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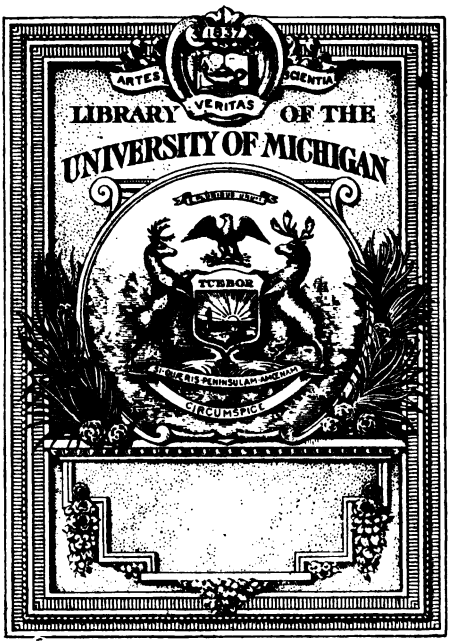
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LIGHT AND TRUTH.

MORRISON AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

Light and Truth:

OR,

Bible Thoughts and Themes.

The Revelation.

BY

HORATIUS BONAR, D.D.

THIRD EDITION.

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Bible Thoughts and Themes.

I.

THE BOOK OF THE LAST DAYS.

'*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John: who bare record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*'—REV. I. 1–3.

THE title of this last and most wondrous of inspired books is 'the revelation (uncovering, unveiling[1]) of Jesus Christ.' It is He who 'unveils,' and it is He who is here UNVEILED to us, and who shines out with transfiguration-brightness before the Church's eye. The spirit and sum of this book is 'testimony to Jesus' (ch. xix. 10). He is its Alpha and its Omega. We find Him

[1] The noun and the verb, both in the Septuagint and the New Testament, have this as their meaning. Gen. viii. 13: 'Noah *uncovered* the roof of the ark;' Num. v. 18: 'He shall *uncover* the head of the woman;' Luke ii. 32: 'A light for the *uncovering* of the Gentiles.' In our version it is 'a light to lighten the Gentiles.' But the reference is to Isa. xxv. 7, as much as to xlii. 6.

everywhere,—in description, in song, in symbol, in prediction; in things past, present, and to come. Here Christ is all and in all. This last book completes the 'unveiling' which was begun in the Gospels and carried on through the Epistles. The last fragment of the veil is here taken from His face. We see Him *as He is*, on the Father's right hand, on the throne, through the rent veil. The heavens are opened, and we see Him (as Stephen did) in His present glory and in the glory of His second coming.

Which God gave unto Him.—This unveiling is given to Him by the Father that He may give it to us; for even on the throne is He subject to the Father (1 Cor. xv. 28), waiting on His will and doing it. This revelation is God's gift to Him, and it is His gift to us; becoming thus doubly precious, as a gift worthy of God,—worthy to be given to Him, and worthy to be given by Him to us.

To show unto His servants.—'Show' is the word used in the case of Moses,—'the pattern *showed* to thee in the mount' (Ex. xxv. 40; Heb. viii. 5); and is almost always used in reference to things submitted to the *eye*.[1] They are sons, yet *servants* also; both of these names of honour belonging to Him who was both the Son and the Servant of the Father (Rom. i. 1; Phil. i. 1; Rev. vii. 3, xxii. 3). This book, then, consists of the things shown by Christ to His *servants*.

The things that must shortly come to pass.—He had said,

[1] The expression here is identical with Esther iv. 8: δοῦναι αὐτῷ δεῖξαι τῇ Ἐσθήρ. As Mordecai *gave* to Hatach a copy of the writing to *show* to Esther, so did the Father *give* this revelation to His Son to *show* unto His servants.

'This generation shall not pass away till all these things *be*.' The word is the same, signifying, not to be *fulfilled*, but to *be* or *begin to be*. (John xiii. 2 : not 'supper being *ended*,' but 'supper being brought in.') So here it is the things that must shortly (or quickly) be,—the things just about to be, that the Lord shows to His servants. And what He has shown to us it becomes us to study. These things are the unveiling of Christ, and of earth's future, in connection with Him, both in grace and glory, both in love and wrath. These are some of the things which the angels desire to look into, and in carrying out which they are specially 'ministering spirits;' and it does not become us, whom they chiefly concern, to slight them. Seeing that God has revealed them, we may conclude that they are neither too high nor too low for us, but worthy of most earnest thought. The tendency of the present age is to set aside prophecy as specially belonging to the supernatural, and therefore the incredible and impossible. Let us stand aloof from this incredulity, and welcome the prophetic word as all the more precious because supernatural and specially divine.

And He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John.—More exactly the words run, 'and He signified it (having sent it by His angel) to His servant John.' This 'unveiling' is of no common importance; for mark the steps by which it reaches us. The Father gives it to the Son; the Son summons *His* angel (perhaps the angel which once and again ministered to Him on earth, as in Gethsemane); this angel descends from heaven with it, and makes it known to the prophet (ch. xxii. 16). All the

agencies in heaven and earth are thus brought into connection with it. How valuable its contents must be when such pains are taken with its transmission! Shall we slight that book which has been thus attested and honoured?

Here begin those references to *angelic* agency of which this book is full. God takes us (as in Daniel) behind the scenes, and shows us the living instrumentality through which the movements of earth and the judgments of divine righteousness are wrought. We look into the inner and invisible world, and see angels there at work, executing God's purposes,—the 'angels that excel in strength;' that 'do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word;' His 'hosts;' His 'ministers that do His pleasure' (Ps. ciii. 20, 21). Angels have far more to do in the affairs both of the Church and the world than we generally conceive. Ever at hand, ever waiting and watching, ever working, they help, they protect, they strengthen, they deliver, or they smite, they destroy, they inflict the judgments of God. In this last book of the Bible there is more of angelic ministry, both for good and evil, than in any other; as if men would need more to be reminded of this in the last days; and as if, when Satan comes down with his hosts, having great wrath, Michael and his hosts were to have more to do than ever; as if, in the battle of the great day, their numbers required to be reinforced, and their reserves brought up, to meet the multitudinous foe.

Who bare record of the word of God.—It is the same John who said, 'In the beginning was the Word,' that now is written to by his Lord. He who testified of his Lord on earth now testifies of Him as He sits in heaven. And we

know that his testimony is true. The Word spoken of in the Gospel, and the Word revealed in the Apocalypse, are one (Rev. xix. 13); both of them revealing wonderfully the Son of the Father, the one in His grace, and the other in His glory. To believe this 'record' is to become a son of God; for it is *faith* that introduces us into the heavenly family. He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.

And of the testimony of Jesus Christ.—The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, no less than of the Gospels. To make known the divine contents of these two glorious names, JESUS and CHRIST, was John's special mission, both at the beginning and at the close of life. He is a witness for Jesus from first to last. It is not merely of the eternal Word that he testifies, but of the 'Word made *flesh*,' 'God manifest in *flesh*,' the bearer of sin, the 'Saviour of the world,' the Anointed of the Holy Ghost.

And of all things that he saw.—Here also the Gospel and the Revelation are similar. In the former we have what John saw of Jesus on earth (John xix. 35: 'he that *saw* bare record'[1]); in the latter, what he saw of Jesus in heaven. The earthly grace and the heavenly glory are thus proclaimed to us on like sure authority,—that of an eye-witness, an inspired eye-witness, whose testimony has in it all that is true and certain, both in God and man.

[1] This is a remarkable passage, as bringing out the simplicity of the Gospel, and the basis on which that Gospel rests, viz. the *facts* concerning Jesus. It should run thus:—'It is he that *saw* who bears witness (and his testimony is true; yea, this man knoweth that he speaks true), that even ye might believe.' The *facts* related by this true eye-witness are those out of which the good news come.

It is all true. Not only do the water and the blood bear witness, but 'the Spirit beareth witness' (1 John v. 6); the testimony of God is greater than all the testimony of man (1 John v. 9). The reception of this testimony by the sinner is life eternal.

Blessed is he that readeth.—What God calls blessedness must be great; and that word 'blessed' is used by Him very frequently in the Old Testament and New. In this book it occurs *seven* times (i. 3, xiv. 13, xvi. 15, xix. 9, xx. 6, xxii. 7, xxii. 14), as if the fulness or perfection of blessedness were contained in what this book reveals. The word 'readeth' refers to the public reading in the church (Luke iv. 16; Acts xv. 21; Col. iv. 16; Rev. v. 4). The *reader* even in his public reading finds blessing. God blesses him in so doing. *Into* him as well as *out of* him flow rivers of living water. Most wondrous book! It begins and ends with blessing on those who read it and give heed to it. How much has the Church of God lost by her neglect of it! It may be hard to be understood; but the privilege of reading it and keeping its sayings remains the same. Surely the Holy Spirit knew what He wrote, when He pronounced blessings on its readers and its observers! Not to gratify the curious; not to suit itching ears; not to encourage human speculation or restless guesses; not to excite the excitable, or furnish materials for poetry; but to feed the Church of God; to be a light in a dark place; to set up a line of beacons along the rocky and stormy coast of the Church's perilous voyage; to be her chart and compass in the last days; to make man wakeful, happy, and blessed; to bring us into

sympathy with the mind and purpose of God,—these are the objects of a book in which Father, Son, and Spirit are all engaged.

And they that hear the words of this prophecy.—They that are but listeners receive the blessing too. To *hear* the voice of God speaking to us in grace, though to the world in judgment, is blessedness. 'Open ears' are the least that God can expect when He speaks. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear! The words spoken are so full of God, so full of Christ, so full of the Spirit, that in *listening* we are blest. His doctrine drops as the rain, and distils as the dew. 'Blessed are they that *hear*,' are among the opening words of this wondrous Revelation; and 'let him that *heareth* say, Come,' are amongst its closing ones. The result produced upon the hearer by the reading of these prophecies should be to make him say, 'Come;' 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

And keep those things that are written therein.—'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them.' The 'keeping' and the 'doing' are the consequents of the 'hearing.' The 'keeping' of Christ's word is what is specially enforced here. For the Revelation is a thoroughly *practical* book, meant to bear upon our daily life, to guide the Church, to warn kings and kingdoms, to lift us out of the region of the visible into that of the invisible. Keep the words of this book, is Christ's message to the Church and the Churches. But how shall we 'keep' them, if we do not study the book? Whether we fully comprehend it or not, let us study it. Each perusal will give a new insight into its visions; we shall take on the

mould and impress of its truths, even unconsciously, in the simple childlike reading of it.

For the time is at hand.—Coming judgments, coming glories, a coming Judge, and a coming kingdom,—these are some of the things held up before our eyes. In regard to all these we are bidden to 'watch.' When and how they are to burst upon our world, and to awaken the slumbering Church, we know *not*. The time has always been concealed. It is uncertain. It may be soon. 'Of that day and hour knoweth no man.' 'Awake thou that sleepest,' for the time is at hand. The trumpet is always ready to sound; the last storm is always just on the point of breaking. Christ is always 'coming.' The end of all things is at hand. Whether we are able to reconcile these words with the delay of so many centuries, it matters not. The words were meant to be words of warning, on account of the suddenness of the final crisis. In looking forward from a human view-point, and measuring the times and seasons by a human standard, the above expression may seem 'hard to be understood;' looking back upon it hereafter from the eternal view-point, we shall see how it was always near.

Here let us stop short and gather up the following lessons, taught us in these verses by the Spirit of God:—

I. *God wishes us to study Christ.*—Again and again He opens out His 'unsearchable riches,' and gives us another and another view of the 'unspeakable gift.' Study His person; study His work: the wisdom, and the power, and the love of God are there. Study all His fulness, and, as you study it, drink it in. Study the cross; study the resurrection; study the present majesty of the ascended and

interceding Christ; study His coming glory as Judge, and King, and Bridegroom. There is none like Him, neither shall be. He is the chief among ten thousand; the only perfect One; the all-perfect One; the representative of the invisible Godhead; the doer of the Father's will; the accomplisher of the Father's purpose, both of vengeance and of grace.

II. *Christ wishes us to study Himself.*—'Look unto me,' He says in this book. Jesus showed to His servant John the things concerning Himself, that the Church in all ages might see and know these things. He unveils Himself in His glory, and says, Look on me! Here Christ is all and in all; and He would fain teach us here what that ALL is, and what that IN ALL implies.

III. *Christ uses human messengers.*—He is head over all things to the Church, and He makes use of all things as His servants, saying to one, 'Go,' and he goeth, to another, 'Come,' and he cometh. Though invisible now and in the heavens, He uses human agencies still. He speaks through men; He teaches through men; He comforts through men; He warns through men. 'We pray you, IN CHRIST'S STEAD, be ye reconciled to God,' are words which show us how He stands towards us.

IV. *God uses angelic messengers.*—In the government both of the Church and of the world He makes use of angels. They are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. Jesus comes Himself to John; yet the Revelation comes to John by an angel. How the angel communicated with John we know not. Who he was, whether Michael or Gabriel, we know

not. But it is an angelic messenger that is made use of here. This whole book is full of angelic agencies and ministries. God lifts a little of the veil, and shows us angels at work in conducting the affairs of earth. This is the book of angels; for the word occurs in it seventy-six times. They minister to man; they execute God's judgments; they do His will here; excelling in strength, and able to counteract the power of Satan and his angels.

V. *He annexes a special blessedness to the study of this book.* —Few believe this; fewer act upon it. The Apocalypse is to many like the Sibyl's books or the Iliad of Homer. The so-called philosophy of the age is undermining the prophetic word, reducing it to a mere collection of figures, or symbolic representation of principles or abstract truths. Prophecy as the direct prediction by God of what is to come to pass on earth is set aside, and the prophetic books are studied merely in reference to their poetry or their lofty ideas. Blessedness in studying them is seldom thought of, even by many Christians. Yet the word of God here stands true. Prophecy is a sure word, and it is as blessed as it is sure. Woe to him who slights it! Blessed are all they who meditate on it, seek to know it, and take it for guidance and counsel in the evil day!

II.

THE GRACE AND PEACE OF THE THREE-ONE GOD.

'*John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.*'—REV. I. 4, 5.

'IN the last days perilous times shall come;' yet in those days, where 'sin shall abound, grace shall much more abound.' It shall be the grace of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the manifold and perfect fulness of the grace of Godhead; 'exceeding riches of grace.' Then shall be the greatest of all the manifestations of grace, both to the Church and to the world. It shall be grace to the uttermost, long-suffering to the uttermost, love to the uttermost, from the Three-one Jehovah to the chief of sinners. Before judgment cometh grace; and not till that large fulness of grace has been rejected shall the wrath descend.

Ver. 4. *John to the seven churches which are in Asia.*—Here is the apostolic salutation; very like Paul's (Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 1, 2), only shorter. It is Jesus who writes; it is the Holy Spirit who writes: yet also John,—John the servant of Christ, and His witness-bearer. He addresses

the seven Asian Churches. There were many others,—Colosse, Tralles, Magnesia,—but seven are chosen as representative Churches, selected by Christ to picture forth all Churches in all ages; selected because of certain peculiar characteristics and conditions which were found in them, that, in speaking to these seven co-existing peculiarities, he might speak to all Churches in all ages; so that each Church, in every age, might find, in some one of these seven, a picture of itself, and, in the words of warning or of cheer, something exactly suited for admonition to itself. To speak symbolically, no one of these Churches has passed away. Ephesus has always existed and still exists in some of the many Churches throughout the world. So of Smyrna and Pergamos and the rest. They are not representatives of *successive* stages or conditions, spiritual or ecclesiastical; they are not prophetical or consecutive, as if Ephesus pictured the primitive Church, Smyrna that of the third and fourth century, down to Laodicea, the representative of the Church of the last days. They picture seven states in which the Church will always be found, and in regard to which each should put the question, Is it I? Lord, is it I? Why they are selected from Asia Minor is hard to say. Certainly it is Gentile ground; and it is to the Churches of the Gentiles that the book is written. Israel had been cast off and had gone out of sight. Jerusalem had fallen; and the apostles, rejected by the Jew, had turned to the Gentile. But why these representative Gentile Churches were selected from Asia, and not from Greece or any Gentile region, we cannot say, further than that John preached at Ephesus and superintended the neighbouring Churches.

Seven is the number of completeness,—manifold completeness; fulness in variety; covenant-certainty. The portrait is *one;* of the one Church of God on earth; but of this one portrait there are seven different views, each bringing out something special, while preserving the common outline and features; all combined giving the complete enumeration or record both of the evil and the good belonging to the universal Church below, in this the day of her imperfection and continual declension.

Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.—'Free favour' (or free love) is the first note of blessing,—apostolic blessing, as in Paul's epistles; and then 'peace,' as the stream flowing from the heavenly fountainhead of grace. 'Peace' simply was the Master's blessing (John xiv. 27), as if the 'grace' were not needed to be *expressed*, He Himself being the visible grace or love. 'Grace and peace,' or sometimes 'grace, mercy, and peace,' we find to be the blessing of His servants, full and large, containing all they needed. 'From Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.' This is the inspired interpretation of the name *Jehovah*, 'who is, and was, and shall be.' Here it is given to the Father, as elsewhere to Christ. 'Yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' 'from everlasting to everlasting God.' The Father's grace and peace must be, like Himself, eternal. Eternal grace, eternal peace, this is the Church's portion, this is the heritage of each saint.

And from the seven Spirits which are before His throne.—This must mean the Holy Spirit in His sevenfold completeness and fulness,—this sevenfold fulness corresponding with

the seven Churches, and intimating the manifold abundance of the gifts which flow out of Him to the whole Church of God.[1] From this storehouse are dispensed the 'gifts of the Holy Ghost,' which Christ has received for men. These seven Spirits are 'before the throne of God;' and from that throne they issue forth like 'the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.' The Holy Spirit is 'the promise of the Father;' and He comes in *His* fulness, from *His* throne, the seat of all authority and power.

Ver. 5. *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness.*—It is not merely the Father's grace that is prayed for, but the grace of the Son, the grace of Him whose name is Jesus,—Jesus the Christ; and it is the peace of Him who

[1] The word 'seven' occurs fifty-three times in this book. We have—

1.	*Seven* Churches,	Rev. i. 4, 20.
2.	*Seven* Spirits,	,, i. 4; iii. 1; iv. 5, 6.
3.	*Seven* golden candlesticks,	,, i. 12, 13, 20; ii. 1.
4.	*Seven* stars,	,, i. 16, 20; ii. 1; iii. 1.
5.	*Seven* lamps of fire,	,, iv. 5.
6.	*Seven* seals,	,, v. 1, 5.
7.	*Seven* horns,	,, v. 6.
8.	*Seven* eyes,	,, v. 6.
9.	*Seven* angels,	,, viii. 2, 6; xv. 1, 6; xvi. 1.
10.	*Seven* trumpets,	,, viii. 6.
11.	*Seven* thunders,	,, x. 3, 4.
12.	*Seven* thousand,	,, xi. 13.
13.	*Seven* heads,	,, xii. 3; xiii. 1.
14.	*Seven* crowns,	,, xii. 3.
15.	*Seven* last plagues,	,, xv. 1, 6, 8.
16.	*Seven* golden vials,	,, xv. 7; xvii. 1.
17.	*Seven* mountains,	,, xvii. 9.
18.	*Seven* kings,	,, xvii. 10.

said, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, that is here dispensed. And this Jesus is the 'faithful Witness,' who has come to us from God with a true testimony, —a testimony concerning the Father and the Father's purpose; a testimony concerning things to come; a testimony to the Church and to the world; a testimony which, on being received, enables us to say, 'We *know*;' for if we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.

The first-begotten of the dead.—The word first-begotten in the Old Testament is almost always used in its literal sense, the eldest of the family, or the first of the herd and flock. So in the New Testament (Matt. i. 25). But in one or two places it is used symbolically,—in reference to majesty or excellency, to power, to possession of the inheritance or birthright (Ps. lxxxix. 27; Jer. xxxi. 9); and in the New Testament the allusions to Christ are symbolical of these, referring not so much to priority in time as to the birthright. These allusions are the following: (1) '*First-born* among many *brethren*' (Rom. viii. 29); (2) '*First-born* of every *creature*' (Col. i. 15; lit., 'first-born of the whole creation'); (3) '*First-born* from the *dead*' (Col. i. 18; same as in Rev. i. 5); (4) '*The first-born*' or 'first-begotten' (Heb. i. 6, where the word stands alone, like 'only-begotten'); (5) *Church* of the *first-born*' (Heb. xii. 23). Christ then has the resurrection-birthright; whether actually He was or was not the first that rose, as to time, He has the primogeniture of resurrection. All of excellency, and power, and glory, and inheritance that belongs to the first-born is His. He is, moreover, 'the first-fruits

of them that slept' (1 Cor. xv. 20); the pledge and earnest, the model and type of resurrection. He is the resurrection and the life. He stands at the head of the long procession of the risen saints, the Church of the first-born, who are in their turn 'a kind of first-fruits of His creatures' (Jas. i. 18).[1]

And the Prince of the kings of the earth.—The word 'prince' is simply 'ruler' or 'president,' as '*ruler* of the synagogue' (Luke viii. 41); 'Nicodemus a *ruler* of the Jews' (John iii. 1). As, then, the *archisynagogos* presided over the synagogue, or the head of the Sanhedrim presided in that court of the elders, so does Christ preside in the assembly of the kings of the earth. The expression is not exactly the same as 'King of kings and Lord of lords;' it rather refers to presidency and power, such as is described in the 82d psalm: 'God standeth' (or 'hath taken His stand,' a solemn act, for the solemn purpose, immediately declared) 'in the congregation of God' (Num. xxvii. 17, xxxi. 16, Josh. xxii. 16, 17, 'the congregation of Jehovah'); 'in the midst of the gods He judgeth;' showing Himself *president* of earth's kings, and as such taking His place among them (for judgment upon them), even as they do in their court or cabinet; and they are called 'gods,' not simply as having authority or worthy of an honourable name, but as His vicegerents, 'God's ministers' (Rom. xiii. 4), to whom their subjects are to look for the embodiment of all that is divine, and in whose laws and actings

[1] As He is here called 'the first-begotten of the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth,' so in the 89th psalm He is called 'the first-born, HIGHER THAN THE KINGS of the earth,' as if John were here taking us back to the psalmist's words, as he does also in the words 'faithful Witness' (Ps. lxxxix. 37).

they expect to find exemplified and represented the laws and actings of God Himself. Christ is thus declared God; and as such He presides over the assembled potentates of earth as their Ruler and Lord, by whom they reign, to whom they are responsible, and for whose glory they are to make use of all that they possess of power, and honour, and wealth. 'Worthy is the Lamb to receive *power*, and *riches*, and wisdom, and strength' (ch. v. 12). The gold and silver of earth, the thrones and kingdoms of the world, all belong to Him, and are to be employed for His glory, in all ages, present and to come.

III.

THE CHIEF AMONG TEN THOUSAND.

'*Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*'
—REV. i. 5, 6.

SUDDENLY and abruptly does this doxology break in. The first and third persons of the Godhead are, if one may say so, passed by, and the second person is singled out for praise. The naming of His name draws forth this loud burst of irrepressible song. The 'man Christ Jesus,' the 'Word made flesh,' the crucified Christ, is the theme.

If He be not God, why is He thus specially singled out? If He be less than the Father and the Spirit, why is so large a portion of song and glory reserved for Him? If He be a creature, why are divine honours thus heaped upon Him? Why do the Father and the Spirit thus join in exalting His name?

This is pre-eminently the doxology of the *heart*. It is a song of love. Love dictates it; love begets it and calls it forth,—that 'perfect love' of the Son of God, which not only casts out all fear, but rouses to joyful, loving adoration. Was ever love like His? Did ever love so merit song? Did ever favours received so call for thanksgiving?

Unto Him that loved us.—He *loved* and He *loveth;* for we may take in both the past and the present (and the future also), whatever reading we accept of the original words. This is 'the love that passeth knowledge,'—without bounds and without end,—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. 'He loved us, and gave Himself for us.' The love is great, for He is great. It is divine, for He is divine. It is human, for He is human. It is free, and altogether irrespective of goodness in us; for no other became Him, and no other would have suited us.

And washed us from our sins in His own blood.—The love leads to and secures the washing. He washed the feet of His disciples; so He washes us wholly, head and foot, spirit, soul, and body. He *did* it: it is a certain and accomplished fact. He did it in one sense when He died; He did it actually when we believed; for it is our believing that brings us into contact with Him and His blood. As soon as we receive the Father's testimony to Him, and in so doing receive Himself, He washes us,—washes us from our sins, washes us in His own blood,—the blood nobler and richer than that of bulls and goats, the blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel. He is our *Cleanser.* He is the great *Fuller,* who with His 'fuller's soap' (Mal. iii. 2), which is His blood, cleanses us. He is the great High Priest, who with His hyssop (Ps. li.) purges us. He makes both us and our garments whiter than the snow; like His own transfiguration body and raiment (Mark ix. 3); like His own head and hair, which was 'white like wool, as white as snow' (ch. i. 14). Thus we become 'the Church without spot,' like Himself; and

then He can say of us, 'Thou art all fair' (Cant. iv. 1, 7); 'Thou hast ravished my heart;' 'How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love!' (Cant. vii. 6.)

Ver. 6. *And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father.*—The *loving* is the first thing; the *washing* is the second; the constituting us *kings and priests* is the third, which consummates all, and reveals the extent of the love, the great things which it is doing for us here, and will do for us hereafter. It is this love that makes us the 'royal priesthood;' which gives us the priestly throne and kingdom; which sets us on high, as, like Himself, *Melchizedeks*, priests of the most High God, kings of righteousness, kings of Salem,—not of the Salem which now lies in ruins, but of the true Salem, the heavenly city, which knows no ruin and fears no Roman host, whose builder and whose maker is God. He *hath* done this! Not He *shall* do it. It is done. We became kings and priests as soon as we became believers; nor can anything alter this royal privilege. Degrees of honour and differences in the extent of our dominions there are, as star differeth from star in glory; but the kingship and the kingdom, once conferred upon us, cannot be taken away. Ours is an everlasting dominion (Dan. vii. 27), a crown of life and righteousness which fadeth not away, the earnest of all which we have in the present possession of the Spirit, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. Yes, kings and priests unto God and His Father,—that is, 'to Him who is His God and Father!' Our kingdom and priesthood are in connection with God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a peculiar kingdom and

priesthood, such as can belong to none other than the redeemed. We are kings and priests in the service of, and at the disposal of, His Father and our Father, His God and our God. Our right to wear the crown and mitre is connected with redemption and sonship; and it is as one with His Son that the Father uses us, and gives us the honour and glory.

To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.—Praise and prayer are directed to Christ. Strange that some should say, We are not to pray to Him directly; as if the many passages which begin, 'O Lord,' were not addresses to Him, and as if the many doxologies in which we ascribe praise to Him directly were not proof of His being equally the object of prayer as of praise. Shall we ascribe glory to Him, and shall we not pray to Him? His is 'the glory.' All excellency, created and uncreated, in heaven and earth, is His. His is the 'dominion;' universal dominion, over all creation. He is its Head, and Lord, and King. For ever and for ever! Never shall this glory and dominion cease to belong to Him; never shall His praises cease to be sung by all earth and heaven, by men and angels. There is none like Him; none so fitted to receive our praises; none so qualified to wear the crown and be exalted head over all. He had by His divine nature the right of universal dominion; by His human nature as the second Adam, the right of earthly sovereignty; as God-man and Redeemer, He has won these in a new way by His blood. They are doubly His. Amen! So be it, and so it shall be.

Let us gather up the foregoing exposition into the fol-

lowing points :—(1) The love ; (2) The cleansing ; (3) The dignity ; (4) The praise ; (5) The amen.

I. *The love.*—The name of Him who loves is not given, because superfluous. Only *One* could be meant. His is love like Himself, infinite ; love like that of the Father to the Son, or the Son to the Father ; unchanging, never ending, yet free ! Love stronger than death or the grave ; love that loves us out of sin, out of hell, out of the grave, into heaven. It is the love whose breadth and length, depth and height, are immeasurable ; the love that passeth knowledge. Of this love none could better speak than John ; he who had leant on the bosom of Him, whose Gospel is throughout the STORY OF LOVE.

II. *The cleansing.*—This cleansing is the great proof of the love ; for it is not 'to Him that loved us and delivered us from wrath ;' but 'to Him who loved us and washed us.' He washed and He washes ; it is both,—the washing of the whole person once, and the daily washing of the feet. He washed us 'from our sins.' These defiled us all over ; He washes us all over from them all ; He makes us clean : 'Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken.' He makes us clean every whit. He does this in His own blood ; not in the blood of bulls, which can never take away sin, but in His own. It is precious blood ; it is spotless ; it is divine ; it is sacrificial ; it is efficacious ; it is altogether suitable. He does it all Himself : 'By Himself He purged our sins ;' 'how much more shall the blood of Christ purge your consciences !' We have God's testimony to this blood and to its power ; and he that receives the testimony is then and there and

thereby cleansed; so that, though the chief of sinners, 'we have no more conscience of sins.' Nothing can wash but this; he who uses it needs nothing more; and yet nothing less will do. It does its work effectually and at once.

III. *The dignity.*—He hath made us kings and priests. Such is the height of dignity to which He raises us. He gives us a kingdom; and in that kingdom He makes us kings, not subjects. It is the *throne* that is ours,—not a home in it merely, or wealth in it, or a place of honour in it; nothing short of the throne and the crown! It is not yet ours in possession, but it is ours in prospect; we are *kings* just now, though it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But the priesthood as well as the throne is ours. We are not simply, like national Israel, to get the *benefits* of priesthood; we are priests ourselves, belonging to the priestly tribe and family; true Aarons, true Melchizedeks; appointed to minister in the heavenly sanctuary. The priestly mitre and robe and ephod are all ours; and we are to exercise our priesthood hereafter throughout the universe. We reign as kings, and as priests we form the medium of communication between the creature and the Creator, between the works of God's hands and the great Maker of all. It is unto *God* and His *Father* that we are such; our priestly-royal service has directly to do with God, and is given us by God Himself. As Christ is, so are we: His joint-kings; His joint-priests; the royal priesthood in whom and through whom God is to be glorified, and His creation governed for ever.

IV. *The praise.*—It is to Him that loved us that we

ascribe the praise; for of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. It is to Him that the song of earth and the song of heaven are both sung. The glory is His, the dominion is His, and for eternity. Eternal glory, eternal dominion, we ascribe to Him. All that the Father has is His,—the Father's throne, the Father's dominion, power, honour, dignity. He is Head of His Church; Head of creation; Head of the universe. In our songs we heap these honours on His head; in our service, and in every part both of work and worship, we do the same. Glory and dominion to Him who loved us!

V. *The amen.*—This is the summing up of all; with heart and voice we sum up this doxology, and cry Amen. This is the response of heaven just now; it will ere long be the response of earth. Meanwhile it is the response of the Church of God on earth, of each saint here. We hear the glorious doxology first uttered in Patmos, and we cry Amen. We shall one day do it with a louder voice, and with our whole soul.

How are we disposed to this doxology just now? Does it suit our taste, does it meet our sympathies? Does the love of which it speaks constrain us? Has it touched, broken, melted our hearts?

Have we realized our own dignity? Do we feel the honour, the privilege, the responsibility of being kings and priests? Do we act, live, speak, feel accordingly? Do our glorious prospects tell upon us now? Are we walking daily in the anticipation of what shall be? Are we working, praying, praising, giving, suffering, denying self, under the influence of that honour which shall so soon be ours?

IV.

THE GREAT ADVENT.

'*Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.*'—REV. 1. 7.

THE Lord shall come! This is the burden of this last book of Scripture. It was the burden of the Old Testament; for Enoch's prophecy runs through all its books,—'Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints.' It is the burden of the New Testament; for both the Master and His apostles give out the same solemn utterance,—'Behold, He cometh;' and the Church in the early ages took up the subject as of profoundest and most pressing interest, 'looking for that blessed hope.'

It was no minor hope to the primitive saints. It cheered them at parting with their Lord, and it comforted them at parting with one another. It upheld them in evil days; it nerved them for warfare; it gave them patience under persecution; it animated them in their work; it kept alive their zeal; it enabled them to look calmly round upon an evil world, and to face its mustering storms; it showed them resurrection and glory, fixing their eye upon scenes beyond the deathbed and the tomb; it ever reminded them of the day of meeting, when Jesus

will gather all His own together, and they that have slept in Him shall awake to glory, honour, and immortality.

The aspect in which the advent is here presented to us bears more upon the world than upon the Church. When Paul writes to the Thessalonians, he brings before us the advent as it bears upon the Church and her resurrection-hope (1 Thess. iv. 16). 'The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven' is the word of consolation and gladness. But here it is a warning to the world, and to the apostate Church, that John proclaims the Coming One. He comes as Avenger, and Judge, and King! He comes with the iron rod, to break the nations in pieces. He comes arrayed in righteous majesty, to take vengeance upon them that know not God. He comes to shake terribly the earth. And who shall abide the day of His appearing?

The world scoffs at the message, and believes in no advent save the advent of gold and silver, of commerce and science, of luxury and pleasure. The Church has lost sight of it, and says, My Lord delayeth His coming; or perhaps, 'I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.' Multitudes of professing Christians cannot bear to hear it preached or spoken of, as if it were an evil doctrine fraught with gloom, and paralyzing all effort.

Yet, though the world may mock and the Church forget, the Lord shall come! He has tarried long. Eighteen centuries have gone by since He said, 'Behold, I come quickly!' He must be nigh, even at the doors.

Ver. 7. *Behold, He cometh with clouds.*—How often has that word 'behold' been used in Scripture, to call the attention of a careless Church or world to something great

—generally something visible—connected with Messiah and His glory! It is the finger of the Holy Ghost pointing to the open heavens, and His voice saying, 'See, He cometh!' For that event absorbs all others in earth's future. It is the centre of the prophetic word. It is the Church's hope. It is the world's dread. Long deferred, it comes at last. The Morning Star rises on a night of storm and gloom. Jesus comes; 'the same Jesus' who left us on Olivet returns as He went. He cometh with clouds! The reference is here first to Matthew (ch. xxvi. 64), and then to Daniel (ch. viii. 13), for both are here; also to first Thessalonians (ch. iv. 17). Sometimes it is 'clouds' (Rev. i. 7); sometimes 'the clouds' (Matt. xiii. 26); sometimes 'the cloud' (Luke ix. 34); sometimes 'a cloud' (Acts i. 9); sometimes 'a bright cloud' (Matt. xvii. 5); sometimes a 'white cloud' (Rev. xiv. 14). All these passages point us not merely to the natural clouds of the sky, but to the pillar-cloud,—the cloud of the glory which dwelt *over* and *in* Israel's tabernacle and temple. 'With' and 'in' such clouds of glory, as His raiment, His chariot, His pavilion, He is to come.

And every eye shall see Him.—This takes in the whole human race then upon the earth; whether simultaneously, all in one moment, is of no consequence. Every eye shall see Him, as every man sees the sun each day. The whole human race beholds the sun, though not all exactly at the same moment. The glory may be universally visible at the same time; but to some parts of the world *first* He Himself shall appear. Every eye shall see Him! Then let us prepare, by looking to Him now. The seeing Him now

will cure and bless us; the seeing Him hereafter will be woe to those who have not looked to Him now as the crucified Jesus.

And they who pierced Him.—They are specially singled out. Israel pierced Him; Israel shall then specially behold Him, as Saul on his way to Damascus, whose conversion seems a type of that of his countrymen at last, when He whom they pierced shall appear. Like him, they have for eighteen hundred years been kicking against the pricks, and like him they shall be amazed and overwhelmed when they see in the returning Jesus of Nazareth Him whom their fathers slew. No doubt we pierce Him and crucify Him afresh by our unbelief: each day is He pierced and crucified by the sons of men; for the piercing is the common act of all who, by reason of unbelief, are in sympathy with the original piercers. Still it would seem, from Zechariah (xii. 10), that to Israel the special guilt of piercing belongs, though the actual spear which did it was in the hand of a Gentile soldier. The 'piercing' was the last proof of *human hatred*,—man's determination that the Christ of God should die the death, and in that visible exhibition of the whole world's hatred we have our part; though Israel, as they who should have known and owned and loved their Messiah when He came, may be the guiltiest of all.

And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.—Not Israel only, but all the tribes of earth, shall beat upon their breasts because of Him. All the inanimate creation *rejoices* (seas, woods, hills, and floods, Ps. xcvi.); man *mourns*. For He comes to deliver creation from the bondage of the corruption, but to take vengeance upon His

enemies. The joy of creation and the wailing of man are striking contrasts. They 'wail,' or beat their breasts, because

(1.) *He comes.*—Rather would they have Him remain away for ever, and themselves left unembarrassed in their plans; undisturbed in their lusts, and sins, and enjoyment of the creature. His *presence* extorts the weeping.

(2.) *He comes to judge.*—There shall be no mistake as to that. The trumpet has told them that. He summons to judgment. He will right all the wrong.

(3.) *He comes with the iron rod.*—For His enemies is the rod of iron. The great day of breaking shall overwhelm them; and who shall be able to stand?

A remnant in Israel shall mourn with a godly sorrow. The sight of Him whom their fathers pierced shall first strike them to the ground, as it did Saul, and then melt them. So a remnant from the spared Gentiles shall *wail* and *turn*. But the vengeance shall be widespread. The nations rejecting Christ shall perish. Christendom shall sink like Babylon in the mighty waters. Destruction from the Lord shall consume them utterly. *This* is the world's day of rejoicing; *that* shall be the day of its weeping. Rejecter of the cross, repent and turn! Refuser of the love of God and of the grace of Christ, reconsider your ways, ere the Judge descends! This is the acceptable year of the Lord. Avail yourself of the free pardon, and the open door, and the paternal welcome, ere it be too late.

Even so, Amen (see 2 Cor. i. 17). The first of these words is Greek, *Yes;* the second Hebrew, *So be it:* both together forming the fullest expression that could be of

the certainty and truth of what is stated, and the deep longing of heart for the fulfilment of the prediction.[1] Here are all John's innermost desires summed up and spoken out. What earnestness, what vehemence, what longing, are expressed in this double AMEN! It is the amen of faith, and hope, and joy. It is the amen of a weary, heart-broken exile. It is the amen of a saint left on earth long behind his fellow-saints, and sighing for the promised rest when the great Rest-giver comes. It is the *Church's* amen; her vehement desire for the day of meeting. It is the sigh of the bride for the Bridegroom, and for the dawning of the marriage-day.

The world is not ready for that advent; how shall it meet the Judge? It has neglected the 'accepted time;' and how shall it stand before the neglected One? What excuse shall it give for slighting the love, despising the blood, and turning its back upon the cross? How terribly, to an unready world, will the last trumpet sound! Poor world! Thy day of grace is drawing to a close. Thy pleasures are nearly done. Thy laughter will soon be quenched. Thy vanities will soon disappear. Thy dreams will ere long be disturbed by the terrible awaking,—when the 'shout,' and the 'voice of the archangel,' and the 'trump of God' shall sound. Be wise in time! Awake, thou that sleepest!

Is the Church ready for this glorious day? Has she

[1] 'The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended' (Ps. lxxii. 20 'My reins are consumed within me' (Job xix. 27); that is, 'My longings are exhausted here.' 'These be the last words of David' (2 Sam. xxiii. 1); that is, this is the summing up of all David's words,—their alpha and omega.

put on her apparel? Has she trimmed and lighted her lamp? Has she filled her vessel with oil? Is she sitting loose from the world? Is she remembering her coming Lord, and seeking to be faithful to Him in His absence? He has entrusted to her His cause, His truth, His honour. Is she alive to her responsibility, and acting accordingly? Is she realizing His nearness and His glory? Is she daily influenced by His sure word of promise, 'Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me?' Is she labouring and suffering for Him? Or is she self-indulgent, worldly, indolent? As if the Lord were not coming, and as if He were bringing no reward with Him?

Look forwards! Look upwards! Stand apart from a present evil world. Remember that in the last days perilous times shall come. It remains for us that we let our light shine and keep our garments undefiled. Labour on, O man of faith! labour on; the toil and the battle will soon be done, and thou shalt rest from thy labours, and thy works shall follow thee.

Beware of the leaven of the last days; the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees; the leaven of mingled infidelity and superstition; the leaven of atheism and pantheism. 'Liberality' is the watchword; but is it the liberality of the Bible or of God? Is it the liberality of Him who says in reference to false teaching, 'WHICH THING I HATE?' (ch. ii. 15).

Beware of letting go the truth of God; of either denying, or disgracing, or depreciating it. 'Hold fast that which thou hast.' The Master is absent; and responsibility in the Master's absence is double responsibility. He

trusts to us to maintain His truth and to honour His name, till He return. Let His Churches be faithful to their trust, honouring Him as Prophet, Priest, and King. He may be returning soon. If, on His return, He finds us unfaithful to Himself and to His truth, what shall be our recompense? Behold, He cometh! Like a trumpet-voice, let that cry go through the Churches; let it echo through earth. His long absence will soon be ended. Let us be ready: let us watch and be sober.

V.

THE FULNESS OF THE GOD-MAN.

'*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*'—REV. I. 8.

HERE the voice of the Son of God breaks in and interrupts the utterance of the apostle. John had been speaking of Jesus; and now Jesus speaks. He speaks of Himself, but in new figures, and in a new style of language. We are carried back to the first chapter of the Gospel of John, and the first chapter of the first Epistle of John; yet the language is not the same. It is a peculiar declaration of the eternity and infinity of the Christ of God,—a declaration specially suited to the present book, as unfolding the ages yet to come, in which this glorious One is to be all in all. It is the ascription to Christ of one of the special and incommunicable names of Godhead. In ver. 4 this name is given to the Father; now it is given to the Son, or rather to Jesus Christ,—'the Christ of God,' the 'Word made flesh.'

The name as given in full is, 'the Alpha and the Omega; the beginning and the ending; the first and the last; the Lord; which is, and which was, and which is to come; the Almighty.' This is the full name, when its various parts are put together. It is the unfolding of the one name,

Jehovah; for as the sunbeam is composed of many parts and colours, so is this great name 'Jehovah' divisible into such parts as the above, which proclaim to us the manifold fulness of God, and reveal to us His divine character and nature as the infinite and eternal Lord.

The following may be given as the meaning of the above symbols,—CHRIST THE FULNESS OF ALL THINGS, created and uncreated. We may thus set them in order:—

I. *In Christ is the fulness of wisdom and knowledge.*—He is 'the Alpha and the Omega;' and as these letters form the beginning and ending of the Greek alphabet, we suppose they are meant to denote all that can be contained in the language of man. Wisdom beyond that of all Greek philosophy is in Him; 'in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'

II. *In Christ is the fulness of all creation.*—He is 'the beginning and the ending.' The 'first-born of every creature' is His name (Col. i. 15). 'He is THE beginning' (Col. i. 18), as well as 'in the beginning' (John i. 1); and *as such*, He is the *Creator* of all things in heaven and in earth (Col. i. 16); the circumference as well as the centre of the universe.

III. *In Christ is the fulness of all space.*—He is 'the first and the last.' That which man calls space, from its one extremity (if we may use the word) to the other extremity, is all in Him.

IV. *In Christ is the fulness of all time.*—He is 'from everlasting to everlasting, God.' Past, present, and future are His. 'Who was, and who is, and who is to come.' The fulness of the past eternity is His; the fulness of the

future eternity is His; and the fulness of the vast present is also His. The infinity of time belongs to Him; He is Himself that infinity. The eternal past is His; and His is the eternal future. He is living eternity.

V. *In Christ is the fulness of all power.*—His name is 'the Almighty;' the Lord God Omnipotent, to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth. As the Creator of the vast universe; as the sustainer of all being; as the Redeemer of His Church; as 'the Lord strong in battle;' as 'able to save to the uttermost,' 'mighty to save;' as the binder of Satan; as the destroyer of Antichrist; as the renewer of the earth,—He is ALMIGHTY. And when the great day of His wrath is come, who shall be able to stand?

Thus Jesus here *reveals* Himself in this book of the *Revelation*; for all these excellences come forth into special manifestation in this glorious book, which may well be called *the fifth gospel*,—the record of Christ in heaven, the unveiling of His love and power. He is the same Jesus, with unchanged heart, and undiminished love, bending in grace and pity over this earth, 'His well-beloved world,' as it has been called. For here we have the 'long-suffering' and the 'salvation' of which Paul and James and Peter speak in their epistles: 'The Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy,' 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;' 'who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.'

All *fulness* is in Jesus: the fulness of the God-man; divine and human fulness; the fulness of love and power;

the fulness of grace and glory. It is the very fulness which we need, and it is accessible to us; free to us; brought down to earth and placed at our side; pressed upon us, that we may take it and use it all. It is a fulness which eye hath not seen nor ear heard. It contains 'unsearchable riches.' Being the fulness of Him who is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, it is altogether suitable, so that no one can say there is not in it provision to suit my need. It is of this fulness that He Himself speaks elsewhere, when He says, 'I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed; and eye-salve wherewith to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see.'

In this fulness there is something infinitely attractive. It is as gracious as it is glorious. It is fitted to win us. It is God's provision for the needy. How large and excellent!

From this fulness no one is excluded. It is open on every side, that all may partake. 'Every one' and 'whosoever' are the words in which the invitation is made. What can be wider or freer? How could eternal life be brought nearer, or made more accessible? Jesus stands beside you; He presents you with HIMSELF. What could He do more? What could you ask or need more than this?

VI.

THE VOICE FROM PATMOS TO THE CHURCHES.

'*I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*'—REV. I. 9–11.

THE voice of the Master ceases, and that of the disciple begins again. He does not call himself 'the disciple whom Jesus loved,' as he does elsewhere, but simply 'John.' And as another apostle writes, 'I Paul,' so he does here, 'I John,'—that is, 'I who am that very John whom ye have known; who have been among you and cared for you as an apostle and shepherd,—I now write to you.' He calls himself the following names:—

I. *Brother and companion.*—He does not write as a lord over them, or as Diotrephes, wishing to have pre-eminence, but as one of themselves. He is one of the many 'brethren' in Asia; one of the 'household of faith;' a son of the same father; a member of the one family. He is no stranger or distant relative, no master

or ruler, but truly a part of themselves, who needed their sympathy and love even more than they needed his. Not a brother only, but a 'companion:' a co-partner with them in all things; a sharer with them in the same faith and hope, the same sorrow and joy. 'Brother and companion!' how comfortably must these words have sounded in their ears! how well fitted to remove suspicion or resistance in regard to the reproofs and warnings about to be conveyed! Such an one was not likely to speak unkindly, or rebuke without a cause; or expose faults with any feeling save that of affection and earnest longing for their welfare. Not to wound, but to soothe and bless, would be his motive and desire.

II. *Brother and companion in tribulation.*—There was tribulation in the Churches then, as now; in some cases it was 'much tribulation' (Acts xiv. 22), or 'great tribulation' (Rev. ii. 22, vii. 14). 'Weeping endured for a night' (Ps. xxx. 5); for this is the *night*, and it is the time of tears. The Church, the injured widow, waters her couch with her tears, and will do so until the morning dawn, and the day of the wiping away of all tears arrive. What John suffered, these Churches suffered; what they suffered, he suffered: for the sympathy between all the members of the body was quick and instantaneous in these days of love. They felt for each other; they bore each other's burdens; they shared each other's griefs and joys. John could say with Paul, 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?' (2 Cor. xi. 29.) The 'communion of saints' was understood then more fully than ever since. For sym-

pathy between the members of Christ's body is little known in these last days; so many things have come between; so many non-conducting materials have prevented the communication. The world has come in; false brethren have come in; the members do not realize the vitality of their connection with the Head. Life has gone out; love has sunk low; and thus the thrill of sympathy which once went through the body when one suffered is no longer felt. The links are broken; the fine nerves that carried the spiritual feeling through every part have frozen or become insensible, if not dead. Who of us appreciates this deep, true spiritual union, with which no external unity can intermeddle, either to hinder or to help? It is the union of life and love; of faith, and truth, and hope. It is a unity of joy and peace; a unity to which nothing earthly can be compared; a unity altogether heavenly and divine.

III. *Brother and companion in the kingdom.*—The kingdom belongs alike to all the members of the one body from the beginning; and the apostle, in the eleventh of the Hebrews, gives us a few of the names of these 'joint-heirs,' these co-partners in the coming glory. It is an inheritance in light, and each has the whole of it, as each dweller on the earth has the whole sun as his. A common faith, and a common hope; a common exile, and a common kingdom! One in sorrow, one in joy; one in shame, one in glory; one in tribulation, one in triumph! It is a *kingdom* that is before his eyes, and before theirs; a kingdom which had not yet come; the kingdom of the saints; the everlasting kingdom, the

kingdom which cannot be moved. 'Kings and priests unto God' is the common name of all the saints, from Abel downward; 'We shall reign on the earth,' is their unceasing song, even in heaven. Even in exile, and persecution, and sorrow, they anticipate their crowns. From desolate Patmos, the eye of John beholds the glory in which all this shame and banishment are to end.

IV. *Brother and companion in the patience of Jesus Christ.*—Until that kingdom come, there is need of patience; patience such as all the saints have shown in the days of their pilgrimage; the patience exhibited by the Master Himself; the patience of faith and hope; the patient waiting for the kingdom. Truly they 'have need of patience.' Often is 'the patience of the saints' dwelt upon. 'He that endureth (is *patient*) to the end,' says the Lord Himself; and again, 'In your *patience* possess ye your souls.' Take also the following passages: 'Tribulation worketh *patience*' (Rom. v. 3); 'with *patience* we wait for it' (Rom. viii. 25); 'the God of *patience*' (Rom. xv. 5); '*patient* in tribulation' (Rom. xii. 12); 'if we *suffer* (literally, if we are *patient*), we shall also reign with Him' (2 Tim. ii. 12); 'let us run with *patience*' (Heb. xii. 1). The Churches of Asia, and the whole Church of God, are called upon to this patient waiting for the kingdom, and yet to be 'looking for *and hasting unto* the coming of the day of God.' Be *patient* unto the coming of the Lord. Be patient under wrong, and suffering, and weariness, and hope deferred! Fret not! He that believeth doth not make haste; the Lord is at hand; the kingdom is about to come; the tribulation

will soon cease; the joy will soon begin; and once begun, it will never end. The 'everlasting joy upon our heads' will compensate for the ages of patience through which the Church has had to pass on her way to the kingdom.

All this John knew from present experience. He was in the isle that is called Patmos, a banished, lonely man; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. It was for the Master's sake that he was in exile. Faithful to 'the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ,' he was made to know what great things he must suffer for his beloved Lord. He was now the *last* of the apostles, as his brother James had been the *first* to go, and he could not but feel his loneliness in his extreme old age.

But he is not alone, for the Father is with him, and the Master too. 'I was' (was 'made to be,' or 'became,' ἐγενόμην) 'in the Spirit on the Lord's day.'[1] One Lord's day he was in the Spirit,—not exactly at first, like Paul, caught up to the third heaven (though afterwards he was summoned up, ch. iv. 1), but still so 'filled with the Spirit,' so 'in the Spirit,' that the invisible things of God were revealed to him. In 'the visions of God' he saw what was coming on the earth. 'The secret of the Lord was with him.' The kingdom and the glory, for which he was suffering banishment, came up before his view.

[1] For the meaning of this expression, see Num. xi. 26, Ezek. ii. 2, iii. 12, 14, Matt. xxii. 43, 1 Cor. xiv. 2, Rev. iv. 2. The expression 'the Lord's day' is the first day of the week, not the day of Christ's coming—*that* is expressed differently.

Thus God sustains His own. He comes to them in exile, and compasses them about with songs of deliverance. He opens heaven, and descends to keep them company in their solitude, making them forget their sorrow and their exile.

Let us live near Him; walking with Him in simple faith; tasting His love; and enjoying His sympathy. He is with His own here, and His own will ere long be with Him where He is. 'Lo, I am WITH YOU,' is His promise to us now; 'so shall they ever be WITH THE LORD,' is the consummation of that promise in the coming glory.

'Wherefore comfort one another with these words.' For the time is short. The Lord is at hand. The glory will soon be dawning. Earth's thrones will soon be emptied of all unfaithful kings, and the true Monarch of the world will take to Himself His great power and reign.

He hears what mortal ears could not take in,—'a great voice,' as of a 'trumpet.' That voice is his Lord's. It repeats the words already spoken concerning Himself, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last,' that John might be reminded of the glory of the speaker. And then it is added, 'What thou *seest*, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia.' Thus the things that are *seen* are for these seven Churches, as well as the things that are *heard*. This whole book of the Revelation was not only for the Church of these last days, but for the Church of the first age as well. The Lord speaks to the whole Church, and summons it to hear. These seven representative Churches get the message

first, and from them it goes forth to all. Jesus is speaking still. 'The great voice as of a trumpet' has sounded through the ages, and it is sounding still; nor will it cease till He whose voice it is has arrived to introduce the consummation and the glory for which we are waiting.

VII.

THE SEVEN GOLDEN LAMPS.

'And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And, being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.'—REV. I. 12.

JOHN hears a voice,—a great voice, a voice like a trumpet,—*behind* him, not above, nor before. Dwelling, if tradition be correct, in the southern extremity of the island, on a steep cliff, and looking over the Ægean, he would have his back to the continent of Asia, and, of course, to the Churches there. The voice he heard makes him turn round, and look to the north-east, where the cluster of the seven Churches lay, the Churches with which he was specially connected. The first thing meeting his eye is seven golden candlesticks, or lampstands, as if just somewhere in the region where he might have expected to see the Churches. What a vision in that lonely, barren island! It would seem as if he had been transported back to Jerusalem, and brought into the sanctuary, or as if the golden relics of that now ruined sanctuary had been transported by some angel hand, and placed upon the desolate rock!

Let us seek to gather something from this vision. What did the Holy Spirit mean by it? What does it teach us? We are told that 'the seven candlesticks are the seven churches' (ch. i. 20). This much is plain. Seven

Churches, which he knew well, had just been named to him, and he is told that these golden lampstands are meant to represent or symbolize these Churches.

With these 'golden candlesticks' we must connect the 'seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God' (ch. iv. 5). Not that these two sets of lamps are the same. In the one case we read of 'lampstands,' in the other of 'lamps;' in the one case it is the *Churches* that are described, in the other it is *the Holy Spirit*. Still, they are connected. The former get their light from the latter. It is by the Holy Spirit that the seven Churches are made 'burning and shining lights.' The 'stars' (ch. i. 20) are not, as some have supposed, the flame of the lamp. They are quite different, as we shall see. Of the New Jerusalem, the Lamb is the light; but in His absence from this world just now, the Holy Spirit, in His sevenfold fulness, and with His sevenfold gifts, and sevenfold illumination, gives light, by lighting up the Churches. They owe all their light to Him. As He came down at Pentecost under the emblem of fire (Acts ii. 3), so does He abide upon the Churches still. In the upper chamber this fire 'sat upon each' of the disciples, and so it sitteth still. It is the pentecostal fire that kindles these seven lamps, and maintains their heavenly brightness; for that brightness is not human nor angelic; it is *divine*. It is light communicated by the Holy Spirit,—a spark or flame from the Shekinah glory; the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Let us look at this more in detail.

I. *The candlesticks.*—It is not so much to the *light* as to the utensil or *stand* for holding it that his attention is turned; for the light of these lamps is not from themselves, or from any earthly source, but from Him who is 'the *light* of the world,' and who said to His disciples as His representatives here, 'Ye are the *light* of the world.'

'Among whom ye shine as *lights* in the world' (Phil. i. 15), says Paul, adding, 'holding forth the word of life.' The individual saint is a 'light;' a Church is a 'light-holder' or 'lampstand.' The saint personally, and the Church or body of saints, is placed 'in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation,' and, like 'the word of prophecy' (2 Pet. i. 19), 'shines as a light in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise.'

Israel, for ages, was the world's only light,—a light confined within narrow boundaries; not diffused over earth, nor set upon a hill. Of this the one seven-branched candlestick in the tabernacle and temple was the symbol. That lampstand was doubly shut in,—first, by the outer curtain, or wall of the house; and, secondly, by the inner curtain, or wall of the holy place. But these curtains have been torn in pieces, these walls thrown down; and now that lamp stands in uncurtained, unhidden splendour, shining out over all the world. Take the lamp as meaning, in the first place, Christ Himself, the light of Israel, and of the world. This is true. He was 'a *light* to lighten the Gentiles;' 'His life was the *light* of men.' Take it again as meaning Israel, who was so long earth's only *light*. This is true; for Israel, when her exclusive privileges passed away, gave forth her *light* around. Take

it as meaning the Church, or Churches, or saints of God. This is also true: they shine out as *lights* over all the world,—not over Israel's vales and hills alone, or her cities and villages, but over all earth's wide expanse, over all kindreds, and nations, and tongues, and peoples.

Christ is the world's light; the Church is the world's light; each saint is the light of the circle where he dwells and where he moves.

II. *The materials of which the candlesticks are made.*—They are of *gold.* Generally in Scripture gold symbolizes the holy, the perfect, the divine. 'Be ye holy, for I am holy;' 'be perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;' 'partakers of the divine nature;' 'as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly,'—these are some of the passages which help to illustrate the meaning of 'gold.' The Churches are 'in God the Father, and in Christ Jesus, our Lord.' They are not from beneath, but from above; they are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. They are composed of men born from above. With divine glory they shine; with divine beauty they stand forth before the world, 'perfect with the comeliness which God hath put upon them,' and representing the surpassing and all-precious excellence of Him in whose beauty they are beautiful, and in whose perfection they are perfect. How noble the lesson which we are thus taught! How holy and unworldly ought the Churches to be, and each saint in them! As gold cannot rust, so neither ought they to take on the world's rust or defilement, but to stand in the midst of it as a witness against its evil; 'holy, harm-

less, and undefiled, separate from sinners;' 'unspotted from the world.' If the iron and clay cannot mingle, how much less the gold and the clay! What a rebuke to the Churches: 'How is the fine gold become dim!' Where is the Church now that could claim the symbol, and say, 'I am a *golden* candlestick?' The furniture of Israel's two inner sanctuaries was all of *gold;* the candlestick of the holy place was of *gold*,—thus in all past ages foreshadowing the true character of a Church and of a saint. Golden Churches! Golden men! Golden witnesses for Christ and His truth! How far the Church of God in the past centuries, since John wrote, has fulfilled the description, ecclesiastical history can tell. The age of gold was not a long one; and then followed the silver, the brass, and the iron. How much of gold is to be seen in the Churches of our day? It does cheer one to know that the Lord still counted such imperfect Churches as Ephesus and Pergamos, or such backslidden ones as Sardis and Laodicea, as represented by gold. The grace of our Lord is exceeding abundant. He prefers to praise rather than to blame. His love and long-suffering are boundless; His desire to discover the least 'good thing' in His people is sincere and earnest. And this truth is of itself a gospel for the declining Churches of the last days. Whilst the sight of the primitive gold rebukes, it encourages amazingly. It humbles, yet it cheers. The love of Jesus cannot fail. The efficacy of the cross, as covering, with its atoning shelter, all who have consented to accept that shelter, cannot change; the backsliders shall be saved, but it will be 'so as by

fire.' Lowest of all, it may be, will the 'orthodox' Churches of the last days be found, who had the name, and the form, and the profession, but not the love, or the holiness, or the power.[1]

III. *The number of the candlesticks.*—Seven. In the temple the candlestick was one, the branches seven. In this symbolic scene it would rather appear that the seven were quite separate from each other,—possibly with the view of intimating that the Churches throughout the world, though all of gold, were to be separate; and if so, then there is here a most vivid protest against the pretended unity of Rome. The number seven is the number of

(1.) *Perfection.*—As the one sunbeam is composed of *seven* parts, and thus *perfected* into whiteness, so seven is the divine number of perfection, or completeness.

(2.) *Variety.*—Not absolute uniformity, but variety; the variety which is needful for perfection,—the manifold gifts of the one Spirit, sent from the one Christ.

[1] Let me enumerate the different things mentioned in the Apocalypse that are made of gold:—

(1.) *The candlesticks*, i. 12, 20; ii. 1.
(2.) *The girdle* of the Son of Man, i. 13.
(3.) *The girdles* of the seven angels, xv. 6.
(4.) *The crowns* of the twenty-four elders, iv. 4.
(5.) The *vials* full of odours, v. 8.
(6.) The *censer* of the altar-angel, viii. 3.
(7.) The *altar* before the throne, viii. 3.
(8.) The *crown* on the head of the Son of Man, xiv. 14.
(9.) The *vials* full of the wrath of God, xv. 7.
(10.) The *cup* of Babylon, xvii. 4.
(11.) The *reed* for measuring the city, xxi. 15.
(12.) The *street of the city*, or New Jerusalem, xxi. 15.
(13.) The *city* itself, xxi. 18.

(3.) *Unity.*—Seven is *oneness;* oneness with diversity: one body, many members; one household, many members; one temple, many stones; one loaf, many crumbs; one firmament, many stars.

(4.) *Covenant-certainty.*—Seven is the covenant-number. The seven lambs at Beersheba were for covenant; and that place means 'the well of the seven,' or the 'well of the oath' (Gen. xxi. 31). The Churches are the Churches of the everlasting covenant,—the covenant between the Father and the Son,—'ordered in all things, and sure.'

1. *What honour belongs to the Churches!*—They are made of heavenly gold, the gold of the sanctuary. All splendour is theirs; untarnished beauty and glory.

2. *What responsibility rests upon them!*—It is special responsibility to the Son of man, who walketh in the midst of them; the responsibility of being what He would have us to be, and what He represents us in this emblem as really being,—'golden Churches;' the responsibility of being holy and consistent; of reflecting the image of our Lord; of being lights in the world.

To the Churches the Son of man is saying, 'Let your light shine! Hide it not. Raise it aloft, that it may send its radiance wide and far. Let nothing dim it; let nothing intercept it. The world is dark. The night is gloomy. The light shineth in the darkness. There is no other light but this for a dark world.'

The day is coming, the time when these lamps shall be needed no more. Till then, shine on, shine on, O Church of the living God; and in proportion to the darkness of the last days, let your light blaze out in heavenly splendour.

VIII.

THE GLORY OF THE SON OF MAN.

'*And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*'—REV. i. 13-16.

THERE stand the seven golden lamps in their heavenly brightness! There stand the seven Churches of the Gentiles as represented by these lamps!

But they do not stand alone. One is seen in the midst of them whom the apostle recognised. He is 'like unto the Son of man,' that is, He is the very Son of man Himself. It is He who said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt. xviii. 20); and again, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world' (or age; Matt. xxviii. 20). He 'walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks' (ch. ii. 1). He is 'the Son of man;'—He whom Daniel knew by that name (Dan. vii. 13, x. 5, 16); and whom John also knew by it (John i. 51, iii. 13). True Son of man, in His connection with the Churches; for it is as the Son of man that He walks in the midst of these golden lamps.

I. *His clothing.*—He is clothed with the long robe,

and He is girt round the breast with a girdle of gold (Isa. vi. 1; Ezek. x. 2; Dan. x. 5). The robe reaching to the feet was the robe of *kings and priests*,—and this Son of man is both. It is the Melchizedek dress, the priestly-royal robe; for glory, and for beauty, and for majesty. His girdle is not that of the waist or loins, like the warrior's, or the servant's. It is for adorning; it is the symbol of dignity; it belongs to priest and prince; it suits the crown and the throne on which the Son of man is seated in regal glory, yet as a ministering Priest in the Holy Place, attending to the service there, caring for the vessels of ministry, and especially trimming the lamps, or keeping their fine gold ever bright and shining.

II. *His head and hairs.*—His head as a whole, with its hair, was 'white like white wool (this is the literal rendering), like snow.' Or it may be simply 'the hairs of His head were white.' Here is purity, intense purity, and august majesty, the same figure used concerning the 'Ancient of days' (Dan. vii. 9), as if here also, as in other places (verses 4 and 8), the designation and description of Father and Son were interchangeable; absolute and divine perfection being ascribed equally to both. It is by *wool* and *snow* that the sinner's cleansing is described (Isa. i. 18), as if to show how complete that cleansing is, and how complete the transformation is from scarlet to snow, from crimson to wool; scarlet and crimson representing the extremity of human defilement and guilt, snow and wool the perfection of divine purity. We are 'made perfect through the comeliness which He puts upon us' (Ezek. xvi. 14). In the Song of Solomon we read, 'His head is as

the most fine gold; His locks are bushy and black as a raven,' as if describing the perfection of earthly beauty: in our text they are said to be 'white as wool and snow,' as if describing the perfection of heavenly purity and glory.

III. *His eyes.*—They were as a flame of fire; piercing, burning, searching. They are like the eyes mentioned in Ezekiel as connected with the glory (i. 18): 'The *eyes* of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good' (Prov. xv. 3); 'The *eyes* of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth' (2 Chron. xvi. 9); 'All things are naked and opened unto the *eyes* of Him with whom they have to do' (Heb. iv. 13); He 'searcheth the heart and trieth the reins.' All-penetrating and all-searching eyes are those here ascribed to Christ; eyes which not only look at us, but look through us; eyes of heavenly flame. When He comes to judge and make war, it is said, 'His eyes are as a flame of fire' (ch. xix. 12). Such are the eyes which wept at the grave of Lazarus; which wept over Jerusalem; which were turned on Peter when he went out and wept bitterly.

IV. *His feet.*—They were 'like unto *fine brass*, as if they burned in a furnace.' In Ezekiel (xl. 3) the person seen had an 'appearance like the appearance of *brass*.' Molten brass is said to be especially bright and lustrous. His feet are like the rest of His body, altogether pure and perfect; brilliant to the eye, and repellent of all stain or evil; like glowing brass when the fire has burned out all its dross and brought out all its beauty. Even when He treads the wine-press, and tramples the wicked in His wrath, His feet take on no spot; and as He walks

among the seven golden candlesticks, this purity and splendour shine out all around, rebuking sin, showing the true standard of divine perfection, and saying, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.'

V. *His voice.*—'As the sound of many waters.' These may be the waters of the sea (the waves of which were now dashing at the apostle's feet), or of the cataract, or of the rolling river, loud and overawing, heard afar off above the din of the world. When He speaks, the world shall hear. The trumpet, the thunder, the noise of many waters,—these are the symbols made use of to describe His heavenly voice, that same voice which said, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest.' The voice which uttered here the gracious words of loving invitation, that voice will, in the day of His appearing and His kingdom, say, 'Come, ye blessed,' and 'Depart, ye cursed.'

VI. *His right hand.*—This is the hand that grasps the sword and sceptre; it is the place of power and authority. It is often made mention of in the Psalms as such: 'Strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy *right hand*' (Ps. lxxxix. 13). There, in that almighty hand, are the seven stars, or seven angels;[1] for 'He maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.'

[1] The word angel occurs seventy-six times in the Revelation; and in all the passages, save those eight in connection with the Churches, it means a heavenly messenger. There is no reason for making it anything else in these eight instances. The angels are the bearers of the messages from John to the Churches. Christ speaks to John; John writes and sends the message by angels. How else could he do it in Patmos? It is not the angel that is addressed in the epistles, it is the Church to which he bears the epistle.

VII. *His mouth.*—This is the place of utterance, the place from which goes forth the voice which is as the sound of many waters. From this comes the voice of mercy; from this comes also the voice of judgment: 'Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword,' the sword with which He executes righteous judgment; for as He *spake*, and all things were made, so He *speaks*, and the stroke of judgment falls. Thus we read in Hosea (vi. 5): 'Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth.'

VIII. *His countenance.*—That is, His whole face—His visage. It is said that on the holy mount 'His face did shine as the sun' (Matt. xvii. 2); and we read that 'His face was as the appearance of lightning' (Dan. x. 6). So here 'His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.' Infinite brightness, divine glory, irradiating, penetrating, revealing, is in His face,—that face which once was covered with blood on the cross, and pale in death.

Such is the excellence of the Lord Jesus Christ. All divine and all human perfections are in Him. 'In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' In Him are the unsearchable riches. He is 'the King in His beauty;' He is 'fairer than the children of men.'

Thus excellent is the Church's Head, and He is Head over all things to the Church. He is, moreover, 'Prince of the kings of the earth;' and all allegiance from earth as well as heaven, from nations as well as Churches, from kings as well as saints, is due to Him. All crowns are His, all sceptres, all thrones. Heaven is now full of His glory, and ere long earth shall be the same.

IX.

FEAR AND ITS REMEDY.

'And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.'—REV. i. 17, 18.

THE spirit of this book, as of all others written by God, is the 'testimony of Jesus.' It bears witness to Him throughout,—to His person, His work, His kingdom. Here are things both new and old concerning Him. He is the Revealer, and He is the revealed One; the Teacher and the lesson; the Sower and the seed. In the marvellous visions of this prophecy respecting Him and His kingdom, faith has much to rest on, and hope much to feed on. They are worthy of all study; and 'blessed is he that readeth.'

The three things in this passage which need our notice, are—(1.) The vision; (2.) The apostle's alarm; (3.) The comfort administered by Christ.

I. *The vision.*—That which John saw was *real;* so that of it he could say, 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you' (1 John i. 1). He saw the Lord; and he knew that it was He. He 'beheld His glory' (John i. 14). It was this same glorious Christ that Isaiah saw upon His throne (Isa. vi. 1-3). It was He whom Ezekiel saw in His majesty, seated in the chariot of

the cherubim (Ezek. i. 24, 26; 1 Chron. xxviii. 18; Ps. xviii. 10). It was He whom Daniel saw 'clothed in linen,' and 'girded with gold,' and resplendent as the lightning (Dan. x. 5, 6). It was a vision of the Son of man,—not as He was in the day of His weakness and sorrow, but as He now is in the day of His might and gladness. A glimpse of this glory John had seen, some sixty years before, on the transfiguration mountain, but hastily and with dazzled eyes. This was more prolonged and complete; intended, moreover, for a steadier gaze.

It was the very Son of man who stood beside him, even He who, though 'crucified through weakness, liveth by the power of God;' even He who died, and was buried, and rose again, and ascended into the heavens, and sits in glory at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. He appears now clothed in flowing raiment, and girt with a golden girdle. His head and hair are of effulgent whiteness; His eyes like flames; His feet like glowing brass; His voice like many waters; seven stars in His right hand; a glittering sword flashing from His mouth; His face like the noonday sun. It was a vision of wondrous splendour,—very unlike what John had been accustomed to see in Christ; unlike the Son of the carpenter; unlike the Man of sorrows, with His much-marred visage; unlike the crucified criminal, with bleeding head, and pierced hands and feet. In this vision, all that was feeble and earthly, all that was sad, and bruised, and weary, had passed away, like clouds passing from the sun, and leaving it to give forth the fulness of its radiance. He seemed now clothed with heaven itself, in all its majesty and brightness.

A vision like this suited John well in his lonely exile. The last of the apostles; the sorrowful survivor of a whole generation of loved ones, most of whom had died the martyr's death; persecuted for his Lord's sake,—how cheering for him to be thus reminded that He, for whose sake he suffers, is *the glorious One!* It suited no less the seven Churches to whom he wrote,—sustaining them in their sufferings, rousing them from their sloth, and rebuking them for their loss of first love and early faith. It suits us no less in these last days. We need to be reminded of the glory of Him whom we are following. It will comfort us in tribulation; it will shame us out of unfaithfulness; it will nerve us for battle and for toil; it will quicken, and invigorate, and purify.

II. *The apostle's alarm.*—'I fell at His feet as one dead.' Like to this was the effect of Isaiah's vision: 'Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips' (Isa. vi. 5). Like to this was the effect of Ezekiel's vision, when he 'fell on his face' at 'the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord' (Ezek. i. 28). Still more like to this was the effect of Daniel's vision, when not only 'a great quaking fell upon the men that were with him, so that they fled to hide themselves,' but he himself 'retained no strength,' and his 'comeliness was turned into corruption' (Dan. x. 7, 8). Not unlike to this was the appearance of the angel to Zacharias in the temple, of which it is said, that 'when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him' (Luke i. 12). In the case, too, of the Bethlehem shepherds, the effect was similar: 'The glory of the Lord shone round about them,

and they were sore afraid' (Luke ii. 9). But the transfiguration vision was the likest to this of the Revelation, both because John himself was there, and Jesus had there put on the heavenly glory in all its radiance. It is said that, when the disciples saw and heard it, 'they fell on their face, and were sore afraid' (Matt. xvii. 6).

In all this there was the old idea (circulating even among the heathen), that no man could see God and live,—an idea which man's evil conscience suggests, believing that God must be the sinner's enemy, that He can only show Himself in order to slay him. Not discriminating between what was true in this idea and what was false, even righteous men were filled with terror at the visible manifestations of God. And though we might have expected something different from this in the beloved disciple, when his old Master appeared to him, still let us remember that he was still in flesh and blood,—still a feeble, imperfect man, both in soul and body. Besides this, there was much fitted to overawe. The vision was so sudden and so glorious, the splendour so overpowering, the voice so majestic, the place so lonely, that it was not wonderful that he should have 'fallen at His feet as one dead;' especially as the contrast in appearance between the Christ that he knew once, and the Christ that he saw now, was so great. He could still recognise his Lord; but how marvellously changed! and this outward change might for a moment raise the thought that there could not have been the same familiar fellowship as in the days of His sorrowing lowliness. We know how the altered dress,and circumstances, and manners of a long-absent friend, suddenly returning, suggest misgiv-

ings as to the continuance of confidence and love, and we are not sure how far we may count upon his friendship. Here there might be something of this feeling in the apostle's mind; and, at any rate, the heavenly glory could not but be overwhelming to one who had still but the tremulous frame of mortality, the feeble eyes and ears of earthly imperfection.

This vision of the Holy One, side by side with himself, would make the apostle feel his unholiness, and cry out, like Isaiah, 'I am unclean.' Self-abhorrence could not but be uppermost in his mind, even though fear might be cast out by love. Nor is there anything more fitted still to deepen our sense of sin, and give us true self-loathing, than direct dealing with the Holy One,—the being brought into contact with *Himself*, whether in His grace or glory. The law may fail; comparison with our fellow-men will fail; inspection of self will fail; but direct transaction with the Lord Himself will accomplish all. Compare yourselves with *Him;* that will search, that will abase.

But if John, who had known Christ so well and long, was thus overawed at the glory, what will become of you, O Christless sinner! in the day of the full revelation of that glory? How terrible will that day be to you! How it will overwhelm you! O sinner, learn to know this Christ now as the Saviour, ere the day arrives when you shall see Him as the Judge! His love would save you now; His majesty will crush you then.

III. *Christ's method of comforting His apostle, and soothing his alarm.*—He begins this by laying His right hand on him,—the right hand where was 'the hiding of His power'

(Hab. iii. 4), and in which John had just seen the seven stars; that right hand which John had so often beheld raised to heal and to bless; the right hand in which were the marks of the nails. As the expression of condescension and kindness, as the symbol of priestly blessing, the action would at once be understood by the apostle; and the touch of the well-known hand, thus laid on the head of the apostle as he lay upon the ground, would be of itself re-assurance and peace.

While the gracious right hand is thus laid on John, the words of grace accompany the action: 'Fear not.' In these there is no hidden spell, no native power to calm, apart from the recognised character of Him who speaks them,—just as the effect of a promise depends on the ascertained mind and power of the promiser. 'Fear not,' coming from the lips even of the *glorified* Son of man, could not fail to recall times when they were used to the disciples by this same Christ, in the days of His earthly humiliation; so that the effect of this utterance, in the ears of the apostle, was at once to identify the present glorious Being with that Jesus who had gone out and in with His disciples on earth, and who thus declared Himself to be the same in mind and heart, the same in love and sympathy, as when He calmed their fears upon the Sea of Galilee with the kindred words, 'It is I; be not afraid.'

Before the words 'Fear not' can have any effect in calming a single fear, or dispelling a single doubt, there must be the knowledge of the character of Him who speaks them. Till then they are as idle wind. Suppose that you lose your way in the wide desert, and with its terrors com-

passing you on every side, you begin to tremble for your safety. An unknown wanderer passes you, and says, 'Fear not;' but his words do not calm you. One of your fellow-travellers says, 'Fear not;' but neither do his words soothe you. But of a sudden you meet with some well-known Arab acquaintance, some chief of the desert, in whom you have confidence, and he says, 'Fear not;' you are reassured in a moment. So is it in your transactions with the Lord. You must know who and what He is before His words of peace will avail. Know Him, and His one 'Fear not' will suffice to cheer and sustain you in any circumstances of danger, or perplexity, or conscious unworthiness. He who received publicans and sinners, who went to be 'a guest with a man that was a sinner,' is just such an one as *you* may go to, and such an one as can say to you, 'Fear not,' with the certainty that the gracious words, proceeding from His well-known lips, do mean all that they seem to do, and will speak to you all the peace which they seem to contain.

The announcements that follow all bear upon this point. They not only say, 'It is I,' but they show who and what this 'I' is. They give reasons for the 'Fear not;' and these reasons are all concerning the speaker Himself. It is what He tells us about Himself that He expects to soothe us and to banish alarm; for it is only His 'perfect love' that can cast out fear, and restore confidence to the soul. Hear, then, what He says:

(1.) *I am the first.*—This would recall to John the words of his own Gospel: 'In the *beginning* was the Word' (i. 1); 'the same was *in the beginning* with God' (i. 2).

It recalls to us the psalmist's expression, 'From everlasting' (Ps. xc. 1), and the description, in the eighth of Proverbs, as to the unbeginning eternity of Wisdom (Prov. viii. 22); and reminds us of Paul's 'yesterday,'—the everlasting yesterday (Heb. xiii. 8); for the two passages correspond strikingly. And in the announcement, 'I am the first and the last,' we recognise the same truth as, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' The epithet 'first' points to time, or rather to eternity; 'Alpha' to eternal wisdom; and 'beginning' to creatorship, as it is written, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth' (Gen. i. 1). He thus means to say to John, 'Fear not; I am the everlasting One.'

(2.) *I am the last.*—Not that to Him there is truly any 'last;' for to Him, as the true Melchizedek, there is 'neither beginning of days, nor end of life' (Heb. vii. 3); but He stands in the place of that which men call 'last,'—He is the crowning, the consummating, the summing up of all,—the great Circumference, as He is the great Centre of the universe. He is not only 'from everlasting,' but 'to everlasting;' the same 'to-day, and for ever,' as He was 'yesterday;' the 'Omega' as truly as the 'Alpha;' the 'ending' as much as the 'beginning.' As God, the eternal Son, He is neither first nor last; but as the Christ, the God-man, He is both; and He is all that can be supposed to be included in both. As all the past eternity was His, so is all the future; and over all that future He watches; all that future He regulates in behalf of His own,—'for His body's sake, which is the church.' Well may He say to John, 'I am the last,' 'fear not.'

(3.) *I am the living One.*—Thus should the passage be read: 'I am the first, and the last, and the living One.' Throughout Scripture the name of God's Messiah is associated with *life.* He is Jehovah, the I Am, the Being of beings, the Possessor of all life, the Giver of all life, the living and the life-giving One. His association with death is only transient, and that for the purpose of overcoming death, and bringing life out of death. He is the Prince of life; He is the Light of life; He is the Bread of life; He is the Water of life. Everything connected with *life* is linked with Him; for as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself. The words, 'I am the living One,' would remind John of the many things which he himself had narrated, and of the many words he had recorded concerning Christ as the Life; for he, of all the evangelists, has brought this great truth before us. It was as the living One that He said, 'The Son quickeneth whom He will' (John v. 21). 'He that believeth in me hath everlasting life. . . . This is the bread that came down from heaven, that a man may eat of it, and not die. . . . If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. . . . Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life' (John vi. 50–54). Ah! truly it was the living One who spoke such words as these; and it is as the living One that He utters them still. We fall at His feet, like John, as one dead. He lays His right hand upon us, and says to us, 'Fear not; I am the living One;' it is not death, but life, that I have come to bring; and in beholding the glory of the living One, it is life, not death, that you should look for.

(4.) *I was dead;* or, more literally, 'I *became* dead,' I laid down my life.—His word of cheer to John, then, is: 'Fear not; I am He who died.' The words here remind us of those of Paul: 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? *it is Christ that died.*' Yes; it was with the Christ that *died* that Paul had to do; and it was with the Christ that died that John also had to do, though, in the blaze of the glory that now dazzled him, he seems to have lost sight of this. To this, however, the Lord recalls him, in order to reassure him. He takes him back to the cross, and reminds him of what he saw and heard there. He sends him to the tomb, that he may again look upon the dead body of his Master. And thus reminding him of the cross and tomb, He reproves his present terror, and makes him feel how unlikely, how impossible it was that any amount of 'glory, and honour, and power, and majesty,' such as that with which he was now surrounded, could alter the relationship between them, or make Him less the Christ whom he knew so well on earth; less the Saviour whom, as a sinner, he needed then, and needed still; less the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world: or make himself less the disciple whom Jesus loved; less the trusted one, to whom his Lord had confided that most precious of earthly deposits, His mother, when dying on the cross. It is as if He had said, 'Fear not; I am the same Jesus whom you saw die upon the cross, whom you saw lying in Joseph's tomb. Yes, fear not; I was dead.'

(5.) *I am alive for evermore.*—'Though I died once, yet I die no more; death hath no more dominion over me; I

live for ever.' To have died, and yet to have triumphed over death; nay, to have triumphed over it by dying, so that never again could death approach Him; this was the truth by which the risen Christ comforted His affrighted apostle. In death He showed Himself the Lord of life; in life He showed Himself the Lord of death; in dying, and living again, He showed Himself all that a sinner needs to give him boldness in his dealings with Him. This ever-living One, with whom death has now no more to do; this ever-living One, between whom and everything pertaining to death a great gulf is fixed,—He it is with whom we have to deal, in the great transactions of life and death. He is made our Melchizedek, Priest and King, 'after the power of an endless life;' and the life which He possesses for ever is something more than what He possessed before His death, or could possess simply as God,—it is resurrection-life, which only He who died could have, and with which He was filled for us in consequence of having died. That which we need, both for body and soul, is risen life, resurrection-life, the life of Him who has risen; and it is this that He so specially announces here when He says, 'I am alive for evermore.' Here John abruptly interposes his hearty and joyful Amen; as if this announcement were the one which he most rejoiced in, and which at once woke up an echo in his breast. He hears the words, 'I am alive for evermore;' and appreciating something of the mighty import of these words, and looking forward into that long eternity, during which he was to be partaker of all the life which this risen One possessed, he exclaims, with eager gladness, 'Amen!'

—a sentiment like that which we always find used in the Old Testament in reference to kings: 'Let the king live for ever. Amen.' It was in the eternity of this risen life of Christ that John rejoiced: in that same eternal life of the risen One let us rejoice, adding our Amen to that of the apostle, and saying, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' Oh blessedness unspeakable! Oh consolation beyond all others! To be told that, in a dying world like ours, there is a living One like this,—One all made up of life; One whom death can never touch; of whom no one can ever bring to you the tidings, He is no more! No amount of death in us can affect Him, or prevent us receiving His endless life. Our death is swallowed up in this boundless life; so that, where death has abounded, there life abounds much more. This is the tree of life, whose leaves are health, whose fruit is immortality. Let us gather round and under this great Plant of Renown; from it to draw present life to our souls, and the assurance of resurrection to ourselves, and to all who have slept in Jesus.

(6.) *And have the keys of hell (Hades) and death.*—He claims power over soul and body, and over those regions into which they pass when separated here. He opens, and none can shut; He shuts, and none can open. No one can enter these places save by means of Him; nor can any pass out of these save by His authority. He is absolute Lord of the invisible world, in all its realms. This truly is blessed to the bereaved. It is not chance, nor natural causes, nor fate, nor the necessity of mortal disease; it is Christ Himself, Christ the living One, who effects the dismissal, and in doing so takes both soul and body into

His own keeping. In this sense is the sickbed His, and the deathbed His, and the burial His. He it is who is loosing life's bonds for a season, removing with His own hands each of His own, and saying to body and to soul, Go in peace! Nor can that invisible world hold any of its tenants one moment longer than He pleases. He keeps the keys, and as He leads *in*, so does He lead *out;* as He unlocks the gate in order that they may enter, so does He again unlock it, in order that they may leave it to put on incorruption and strength and glory. No enemy, either of Himself or of the Church, shall prevail to hinder the unlocking of the gate, and the great exodus of the rising saints. Not the power of Satan, nor of death, nor of Hades, shall prevail. He has the keys of Hades and of death, and He will yet bring forth His own in triumph. 'The gates of Hades shall not prevail against His Church.' Though guarded by all the powers of hell, they shall be unlocked by Him who keeps the keys; they shall fly open, and the saints shall come forth to resurrection-glory.

Is it not, then, true that 'all things are ours, whether life or death, things present, or things to come' (1 Cor. iii. 22)? for He is ours who is Lord of all these: 'Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' If so, we may hear the voice that spoke to John speaking also to us: 'Fear not; I have the keys of Hades and of death.' 'Fear not, I am the resurrection and the life. Fear not, I will yet swallow up death in victory; I will be its plague; I will be the destruction of the grave; my dead ones shall live, my dead body shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust.' What an antidote to fear, what a consolation in

bereavement, what a binding up of wounds is this! Christ is Lord over all; over death and the grave, over the body and the soul. He binds, and none can loose; He looses, and none can bind; He kills, and none can make alive; He makes alive, and none can kill; He scatters, and none can gather; He gathereth, and none can scatter; and to us He says, 'Fear not; I am the first, and the last, and the living One.' We have known what death is, we shall know what life is; we have known what the grave is, we shall know what resurrection is; we have known the killing, we shall know the making alive; we have known the binding, we shall know the loosing; we have known the scattering, we shall know the gathering; we have known the corruption, we shall know the incorruption; we have known the withering, we shall know the blossoming; we have known the parting, we shall know the meeting; we have known the sorrow, we shall know the glory and the joy.

Thus it is that the words of consolation are all concerning Christ Himself. The counteraction of all fear, the removal of all doubt, comes from the knowledge of Christ Himself. 'Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.' He spoke peace to His apostle by reminding him of who and what He was and is. So does He still speak to us; nor will one fear ever be dispelled, or one doubt removed, in any other way. The sight of Christ will do everything; no other sight will do anything. A simpler, fuller knowledge of this gracious One is all that we need to give us perfect peace, and to keep us in that peace for ever.

X.

THE SYMBOLIC SEVENS.

'Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.'—REV. I. 19, 20.

WRITE, says the Lord! Write. Thou canst not now *speak* to these churches over which thou didst once watch; but write! Write (1) the things that thou hast seen,—this glorious vision of my person, a vision like that which thou sawest when thou wert with me on the holy mount. Write (2) the things which are,—the things relating to the present state of these churches. Write (3) the things which shall be hereafter,—the words of prophecy which this book is to contain. Write them for the churches now; write them for the churches throughout all the ages. What thou writest, let them read. 'The writing is the writing of God' (Ex. xxxii. 16).

Christ dictates the words of the message, and John writes them; yet even in this writing he is something more than a mechanical instrument. The Spirit takes full possession of his whole man; so that while it is the Spirit that speaks, it is also John; nay, and it is Christ also. The thoughts and words are divine, and yet it is in a human mould that these thoughts and words are cast. We recog-

nise the voice of the beloved disciple; but we recognise also the voice of the Spirit: 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.'

Here is the mystery or *secret* of the vision which thou hast seen. The seven stars are the angels of the churches; for each church, like each kingdom (Dan. x. 13, 20, 21), has its angel. The seven candlesticks are the seven churches.

The symbols or figures in this book are very vivid and expressive. They are not ornaments, but truths; not flowers, but fruitbearing trees. They are *pictures*, no doubt; but each has an articulate voice, and a living eye, and a powerful hand.

Let us arrange and group together the symbols of the first three chapters into *sevens;* for it is that number that is so conspicuous among them.

I. *The seven candlesticks or churches.*—There were hundreds of churches in the apostle's days throughout the Gentile earth; but the Holy Spirit selects seven of these, and presents them to us by name; all in Asia Minor, not in Palestine, for from Judea the glory had departed. They are *representative* churches; chosen to set forth seven distinct states in which the Church of God would in all ages be found. They do not represent or predict seven *consecutive* states, in which the Church would be found during succeeding ages; but seven *co-existing* states, in which the Church would be found in each age; so that there would be always an Ephesian state, and a Smyrnian, and so on. Every age would exhibit these seven spiritual phases; so that, taking this as our key, we might always

classify the Church. We shall at all times find churches, congregations, individuals, corresponding to these seven photographs. It is this that makes these epistles so searching. Were they consecutive and prophetic, much of their practical point and importance would be lost. Let each saint and each congregation be always asking, 'Is it I?' as the words to Ephesus or Sardis or Laodicea are read. We shall be sure to find one of them to suit us.

II. *The seven stars.* — These epistles are sent to the churches through the 'angel' or 'star.' The lamp and the star are both (each in its own way) figures referring to the dark night in which the Church now exists. Shining in the midnight firmament, there is the star; and shining down here on earth, there is the lamp. The members of the Church are addressed through this angelic messenger. He carries to them from the Lord a letter descriptive of their spiritual state, and containing corresponding warnings and encouragements.

III. *The seven titles of Christ.* — We find these in the first chapter; and we find them repeated in the second and third, in connection with the admonitions to the churches.

(1.) *He that holdeth the seven stars, and walketh among the seven golden candlesticks:*—The source of all light in heaven and earth; the watchful guardian of the churches.

(2.) *The first and last, the dead and living one:*—He to whom all things belong in time and space, above and beneath; the crucified Christ, the risen Lord.

(3.) *He that hath the sharp two-edged sword:*—The

judge, the searcher, the executioner, God's true minister, who beareth not the sword in vain.

(4.) *He that hath eyes like fire, and feet like fine brass:*— He with the penetrating glance, and feet all splendid, yet repellent of evil.

(5.) *He that hath the seven Spirits and the seven stars:*— He who has the fulness of the Holy Spirit, and who has it for His Church, and for ministry therein.

(6.) *The holy, the true, the holder of David's key:*— He who is the fountainhead of holiness, faithful to His word, true successor of David, heir of his house and throne.

(7.) *The Amen, the faithful witness, the beginning of the creation of God:*—He who is the true witness of the Father, who created all things by the word of His power.

Each of these seven titles is wonderful; each a brilliant orb of glory; each a storehouse of heavenly provision; each a mine of gold; each a coronet of gems: all together, how transcendently excellent and glorious!

IV. *The seven searching words.* — 'I know thy works.' Thy *works!* Not thy words, but thy works; what they are; whether real or formal, hearty or heartless. All that thou doest and hast done, I know. How piercing and overawing! He who cannot be deceived or imposed upon as to quality or quantity,—He tells you that He knows you and your works! O saint of God, O child of His love, O Church of His election, He knows you!

V. *The seven words of grace.* — To each of the churches He has some loving message, suited to its state. These are various, scattered through each epistle. Of Ephesus He acknowledges the labour and the patience, the hatred

of evil, and the unfainting endurance. Of Smyrna He acknowledges the spiritual wealth, in the midst of earthly poverty; and to her He says, 'Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.' To Pergamos He says, 'Thou holdest fast my name.' In the case of Thyatira, He acknowledges the charity, and service, and faith, and patience. In Sardis He owns the few names who have not defiled their garments, and promises that they shall walk with Him in white. To Philadelphia He speaks of her fidelity to Him, and His love to her. But the most gracious words are reserved for Laodicea, the worst of the seven churches. He offers her gold and raiment and eye-salve; He knocks at her door, and offers Himself as her guest; He tells her of His love in rebuking and chastening.

VI. *The seven exhortations.*—How suitable, how various, yet how brief! To Ephesus He says, 'Remember whence thou art fallen; repent, and do the first works;' to Smyrna, 'Be faithful unto death;' to Pergamos, 'Repent;' to Thyatira, 'Hold fast till I come;' to Sardis, 'Be watchful; strengthen what remains; remember, hold fast and repent;' to Philadelphia, 'Hold fast that which thou hast;' to Laodicea, 'Be zealous, and repent.' In each of these, each one of us may find something for ourselves.

VII. *The seven rewards for the seven conquerors.* — Each epistle takes for granted the warfare,—a warfare for the churches as well as for each member; and each epistle speaks of victory. 'To him that overcometh' is the key-note of each. Battle and victory,—to these are we called. And then there are the spoils of battle; and the division of these among the conquerors. The strong one is over-

thrown, and his kingdom is divided among the victors. But there are special rewards.

(1.) *To Ephesus* there is the tree of life; the restoration to Paradise; the gift of the Paradise of God.

(2.) *To Smyrna* the crown of life, and deliverance from the second death,—through Him who was dead and is alive, and who is now crowned with glory and honour.

(3.) *To Pergamos* the hidden manna, the white stone, and the new name; each of these denoting something very glorious.

(4.) *To Thyatira* power over the nations, and the morning star; she is to be made partaker of Messiah's glorious reign on earth.

(5.) *To Sardis* the white raiment and acknowledgment before the Father and the angels.

(6.) *To Philadelphia* the being made a pillar in God's temple, the name of God and His city, the new name.

(7.) *To Laodicea* a seat upon Christ's throne. This is glory: thus are we heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. We shall reign with Him for ever. Even Laodicea is counselled and besought to return from her lukewarmness ('Be zealous') by the assurance not only of reception into former favour, but of a kingdom! Herein is love: love which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown: 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?'

XI.

WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

'*That walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*'—
REV. II. I.

THE mention made of 'stars' and 'candlesticks' (or rather 'lamp-stands') shows that it is *night*. It is the world's night; it is the Church's night. It is night all around. Day needs no lamps nor stars; night does both, for the outside earth and the inside chamber. Accordingly, both are provided, and shall continue burning, with more or less of brightness, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise. The 'night' was far spent in the apostle's days; but it was not over, nor is it over yet. Just before the Son of man was betrayed, it is written, 'It was night' (John xiii. 30)—as if, in every sense of the word, night was reigning then; so, before the Son of man shall come, when Antichrist, the representative of him who is 'the ruler of the darkness of this world,' shall be at his height, there shall be night,—deep, dark night,—night for the Church and for the world.

These seven epistles take this for granted. They are written for saints and for churches who are enveloped in this night. They are representatives of the Church universal, in all ages and lands. Their symbols speak to us in these last days. They tell us our need of stars and lamps; of light coming from above, or out from the holy

place where the seven-branched candlestick was; of light-givers kindled by God Himself, and by the Great High Priest, before whose throne are the seven lamps of fire ever burning (Rev. iv. 5).

I. *Who is He that thus walketh?*—He gets many names and designations in this book of the Revelation: 'Son of man;' 'the First and the Last;' the 'First-begotten of the dead;' the 'Faithful Witness;' the 'Root and Offspring of David;' the 'bright and morning star;' the 'Prince of the kings of the earth;' the 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.' He appears before us in priestly raiment; yet He shows Himself also as a King. It is as Priest and King that He appears in the midst of His churches: as such they are to acknowledge Him. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we see Him specially as Priest; in the book of Revelation, as King—King of saints, King of nations; and all throughout this latter book it is kings and nations that are spoken of, warned, threatened, and judged. He stands forth as King of nations, as Prince of the kings of the earth,—thus declaring His connection with nations and kings; declaring also the duty of kings and nations to own and serve and glorify Him, to lay their honours and their treasures at His feet; declaring also the sin of those who would not that He should reign over them, and also the fearful judgments on all such. It is with the sins and the judgments of nations and kings that this book has specially to do; all because He is so specially announced in it as 'King of kings.' A nation's laws ought to acknowledge Him as such; the king's sceptre ought to have that name inscribed

on it; the national resources ought to be consecrated to Him; and all government ought to recognise Him as the source of authority and power, the fountainhead of wisdom and counsel. Earth does indeed disown Him; men reject His yoke, His authority, His sovereignty. We see not yet all things put under Him; but not the less does the Father claim for Him the homage and the crowns of earth; and not the less is the sin of earth's kingdoms for refusing His authority. He is, in all senses and in all His characters, the rejected One; rejected by His own Israel, by His professing Church, by the world to which He came; rejected as Prophet, as Priest, and as King.

II. *Where does He walk?*—Among the seven golden candlesticks. These candlesticks are on earth, and He is in heaven; yet He walks among them, as He said, 'Lo, I am with you always.' It is with His churches that He ever is; not with these seven alone, but with His whole Church (complete, yet manifold; one, yet seven), through all ages, in all the earth. The seven epistles are the utterances of this Glorious One while walking. He looks, and He speaks. He comes up first to one candlestick, and then to another, and then to another. It is in the midst of His many churches, or His one Church (for both are true), that He is ever walking.

III. *What does this walking mean?*—It seems to say that He has come down from heaven, that He has left the throne where He was *sitting*, and is now moving about among His churches on earth.

(1.) *He is near.*—A *present* Christ is specially taught us here,—Jesus in the midst of His saints and His churches,

as in the upper chamber of Jerusalem. He is near to *all* of them, even the backsliding; as near to Laodicea and Sardis, as to Ephesus and Philadelphia.

(2.) *He watches over them.*—'I know thy works.' His eye, the eye of the watchful Priest and King, the eye of the watchful Saviour and Shepherd, is upon them. He inspects them, oversees them, cares for them, values them, delights in them, takes an interest in their welfare.

(3.) *He supplies their need.*—This need is constant, but He is as constant,—unwearied, long-suffering, faithful, loving. All his fulness is at hand for each of them. He sees if their light grows dim, and seeks to rekindle it, and make it burn the brighter. Nothing is lacking on His part to meet all want, to strengthen all weakness.

(4.) *He mourns over their sins.*—He is faithful to *notice* sin, and to warn against it; just as He is faithful to *pardon* it when confessed. His holy eye detects the sin; His loving, tender heart mourns over it. There is no anger, no fury here. All is gentleness and grace. He mourns over Ephesus for leaving her first love; over Pergamos for allowing sin; over Sardis for death; over Laodicea for lukewarmness. He *feels* these things profoundly. He is not indifferent to them, as if He did not care whether His lamps burned bright or not. He mourns over every sin; He longs to supply every want.

(5.) *He cheers them with the promise of victory and recompense.*—As if He would say to each, 'Fight on, for I am with you; faint not, for I, with all my fulness, am near. Shine on, for I delight in your brightness, and will enable you to shine. And my reward is with me,—to him that overcometh!'

XII.

SELF-DENYING CHRISTIANITY.

'I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.'—REV. II. 2, 3.

'EVEN Christ pleased not Himself' (Rom. xv. 3). Yet if any one were entitled to please Himself, it was the Son of the Blessed, the Son of the Highest. He was no flesh-pleaser, no man-pleaser, no self-pleaser. He 'pleased the Father' (John viii. 29). He was the highest type or specimen of that which was found so pre-eminently in Enoch (Heb. xi. 5).

Paul pleased not himself. 'I have made myself a servant to all' (1 Cor. ix. 19). 'I keep under my body' (1 Cor. ix. 27; Greek, 'I buffet, maltreat'). There exists no picture of a self-denied man like that of 2 Cor. vi. 3–10. Let us study the whole passage, especially these words: 'In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings.' What minister of Christ, what Christian man or woman, does not blush and hang the head as he reads these words? What say we to our self-indulgence, our sloth, our love of ease, our avoidance of hardship, our luxury, our pampering of the body, our

costly feasts, our silken couches, our brilliant furniture, our gay equipages, our braided hair, our jewelled fingers, our idle mirth, our voluptuous music, our jovial tables, loaded with every variety of wine and rich viands? Are we Christians? or are we worldlings? Where is the self-denial of primitive days? Where is the separation from a self-pleasing luxurious world? Where is the cross, the true badge of discipleship, to be seen save in useless ornaments for the body, or worse than useless decorations for the sanctuary? 'At ease in Zion,'—is not this the description of multitudes who name the name of Christ? There may not always be 'revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries;' but even where these are absent, there is 'high living,' luxury of the table or the wardrobe,—in conformity to 'this present evil world.'

'At ease in Zion!' Yes; there is the shrinking from hard service; from 'spending and being spent;' from toil and burden-bearing and conflict; from self-sacrifice and noble adventure, for the Master's sake. There is conformity to the world instead of conformity to Christ. There is a following afar off, instead of a keeping pace with Him whom we profess to follow. There is a laying down instead of a taking up of the cross; or there is a lining of the cross, lest it should gall our shoulders as we carry it; or there is an adorning of it, that it may suit the taste and the manners of our refined and intellectual age. Anything but the bare and simple cross! We think that we can make the strait gate wider and the narrow way broader, so as to be able to walk more comfortably to the kingdom. We try to prove that modern enlightenment has so elevated

the race, that there is no longer the battle or the burden or the discipline; or has so refined the world and its pleasures, that we may safely drink the Circean cup, and give ourselves up to the inebriation of the Syren song.

'At ease in Zion!' Even when the walls of the city are beleaguered, and the citadel on the point of being stormed! Instead of grasping our weapons, we lie down upon our couches. Instead of the armour, we put on the silken robe. We are cowards when we should be brave; we are faint-hearted when we should be bold as Elijah or as Paul. We are lukewarm when we should be fervent; cold when we should be full of zeal. We compromise and shuffle and apologize, when we should lift up our voice like a trumpet. We pare down truth, or palliate error, or extenuate sin, in order to disarm the world, or suit the spirit of the age, or 'unify' the Church.

At Ephesus we find from the first a self-denying Christianity; and now, some fifty years after its foundation, we still find, even amid the decay of first love, the same self-denial, and patience of toil and suffering. It still bore noble testimony to a self-denying Lord and a self-sacrificing religion. It was still a lofty and unworldly church, amid much declension and coldness. What must have been its original loftiness and self-crucifixion, when even in its declension it can be spoken of in the way here done by its gracious Lord!

'The angel' of the Ephesian church is sent to bear from Patmos the following message, partly of commendation and partly of rebuke,—*first* the former, and then the latter,—to show the tenderness and patience of the Lord, who

will not reprove us until He has said all He can in our favour.

The speaker or writer takes to himself two special titles —(1) He who holds the seven stars in His right hand; (2) He who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. The firmament with all its stars is His; the earth also is His; all above and below is His. He walks among His churches; constantly moving to and fro with watchful care and love. For eighteen centuries He has thus been walking and watching; trimming His lamps, and supplying them with oil; sometimes also removing them out of their places. Thus this glorious One spoke to Ephesus; He speaks also to us.

(1.) *I know thy works.*—He knows what they are exactly. He knows their value precisely. He will neither under-estimate nor over-estimate them. The cup of cold water shall be duly valued and rewarded.

(2.) *I know thy labour.*—The word denotes hard toil. Ephesus had had her days and nights of *toil;* and all this is acknowledged. She had not pleased herself; she had not lived in ease and luxury. She had set herself to self-denying work. Of what kind we know not. It is registered above; and we shall one day know it all.

(3.) *I know thy patience.*—The word means patient endurance of suffering or toil,—the patience of Christ, the patience of men who knew that they were called to a self-denying life in following a self-denying Lord. Not impatience, nor fretfulness, nor anger, nor excitement; nor yet ease, and comfort, and luxury, but PATIENCE. 'Fret not thyself' (Ps. xxxvii. 1) is the Church's watchword in

evil days. It is to this that she is called,—to calmness, forbearance, control of spirit; unruffled temper in the endurance of wrong, or the bearing of burdens and crosses.

(4.) *I know how thou canst not bear them which are evil.*—It is not compromise or tame submission to sin, and evil, and error, and apostasy that is commended here. It is bold resistance to sin; bold rebuking of error and departure from truth and holiness and Christian consistency; for the Lord lays great stress upon *the truth*, and upon *testimony for the truth*, as well as upon a holy life. All true religion is founded upon truth,—upon a true creed,—a creed that rests upon God's testimony to His own truth.

(5.) *I know thou hast tried them who say they are thy apostles, and are not.*—This church had been zealous for the truth; zealous against error; zealous against all false pretensions to apostleship. Error came in very early. Scarcely had Paul left Galatia when the whole Church went astray into deadly error; receiving 'another gospel,' and other teachers; and drawing upon itself the sharpest rebukes the apostle ever gave. It was against the teachers of this false gospel that he said, 'Let him be accursed.' Such stress did he lay upon *truth*, as the foundation of a church; in such abhorrence did he hold all departure from the truth. The Church is the 'pillar and ground of *the truth*.' She must hold up that *truth* to the world. She must make known a true and full testimony, otherwise she becomes unfaithful to Him who is the true and faithful *witness*,—to Him of whom it is said, 'The *testimony* of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy;' to Him who said, 'Ye are my *witnesses*.' A true church will

'try' all pretenders to apostleship; and try them by the unerring touchstone,—the testimony which her Head has entrusted to her to maintain till He come.

(6.) *I know thou hast found them liars.*—They were discovered to be liars, in two senses—(1) As respects their teaching, which was false; (2) As respects their pretensions to apostleship, which were found untrue. 'Liars' is the fearful name which the Master gives to all such. In our day *departures from the faith* are not accounted evil things, but as the excellent development of modern liberty and enlightenment. *Heresy* is becoming identical with *liberal thought*, which refuses to be bound by any trammels. Truth is made light of. The Church's testimony for God and for His truth is denied, and she is regarded as a mere literary institution for fostering speculation and free thought. Such she was not in the Father's purpose. She was to be the witness for God on earth; and if she failed in her testimony she became useless, and was to be branded as a *liar*,—one of those of whom it is written, that 'all liars have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.'

(7.) *I know thou hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*—This is, so far, a repetition of the previous commendation. Endurance, patience, unfainting toil for Christ's name,—these are the features of the Ephesian church. She was not what she once was; yet she has still a high place and a noble name for self-denial and self-sacrifice. She still bears her cross, and follows her crucified Master. She is not slothful, nor easy-minded, nor luxurious, nor self-

pleasing; she is still an earnest labourer in the vineyard, bearing the burden and heat of the day. She had, amid much declension, upheld *the truth* given to her. She had proved herself a faithful *witness* or *testifier*. She had not let go the form of sound words. For this the Lord still honours and blesses her. He is jealous of His truth; hates all departure from it. For what is truth? It is the embodiment of Himself, whose name is *the truth*, and who is the witness for the truth sent by the Father.

1. *Learn self-denying Christianity.*—Not the form or name, but the living thing. 'Even Christ pleased not Himself.' Let us in this respect be His true followers; bearing burdens for Him; doing work for Him; submitting to the sorest toil for Him; not grudging effort, or cost, or sacrifice, or pain; spending and being spent for Him; abjuring the lazy, luxurious, self-pleasing, fashionable religion of the present day. A self-indulgent religion has nothing in common with the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ; or with that cross of ours which He has commanded us to take up and carry after Him, renouncing ease and denying self. Our time, our gifts, our money, our strength, are all to be laid upon the altar. We are to be 'living sacrifices' (Rom. xii. 1).

2. *Learn faithfulness to His truth.*—We hear it often said that what the age needs, and what the Church needs, is *religion*, not *theology*. But the whole Bible takes for granted that there can be no true religion without a true *theology*. The Bible is God's testimony to Himself and to His Son,—the Christ of God. There can be no acceptable religion or worship or service save that which is founded

upon that *testimony*. The belief of that testimony is life everlasting; the belief of any other testimony is death eternal. Let us be *true* witnesses for the *truth;* let us shun and hate error,—trying those that propagate it, and finding them 'liars,' as the Ephesian church did. Let the Master's word in reference to the errors of the early churches sound in our ears: 'Which thing I hate.' A church may, no doubt, have a true testimony, and yet be a very unfaithful church; she may have the form of sound words and the form of godliness, and yet be cold like Sardis, or lukewarm like Laodicea; yet, on the other hand, it is not possible that, with a *false* testimony, or a testimony to what is *untrue*, she can represent her Master and Head. A false testimony must make a false church. The belief of a lie will not save a man; nor will the belief of a lie win for a church the favour of the Lord. A true creed is of unspeakable moment, even though at times it has been associated with inconsistency and death.

XIII.

FIRST LOVE LEFT.

'Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.'—REV. II. 4.

THERE are words which smite like a hammer, or rend like a thunderbolt; words of mere power and terror; words like those which broke forth in fire from Sinai. Such are not these. There are words which drop as the rain, and distil as the dew; words which pierce, yet soften; which rouse, yet soothe; which wound, yet bind up; which combine the biting north wind and the healing south. Such are these. They are not the earthquake nor the fire nor the whirlwind, but the still small voice; more resistless than all these together; mingling the rebuke and the consolation; the severity and the love; the father's rod and the mother's tears.

There are words which lead you away from the speaker, and absorb you in themselves. These are not such. There are others which carry you wholly past themselves to the speaker. Neither are these such. There are yet other words which divide you between themselves and the speaker, or rather which so engross your whole man with *both*, that you feel yourself passing continually from the one to the other, as if the eye could not be satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. Such are these. You

have both the picture and the artist, the poem and the poet, so interwoven, that each recalls the other; nay, each is seen and heard in the other. No sooner do we hear these words of the Son of God,—so searching, so alarming,—than we are carried up to Him who uttered them, and our souls are absorbed in the mingled majesty and grace of the only-begotten of the Father; and while they send us down into the depths, to learn one of the most humbling lessons that was ever taught concerning the weakness, the fickleness, the faithlessness, of a Christian man's heart, they carry us upward irresistibly, far above all heavens, to gaze upon the surpassing glory and meditate on the matchless love of Him who died for us, and who rose again.

The words are those of complaint; some would call it fault-finding; and, as such, might have repelled us from the complainer. But such is the nature and tone of the complaint, that we feel attracted, not repelled; humbled, but not hurt nor affronted; made to blush, and yet not chilled nor estranged, nay, rather drawn more closely to a friend so affectionate and faithful. The reproof is keen, yet it casts no shadow on the grace of the reprover;—rather does it magnify that grace into sevenfold brightness, by embodying in the expostulation an utterance of the most generous, the most profound, yet, as we may call it, the most sorrowful affection that the world has ever seen. Next in tenderness to the tears shed over Jerusalem by the Son of God in the days of His flesh, is this outflow of disappointed love over the estrangement of Ephesus given vent to upon His throne above. It is not

weeping. No; that cannot be, now when from His face all tears have been for ever wiped away. But it is akin to this; it is the nearest thing to it that we can imagine; it is that which *would have been tears* anywhere else than in the heaven of heavens.

But the preface to the complaint claims special notice; for that complaint does not stand alone: it is a gem set in fine gold, and the verses which introduce it are as marvellous as itself. And what strikes us most in it, is the minute enumeration of services performed by this church, as if the speaker were most unwilling to come to the matter of complaint, to touch the jarring string; being desirous of recounting all the good deeds and faithful services of the church ere He speak the words of censure. 'I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.' What an introduction to the 'Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love!' How fitted to disarm all risings of anger; to anticipate and smooth down the offence-taking that might have been stirred; to make Ephesus feel that He who was complaining was complaining in love, not exaggerating the evil, but much more disposed to dwell upon the good; that He was no austere man, no hard master, no censorious fault-finder, but loving and generous, possessed to the uttermost of that 'charity which suffereth long, and is kind; which seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked,

thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and never faileth.'

But it is not the mere recital of His servant's good deeds that so strikes us; it is His manifest appreciation of these, His delight in them, His grateful sense of the service rendered. Faults there would be in these labours, but He sees none; imperfections in the endurances of trial, but He makes mention of none. He speaks as one full of gratitude for favours conferred. He weighs the works, and finds them not wanting. He names His servant's name, and is not ashamed to confess him. He points not merely to the cup of cold water, but to the toil and the testimony and the faithful discipline; commending them, rejoicing in them, thanking His servant for them. And not till He has done all this, and shown how well He remembers and appreciates each act of happy service, does He come in with the complaint, 'Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.' What tenderness, what delicacy, what nobleness of love, what divine courtesy, is here! What an honour is put upon our poor doings and endurings for Him, when they are thus so gratefully recounted and so generously commended by the Son of God! What an importance, what a dignity, what a value, is thus affixed to every act, even of the simplest, commonest service for Him!

But our text goes beyond all this. It teaches us His desire for our love, and His disappointment at losing it, or any part of it. It is not so much our labour as our love that He asks; and with nothing less than love can He be

satisfied. As God, He *claims* it; as man, He *desires* it; as the God-man, He presents to us this mingled claim and longing for love, as that without which He is robbed of His desire and His due. He has not left His real humanity behind Him here in the tomb. He has carried up into heaven His true human heart, with its yearning affections and cravings for love. Neither the Godhead to which that humanity is united, nor His high throne at the Father's right hand, has in the least altered that humanity, or made it less susceptible of love and fellowship. And it is this unchanged and unchangeable manhood that is giving vent to itself in the tender expostulation of our text: 'Thou hast left thy first love.'

It is the language of wounded friendship, complaining of undeserved estrangement. It is the utterance of unrequited love, mourning over the loss of an affection which was better than life. He wants not merely to love, but to be loved. He seemed to have found this at Ephesus,—that noble church for which the apostle prayed that it might be rooted and grounded in love, and might know the love that passeth knowledge. But the kindness of their youth, the love of their espousals, had passed away. The star grew dim, the flower faded, warm love had cooled, and the Ephesus of the second generation was not the Ephesus of the first. Over this lost first love He mourns, as the gem which of all others He prized the most; and the voice which we hear, sounds like that of Rachel in Ramah weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not.

It is not of slothful service, or waning zeal, or failing

liberality, or slackening warfare, that He complains. His remonstrance rather assumes the existence of much Christian fruitfulness; and even though there had been some failure in labour or endurance, *that* might have been more easily remedied; nor were these such a necessity to Him who filleth all in all. But it is over lost love that He laments; lost love, for which there can be no compensation and no substitute, even to Him; lost love, which cuts so keenly even into the callous heart of man, and leaves such lifelong blanks even in common and inferior souls.

Yet it is not love altogether lost; nor love turned into hatred. The failure has not got so far as this, nor descended to such a depth. It is of ebbing love He speaks, not love dried up wholly; it is love that has lost the freshness and the edge of other days; love that has sunk below the temperature at which it once stood. This is the substance of the complaint, the burden of the disappointment,—the loss of *half* a heart! So that it would almost seem as if the total drying up would have been more endurable than this ebbing; as if the entire withholding would have been less painful than the stinted giving; as if complete and downright cessation would have been, as in the case of Laodicea, so in that of Ephesus, less hateful than this diminution, this declining to a lower range of feeling, this grudging gift of a divided heart where once there was love entire.

Strange that the risen Christ, the ascended King, should feel so much the loss of creature-love; that He should be, as one may say, so dependent on our affection; that He should treat this failure not so much as an affront or a

crime, but as a wound and a blank; that He should be touched with the alienation of half a heart, and speak of it as a bereavement and a sorrow! Oh, what must be His estimate of love; what must be the value of our love to Him; and what is the honour put on us by a condescension so amazing as this!

A complaint like this coming from any quarter is deeply touching. The wife has ceased to love the husband; the husband has ceased to love the wife; the brother has ceased to love the brother or the sister; the friend has ceased to love the friend: these are complaints which we recognise as real among ourselves, seeing we are so dependent for happiness upon each other's love. But that a complaint like this should come down from heaven, from Him who has the Father's love and all the love of angels; from Him to whom they sing, in their everlasting songs, 'Blessing and honour and glory and power;' to whom they ascribe 'riches and wisdom and strength,' —is far more profoundly affecting, and appeals to every noble and tender feeling of our nature with irresistible potency. What true-hearted man but must be humbled and melted down beneath it? Why should *He* love so much, and *I* so little? Why should *He* love so truly, so constantly, so warmly, and *I* return Him nothing but fickleness and insincerity and coldness? Why should *He* be so concerned about my love, and *I* so careless about *His*? Is *my* love so precious, and *His* so worthless? Where but in His own infinitely loving and lovable nature can I find a reason for a difference so strange? How marvellous, and how affecting, to hear Him mourn

over the changed affection of one of the least of His saints on earth, and to hear Him say, 'I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love?' What should move Him to desire my love, and to grieve when it is withheld, or when given for a time, and then withdrawn? Has He not love enough in heaven? That one pulse in the universe should beat more feebly, what should that be to the infinite heart above? She who rules that empire on which the sun never sets, need not trouble herself though one worthless subject should forswear allegiance. The ocean does not miss the exhaled drop, nor the forest the faded leaf, nor the sun one wandering ray. Why, then, should He who is King of kings and Lord of lords care so much about the waning love of Ephesus, the loss of the one half of a human heart? Yes; why should He? Why but because He is love; and because His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways. He who could utter a complaint like this, and utter it with such manifest sincerity and earnestness, yet with such gentleness and delicacy of tone and word, must be one of whom we cannot know too much. 'I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love,' are words which embody as precious a revelation of the mind of the ascended Christ as the more explicit announcement: 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood;' and do they not wonderfully teach us the deep meaning of the old words of the Song of Songs: 'Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave, the coals thereof are coals of fire which hath a

most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned' (Cant. viii. 6)?

It was as one who knew both his own heart, and the heart of Him who was claiming it, that old John Berridge wrote these memorable words: 'Oh heart, heart, what art thou? A mass of fooleries and absurdities! The vainest, foolishest, craftiest, wickedest thing in nature! And yet the Lord Jesus asks me for this heart, woos me for it, died to win it. O wonderful love! adorable condescension!

> 'O take it, Lord, and let it be
> For ever closed to all but Thee!'

But let us follow out a little further this divine rebuke, this touching remonstrance.

'Thou hast left thy first love!' And for what reason? Did the coldness begin on my side or on thine? Have I been to thee a wilderness or a land of darkness? What iniquity or unkindness have you found in me, to justify your change? Canst thou point to one word or deed of mine as an excuse for the withdrawal of thy heart? Have I become less lovable, less loving?

'Thou hast left thy first love!' And what or whom hast thou substituted? Has thy power of loving ceased, and thy heart contracted? Or is there some second love that has usurped the place of the first? Is it the world that has thus come in? Is it pleasure? Is it literature or science? Is it business? Is it politics? Is it the creature in some of its various forms, and with the seductive glitter of its many-sided beauty? What, oh what, is the equivalent

for a lost first love? And is there in this new, this second love, a satisfying substitute, a sufficient compensation to thy soul for a loss so infinite? To one who has looked upon Jerusalem, what is there in Egypt or Babylon, in Rome or in Athens, to admire? To one who has got a glimpse of the heavenly Jerusalem, what is there in all the splendour of earth to attract or satisfy? He whose eyes have seen the King in His beauty (if ever he lower his love to any meaner object) must bear about with him an aching heart and an uneasy, dissatisfied eye.

'Thou hast left thy first love!' And what hast thou gained by the leaving? What has this strange turn of capricious affection done for you? Has it made you a happier, holier, truer, stronger, more noble, more earnest man? Has it disarmed the world's enmity? Has it conciliated the devil? Has it nerved you for the battle with the principalities and powers of hell? Has this scattering over a hundred objects, of affections that were lately centred upon one, brought with it enlargement and liberty, —an increase of joy and peace? Ah! ask your hearts what has been your gain? A few indulgences which once you did not dare to venture on. A few gay smiles of worldly companionship. A few pleasures, for which, till your first love had gone, you had no relish. A more unrestrained enjoyment of the things which perish with the using; a keener appetite for trifles and frivolities, for foolish talking and jesting; a contentment with forms, and names, and words, and creeds, and doctrines; a wider sympathy with fashion and vanity; less decision and more compromise; weaker recoil from the lust of the flesh, and

the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; growing desire for reunion with a present evil world, in its amusements and tastes, its revellings and banquetings, its self-pleasing, its flesh-pleasing, its love of show and costly attire. These are some of the things for which thou hast exchanged thy first love! For these thou hast sold thy Lord! Judge for yourselves if the bargain has been a good one,—if the thirty pieces of the world's silver by which thine eye has been attracted and thy heart won will prove an equivalent for a lost first love! One day or other it will cost you dear. Sooner or later you will repent of your bargain, and bewail your folly. Remember that 'no man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith, the old is better.'

Thou hast not indeed renounced Christ, but thou hast come down from thy noble elevation. Thou hast not perhaps ceased to love Him, but thou lovest Him *less;* and other objects have now a place side by side with Him who once filled up thy heart so as to leave no room for a rival affection. Thou mayest possess many things (as thy gracious Master most kindly allows), but thou hast failed in love. Thou hast a name among the Churches; thou hast intelligence, wisdom, wealth, honour, position, influence, political and social standing;—but thou hast left thy first love! Nay, thou hast zeal, hatred of error, patience, courage, perseverance in well-doing; but thou hast left thy first love! Insignificant as a descent like this may be in the eyes of men, it is great indeed in the estimation of Him who prizes love above all gifts and offerings, above all gold and frankincense and myrrh; for is it not written, 'Now

abideth faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love?' What, then, though 'thou couldst speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and hast not love? Thou art become sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.' 'If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned' (Cant. viii. 7).

And who art thou that thinkest it a right thing to give but half a heart to Him who asks the whole,—to Him who loved thee and gave Himself for thee? Who art thou that claimest the liberty of giving or withholding affection at thy pleasure? Dost thou not call to mind the thrice-repeated question of thy risen Lord, 'Lovest thou me?' And what wilt thou answer Him when He comes again in His glory? Oh, heartless Ephesian, is thy Lord's love nothing to thee? Is His gracious jealousy, His longing for thy love, His grateful remembrance of all thy poor services, His entreaty that thou shouldst repent and do thy first works, His promise, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God,'—are all these light things in thine eyes? And if all these are trifles, is a warning like this a trifle, 'Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent?' and is it a trifle to be told, from lips that cannot lie, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha?'

Oh, heartless Ephesian, retrace thy steps at once! Thou didst run well, who hath hindered thee? Begin once more at the beginning. Go back to the fountainhead of love,—

I mean thy Lord's love to thee, the sinner,—there refill thy empty vessel. Go back to the blessed Sun, whose light is still as free and brilliant as ever; there rekindle thy dying torch; there warm thy cold heart, and learn to love again as thou didst love at first. So shall the love of Christ constrain thee; thou shalt love Him who first loved thee; thou shalt feel the quickening power of the living One; thou wilt rise up again to thy lost temperature by knowing the love which passeth knowledge, and finding that, in spite of all thy fickleness and faithlessness, that love is still the same.

We bring to you the glad tidings of that great love of Christ which was preached at first to Ephesus, and by means of which her first love was kindled,—the love, not of the Son only, but of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—the free and infinite love of Godhead. It is this that is the true remedy for a lost first love. Go to that love again, and learn it in all its fulness and exceeding riches; learn that God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins, quickens us together with Christ; learn anew the length and breadth, the depth and height, of this love; know the love that passeth knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God.

XIV.

PARADISE AND THE TREE OF LIFE.

'*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*'—REV. II. 7.

THE promise here is to the Ephesian conqueror. It is the first of the seven promises, and, like the rest, very glorious, carrying us on to the return of the second Adam, and to paradise regained. It comes from Him who holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Here, as in several other places, Christ is at once the promiser, the promise, and the thing promised. Of the promise He is the centre and its circumference, its body and its soul, its first and its last, the *yea* and the *amen*, the eternal *yea* and the eternal *amen*. It is out of His varied fulness that the promise is composed, and in each we are presented with some portion of His exceeding riches, His boundless excellency. Christ Himself, in closest intimacy, in most endearing fellowship, in fullest love, and in brightest glory, is presented to us. The rewards connected with the kingdom and the throne are glorious, and in these there are vast and various differences and degrees; but the rewards which hold out Christ Himself to us as our possession are more glorious still, and in these there are equally varying

degrees,—to some being given more, to others less, of Him and His riches; some being brought nearer Him than others;—brought into the very bosom of Him who is in the bosom of the Father.

Ephesus was once a noble Church, and the Epistle to the Ephesians shows us how high in spirituality she stood at first. But she had left her first love, and come down very low. She did run well, but had been hindered. Her lamp was low and dim. Her Lord was troubled about her declension, and gently upbraids her because of it. Yet He is far from throwing her off. He speaks lovingly, and holds up the reward before her eyes, to incite her to rouse herself and return to her early love. He woos her still, that He may win back her wavering love.

One redeeming feature in her character is her 'hatred of the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which,' the Lord adds, 'I also hate' (ver. 6). Hatred of evil,—hatred of false doctrine (ver. 15),—these are things which the Lord looks for in His Churches. Indifference to error, tolerance of evil, smoothing down the ridge between true and false teaching, whether by the press or the pulpit,—these are things very common in our day, as proofs of liberality and large-mindedness; but the Lord says, 'which thing I hate.' To be 'broad' and 'wide' is the universal boast; to be 'narrow' and 'strait' the worst of reproaches;—as if 'broad' and 'wide' were not the words of the Master's condemnation; as if it had not been said, 'Enter in at the *strait* gate: for *wide* is the gate, and *broad* is the way, that leadeth to death; and *strait* is the gate, and *narrow* the way, that leadeth to life.'

Awake, thou that sleepest! Oh, Ephesian backslider, arise and shine, for thy light is come! Thou art not yet a castaway. See from whence thou hast fallen, what is thy present low estate; see especially the bright recompense which may yet be thine, and let these things quicken thee. Up, shake thyself from the dust; gird on thy sword; take to thee the whole armour of God; fight the good fight: it is not too late, even yet thou mayest overcome! The tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God, may still be thine! For such a blessedness and brightness, who would not fight and suffer, and deny self, and toil to the end?

I. *Entrance into the paradise of God.*—The 'heavenly' is the pattern of the 'earthly' in all things. The model of earth, and all that is good on earth, is to be found in heaven. Adam's paradise below was but the image and shadow of the paradise above, as the tabernacle in the wilderness was but the 'example' or image of the better tabernacle above, showed to Moses on the mount. From the lower paradise (or garden) man was cast out, and it is into the upper paradise that he is brought. He gets the earthly back again, or the new earth: but he gets far more; he gets the heavenly as well as the earthly. 'Paradise regained' is his; and in addition to it the paradise of God. From both was man shut out. Both were barred against the sinner. The flaming sword confronted each child of Adam, and forbade his entrance. Sin made him an outcast, an exile, a condemned man, with no home but the waste howling wilderness, the land of darkness. 'So He drove out the man' was the doom not of one, but

of all. Expulsion from the presence and the paradise of God and from the tree of life was the sentence. We all went out of paradise with the first Adam, and became, like him, banished men. The second Adam entered in for us, and took possession of it in our name. He quenched the flaming sword; He sprinkled these heavenly places and heavenly things with His own blood (Heb. ix. 23), so that now the entrance lies open for the sinner. In *believing*, we get the title to all this just now; and as those who have believed and overcome we shall enter in hereafter. Entrance into the paradise of God, through Him who is the gate, is the reward of the overcomer. No slumber, then, no ease, no sheathed swords! Forward is our battle-word. Forward to the celestial city, to the paradise of God, 'that so an entrance may be ministered to us abundantly' (2 Pet. i. 11) into this everlasting glory. '*To-day* shalt thou be with me in paradise' may not be the promise; but it will not be long, for He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

II. *Access to the tree of life.*—In that paradise is the tree of life; and the promise is of free access to it, the reverse of that refusal to man of access to the earthly tree (Gen. iii. 22, 23). Free entrance, free access, and free liberty to eat of the tree of life.

Everything connected with life is comprised in Jesus Christ: 'In Him was *life;* and the life was the light of men' (John i. 4). He is the bread of life; the water of life; He is *life* itself, He is 'eternal life' (1 John v. 20). The tree of life may or may not be an actual tree; but whether figurative or real, it represents Christ Himself, or

something connected with Him, as the food of our immortal life, of our risen and glorified life. Just as He says, 'I will give him the morning star' (*i.e.* I will give him myself in the character of the morning star), so here He means, I will give him myself as the nourishment of his glorified being, and this in such a near and full way as he cannot have on earth. Christ, as the tree of life, the food of the new life, the glorified life, is to be given to the conqueror in a special way, such as even faith cannot conceive of here. There will be different degrees of glory, and knowledge, and love; different degrees of intimacy and fellowship with the Lord Jesus. He shall bring us into His banqueting house in a new way then; under His shadow we shall sit down with great delight, and His fruit shall be sweet to our taste.

Ezekiel's tree of life and gushing stream represent the earthly blessedness restored (more than restored), as in Adam's paradise. John's tree of life and crystal river represent the heavenly splendour and gladness; for the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another,—both of them together making up the heritage of the redeemed. 'Blessed are they that do His commandments' (or 'have washed their robes') 'that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city' (Rev. xxii. 14).

The prospect of such things is greatly influential upon us here. It tells on our daily life. It quickens us, it nerves us, it purifies us, it comforts us, it makes us brave and resolute.

Nor is that prospect separate from the cross of Christ

in which we glory here. That tree of life represents the fulness of a dying, risen, and glorified Christ. It is what it is for life and nourishment, by reason of its connection with the great atonement; so that even in the kingdom we shall eat of that of which atonement has been made,—priestly or sacrificial bread,—bread which is connected with blood, and has passed through the fire,—that flesh which is meat indeed, and that blood which is drink indeed (Ex. xxix. 33). Gethsemane and paradise can never be far asunder. They are inseparably linked to each other. The tree of death and the tree of life are after all but one; the glory of the latter can never be disjoined from the shame of the former.

As we fell in the first Adam, we rose in the second. Nay more. Not only shall we have restoration of all that the first Adam lost, but partnership in all that the second Adam has won; in all that He has and is. As one with Him, as represented by Him, we enter into the second paradise, and eat of the tree of life; not only undebarred, but welcomed; as the very tree to which we are entitled as conquerors,—Ephesian conquerors,—in a Church of Ephesian backsliders. For beauty, for food, for shade, for health, is that tree renowned; and all these we shall share with Him in whom, and by whom we are introduced into the garden, and made welcome to the heavenly fruit.

And does not this tree send out its invitation to all the sons of the first Adam? Does it not bid welcome to all? 'Whosoever will' is the invitation to the water of life; 'whosoever' is the equally wide invitation to the tree of life.

XV.

THE DIVINE FOOD OF OUR HEAVENLY LIFE.

'*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.*'—REV. II. 17.

THE angel of the Church in Pergamos is both commended and reproved. Not a little of evil, of laxity, of unsound doctrine, was found in that Church; yet not a little of stedfastness and martyr-boldness for Christ. She is rebuked, she is warned, she is encouraged; and she gets a glorious promise,—of the hidden manna, of the white stone, and of the new name. It is to the first of these that we would now look,—the manna 'hidden,' or 'treasured up,'—as the reward of the conqueror; for these seven rewards are specially to 'him that overcometh.' As believers, we get eternal life; as warriors and conquerors, we get special rewards,—the rewards of victory from our mighty Captain. For religion is not a thing of ease, and luxury, and comfort; but of conflict, and weariness, and wrestling. He who knows it only as the former, and not as the latter, ought to conclude that he does not know it at all. It is not for parade, or show, or a name, that Christ enlists His soldiers, but for stern battle, for hard toil, for wounds and pain, and continual facing of the enemy.

I. *The manna.*—The manna was wilderness-food,—in

connection with tent-life, water from the rock, and the journeyings of pilgrimage. Israel did not know it: they asked what it was. It was connected with the desert, but it did not grow there. It came down from heaven; it was 'angels' food,' the 'bread of the mighty.' It sustained Israel, but did not make them immortal; it was simply food for the body given them daily by God, till they reached Canaan. Let us keep these things in mind, for the manna of which our text speaks is in several aspects a *contrast* to all these.

II. *The hidden manna.*—The word 'hidden' does not so much refer to a thing secreted or concealed, as to a thing carefully treasured up and preserved, like a precious gem; as when it is said, 'Your life is HID with Christ in God.'

This hidden manna is evidently Christ Himself, or something directly coming from Him, and connected with Him. Christ, as the heavenly food of our glorified being, may be said to be the hidden manna,—just as He is the tree of life, and the morning star. Christ, as risen and glorified,—Christ in certain peculiar aspects and relations connected with the future glory,—is the hidden manna. Not simply Christ,—for even here we feed on Him as the bread of life; we eat His flesh, and drink His blood; our daily hunger is satisfied with Him,—but Christ, as connected with the holy of holies, the immediate presence and bosom of the Father.

The word 'hidden' refers to the golden pot of manna which was preserved in the ark, under the mercy-seat, along with Aaron's rod and the tables of the covenant.

The manna was taken from off the sands of the desert, put into an urn, and placed, for all ages, in the holy of holies, in remembrance of the desert food, and as a type of something better yet to be revealed.

This hidden manna was both like and unlike the manna of the wilderness; it was connected with it, yet also separate. It was of heaven originally (John vi. 31); it came down to earth; it was taken into the holiest of all, the emblem of the heaven of heavens; and thus was both of earth and heaven. It was of the wilderness, yet not in it. It was originally corruptible, yet made incorruptible; once a daily gift, spread over all the sand of the desert, now gathered into one small vessel, and laid up there once for all. It was in the ark, covered with the blood, beneath the cherubim and the glory; food that could only be reached through blood, and could only be for those whom blood had redeemed. Man had eaten 'angels' food;' but now this had become the food of men,—not only of men here, in weakness and wandering, but of the glorified in the new Jerusalem.

This hidden manna is (in conjunction with the tree of life) the special food of the redeemed; the nourishment of the new and glorified life, both of body and soul. It is set down on the great banquet table, in the high banquet hall. As in the upper-room in Jerusalem Jesus said, 'Take, eat, this is my body, broken for you,' so in like manner will He take the hidden manna, and present it to His own as their special food; and if the 'Take, eat,' from His lips below be so loving and precious, what will it be in the Jerusalem above,—'Take, eat, this is my glorified self!'

And if that which symbolizes His death be so sweet and nourishing, what will that be which symbolizes His endless life! Then we shall fully know what the apostle meant when he said, 'We are saved by His LIFE' (Rom. v. 10). The bread of the Lord's Supper speaks of death, the hidden manna of life only; the one speaks of shame and humiliation, the other of glory and immortality.

This hidden manna is food for the kingdom,—the kingdom of the risen and the glorified. It is Christ's resurrection-life, for those who are partakers of His resurrection. It is the food of the royal priesthood; the food of the conquerors; food that reminds them of their desert weariness, and hunger, and warfare, yet food which assures them that they shall hunger no more, but shall feed on that which is immortal, incorruptible, and divine.

It is food for eternity,—everlasting nourishment. And all out of the one golden pot, the one Christ,—the glorified Immanuel. That one golden pot is like the widow's cruse and barrel,—it fails not. It will suffice for the multitude that no man can number, and it will suffice for ever. Like the one tree of life, so this one pot of manna will supply millions eternally. Out of it we shall feed; out of Christ's glorified fulness we shall be nourished. Our life is hid with Him in God; for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell. 'The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them,'—and feed them on HIMSELF.

XVI.

THE MORNING STAR.

'*And I will give him the morning star.*'—REV. II. 28.

HE who speaks is Jesus Himself. He spoke to His Asian Churches once; He speaks to us now. He speaks directly; He speaks from heaven. 'I, Jesus, have *sent*;' and again, 'Behold, *I come*.' He is the speaker of these sure words of prophecy: 'He that hath an ear, let him hear.'

He speaks as a *promiser*. It is to something future that He points the eye of His Churches,—the things 'not seen,' the 'things hoped for,' in their sevenfold fulness and glory. His discourses on earth referred to these futurities in a very general way,—often not at all. The two great futurities of which He then spoke were, (1) the Holy Spirit, as the promise of the Father; and (2) His own return. Here His promises all pertain to the glory. He takes these things for granted, and proceeds to speak of others.

He speaks as a *giver*. 'I will *give*.' He has been a giver from the first. He was Himself the Father's *gift*, and He is the depositary of all gifts for us, present or future. All is *gift*,—even the rewards are *gifts*, not wages. For wages are measured by bargain, or desert, or profit; but these gifts are beyond all measure and desert.

He speaks to the *overcomers.* Though the gifts are not wages, yet they depend on our winning a battle. They are something beyond mere salvation. In believing we are *saved;* but there is something more than this held out to us, and that something is the reward to the fighters of the good fight. You say, 'I believe.' It is well; but is that all? No; it is but the first step. The battle now begins; and to cheer you on, the prize is hung out to view. You are not to fight for nothing. Your Captain, who leads you to victory, will share His spoils with you. He will lavish the whole store of His gifts upon His faithful soldiers. What will He not give of glory and honour and blessedness in His kingdom for ever?

He speaks of the *morning star.* This is His promised gift, and a very glorious one it is. Let us inquire about this star of the morning.

(1.) *What it is naturally.*—It is not *any* star that appears in the morning, but *one,*—one 'bright particular star,'—a star to which the special name belongs; a star which, above all others, is known for its splendour, and is connected with the departure of the night and the arrival of the day. It is the fairest and brightest of the bright and fair; especially as it is seen rising over the Mount of Olives, 'last in the train of night, if better it belong not to the dawn.' It says, Night is done,—day is coming,—the sun is about to rise.

(2.) *What it is symbolically.*—Christ Jesus,—He is the Star. 'I am the bright and morning star.' He is the giver and the gift; as if He said, 'I will give him myself as the morning star.' In Him all that is comprised in the

idea of morning-star is found and displayed. He says: Night is just at an end; day is about to dawn; the sun is about to rise. Forerunner of day, yet also day itself. Sun of righteousness, yet also morning-star. Bright and fair to look upon; attractive and glorious; joy of the traveller, or the sailor, or the night-watch. He is the Star of Jacob; the glory not of Israel only, but of the earth.

(3.) *What it is prophetically.*—We get Christ, in believing, just now, but we do not get Him as the morning-star. That is yet to come. His 'unsearchable riches' are yet to be unfolded. The day of the bringing forth of the gems and glory is yet future. It is the day of His second coming. Then it is that He rises on our world as the morning-star. There are three periods to which Scripture points our eye:—(1) The *present*, which it calls night, during which we get Christ as our light personally, and in that light the earnest of the future glory. 'I am the light of the world: he that believeth on me shall not walk in darkness.' (2) The *millennial period*, which ends the night, and which is not yet full day. 'Joy cometh in the morning.' This is the period of the morning-star; the second coming; the first resurrection; the deliverance of creation; the restoration of Israel, and the kingdom of the saints. It is to this that the promise here refers, 'I will give him the morning-star;' and it corresponds with the 20th of the Revelation, 'Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.' It is something very bright and glorious, yet not perfect,—intermediate between night and noon. (3) The *eternal state*. There the full sun shines in its noonday glory. All is perfection; every trace of the curse

is wiped away; every cloud and mist pass off; the new heavens and the new earth are manifested in their perfect glory.

1. *Seek to be sons of the morning.*—In one aspect this is identical with being children of light and day. But it expresses more. Such have their special portion in the glory and freshness of the dawn. They catch the first ray or streak of coming sunshine. The world's night will soon be done, and all whose portion is in it shall perish with it. But the morning cometh! Let us seek our portion there, and, seeking it, be conformed to the glory which is then to be revealed. Live, and act, and walk as sons of morning. Let the world recognise you as such. Let there be streaks of dawn seen upon you.

2. *Live upon your prospects.*—The 'things hoped for' are the Christian man's prospects,—prospects in which there is no uncertainty, and over which there hangs no cloud. Look at them; study them; keep them constantly before your mind. Fix your eye upon the morning-star. Draw strength, joy, comfort, vigour, out of them. They are meant to yield all these.

3. *Live up to your prospects.*—They are very bright, unspeakably glorious: live accordingly. Live worthy of your hope. Aim high. Set your affection on things above. Be not conformed to this world. Take up a high and true position. Forget the things behind; reach forward to that which is before. Press toward the mark. Be moulded by these blessed hopes. Think of the morning, and the morning-star; keep separate from the night, and the men of the night, and the things of the night.

4. *Seek to make others partakers of your prospects.*—Say to all you meet with, Will you go with us? We are travelling eastward to the land of the morning; for we are children of the morning: will you not cast in your lot with us? Pity a dark world, and its dark children, that have no hope and no morning before them. Point out the morning-star to them; bid them look at it; tell them what its anticipated brightness has done for you. Win souls to Christ. Draw many into the kingdom by your words and by your walk. There is little time to lose; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

XVII.

THE FULNESS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

'These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.'—REV. III. 1.

'There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.'—REV. IV. 5.

'And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.'—REV. V. 6.

'THE love of the Spirit' (Rom. xv. 30) is too apt to be forgotten by us. We believe the Father's love, the Son's love; but do we as really believe the love of the Holy Ghost? 'God is love;' and that means that the Father is love, that the Son is love, and that the Spirit is love.

It was this loving Spirit that anointed the Son of God that He might preach the gospel to the poor. It was in the power of this loving Spirit that He wrought His miracles of grace and spoke His words of grace. It was 'through the eternal Spirit that He offered Himself without spot to God' (Heb. ix. 14) for us. And this 'anointing' or 'unction' presents Him to us under that character by which He was all along symbolized in the Old Testament,—'the holy anointing oil.'

In this Book of Revelation it is as a lamp or 'lamps of fire' that He is made known to us: not the *oil*, but *the*

lamp itself. He is both: He feeds the light in us, and He is Himself the light. Here we are (though not directly) taught much about this Spirit, as the Spirit of light, and love, and holiness; His personality, His vital agency, His divine and manifold fulness. Seven times over are these words made to fall upon our ears: 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches,' as if the words of this book were His as truly as they are those of Christ.

We have much to do with the Holy Spirit; for what would the Bible be without Him? What should we know of Christ without Him? A religion without the Spirit is wholly vain and unprofitable; like a sapless tree, a well without water, a vessel without oil.

Let us mark the characteristics, as given us in the Revelation, in connection with the emblems.

I. *Light.*—The lamps of fire are emblems of His illuminating character and office. All true enlightenment comes from Him. As truly as Christ is the light of the world, so is the Spirit,—the former more outward, the latter more inward. When fire is mentioned, it is generally in connection with the shechinah-glory; and, as was the fiery pillar to Israel, so are these lamps of fire to the Church. The saint needs light; the Church needs light; the world needs light. From the Spirit comes the light. It is sanctuary light, temple light, light from the seven-branched lamp, or seven lamps which give light to the holy place.

II. *Power.*—The seven horns represent Him. Power is with Him; divine power; omnipotence. It is power for defence, for attack, for victory over enemies. He is

the Spirit of power. As such He does His work in us, and enables us to do the work of God. In our conflicts, labours, sufferings, 'fightings without,' and 'fears within,' we have the Almighty Spirit on our side, helping our infirmities.

III. *Wisdom.*—The seven eyes are the emblem of His omniscience. His eyes are everywhere; He sees us through and through. And He comes in to us as the Spirit of wisdom. The four living ones are represented as full of eyes before and behind, implying the fulness of the all-seeing Spirit, as if they were thus 'partakers of the divine nature.' As the Spirit of wisdom rested on Christ, so does it on us; for out of His fulness we receive. It comes to us, not directly, but from and through Him. We were blind, now we see; we see afar off, within the veil, the things which eye hath not seen.

IV. *Spirituality.*—They are called *spirits:* invisible, yet real; not corporeal, yet real; something which may dwell in us, and influence us, unseen, unheard, unfelt. Spirits, yet not shadows; spirits, yet infinitely personal and real.

V. *Completeness.*—Seven is the perfect number in Scripture (seven days, seven years, etc.). It is the complete and perfect Spirit that is represented; without defect or weakness; altogether *full;* full in light, and wisdom, and power. That fulness is *divine,* not human or finite; the fulness of God; fulness without measure or end; fulness which was completely realized only in Christ, but in us according to our measure.

VI. *Variety.*—This is also indicated by *seven.* Not mere fulness; but fulness in variety,—variety in fulness. Not the *uniform* fulness of the unvaried sea, but the ful-

ness of the varied earth and sky; all different parts connected together, and making up that wondrous perfection which mere *unvarying infinity* could not exhibit. The Spirit, with His manifold gifts and graces, is thus represented,—the varied perfection of his *gifts*, as well as the varied glory of His person; a glory like that of *light*, whose perfection of whiteness is the result of variety in colour. These *seven* Spirits are what we need, to meet the varyihg cases and characters of the saints.

VII. *Universality.*—These lamps of fire burn before the throne. As (when the veil was rent) the seven-branched candlestick would appear to be standing before the mercy-seat, so these lamps of fire are seen burning before the throne of God and of the Lamb. They are thus connected with the throne, yet they shed their light far and near over creation. The seven Spirits of God are sent forth into all the earth. They go out beyond the temple, beyond Israel's land; into all the earth; to the nations afar off,—'every nation and kindred.' They are sent forth *from the throne* as royal messengers, to do the work of Him who sits upon the throne, as Christ speaks of the Spirit, 'the Comforter whom the Father shall send in my name.' As Christ was the sent of the Father, and also of the Spirit, so the Spirit is the sent of the Father and of Christ. He is connected with 'the throne,' and He is connected with 'the Lamb.' He goes forth to testify of Him, to glorify Him, to reveal Him to the sons of men. This is the work which He is doing now, in a measure, and which, in the coming age, He will do more largely, filling the whole earth with the light of the glory of Immanuel.

Into all the earth He goes, far as 'the gospel' itself, revealing to men that 'gospel,' and revealing that cross of which it brings the 'good news.' For all the Spirit's work gathers round the Lord Jesus, unfolding the divine testimony to His blood, and overcoming the resistance of the sinner's heart, that he may believe that testimony, and be saved.

Into all the earth He goes, raising the dead, illuminating the dark, guiding the perplexed, leading back the wanderer to the fold. To the very ends of the earth these seven lamps are shining. Through them the darkness of the earth has been preserved from being total; through them, here and there bright lights are kindled, in some measure dispelling the thick gloom that covers the human race. It is this Spirit that is striving with the sons of men; it is this Spirit that men are quenching. And when He is quenched, and the one Light departs, what will the darkness of the human spirit be! He will not always strive. He may even now be near departing. The long ages of His love may be near an end. O world! thy day of darkness is coming; darkness that may be felt; prelude of the blackness of darkness for ever.

O Church of God! grieve not this Spirit; quench not these lamps of fire. Bid Him welcome with all His gifts, to make thee in these last days what thou wert when first He came down in His divine fulness, and wrought a work in thee, and through thee, such as amazed, and terrified, and enraged a world, till men in every city rose up, and with weapons of persecution sought to extinguish the new-kindled flame, as too bright for them to bear.

XVIII.

THE KEY OF DAVID.

'*And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith He that is Holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.*'—REV. III. 7.

HERE is another of Christ's names, or designations, or 'styles,' given by Himself. There are seven in all, and this is the sixth. Let us consider this sixth.

I. *He that is holy.*—Christ's name here is that of 'the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is *holy*.' He is the holy One of God; hating sin, loving righteousness. Thus, while He is the holy One, He deals in love with the feeble, and makes their enemies to 'know that He loveth' (ver. 9). With all Christ's infinite tenderness and pity there is holiness conjoined, and He says, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.'

II. *He that is true.*—This is frequently said of Christ: He is 'faithful and *true*;' the '*true* light;' 'the true bread;' the 'true vine;' the 'true witness;' the 'true God.' He is 'the *truth*.' All that is *true* is embodied in Him. He is the reality, the truth, the substance, the wisdom, the filling up of all promises, and of all symbols. All the promises in Him are yea, and in Him Amen. His

words are *true*, His works are *true*, His ways are *true*, His invitations are *true*, His love is *true*.

III. *He that hath the key of David.*—Both as David's Son and David's Lord He had a right to all that David had. Of David's crown, and throne, and land, He was the rightful heir. But it is only of David's *key* that He is here spoken of as the possessor. He had the *key*,—the right and the power of opening the gate, and admitting those who had the right of entrance. He could open and no man could shut,—this was grace; He could shut and none could open,—this was sovereignty. This combined grace and sovereignty which He here proclaims is that which Philadelphia specially needed, for encouragement on the one hand, and for stimulus on the other.

The reference here is to Isa. xxii. 22: 'The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder.' This was said of Eliakim, who was thus set up as a type of a greater than himself,—a greater than David. Eliakim was royal chamberlain, keeper of the house, like Joseph in Pharaoh's palace. So Christ is represented as not only being the royal possessor of the house, but He also to whom the keeping of its gate was entrusted. He is 'the door' and He is the 'porter too;' He is the pasture and the Shepherd too. 'All power is given to Him in heaven and in earth.' 'The Father loveth the Son, and hath committed all things into His hands.' He has, we may say, many keys.

1. *The key of David's house.*—The palace is His, and He keeps the key of it, as the Father has given it to Him. He opens and shuts according as He will. Wouldst thou

enter David's house? Apply to Him who has the key. He is the true David, the true Eliakim; He is David's Son and David's Lord.

2. *The key of David's castle.*—Besides his palace, David had a fort on Zion which he took from the Jebusites,—a stronghold against the enemy. So has our David a strong tower and fortress, into which we run and are safe. This is the true 'tower of David, builded for an armoury.' Wouldst thou get into this impregnable fort? Apply to Him who keeps the key. He opens, and no man shuts.

3. *The key of David's city.*—Yes, the key of Jerusalem, both the earthly and the heavenly! 'Open ye the gates;' 'Lift up your heads, ye gates.' These cries shall be heard, the key shall be applied, and the gates flung open, and the great multitude that no man can number shall enter in. Wouldst thou enter in to this glorious city? Thou must go to Him who has its keys. No application was ever made in vain to Him. No other key but His will open the gate to thee.

4. *The key of David's treasure-house.*—That storehouse contains all we need. The unsearchable riches are here; and David says to us, 'I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.' But not riches alone: the bread of heaven is here; the hidden manna is here; the white raiment is here; the royal wine of the kingdom is here. All store of goods of every kind is here. Our David has the key. Would you be rich? Come and get freely all you need,—gold, silver, gems, bread, water, wine and milk.

5. *The key of David's banqueting-house.*—Here the feast is spread; a royal feast; a bridal feast; a divine feast; a feast of fat things. The king brings us into His banqueting-house, and His banner over us is love. He spreads a table for us here in presence of our enemies; He will spread it for us ere long in the presence of the angels. He says here, Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

Some have said 'the key of David's *harp*,' inasmuch as Christ is the theme of the Psalms of David, and they cannot be unlocked without Him. But this sense is strained, though striking. Yet David does sing of Him: 'My heart is inditing a good matter. I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.' Messiah is his theme; his Alpha and Omega; his first and last.

What comfort (1) to a minister, (2) to a church, (3) to a saint, in the truth that Christ has the *keys!* The keys of the universe; the keys of every sphere of labour; the keys of life, of death, of the grave. What comfort in the truth that He has power to open and shut at His own gracious pleasure! All things are in His power. The keys are in pierced hands. They hang upon the cross. Work on, O Philadelphian, with thy little strength! He opens great doors and effectual, however many the enemies may be. He opens and none can shut; He shuts and none can open. How blessed when He says, 'I have set before thee an open door!' O feeble Philadelphian, labour on. He is with thee, and who can be against thee? 'I have set before thee an open door.'

There are one or two texts, which, though not strictly

connected with the text, I would hang upon it, as suggested by the key and the door :—

(1.) *Knock, and it shall be opened.*—He who keeps the key of every door is always ready to open,—more ready to open than we to knock.

(2.) *The doors of it shall not be shut at all by day, and there is no night there.*—An ever-open door ! Sometimes it is said knock, and sometimes you don't need to knock, for it is open. Just enter in ; enter in at once ; enter in as you are.

(3.) *The door was shut.*—Yes, shut at last ! Then knocking is too late. For when He shuts, no man can open. Oh, that eternally shut gate ! How dismal to those who, all their lifetime, saw it open, but would not go in ! They might have gone in, but would not. This is their condemnation, and their eternal sorrow.

(4.) *Behold, I stand at the door and knock.*—It is not merely we standing at Christ's door, but Christ standing at ours ! As if He would say to us, Take the key ; open and let me in. Shall Christ's knock be in vain ? It is the knock of love, earnest, patient, condescending love. He really wants admittance ; His knocking is no pretence. He wants to make our souls His dwelling. Admit Him, and be blest !

XIX.

THE CHURCH'S LITTLE STRENGTH, AND THE LORD'S GREAT LOVE.

'I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.'—REV. iii. 8.

IT is Christ's *gracious character and tender heart* that come out so strikingly in these words. How considerate and patient! How gentle and tender in His words and doings! How affectionate and loving towards those whom He might have blamed and condemned! Here is the love that passeth knowledge; and here is what the apostle calls 'the meekness and gentleness of Christ.' He bears true witness of Himself when He says, 'I am meek and lowly.' Who would be afraid to deal with such a Saviour, or to betake themselves to Him in any circumstances of sin or grief, of emergency or peril?

Let us hear how the Old Testament prophets spoke of Him and announced His graciousness, as Messiah. He was to be 'a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; rivers of water in a dry place; the shadow of a great rock in a weary land' (Isa. xxxii. 2). He was to 'feed His flock like a shepherd; to gather the lambs with His arm, to carry them in His bosom, to lead gently those that

were with young' (Isa. xl. 11). He was not to 'break the bruised reed, nor to quench the smoking flax' (Isa. xlii. 3). He was to 'open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house; . . . to bring the blind by a way that they knew not' (Isa. xlii. 7, 16). He was to 'bind up the broken-hearted, and to proclaim liberty to the captives' (Isa. lxi. 1). He was to be 'afflicted in all the affliction of His people, in His love and pity to redeem them, to bear them and carry them' (Isa. lxiii. 9); He was 'to comfort them as one whom his mother comforteth' (Isa. lxvi. 13).

Let us see how He unfolded this graciousness, this tenderness, in the days of His flesh. We learn this from His own acts and words; from His affability and accessibility everywhere, and to everybody; from His attractiveness and winningness, His perpetual beneficence to all. What tenderness in His tears over Jerusalem; in His dealing with the woman that was a sinner; in His acting to the widow of Nain and her son; in His weeping at the tomb of Lazarus; in His pity for the daughters of Jerusalem; in His loving the young man who came to Him; in His being moved with compassion for the multitudes; in His treatment of children, both infants and those farther grown,—laying his hands on them, taking them in His arms, and saying, 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven!' The Gospels are four portraits in different attitudes, but they all bring out the same tender love.

It is this tender love that He shows in heaven as well as on earth. It cheered John in Patmos; and it breathes through these seven epistles, and very beautifully in our

text. What considerate kindness, patience, and gracious meekness are embodied in these words! There was something wrong in Philadelphia, but He touches on this very slightly and kindly. *We* might think there was unfaithfulness in such a way of dealing and speaking, but we know not what manner of spirit we are of. Harshness is not faithfulness; strong words are not convincing, still less melting or winning.

Let us see here—

I. *Christ's open door.*—The figure here is probably similar to those expressions in which Paul speaks of 'a door being opened to him of the Lord' (2 Cor. ii. 12); of 'a great door and effectual being opened' (1 Cor. xvi. 9); of 'God opening a door of utterance' (Col. iv. 3). In one aspect it is the door of service, and labour, and opportunity; in another, it is the door of success, and blessing, and power. It is the door both of service and success. It is an *open* door, not requiring even to be knocked at, but thrown wide open, that the Philadelphians might enter in at once and without obstacle. Christ, when He comes to men, finds a closed door; so He has to knock; but 'before them' He sets an *open* door. It is *right before* them, immediately in front; for this seems the true point of the word. They have not to seek for it; it is not far off nor hidden, but just before them, without distance or difficulty or hindrance. It is set before them, thus open, by Christ Himself. He who has the key of David has unlocked it and thrown it wide open. Christ with His own hand has opened it, and with His own finger points to it, saying, 'Go in.' Christ has thus two open doors,—an open door

for salvation, an open door for service. Go in, He says to every loiterer on the outside; Go in and be saved. See there, just before you is the house of salvation. I have set it before thee open, and no one can shut it (either man or devil). Go in, He says also to each Christian; Go in and work. See, right before you is the door of service. I have set it open, and no man (or rather, 'no one,' whether man or devil) can shut it.

II. *The Church's little strength but true faithfulness.*—In tenderness and grace He now speaks, to commend. 'The Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.' Three reasons are given for this considerateness and love.

(1.) *Thou hast little strength,*—not 'Thou hast a little,' but 'Thou hast little.' It was this Philadelphian *feebleness* that excited the compassion. Little strength! How tenderly He speaks! Little strength! Therefore thou needest an open door. Thou hast no power to fight or struggle. Nothing but an open door will do for such little strength. *The little strength and the open door suit each other well.* He knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust. He pities our feebleness; and because we are 'without strength,' He interposes to help. The less of strength, the more of pity and of help. 'To them that have no might He increaseth strength.'

(2.) *Yet hast kept my word.*—In spite of feebleness, she had held fast God's word. This may seem a small thing in the eyes of man; not so of God. He lays great stress upon our keeping His word. His word! How God honours it, and those who keep it, even in utter feebleness, as the wounded ensign does the banner, which he wraps

round him as he falls to earth! Keep my word, however feeble thou art, is Christ's message. Let it not go. His 'word,' His 'truth,' His 'promise,' His 'gospel;'—these are to be KEPT!

(3.) *And hast not denied my name.*—This is the least that could be said of any one who had remained faithful at all. It is not, 'Thou hast confessed my name,' but simply, 'Thou hast not denied it.' He accepts the very least. How gracious and pitiful! Do not deny Him! Surely He can ask no less. Love is here condescending to its uttermost. What grace is here! And what encouragement to the feeble and the tried!

Yes; all this is wondrous, in its exhibition of the tenderness of Christ. How these words should cheer us amid conscious darkness and deep-felt poverty,—it may be declension!

Hard and sore is our daily struggle! He sees it and is not angry; but pities, and loves, and helps. He sees us trying to bear up, yet often sinning; fighting, yet often overcome; endeavouring to master our weariness, yet often overmastered by it; labouring, yet often despairing of success; and, as He sees us thus overwhelmed, He pities us most tenderly, and steps in to help. He opens the door; He keeps it open; He cheers us with words of love; He comforts us in our tribulation, and supplies us with heavenly cordials in our day of need.

XX.

THE PHILADELPHIAN CONQUEROR.

'*Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.*'—REV. iii. 11, 12.

AGAIN the trumpet sounds. 'Behold!' It is the trumpet of Advent. 'Behold, I come quickly!' The Master is at the door. What then? Hold fast! 'Hold fast that which thou hast.' As if one of the special temptations of the Church would be to let go her principles; to turn her back upon the truth which once she held; to contradict not only herself, but the truth of God. And all under that name of progress! We are men of progress, therefore we must be inconsistent! Consistency is bigotry and narrowness; inconsistency is advancement and development,—large-mindedness and nobility of soul!

Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown! In letting go what we have, we lose our crown. Such stress does the Master lay upon consistent adherence to our testimony to His name.

Again the conqueror is set before us. For each of the Churches there is warfare, and victory is to be our aim.

A daily battle and a daily victory. The GOOD (καλὴν, 1 Tim. i. 18; 2 Tim. iv. 7) warfare and the glorious victory. Of this victory let us now hear the reward.

I. *The conqueror is to be a temple-pillar.*—Not an *outside*, but an *inside* pillar. Not a door, nor a wall, nor any mere vessel or utensil; but a column, a fair and majestic column 'in the temple of my God.' The interior colonnades or double rows of tall pillars in some churches and temples (such as that of St. Paul's, outside of modern Rome), set upon marble floors, upholding marble roofs and arches, are splendid beyond description. There the pillars stand, each in itself an obelisk or a monument, beautiful in their matchless symmetry, tall as the palm, and pure as the snow. Day and night they stand there, looking down upon the temple and its worshippers, listening to its songs, and veiled in its incense. They are *part* of the vast fabric; not like those who minister there, going out and in, but standing immovable in their surpassing beauty. Such is the reward of the Philadelphian conqueror. An everlasting inhabitant and ornament of that sanctuary of which we read, 'I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof.' They shall go no more out! Their home is the innermost shrine in the heaven of heavens. Like Jachin and Boaz (1 Kings vii. 15, 21), there they stand for ever. As the Church is here the pillar and ground of the truth, so are they hereafter. As Barnabas and Cephas are called 'pillars,' because of their noble pre-eminence in upholding the truth, so are these conquerors to be. And as pillars were used of old for affixing royal proclamations, so that

from them came forth the voice of the king, so shall it be with these conquerors. Like the seven pillars which Wisdom hews out for her house (Prov. ix. 1), they stand. Witnesses for Christ they were here, with 'little strength;' witnesses for Him they shall be hereafter, when that which is sown in weakness shall be raised in power. *Here* they kept His word and denied not His name; *there* they shall stand as His faithful ones for ever and for ever.

II. *The conqueror is to be inscribed with glorious names.*—It is said of Christ that He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, 'King of kings and Lord of lords.' It is said of the redeemed in glory that they have their Father's name written on their foreheads (ch. xiv. 1); so here on these Philadelphian pillars are many names to be inscribed, each of them unutterably glorious. The inscriptions ennoble the pillar; and the pillar holds aloft the inscriptions to the gaze of 'the great multitude that no man can number.' These inscriptions are written by Christ Himself: 'I will write.' As He engraved Israel upon the palms of His hands (Isa. xlix. 16), so does He engrave these names upon these temple-pillars, that they may be eternal witnesses to them in the glorious sanctuary; for throughout eternity His redeemed are to be His witnesses and His conquerors,—pre-eminently so. All saved ones are to tell something of Him,—His conquerors most. The inscriptions to be thus engraven are as follows:—

(1.) *The name of my God.*—This is the name which God proclaimed to Moses, the name which is the summary of His blessed character, as the God of all grace. As He made Israel's names to shine out from the twelve gems of

the breastplate, so does he make His own name to shine out from these pillars; quarried, hewn, polished, set up by the Holy Ghost, and engraven by a greater than Bezaleel or Aholiab,—Christ Himself. What honour! To be the marble on which Jehovah's name is carved, and from which it shall blaze forth in the eternal temple!

(2.) *The name of the city of my God.*—'God is not ashamed to be called their God, because He hath prepared for them a city.' And the name of this city is to be engraven on these pillars in connection with the name of its builder and maker. The city's name is New Jerusalem, and 'it cometh down out of heaven from my God.' The city is theirs; and, as its citizens, they are to have its name written upon them. Other pillars set up on earth by man have the names of deities, or kings, or warriors, or cities graven upon them. But this inscription excels all in glory. It shines out in its own brilliance, irradiating the pillar itself, and the whole temple where that pillar stands.

(3.) *My new name.*—This is the new name given by Christ, which no man knoweth save he who receiveth it,—a name, the like of which has not yet been known on earth; a name which shall embody in itself some peculiar honour and blessedness which we know not now, but which we shall know hereafter. We need not try to guess it; we should but fail. It will be made known in due time, when the battle is won and the reward is given to the conqueror.

All this is because, with but 'little strength,' this Philadelphian Church had kept Christ's word, and not denied His *name*. The reward is to correspond with the service.

For the keeping of the word, there is to be the recompense of the pillar with a divine inscription; and for the owning of the *name*, that inscription is to consist of the most glorious of *names*. Reward and service are ever made to correspond by Him who duly appreciates the service of His saints on earth, and knows the peculiar circumstances of trial or difficulty, or pain or weakness, in which the service was performed.

Small may be our strength in these last days. The tide of error, and sin, and worldliness may be running very strong. It may not be easy to confess Christ, or to hold fast His truth. But His grace is sufficient for us; and woe be to us if we give way to the errors of the age, or conform to its vanities, or seek to please its multitudes, either under the dread of public opinion, or the fear of not being reputed 'men of progress,' or the shrinking from more direct persecution and hatred! Faithfulness to Christ, and to His truth, is everything, especially in days when iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold.

Fear not! the reward is glorious; the honour is beyond all earthly honours. The contempt and enmity are but for a day; the dignity and the blessedness are for ever and ever.

What though men call you narrow-minded for cleaving to old truth,—now obsolete, as they say; for 'worship of a book,' or bibliolatry, as they call it; for the stern refusal to lower our testimony to our glorified Lord and coming King? Let us be content to bear reproach for Him and His word. The glory to be given us at His appearing will more than compensate for all.

XXI.

THE CHARITY OF THE LORD JESUS.

'*Neither cold nor hot.*'—REV. iii. 16.
'*He that is not with me is against me.*'—MATT. xii. 30.
'*He that is not against us is on our part.*'—MARK ix. 40.

THE first of these texts proclaims as a ruinous sin what many regard as a misfortune which cannot be helped,—*lukewarmness.* To be neither cold nor hot is an abomination in the sight of Christ, awakening disgust, and leading to entire casting away. It is not lukewarmness occasioned by the cold passing gradually into heat, but that produced by the heat passing into the cold. Once there was warmth; now that warmth and glow are giving way, and the hateful medium condition is coming on. Church of the living God, beware of letting your temperature sink even one single degree. Christian man or woman, watch! Mark your spiritual thermometer; take alarm when it begins to go down, though but a hair-breadth. See that it rises, and rises from day to day. How loathsome to the great Master is the tasteless, tepid, vapid Christianity of multitudes in our day! One can hardly tell what it is, or whither it is tending. Neither cold nor hot! Making the best of both worlds; mixing up heaven and earth; a compound of zeal and indifference; a dilution of genuine religion, to such an extent,

that the original element has almost disappeared. Alternate folly and wisdom; levity and seriousness; the ball and the prayer-meeting; the concert and the communion; the opera and the committee; the gay evening party and the mothers' meeting or the Sabbath school; the cup of the Lord and the cup of Belial mixed together;—such is the condition of things among multitudes who name the name of Christ.

The second text points not so much to the lukewarm and half-hearted, as to the deliberately undecided,—those who, from prejudice, or fear of man, or love of ease, wilfully stand aloof from Christ, while yet not openly joining with His foes. Their conscience says, 'Join Christ; follow Him.' But there is a lion in the way: they must take up their cross, and deny self; they must incur loss, or hatred, or shame. So they shrink back, all the while defending their indecision, and soothing their consciences with the thought that they do not *oppose* Christ or His cause. Of such Christ here says, He that is not with us is against us. He that stands aloof,—afraid, perhaps, of being called a saint or a bigot, unwilling to commit himself to a life of decided religion, reluctant to come wholly out from the world, or set himself against its opinions and ways,—is as if he were an enemy. For no man can serve two masters, or follow two religions. Why halt ye between two opinions? is God's appeal to such; and Balaam stands in history as the awful specimen of the double-hearted.

The third text speaks to a very different class from either of these. If Laodicea, with her lukewarmness, is the representative of the first, Philadelphia is the repre-

sentative of this last: 'Thou hast LITTLE STRENGTH, yet hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name' How cheering and gracious to the feeble-hearted the Master's words, 'He that is not against us is on our side!' How like Him who breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax! How encouraging are His words, in circumstances in which we might have expected rebuke and sternness! He thus comforts the feeble-minded, supports the weak, and shows His patience toward all men. He accepts the will for the deed; the weak effort for the accomplished fact. If the spirit be willing, He overlooks the weakness of the flesh.

There is one Old Testament character which seems to illustrate this affirmation of our Lord,—Abijah, the son of Jeroboam,—who is evidently reckoned upon the Lord's side, and yet all that can be said of him is that there was found in him *some good thing* towards the Lord God of Israel. We may conclude the same respecting the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. They had not come out openly; they had been so timid that even Elijah did not know of their existence; yet in silence they had cleaved to Jehovah, and He owns them. They had not been against Him, and He proclaims them as with Him. How gently the Lord deals with fearful ones! how tender and charitable His judgments! He beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. He heeds the faintest breath that goes up to Him; He despises no petitioner, even the most troubled and timorous. There are two New Testament characters whose history brings out this,—Nicodemus and Joseph of

Arimathea. They are for more than three years very timid witnesses for Christ. One can hardly call them disciples. They do not follow Him; and even when the council plots against Him, all the length they go is, 'Doth our law condemn a man before he is heard?' Yet they are owned of the Master, and are examples of the gracious truth, 'He that is not against me is for me.' And then what a reward they get! What an honour is put upon them even for this weak protest! They are filled with boldness, and stand forward in behalf of Christ when all others have shrunk back. 'The last becomes the first, and the first last.'

What grace is this! What tender love and condescension! What a charitable construction our Master puts on all we say or do! He makes the best of everything in our behalf. He puts the kindest possible interpretation on every effort, however faint, put forth for Him; on every word, however feeble, spoken for Him. And even when we speak no words, and do no deeds, if we do not deny Him, He says, 'He that is not against me is for me.'

What encouragement is this to those who are cast down about their acceptance! They afflict themselves; they write bitter things against themselves; for they fear they are not the Lord's. O sorrowful doubter, O weary, troubled spirit, hear the Master's gentle, loving words, 'He that is not against me is for me!' He owns your feeble faith, and does not cast you off. And what encouragement to those who are depressed because of their poor, poor work for Him! He thinks more of your work than you do. He is well pleased with that cup of water which you gave to one of His brethren. He owns it now; He will own it hereafter.

XXII.

THE HEAVENLY MERCHANT AND HIS GOODS.

'I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.'—REV. iii. 18.

CHRIST'S love is here beyond all doubt: His profound compassion for the sinner; for the worst of sinners; for the sinner of Laodicea. Each word is full of meaning and of grace.

I. *I.*—It is the Master Himself who speaks; speaks the very truth of God; speaks in deep sincerity; speaks as the *Amen*, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. The words that followed are meant to embody and express all these attributes, these parts of His name, these features of His character.

II. *I counsel.*—The word is a peculiar one (συμβουλεύω), and resembles the prophet's expression, 'Let us reason *together*' (Isa. i. 18). I would unite with thee regarding such counsel as the following. It is the invitation to joint counsel that makes the expression so condescending and so touching. It is not, I *command*, but I *counsel*. What lowliness of love is here! What a desire to disarm all opposition, to prevent irritation, and to win the heart! Oh that you would take my advice! He says to the self-

sufficient Laodicean, whose estimate of himself was so widely different from that of God concerning him.

III. *Thee.*—The lukewarm Church; the worst of the seven; just about to be rejected with loathing. God has ever spoken His most gracious words to His people in their worst estate, as Jesus wept over Jerusalem when she was about to reject and crucify Him. For His is love to the uttermost; love that many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown. The most loving words in all these seven epistles are spoken to the worst of the seven Churches. What sinner, what backslider, then shall say, There is not enough of love in Christ for me!

IV. *To buy.*—For Christ, as we shall see, speaks here as a *merchant*, offering His heavenly merchandise for sale. And yet not for sale; for all is free! He speaks of *buying*, that they who come might know that they get His goods in an honest and righteous way, and that they have them as securely as if they had paid the full price. 'Buy,' He said in the Old Testament (Isa. lv. 1, 3), where He also publishes the advertisement of His goods. 'Buy,' He says to Laodicea. 'Buy,' He says to us still. BUY OF ME! Of me, in whom is all fulness.

The words of our text are the words of a merchant; yet not of a merchant 'seeking goodly pearls,' but offering His merchandise for sale in a wondrous market, and at a wondrous price. Yet He does not speak as one wishing to make gain by His goods; He speaks in sympathy and love. But He evidently has to do with men who care neither for Him nor for His goods; who have made choice of another merchant, and set their hearts on other mer-

chandise. He has to *press* Himself and His goods upon unwilling buyers, who do not appreciate His wares. It is for their own profit, not His, that He is thus urgent. Unlike other dealers in the market, He wants to make His customers rich, not Himself.

Here, then, we have the seller and the buyer. Who are they? For they appear so unlike other buyers and sellers,—the seller so anxious to make the buyer rich, and the buyer so reluctant to be enriched.

The seller or merchant is the Son of God, in whom are unsearchable riches. The buyer is a sinner of Adam's impoverished family; a Laodicean sinner; one of the poorest and emptiest of men; all the more poor and empty, because ignorant of his great necessities, and complacently fancying himself rich and full, increased in goods, and needing nothing. It is upon this needy one that the rich merchant presses His stores; spreading them out before his eyes, and proclaiming both their sufficiency and suitableness. It is not often that love and wealth are thus combined; but here we have them both in blessed fulness,—wealth sufficient to supply the wants of the neediest, and love, unselfish, generous-hearted love, urging on the needy the acceptance of its boundless treasures. It is not often that poverty and pride are thus conjoined; but here we have the extreme of poverty accompanied with the resolution to remain poor rather than accept the merchant's offer.

This heavenly merchant no doubt speaks of a *price;* for He says, 'Buy of me.' May not then the rejection of His goods be on account of their being too high in price?

That this is not the case is plain from the three following things: (1) There is in these Laodiceans a manifest dislike of both the merchant and His goods, quite irrespective of the terms; (2) The merchant means obviously to intimate to them that they did not need more to buy *His* articles with than they were now buying the articles of others with, and that therefore *price* could be no stumbling-block; (3) He is manifestly, by His mode of speech, referring them to another of His advertisements or announcements, in which His terms are explicitly given, 'Without money and without price' (Isa. lv. 1). It cannot then be the price of His goods that is frightening away buyers. He knows this, and He continues to press His merchandise upon their acceptance, as something which they truly needed, nay, something without which they would be absolutely and utterly poor. It is *love*, divine love, love to the needy, that makes Him so importunate; for He knows the extent of their poverty, their total inability to help themselves, and His own boundless treasures,—the least fragment of which would enrich a world for eternity.

What then are the *wares* of this divine merchant? They are manifold, nay, unsearchable. But there are *three* which He singles out as specially suited to the case of those Laodiceans:—(1.) Gold; (2.) Raiment; (3.) Eye-salve. These were the articles which they thought they needed least, but which He knew they needed most. The possession of these would be to them the abundance of blessing. Without them they would be wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

I. *Gold.*—He offers gold for sale,—gold not only of the

finest kind, but which had passed through the fire, and been purged from all its dross. It is better than gold of Ophir, than temple-gold, than palace-gold; it is gold the like of which earth has not anywhere; the very gold of heaven. As gold is the chief medium of currency, by means of which men obtain in the market all they need, so we may say that *the name* of Christ is that by which we obtain, in the heavenly market, all we require. His name avails the sinner for the purchase of everything. Making use of that name, he may demand anything and everything. Is he not then rich? What gold, in value and in efficacy, is equal to the name of Jesus? For thus it is written, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do' (John xiv. 13); and again, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you' (John xvi. 23). With gold such as this, it seems impossible to be poor. All Christ's unsearchable riches pass over to us, and we use them as if they were our own. They are our 'currency,' our 'circulating medium,' in the heavenly market. Nor is there anything which by means of them we may not obtain. Thus are we 'rich toward God;' and having nothing, it may be, 'we yet possess all things.'

II. *Raiment.*—Raiment was the first thing which man felt his need of after he had sinned. Before, he was naked, yet needed no covering; after, he felt his nakedness, and blushed. He tried the fig-leaves, but they would not do. He was still ashamed. He tried the thick trees, but neither would they do; he was both afraid and ashamed. At last God covered him. He took the skins of the sacrifices, and clothed him. That sufficed. The

shame of his nakedness no longer appeared. It is thus that God deals with the sinner still. It is from the slain Lamb that the true raiment comes. Nothing else will do. This does. The Laodicean sinner is so vain and so ignorant, that he feels as Adam did before he fell. He is naked, yet not ashamed. Hence the sharp words of the Lord, 'Thou knowest not that thou art *naked!*' A sinner, yet ignorant of his sin! Naked, yet unconscious of his shame! To many a sinner now may the Lord's words be pointed, 'Thou art naked, and knowest it not!' But whether conscious or unconscious of thy shame, here is raiment, fine raiment, that *thou* mayest be clothed. 'Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him,' are the words of paternal grace. It is the best robe; for it is divine. It is fine raiment; for it is the very raiment of the Son of God. It is His righteousness that is to cover thee. Then shalt thou be no more ashamed. Thou shalt be able to stand before men and angels, nay, before God, without a blush.

III. *Eye-salve.*—'Blindness,' not in part, but in whole, is the sinner's lot. He is blind from his mother's womb,—'born blind.' Yet he thinks he sees! Strange delusion! 'Are we blind also?' he says with the Pharisees. Unconscious blindness! What a calamity! 'Thou knowest not that thou art *blind.*' But whether thou knowest or not, here is eye-salve,—heavenly eye-salve,—better eye-salve than that with which Christ anointed the blind eyes of the body. Here it is; in Christ's own hand. Here it is, all ready for thee. Let Him anoint thee with it, and straightway thou shalt see. Consent to take His eye-

salve, and thy vision is restored. With that restoration, what a world of glory opens upon thine eye!

Here then are the merchant's three articles,—gold, raiment, eye-salve,—riches, clothing, knowledge! He presents them all to thee. And though He says 'Buy,' He asks no exorbitant price for His divine wares. His terms are wonderful,—'without money and without price!'

Every day comes the heavenly merchant to our earthly market, with His goodly but despised merchandise. Patiently, lovingly He carries them about, presenting them to all He meets; seeking not to enrich Himself, but us; not to amass a fortune for Himself, but to provide one for us. Ah, this is love! Love that seeks another's welfare, not its own; another's joy, not its own. 'I counsel thee to buy,' He says. Yet who take His counsel? Who buy?

After having gone through the market-place, amid the crowds of earth, and found but little custom for His precious wares, He goes to the houses of those who have been refusing all his offers. He knocks and knocks, presenting not only His goods, but HIMSELF also, as the blessed guest! There He stands, knocking and knocking! Not because *He* needs shelter or food, but because *they* need His company. The house and the table will be poor without Him. He knows this, though they know it not. Therefore He asks admission, that He may come in and bless them with His divine fellowship and love.

XXIII.

THE LOVE AND THE DISCIPLINE.

'*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*'—REV. III. 19.

HOW soon a Church goes down! How quickly its love and holiness and zeal fade away! *One* generation often sees its rise, decline, and fall. Its gold becomes dim; its blossoms wither; its cheek becomes pale, with the symptoms of deadly decline, or flushed with the passions produced by drinking the world's cup, and partaking of the world's fellowships. Spirituality loses ground; worldliness, either in a gross or a refined form, steals in; reality in religion disappears; enjoyment of prayer and the Bible ceases; pleasure, politics, and exciting literature supply the place which the things of God once held. First love is gone. Joy and peace become strangers. Religious formalism, routine, ritualism, by which a man is enabled to quiet his conscience with a few external performances, while devoting the rest of his time to vanity or business, are adopted. The soul withers; the eye that looked upward now looks downward; and the once 'religious man,' who 'did run well,' takes the downward path into lukewarmness or death. Yet Jesus leaves him not. He hateth putting away. He pursues His

fugitive. He pleads with the backslider,—'Return, and I will heal.'

I. *The love.*—The 'I' here is emphatic, and by its prominence Christ presents Himself specially as the lover, the rebuker, the chastener. His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor our ways His ways. He loves where others would hate. He shows His love by *chastening* where others would show theirs by *indulging*. 'He that spareth the rod, hateth the child;' 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.' Herein is love, love to Laodicea, even in her lukewarmness. It is not 'Repent, that I may love thee;' it is, 'I love thee, therefore repent.' The sinner, whether of Ephesus, or Sardis, or Laodicea, as long as he remains self-satisfied and happy in his worldliness, cares nothing for any love higher than the creature's. He loves the world, and he would fain have the world to love him. This would be his heaven; his gods and goddesses would all be here. But when trial comes, and sorrow lays hold, and the deep consciousness of evil burdens, and the prospect of coming wrath rouses him, then he looks round and asks for love. 'Is there any one to love *me*, any one that *can* love one so unlovable?' The answer is, None on earth; but One in heaven. Jesus loveth still. All Laodicea's unlovableness has not quenched His love. The worst of the seven Churches is that which receives His fullest words of love,—'the love that passeth knowledge.'

II. *The discipline of love.*—Mark the way in which this love deals with Laodicea. It deals in tenderness, and yet in solemn severity. Instead of letting Laodicea escape, it

takes hold of her, as a wise father of his disobedient child, and makes her sensible how much it hates the sin. Love cannot bear lukewarmness. It expects love for love; and will leave no method untried in order to win back the straying heart, however far it has gone, either in indifference or hatred.

(1.) *I rebuke.*—He reproves by word and deed. His words are full of tendernesss, yet also conveying solemn and searching rebuke. Such rebuke may be 'His strange work,' for 'fury is not in Him.' Yet He does administer the rebuke when it is needed,—not harshly, yet sometimes severely; for He speaks as one who has authority, and who will not be mocked.

(2.) *I chasten.*—What the chastening was we know not: it would be something specially suited to the self-sufficiency and worldliness of the Laodiceans. Perhaps they were stripped of their riches; perhaps visited by sickness and death; laid desolate by grievous sorrow; some heavy blow, or some long-continued trial, stroke upon stroke, crushing and emptying them. The chastisement, we are sure, would correspond with the cherished sins, searching the conscience and breaking the heart in pieces. For the Lord leaves not His own, even in their backsliding; nor indeed any who name His name. The unbelieving world may be allowed to go on unchecked in its wickedness and vanity, but they who call themselves Christ's may expect discipline. By naming His name, they have brought themselves under His special rule, and He will deal with them as He dealt with Laodicea. They profess to be His, to have been bought by Him, to follow Him;

they must therefore know His rod, and be treated differently from those who reject His sway and service. Discipline, because of permitted sin, because of indulged worldliness, because of defection from truth or holiness,—discipline, it may be, of no ordinary severity,—they must be prepared for. In faithfulness as well as love He will chasten. Whatever it may cost, they must be made to feel the evil of their ways.[1]

III. *The exhortation of love.*—Be zealous, therefore, and repent. The word *zealous* contrasts with *lukewarmness*, and implies true warmth and fervour. Whilst He says, 'I would thou wert cold or hot,' He shows by this word 'zealous' that He desires to see zeal quickened in this Church, and luke-

[1] 'If they have drunk of Christ's cup, and tasted the bread of His table, it is not with them as in time past. They have a portion in destinies which other men have not; and as having destinies, they have conflicts also. They came for a blessing, and they have found a work. They find that their lot is changed,—that, in one shape or other, adversity happens to them. One blow falls,—they are startled; it passes over,—it is well. They expect nothing more. Another comes,—they wonder. Why is this? they ask. They think that the first should be security against the second. Then a third comes,—they almost murmur. They have not yet mastered the great doctrine that endurance is their portion. Is not this the law of thy being since thou camest to Christ? Why didst thou taste His heavenly feast, but that it might work in thee? Why didst thou kneel beneath His hand, but that He might leave on thee the print of His wounds? Why wonder, then, that one sorrow does not buy off the next? Does one drop of rain absorb the second? Does the storm cease because it has begun? Understand thy place in God's kingdom, and rejoice, not complain,—that in thy day thou hast thy lot with prophets and apostles. Envy not the gay and thriving world. The Church ever suffers in maintaining her ground. She fights, and she suffers in proportion as she plays her part well; and if she is without suffering, it is because she is slumbering.'

warmness done away. Be zealous! Be fervent in spirit! Have done with coldness and half-heartedness! Rouse thee into the fervour of thy early days, ere this lukewarmness fall upon thee! Repent also! Repent of thy present miserable estate; of thy apostasy, and declension, and worldliness! Repent in dust and ashes! Retrace thy steps! Awake thou that sleepest! Thy estimate of thyself is high; come down from thy loftiness. Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. Come down from thy self-sufficiency, and learn that thou art not what thou thinkest thyself to be. God's estimate of thee and thy estimate of thyself are widely different. Know thyself as He knows thee. Take His estimate of thy poverty and blindness, and cast thyself down before Him. Thou art not the Laodicea of other days. Thou must go back to thy early zeal, and faith, and love. Be not high-minded, but fear. Abhor thyself, and turn from thy lukewarmness.

All this is the language of love; it is the treatment of love. It is love that is rebuking, and chastening, and exhorting. Hear the voice of *love*,—the unchanging *love* of Him who yearns over thee in thy declension, and longs to see thee restored. This was the beginning of *thy love*, as well as of *thy confidence*. 'We have known and believed the love which God hath to us.' Go back to *this*, and what thou didst get there at first thou wilt get there again. Know that GOD IS LOVE.

XXIV.

CHRIST'S LOVING EARNESTNESS.

'*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*'—REV. III. 20.

THIS is the sound of a trumpet. Yet it is not the *iron*, but the *silver* trumpet that here sounds out, 'Behold.' The Church is asleep, and needs to be awakened; or she is busy with worldliness and pleasure, and needs to be recalled to Him whom she is forgetting. Jesus loves her, but she loves not Jesus; or at least has grown lukewarm in her love. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold. Laodicea is the worst of the seven Churches; of whom her Lord has not one good thing to say. She has not rejected His name, nor disowned His cross, nor departed from the faith; but she is neither cold nor hot. She is one whom it is difficult to know how to deal with or to discipline. If she were 'cold,' He would put her under special discipline; if she were 'hot' ('fervent in spirit,' Acts xviii. 25; Rom. xii. 11), He would commend her, and make her to become more and more fervent. But she is in the worst state of all,—'lukewarm;' distasteful and useless,—and therefore she must be 'spued out,'—rejected as utterly loathsome, in the most loathsome way. Yet it is to this Church that the

Lord sends His most gracious messages,—loving her to the last. As He sent His words of largest grace to Israel in their worst state, by the prophets in the Old Testament, and by His Son in the New, so He does to Laodicea. The *tone* of this epistle is marvellous for its kindliness; and the *words* no less marvellous for their generosity and tenderness. This is not the manner of men; but it is truly the way of the Lord,—of Him who came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

I. *The love of Christ.*—Herein is LOVE. It is the love that passeth knowledge. It is love not to the lovable and the loving, but to the unloving and unlovable. It is love to the worst of sinners, the worst of backsliders; love to those who had left their first love; who had once known Christ and His love, but had begun to go back. It is *free* love. It is *large* love. It is love irrespective of goodness in us. It is love which has broken through many a barrier in order to reach us; love which many waters could not quench, nor the floods drown. This whole verse and this whole epistle breathe true and unambiguous love. There is but one interpretation that can be put upon them—LOVE. If they mean not this, what can they mean? This speaks out in every line. 'I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely.' Here is the fulness of the grace of Him who wept over Jerusalem; who said, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' Here are the good news to all; for that which takes in Laodicea will surely take in the ungodliest, the farthest gone in declension and apostasy. 'Return unto me, ye backsliding children.' 'HOW SHALL I GIVE THEE

UP?' Can even Laodicea answer this question? It is one which God Himself leaves unanswered.

II. *The patience of Christ.*—'I stand at the door.' He *stands*, and He *has stood*, as the words imply,—not afar off, but nigh, at the door. He stands. It is the attitude of waiting, of *perseverance* in waiting. He does not call from a distance; He *comes*. He does not come and go; He *stands*. He does not sit down, or occupy Himself with other concerns. He has *one* object in view,—to get access to this poor Laodicean; and therefore He *stands*. Patiently and untiringly He stands. At the door of a backslider He *stands*. Day after day He is seen in the same posture, immoveable in His patient love. 'Behold, I stand.' Here, surely, is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; the 'meekness and gentleness of Christ;' the patience of Him who endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself.

III. *The earnestness of Christ.*—'I KNOCK.' If the *standing* marks His patience, the *knocking* marks His earnestness,—His unwearied and persevering earnestness; as if He were renewing the ancient oath, and swearing by Himself, because He can swear by no greater, 'As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner.' He calls as well as knocks; for He says, 'If any man hear my VOICE.' One of our modern literary men (Carlyle) has described the Bible as 'that most earnest of all earnest books;' and here is one of the passages which exhibit its unutterable earnestness. Christ does not merely speak or call to Laodicea. He is too much in earnest for that; and, besides, she is so much engrossed with the

world that a *voice* would not reach her deaf ears. It needs knock upon knock to startle her. So He continues knocking; not forcing the door, or using violence, for God always treats us as reasonable and responsible creatures; and, besides, force cannot change the will or heart, and it is with these that Christ has to do; it is into them that He is seeking entrance. We cannot by stripes or angry words compel a man to love us. Hearts are not won either by force or gold. Only love wins love; only earnestness overcomes rebelliousness. Christ treats us *respectfully* as well as reasonably, as we treat each other when wishing to enter their dwelling, counting that dwelling sacred, and only to be entered with the consent of the owner. How *condescending* is the Master; how meek and lowly! How He exemplifies His own precept, 'Knock, and it shall be opened!' Hear His words of old, 'It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night' (Song of Sol. v. 2). We ask,—

(1.) *How does He knock?*—By His word; His warnings; His invitations. By providences; by trials; by comforts; by sorrows; by joys; by family troubles and national calamities; by wars at home or abroad; by the confusions and distresses of nations. By convictions; by sermons; by friends; by the changes of the year. By His Holy Spirit ever working, ever striving. By this message here.

(2.) *When does He knock?*—Continually. Day and night. All the day long. No man passes a day, nay, an hour, without a knock,—sometimes louder, sometimes

gentler. He is always knocking; and His knocks seem to get louder as the last days draw on, and His coming approaches.

O sinner, O Laodicean, listen! The Lord is knocking! Listen! Do not let Him longer stand without. Open, and bid Him welcome.

IV. *The appeal of Christ to the Laodiceans.*—'If any man will hear my voice, and open the door.' It is (1) a loving appeal; (2) it is a personal appeal; (3) it is an honest appeal; (4) it is an earnest appeal. 'If any man!' Here in another form is the oft-repeated 'whosoever' of other places; and the force or point of the expression is, 'Oh that *every* man,—every one of you!' 'If thou hadst known' is equal to 'Oh that thou hadst known;' so 'If any man' means 'Would that each of you!' What an appeal! And is it to do some great thing? No; only to hear His voice and to open the door,—only that. Christ will do all the rest. Hear, O man, O Laodicean! The Lord speaks to you from heaven. Is His voice inarticulate and inaudible? Does He not mean *you?* Are His knockings not for you? Are His love, His patience, His earnestness, not for you? At each door He knocks, saying to the inmate, Hear and open. No lost soul hereafter shall be able to say, He did not knock at my door, else I should have heard and opened. O deaf Laodicean, listen and open, ere it be too late; ere He have gone away and left you alone in your worldliness. Lukewarmness may seem little now, but what will it be hereafter? Christ's knocks may be unheeded now, but each one of them will come back to memory, when too late, to torment you for

ever. Oh hear and open! Quickly, quickly, for the time is short.

V. *The promise of Christ.*—This is threefold, and each of the three parts full of meaning and love.

(1.) *I will come in to him.*—His standing on the outside is of no use to us. No doubt His standing there tells us His love, and forms one of the great items in the good news which we bring even to such a sinner as that of Laodicea. But a mere outside Christ will profit us nothing. An outside cross will not pacify, nor heal, nor save. It must come in; and it comes in upon our believing. We hear the knock, and we say to the knocking One, 'Come in, Thou blessed of the Lord;' and straightway He comes in with His healing, saving cross; He comes in with His divine fellowship and love. The gracious promise is, 'We will come in to him, and make our abode with him' (John xiv. 23). The presence of the Lord Jesus in our dwelling turns darkness into light. His absence is gloom; His presence is glory and gladness.

(2.) *I will sup with him.*—When He comes in, He does not give a hasty salutation, a brief 'Peace be with you,' and then depart. He sits down,—not to rest Himself, as He did at Jacob's well, but to sup with us, as at Emmaus. He comes in as a guest, to take a place at our poor table, and to partake of our homely meal. The King comes in,—not to *His* banqueting-house, but to our upper chamber or earthly cottage. He comes in lowliness and love, as He entered the house of Zaccheus, with 'To-day I must abide at thy house' upon His lips. At this table of ours,

it is He who shares with us what we possess; it is we who give to Him that whereon to feast, and not He to us. Such are the meekness and gentleness of Christ! So affable, so accessible, so condescending He is! The knock comes to every door. Who will shut Him out?

(3.) *He shall sup with me.*—Christ has a banquet in preparation, a feast of fat things,—'the marriage supper of the Lamb.' To this He invites us here, promising that they with whom He sups on earth shall hereafter sup with Him in His kingdom, when that shall be fulfilled which He spoke, 'Hereafter I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of God.' The wise virgins go in to the marriage and the supper; the foolish are shut out. Here is the gracious promise, to be fulfilled hereafter when He comes again in His glory. He first sits down at our table, and then, while sitting there, He gives us the invitation to sit down with Him at His royal table, in the great bridal hall, where the marriage is to be consummated, and the festival held. Now is the fast day; the feast day is coming. The absence shall be ended, the everlasting presence and fellowship begun. We have here a feast in absence, when we feed on the symbols of the body and the blood; but the feast of the presence is coming, when we shall feed on the divine 'shew-bread' (or presence bread), Christ Himself being at once the provider and the substance of the feast. O everlasting festival, when wilt thou begin? O song that never ends, when shall thy first notes be heard? O lamps of the heavenly hall, when will ye be lighted, to shine down on the great supper-table, in the King's own

banqueting-house, where we shall feast for ever, and go out no more?

While Christ is thus knocking at our door, He is bidding us knock at His. 'Knock, and it shall be opened.' He will certainly hear our voice, and open the door to us. He will not be deaf to our voice, nor bar the door, nor keep us standing, nor send us empty away.

Whether the parable of our Lord as to the waiting servants (Luke xii. 35-37) may not point to the same scene as that here in Laodicęa, I do not say. They have some points in common. For it is the Lord that there is said to knock that His servants may open to Him immediately. There is, no doubt, a difference. In Luke He is represented as returning from the wedding to His own house; in the Revelation, He comes to ours. But still, in both cases it is *He* that knocks. His Church will be found in different circumstances when He comes. Then, as well as now, there may be many kinds of knocking; yet in all it is the same earnest desire on His part to be admitted, that is described. He wants to enter. His knock and His voice are sincere and loud. He will not force the door; but still He wants to be in. O Church of God, keep Him not out. How much you lose! For His absence, no outward prosperity, nor riches, nor numbers, can compensate. If He be kept out, all is sadness, and leanness, and poverty. If He be admitted, all is well. Happy the Church with which Christ is daily feasting. Happy the soul in which He has come to dwell, and who, in daily communion by faith, tastes the Bridegroom's love.

XXV.

THE VICTORY AND THE CROWN.

'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.' —REV. III. 21.

THREE persons are set before us here,—the warrior, the conqueror, the king; or, putting the figure in another way, we have,—1. The battle; 2. the victory; 3. the reward.

I. *The battle.*—Common life in this world is a warfare; and hence even worldly men speak and write of 'the battle of life:' much more is the Christian's life a warfare. It is warfare out and out, for all here is hostile. It is called the good fight, the fight of faith, the good warfare.

(1.) *It is inner warfare.*—The 7th of the Romans is the description of this,—the battle between faith and unbelief, between the spirit and the flesh. This war is private, solitary,—with no eye upon the warrior; fought in the closet, on the knees, with the Bible as his weapon; not uncertainly, nor as one that beateth the air.

(2.) *It is outer warfare.*—The enemies are legion; the world, with all its enmities, snares, pomps, pleasures; Satan, with his principalities and powers;—both of these in combination, hating, persecuting, attacking. This is 'the great fight of afflictions' (Heb. x. 32). Thus it is

so far public,—before men; 'we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men.'

(3.) *It is daily warfare.*—It is not one great battle, but a multitude of battles,—constant warring: there is no intermission and no discharge in this war. The enemy wearies not, ceases not; nor must we. We wake to warfare each morning, and go out to warfare each day. Everywhere we find the enemy posted, sometimes openly, sometimes in ambush. The conflict is life-long, and it is daily.

(4.) *It is warfare not fought with human arms.*—The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. We do not war after the flesh. It is in divine strength; with the sword of the Spirit; clothed in the whole armour of God. It begins when we believe. Faith, instead of being the *end*, is the *beginning* of conflict; ours is 'the good (or 'glorious') fight of faith.'

(5.) *It is warfare in which we are sharers with Christ.*—He first fought the good fight, as the Captain of our salvation,—the Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle. The inner warfare indeed was not His, but all the rest was. He fought, when here, the same battles as we; and it is into *His* warfare that we are called to enter. His battle on earth was ours; and our battle now on earth is His. Let us fight it with this remembrance and encouragement. We fight along with Paul, but we also fight along with Christ.

II. *The victory.*—Here it is spoken of as one great final victory, but in reality it is a multitude. As are the battles, so are the victories. There may be occasional defeats,—wounds,—losing ground; but the tide of victory rolls

steadily onward. Inner and outer warfare ends in victory; we are made more than conquerors through Him that loved us. He fought and overcame, and He leads us on to victory: 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' The brunt of the battle fell on Him; He routed the host, and it is with a conquered foe that we have to do. Sin, hell, death, the world, the devil, He has vanquished, and He is now leading us on to the same victory. Seven times in these chapters do we hear the glorious words, 'To him that overcometh.' Each Church had its battle and its victory,—even Laodicea; so has each individual. No one can fight another's battle, or win another's victory; each fights and wins for himself. Fight then, and win; overcome daily; nor faint till the long series of victories is summed up in the one great final triumph,—the triumph of each saint, and of the whole Church of God.

III. *The reward.*—In these epistles seven rewards are promised,—a peculiar reward to each. To Ephesus, the tree of life; to Smyrna, deliverance from the second death; to Pergamos, the hidden manna and the white stone; to Thyatira, dominion and the morning-star; to Sardis, the white raiment; to Philadelphia, to be a pillar and to receive the new name; to Laodicea, a seat on Christ's throne;—each according to his peculiar battle and victory. In Laodicea there are warriors and conquerors,—few, perhaps, but still some; some whose faith remained stedfast, raising them out of lukewarmness and worldliness. To these there is a brilliant hope presented,—a seat upon Christ's throne. In Laodicean times, and a Laodicean Church, be faithful and true!

(1.) *A throne.*—Not salvation merely, or life, but higher than these,—glory, honour, dominion, and power. From being the lowest here, they are made the highest hereafter. Even out of Laodicea there come God's kings and priests, —heirs of the throne.

(2.) *Christ's throne.*—He has a seat on the Father's throne as the reward of His victory; we have a seat on His as the reward of ours. He shares with us His crown and throne. We are made 'joint-heirs' with Him. He is on the Father's throne just now; He will shortly be upon His own. To a seat with Him we look forward; and, cheered by this hope, we fight the good fight of faith. We are sharers or 'partakers with Christ' in all things. We share His battles, His victories, His rewards; His cross, and His crown.

Let us look *forward* then, as well as *backward.* All the promises to these Churches bid us look forward. Amid toil, conflict, weariness, sorrow, backsliding, we have a HOPE! Let us hold it fast; let us use it constantly. In the midst of Laodicean lukewarmness here is something to stimulate and rouse! When our hands hang down, let us think upon THE THRONE; the throne and Him who gives it; the throne and Him who sits on it, and shares it with us. It will be glorious enough to compensate for hardship and conflict now. It may soon be here; we know not how soon. Events are rushing on: Antichrist is waxing strong; Israel is preparing to return; wars are rising; departures from the faith are multiplying; the gospel is going forth as a witness. The King is on His way. Behold, the Bridegroom cometh! Let us watch and be ready.

XXVI.

GLORY TO THE GLORIOUS ONE.

'*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory.*'—REV. IV. 11.
'*In His temple doth every one speak of His glory.*'—PS. XXIX. 9.

THE above verse of the 29th psalm is more exactly rendered in the margin, 'In His temple, every whit of it uttereth glory.' The incense fills the house, and comes forth from it breathing glory. The volume of sound fills the temple in every part, and pours itself from every stone and timber; from floor to roof in every part, proclaiming GLORY. Such was the praise of Israel according to the flesh, in the temple; such is the praise of Jehovah in the heavenly city and temple, ascending everywhere. 'The glory of the Lord filleth the house.'

(1.) *The burden of the praise.*—It is 'glory.' All that is excellent and perfect in Him is the burden of the song that is sung. Glory is the fully developed or unfolded excellency of a thing. The flower is the glory of a plant; the fruit is the glory of the vine or olive. It is the excellency of *Jehovah* that is the theme of praise in His temple; specially the glory of Messiah, for He is the Jehovah of the psalm, the God of Israel. The heavens tell His glory, and earth is full of it. All creation speaks of it,—sea and land, man and beast. But His temple is the

special place which this glory fills, and from which its praise issues forth.

(2.) *The place of the praise.*—His temple,—the place which He built for His worship; where His altar smokes, and His incense arises, and His sacrifices are offered up, and His priesthood minister,—that is the place of the *great self-revelation* and of the proclamation of His glory; the glory of His greatness, and righteousness;—specially of His grace, for when Moses asked to see His glory, He proclaimed Himself as the Lord God, merciful and gracious.

(3.) *The things that praise.*—'Each one,' or 'everything,' or 'every whit of it.' There is no vacant spot; no idle voice; nothing dumb. All is vocal with His praise. Everything utters 'glory.' Every echo is 'glory.' Without and within,—each pillar, each vessel, each chamber, each altar, each priest, each sacrifice,—all and each utter the same sound, 'glory.' Glory to the righteous One! glory to Messiah, King and Priest, Lord of heaven and earth! His name is as ointment poured forth; His excellency is the burden of every song.

In connection with the words of David, we take up the words of John, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory.' Yes; Jesus, Messiah, the Lamb that was slain, the King on the throne, Creator of the universe, Head of all things, is He who is worthy to receive the glory! And why?

I. *Because of His person.*—As having in Himself all the perfections of the Creator and of the creature; as very God and very man; the Word made flesh;—He is 'worthy to receive glory.' Godhead and manhood, united in one wondrous person, make Him infinitely glorious. Through

Him new glory comes to the whole Godhead. He is the Revealer of the Father. His glory thus overflows, and fills both heaven and earth; nay, the whole universe.

II. *Because of His work.*—The excellency of His propitiation is infinite. It is (1) excellent in itself; (2) in its revelation of divine wisdom; (3) in its manifestation of divine love; (4) in its reconciliation of grace with righteousness; (5) in its everlasting results. Because of such a work it is said, 'Thou art worthy to receive glory.'

III. *Because of His life on earth.*—His whole earthly life was marvellous. There has been nothing like it, neither shall be. It was absolute perfection in every part: the perfection of a human life; the life of a son of Adam; a life upon a fallen earth, assailed by Satan, amid evils, and enemies, and weaknesses, and sorrows; the perfection of infancy, of childhood, of boyhood, of manhood; perfection in the whole round of that which we call the life of man; perfection, not only as measured by man, but as estimated by God: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' Because of this life, it is said, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory.'

IV. *Because of the redemption of His Church.* — His people sing, 'Thou hast redeemed us;' and in the various parts of this redemption, from the eternal purpose to the glorious completion, there is such excellency, such an exhibition of power, and wisdom, and love, that because of this (not simply because of the result, but of the wondrous process) we look up and say, 'Thou art worthy to receive glory.' He said, 'I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou hast given me

to do;' and He who glorified the Father on earth has been by the Father glorified in heaven. 'Father, glorify me,' was His prayer; and it has been fully answered. The Son of man, as the Redeemer of His Church, has been exalted to the glory, and has received the name which is above every name. As the Creator of all things, He is worthy of the glory; still more, as the Redeemer of His Church.

V. *Because of what He is now in heaven.*—He has triumphed over His enemies; He has abolished death; He has emptied the grave; He has risen; He has ascended on high; He ever lives to intercede; He has received the crown of heaven; He is the head of principalities and powers; He sits on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. Thus enthroned and crowned, mediating and interceding, He receives the homage of heaven, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory.'

VI. *Because of what He is to be and to do when He comes again.*—His excellency, though perfect, cannot be said to be completed. It is always on the increase, as new rays of splendour issue from Him. At His second coming, He appears as King of kings; the renewer of creation; the restorer of Israel; the binder of Satan; the executor of the Father's righteous vengeance on a guilty earth. He comes as Judge, as Deliverer, as the second Adam,—as not only the King of Israel, but the King of earth. Then shall be the fullest manifestation of Godhead, according to the eternal purpose of divine SELF-MANIFESTATION. Well may this song be sung: 'Thou art worthy to receive glory.'

(1.) *Let us appreciate His excellency.*—Taking God's testimony to Him, and God's estimate of His glorious worth, let us prize Him as He deserves to be prized. 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.'

(2.) *Let us thoroughly trust and love Him.*—He merits all our trust and love. Let us do justice to His love, and love Him in return.

(3.) *Let us make use of His fulness.*—It contains all we need, and it is always accessible; a well of heavenly water; a storehouse of inexhaustible provisions; a treasury of infinite wealth.

(4.) *Let us bow before Him.*—Every knee is yet to bow. Let us bow before Him and worship Him now on earth, as we shall hereafter in heaven.

(5.) *Let us sing the song of praise.*—When we get a glimpse of Him now, we praise Him; when we shall see Him as He is hereafter, we will praise Him more, and sing the song of the redeemed, 'Thou art worthy to receive glory.'

XXVII.

THE WEAKNESS AND THE POWER OF CHRIST.

'*A Lamb as it had been slain.*'—REV. v. 6.
'*Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*'—1 PET. III. 18.
'*To you-ward He is not weak, but is mighty toward you; for He was crucified through weakness, yet liveth by the power of God.*'—2 COR. XIII. 3, 4.

MARK the contrasts given us in these three passages: the Lamb slain, and the Lion of the tribe of Judah; death and life, the flesh and the spirit, crucifixion and resurrection, weakness and power.

These words, which read almost as if the one contradicted the other, bring us to the cross of Christ, show His empty tomb, and proclaim a risen Lord, to whom all power is given. The third passage is more detailed and explicit than the first; let us take our outline from it, keeping, however, the others before us. This third passage affirms also our connection both with the weakness and power of Christ, with His death and life. We are one with Him in death and life; we have fellowship with Him both in His weakness and strength. As He lives again by the power of God, so do we. As He was put to death in the flesh, so are we; as He was quickened by the Spirit, so are we.

There are two affirmations here made concerning Christ,

—the one negative, the other positive; the first as to His non-weakness, the second as to His power.

I. *His non-weakness.*—He is not weak in Himself, says the apostle; nor is He weak toward you. He *is* Judah's Lion, though for a season He does not act as such. Yet there are many things which look like weakness in His person and history, and in His Church's history.

(1.) *He entered our world an infant,*—helpless as the most helpless of the sons of men. He was scarce born when He had to flee from danger. His life was feebleness: He was persecuted, and had to hide Himself once and again; He was taken prisoner, bound, tried, condemned, by a Roman judge. Was all this not weakness? From infancy He is the Lamb.

(2.) *He was crucified.*—This is the event which the apostle takes hold of, conceding it as a proof of weakness. He was crucified through weakness. Every part of that awful event betokens weakness,—His submitting to an unjust sentence; His allowing Himself to be scourged, bound, buffeted; then nailed to the tree; then crucified. All was weakness,—weakness just like that of the thieves at His side. He is the Lamb SLAIN.

(3.) *His departure from earth.*—True, He rose. But after His resurrection there was no forthputting of power; and He left this earth without avenging Himself on His enemies, as if unable to do aught against them,—as if they had prevailed against Him, and succeeded in banishing Him.

(4.) *The Church's history since He left.*—He left, saying, 'All power is given unto me;' 'Lo, I am with you always.' But the story of the Church since then has been one of

weakness, not of power. A bare existence is all that she has had, amid persecution and mockery; divisions, backslidings, inconsistencies within, hatred and hostility without; no progress in the earth; gaining a little in one place, losing it in another; her members, like the conies, a feeble folk, making their nest in the rock; made up of smoking flax and bruised reeds. 'Harmless as doves,' is the Master's picture of His disciples. Does not this look like weakness in her Head?

(5.) *The world's history since He left.*—Earthly power and glory have increased; empires of idolatry have risen; Paganism, Popery, Mohammedanism divide the world between them. The name of Christ is not a name of power among the nations; it takes no place in commerce, or politics, or war, or art. The world honours not, obeys not, the Son of God. It is in rebellion against Him; and this rebellion has lasted centuries, and is not yet put down. Is this weakness, or is it not?

(6.) *The progress of error and evil since He left.*—Evil has not diminished; the human heart has not improved; sin has not been dried up; evil men and seducers wax worse and worse; and the last days are the worst. Errors multiply; infidelity is leavening society, and working its way into the Church of God. The Bible is assailed; the gospel is denied; the cross is ridiculed; the blood is repudiated; the authority of Christ—Prophet, Priest, and King—is disowned. Satan, too, still works; death still triumphs; pain and disease are still at large, working woe and havoc in God's creation. Does not this look like weakness? Does it seem as if evil had got the upper hand entirely?

Yet, in spite of all these strange phenomena in Christ's own history and that of His Church, the apostle declares, 'He is not weak;' He is not weak in Himself; He is not weak to us. Whatever may be the cause of these anomalies, it is not weakness, and never has been so. The weakness is only in appearance; and even that appearance is but temporary.

II. *His power.*—He is mighty,—mighty not only *toward* you, but *in* you; mighty in the midst of you; mighty in your hearts. Apparent weakness, but real and true power. This is the wonder; and in this wonder there are contained other wonders,—wonders of wisdom, love, and long-suffering; wonders which could not have been exhibited in any way but this; this marvellous adjustment of forces, moral and physical; this holding of His own for ages against the augmenting power of creature-evil and creature-hostility; this meeting each fresh development of evil by wondrous appliances of His own,—all of them moral and spiritual, not miraculous or forcible; keeping the vast hostile forces of earth and hell in check by invisible influence; saying, yet not audibly, to the tides and billows of the stormy deep, Thus far, but no farther; reserving the great physical demonstration of His power till the day when He comes to take vengeance on His enemies.

Yes, says the apostle, He is *mighty*. Whatever appearances may say; whatever we might be tempted to infer from the power of the world and the weakness of the Church; from the prevalence of evil and the scantiness of good; from the depression of His friends, and the elevation of His enemies;—He is *mighty*—mighty in Himself,

and in all things pertaining to Him. His word is mighty; His gospel is mighty; His purposes are mighty; the arm with which He wields the world's sceptre, and holds Satan's bridle, is mighty. He is mighty over the world, and in the world; mighty over the Church and in the Church, and in behalf of the Church; so mighty, that no weapon forged against her, or against one saint, shall prosper; so mighty, that she is entirely safe,—secure in the midst of danger, and wiles, and power. All His strength is ours; it belongs to the Church; it belongs also to each member of His body. We are strong in the Lord.

The weakness of the Lamb slain belongs to the Church; yet also the strength of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. She can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth her. She liveth by the power of God. The source of her strength is above, and the preservation of her heavenly strength is connected with the preservation of her Nazarite locks. When these, the pledges and marks of her consecration, are shorn, she becomes weak like other men.

Our strength is not in numbers, nor wealth, nor political influence, nor human learning, but in Him who was crucified through weakness. He is both the wisdom and the power of God. The arm of flesh has always been a broken reed for the Church of God. It is in the power of a risen and glorified Christ,—in the power of the Holy Ghost,—that she is strong. It is only in this power that she can be holy, or work for God, or fight His battles, or war with Satan, or confront the gathering hosts of evil, or contend with error, or win the everlasting victory.

XXVIII.

HOW LONG?

'*And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*'—REV. VI. 10.

THE words 'How long?' occur frequently in Scripture, and are spoken in various ways: (1) As from man to man; (2) as from man to God; (3) as from God to man.

The passages in which the words are between man and man may be briefly noticed. They are such as, Job viii. 2, '*How long* wilt thou speak these words?' xix. 2, '*How long* will ye vex my soul?' Ps. iv. 2, '*How long* will ye turn my glory to shame? . . . love vanity?' lxii. 3, '*How long* will ye imagine mischief against a man?' They are the complaint of the troubled against his troublers, and of the righteous against the wicked. Strange interchange of words between man and man! But we do not dwell on this. We come to the other two, in their order.

I. *The words as from man to God.*—Looking up to God, man breathes the deep-drawn sigh, 'How long?' Let me note the chief passages: Ps. vi. 3, 'My soul is sore vexed: but Thou, O Lord, how long?' Ps. xiii. 1, 'How long wilt Thou forget me? . . . hide Thy face? how long shall I take counsel in my soul, sorrow in my heart? how long shall

mine enemy be exalted over me?' Ps. xxxv. 17, 'How long wilt thou look on?' Ps. lxxiv. 10, 'How long shall the adversary reproach?' Ps. lxxix. 5, 'How long wilt Thou be angry?' Ps. lxxxix. 46, 'How long wilt Thou hide Thyself?' Ps. xc. 13, 'Return, O Lord, how long?' Ps. xciv. 3, 4, 'How long shall the wicked triumph?' Hab. i. 2, 'How long shall I cry?' Rev. vi. 10, 'How long, O Lord, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood?' These are the chief passages in which the expression occurs. Instead of dwelling on each of these in succession, let me thus sum up and classify their different meanings. It is the language—

(1.) *Of complaint.*—It is not murmuring or fretting, yet it is what the Psalmist calls 'complaining.' The righteous man feels the burden and the sorrow and the evil that have so long prevailed in this present evil world, and he cries, 'How long?' Have these not lasted long enough? Would that they were done! In this complaint there is weariness, and sometimes there is sadness,—almost despair,—when unbelief gets the upper hand. Creation groans. Iniquity overflows. Death reigns. The wicked triumph. God seems to forget the earth and to hide His face. The saint 'groans within himself, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body.' 'Woes me,' he says, 'that I dwell in Mesech!' Yes, we that yet are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened. We daily cry, 'How long?' We are oppressed, and oftentimes cast down. We are not desponding, yet we cannot laugh with the world.

(2.) *Submission.*—While impatience sometimes rises, yet the cry does not mean this. It is really a cry of submis-

sion to a wise and sovereign God. It is the cry of one putting all events, as well as all times and seasons, into His hands, as Jesus did in Gethsemane. When we pray for deliverance, or plead for the Lord's coming, we do not mean to be impatient, but simply to utter our weariness, to unbosom ourselves to a gracious God. While we say, How long? we say also, Not my will but Thine be done. We utter our own conscious helplessness, and put all into the hands of God.

(3.) *Inquiry.*—In all the passages there is an implied question. It is not merely, Oh that the time would come! but, *When* shall it come? We may not 'know the time how long,' but we ask earnestly, with the prophet, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? We are warranted in asking, for God has given the prophetic word, that our inquiries may be stimulated and directed. The disciples *inquired*, and Christ answered fully (Matt. xxiv. 3, 4).

(4.) *Expectation.*—It is the voice of faith, and hope, and longing desire. The present is dark, the future is bright; God's word is sure concerning the coming glory; and so we, looking for and hasting to that glory, and depressed with the evil here, cry out day by day, 'How long?' When will the day dawn? When will the kingdom come? When will the glory break forth? Faith hears the voice of the Beloved, and says, 'Make haste;' it hears His 'Behold, I come quickly,' and it says, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' We 'look for and hasten (unto) the coming of the day of God' (2 Pet. iii. 12).

II. *The words as from God to man.*—I note the fol-

lowing instances: Ex. x. 3, xvi. 28, 'How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself?' Josh. xviii. 3, 'How long will ye be slack to go in and possess the land?' 1 Kings xviii. 21, 'How long halt ye between two opinions?' Ps. lxxxii. 2, 'How long will ye judge unjustly?' Prov. i. 22, vi. 9, 'How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?' Jer. iv. 14, 'O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be heard: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?'

Taking up these words of God as spoken to different classes, we would dwell on the following points:—

1. *Long-suffering.*—Jeremiah's words to Jerusalem are the words of a long-suffering God, 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' He is the infinitely long-suffering God, and as such most unwilling to smite. He speaks in pity to the sinner, 'How long wilt thou not be saved?' like Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.

2. *Expostulation.* — How long halt ye between two opinions? How long shall ye be of deciding? How long of trusting me? How long will ye treat me as a false God, and do injustice to my grace?

3. *Entreaty.*—How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? God beseeches man; He entreats him to give up his sin, to come and be saved. How long will ye refuse my love?

4. *Earnestness.*—God's words are all *sincere.* They are not the language of duplicity or pretence. He means what He says, and He says what He means. 'Ye will not come to me!' 'How often would I have gathered thy children!' 'O that thou hadst known!'

5. *Sorrow.*—It is not at random that God says, How long? His are not mere words of course. 'It grieves Him at His heart.' Every moment's continuance in unbelief is vexing and grieving the Spirit.

6. *Upbraiding.*—As He upbraided Israel with being slack to go in and possess the land, so He upbraids us. There is the land, the kingdom, why do ye not go in? The door is open; the way is clear.

7. *Warning.*—As He warned the judges and princes in Israel, so does He us. How long will ye deal unjustly? He said to them. How long will ye persist in your unrighteousness and unbelief? He says to us. The day of grace is ending. The day of wrath is coming. Be warned. Flee from the wrath to come.

XXIX.

THE RECOMPENSE OF MARTYRDOM.

'*And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*'—REV. VI. 10, 11.

THE chief symbols in this chapter are *horses*,—expressing the external, visible human (or earthly) agencies employed in the scenes and events predicted.[1] Here it is not *angelic* forces that are at work, but *human*. In like manner, it is not angels who open the seals, but the Lamb. Angels blow the trumpets, and pour out the vials; but everything relating to the seals belongs directly to the Lamb,—the Lion of the tribe of Judah. This chapter, then, is peculiarly connected with Him: it begins with His opening of the seals, and it ends with His infliction of wrath. The Son of God has much to do with earth and its nations, even though seated at the Father's right

[1] The frequency with which the connective particle *and* occurs in the Apocalypse ought to be noted. In this short chapter it will be found nearly sixty times. It is difficult to give its exact force in each case; but its very frequent occurrence gives the idea of rapidity and vehemence in the speaker or writer. This book is like the rush of a whirlwind. 'Shortly' and 'quickly' are its key-notes.

hand. 'His eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves' (Ps. lxvi. 7). He is Judge and King of earth; the holder of the golden sceptre, and the wielder of the iron rod. We speak of 'Providence' when we should speak of *Christ*. As He walketh among the seven golden candlesticks, so does He go to and fro among the thrones of earth; for the kings of the earth are as responsible to Him for service in their appointed spheres as are the ministers of the churches. Because this is the day of the fourth Gentile empire, the dispensation of election and of the Church's pilgrim state, therefore some strangely conclude that the responsibility of kings and nations to serve the Son of God does not exist! As if, because Scripture foretells the persecution of the Church, therefore kings do not sin in persecuting her, but rather fulfil God's will! As if, because the Church's state in this dispensation is that of being trodden down, therefore it is the duty and vocation of earthly rulers to tread her down! 'We will not have this man to reign over us' is the wild shout of earth's nations and kings; for they know that He claims supremacy, and that supremacy they hate. Christ's supremacy in the State is as true and real a thing as His supremacy in the Church. The full development of that supremacy over kingdoms man resents and resists; and many Christians seem to think it a carnal doctrine, unworthy of men who believe in the Church's heavenly calling. Yet it is the full development of that supremacy that is to make earth a holy, peaceful, glorious kingdom; and it is for that development that we pray, 'Thy kingdom come.'

This, no doubt, is the day of the Church's tribulation and persecution. Hence we find in our text reference to the martyrs,—their death and testimony. But in their death they testify to Christ as Prince of the kings of the earth, the avenger of their blood upon those rulers that had slain them. Their 'souls'—that is, they, even when separate from the body—are seen under the altar, as if all gathered there, as one by one they passed from the fire, or the sword, or the torture. The place of martyr-gathering is the altar of God. The place of ashes and of blood is the place where they lie.[1]

I. *The martyr-cry.*—It is the widow's cry, 'Avenge me of mine adversary.' It is the cry which we so often find in the Old Testament (especially the Psalms), and because of which some Christians have rashly concluded that the old saints were much more imperfect than we, and had a lower standard of morality and spirituality; forgetful that the psalms objected to are the words of the Son of God Himself; forgetful also of such a passage as that of our text, containing the feeling, not only of New Testament saints, but of the 'spirits of the just made perfect.' The arguments used by some in arguing against 'the revengefulness of the Old Testament saints,' are such as would, if true, condemn the verdict of the Judge, 'Depart, ye

[1] The word 'altar,' used alone, seems always to denote the *brazen* altar. The inner altar is distinguished by a suitable designation,—'golden altar,' or 'altar of incense.' In this passage, and in chapter viii., both altars seem referred to, as if brought into juxtaposition; so that the angel stands at the brazen altar first, and then takes the fire from it to fill his censer, and goes with it to the 'golden altar before the throne.'

cursed,' and make the doctrine of future punishments inconsistent with Christianity,—a relic of patriarchal barbarism or Jewish bloodthirstiness. 'How long, O Lord (or O Master), holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth!' This has been that long and bitter cry of the ages,—not loud, indeed, but deep; the cry of the injured; the cry, not of mere personal feeling, but of righteousness trampled on, and all holy government subverted by the slaughter of the saints. It may seem 'narrow,' or worse than 'narrow,'—it may be called 'bigotry,' or worse than bigotry,—to sympathize with such sentiments; but there the words stand. Let modern sentimentalists tell us what they mean, or else boldly proclaim them false and cruel. The day is at hand when such sentimentalism shall be valued at what it is worth, and the great truths of a righteous law, and a righteous sceptre, and a righteous Judge, and a righteous recompense, shall be acknowledged as at once the basis and the corner-stone of a happy universe.

II. *The martyr-honour.*—'White robes were given them.' Each of these martyrs, as they passed from the persecution of earth, entered the holy presence with the cry, 'How long?' and as the immediate answer to this, and the pledge of yet brighter things, white robes were given; white robes,—the earnest of triumph and splendour, the earnest of eternal joy and song, the earnest of the festal and bridal day. What a contrast to the poverty of their raiment here, as they came out of prison; to the blood-stains and filth upon their earthly apparel! White robes! This is God's immediate response to the beloved and

honoured band. They cry, 'How long?' and He speaks to His angels, saying, 'Bring forth the best robe and put it on them.' Such is martyr-honour and blessedness even now!

III. *The martyr-rest.*—They get immediate *rest* as well as honour. 'To you who are troubled,' the apostle says, 'God will recompense *rest* with us' (2 Thess. i. 7). The fulness of the rest,—the Sabbatism (Heb. iv. 9),—is in reserve for the Lord's revelation from heaven; but *rest*, meanwhile, is theirs;—rest, how sweet after the torture and toil of earth! It may be that there is *peculiar* rest for the martyr-band; and yet there is rest for all who are the Lord's, even though they may not have passed to it through the flames. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may REST from their labours; and their works do follow them' (Rev. xiv. 13). They sleep in Jesus; not the sleep of unconsciousness or death, but the sleep of blessedness —the 'sleep of the beloved'—the 'rest' of paradise, with Him who has 'rested' from His toils and sufferings, and who bids them come and share His rest.

IV. *The martyr-hope.*—It is not expressly mentioned here. It is something which shall be given when the whole band is gathered;[1] the whole martyr-band from

[1] See Heb. xi. 39, 40, where the apostle shows that the hope of the Old Testament saints was the same as the New; only they were to wait till their New Testament brethren were gathered in. The words may thus be paraphrased: 'These all, although they obtained a good report through this faith of theirs, yet did not receive the thing promised ('things hoped for,' ver. 1), God having laid up in store that better thing (to which they were looking) for us, that they without us

the beginning. The seven epistles reveal that hope; and the three closing chapters of this book unfold it more fully. It is the hope of the first resurrection; of reigning with Christ; of entry into the celestial city; of the crown of life; of the inheritance of all things.

Prospects like these sustain, and comfort, and purify. We are to look into the future, that we may realize the details of this hope, as God has made them known. We may not be called to martyrdom; but we are called to labour and suffering, to self-denial and self-sacrifice. The bright future of the Church, both between death and resurrection, and after resurrection, throughout the everlasting ages, is meant to tell upon us here. With such a future, can we be worldly, or pleasure-loving, or self-pleasing? Shall we live here, unworthy of our hope, unworthy of our place hereafter in the kingdom? Shall we turn aside from the path which the Master trod? Or shall we shrink from the crown of thorns, even though there were to be no crown of glory? Shall not the love of Christ constrain us to serve, at whatever cost, Him who bought us with His blood, and who has bought for us such a glory as that which shall so soon be ours?

should not be perfected.' Thus all the saints, from Abel downward, are to be crowned together, as the one great family of faith. Simultaneous entrance into the one glory is the truth with which the apostle sums up this marvellous summary of the faith of the ancient saints, into whose privileges and hopes we in these last days have entered. They were the men of whom the world was not worthy; while we in this age lag far behind,—some of us, it may be, only to be saved 'so as by fire,' instead of having the abundant entrance which these ancient worthies are to obtain.

XXX.

PENT-UP JUDGMENT.

'*And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*'—REV. VII. 1-3.

THE scenes in the sixth chapter are scenes of judgment, ending with the great day of the wrath of the Lamb,—no interval of blessedness between; no millennium before the great and dreadful day. The seventh chapter is *in vision* after the sixth, but not necessarily in *fulfilment;* for both in the Old Testament and New we find a vision running on to the Advent, and then the next coming back and going over the same period for another purpose;—so that 'after these things' refers generally to the sequence of the vision, not of the fulfilment.

The seventh chapter, then, does not take up the *events* at the close of the sixth. 'After these things' refers simply to the order of vision, not of execution; that execution or fulfilment may go back over the whole events of the previous chapter. Without, however, attempting to

determine this more minutely, we take the seventh chapter as describing a time (1) of pent-up judgment; (2) of sealing; (3) of ingathering.

I. *Pent-up judgment.* — Righteousness produces judgment, and grace restrains it. Grace does not nullify or cancel judgment; it simply suspends it. The history of our earth is one of suspended judgment. In the case of every sin, righteousness calls for a sentence against it, and for the execution of that sentence. The sinner who accepts the Substitute obtains complete and immediate remission, by the transference of his guilt and sentence to the Sin-bearer. He who refuses the Substitute braves the sentence, and takes his risk of the vengeance. In his case the sentence is not immediately executed; the wrath is treasured up; the judgment is pent up; the cup is allowed to overflow. But sooner or later the vengeance comes. It may be long pent up, but it comes at last. Of this judgment, we may say that it is—

(1.) *Slow.* — When it comes, it comes swiftly; but meanwhile it is slow of foot (*tardo pede*),—not rash, nor precipitate. This slowness often deludes the sinner.

(2.) *Silent.*—It makes no sign. The fermenting elements are noiseless. There are often no thunder-clouds, but a calm, blue sky.

(3.) *Sure.*—It will not miss its mark, nor mistake its victim, nor forget its time. Its slowness and silence contribute to its certainty.

(4.) *Terrible.*—The blow, when it comes, is overwhelming. The pent-up torrent, when it breaks its barrier, carries all before it. The lightning comes noiselessly, but

resistlessly. So God's vengeance is infinitely terrible. Who can stand before it?

The pent-up judgment for the earth, or for a kingdom, is like the above. The storm gathers, but the four angels hold it in, till it can be restrained no longer. Frequently it tries to break out, but is restrained by the 'four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth.' We hear of wars and rumours of wars, and earthquakes in different places. These are the judgments breaking through their barriers, and then forced back again. The storm is pent up. It gets a little vent, as if one of the four angels had for a moment lost his hold; and then it is restrained, for the time is not yet come. We are living in a day of pent-up judgment,—the fire ready to descend, the storm ready to burst forth. How solemn to all! How startling to the sinner! How rousing to the saint! The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

II. *The sealing.*—In the chapter before us it is a Jewish multitude that is specially *named* as sealed; but as in verse third it is the 'servants of God' that are said to be sealed, we may infer that by that expression both Gentile and Jew are meant. The sealing seems (as in Ezek. ix.) to intimate exemption from the earthly judgments of a particular time. I do not dwell on this further than to point out God's care for His own in days of trouble,—as in Noah's days, in Lot's days, in Ezekiel's days, in the time of Jerusalem's great siege. I would remind you of the 91st psalm also, which is specially written for evil days. It is true that in general the good as well as the evil suffer in times of pestilence, or war,

or trial; but still it will be found that there is oftentimes an *alleviation* (sometimes an *exemption*) of the saints from the evils of the evil day. In all cases and times *God's care for His own* is abundantly manifest. He covers them with His feathers, and under His wings He bids them trust. He is their shield and buckler. As He protected Israel in the day of the slaughter of Egypt's first-born, so does He still. In that day the *blood* was His seal set on Israel; and other such seals He has for every evil day. He sends His angels to *seal* His servants, that the evil may not come nigh them. Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith? Trust ye in the Lord for ever. Sealed and safe! Is not this blessedness, whatever may be coming on the earth?

III. *The ingathering.*—It is not simply for temporal protection that God stays His judgments, but for *salvation.* A time of pent-up judgment is a time of *ingathering.* A time of judgment may also be so, but a time of suspended judgment still more so. For at such a time God is *in earnest,*—in earnest in His *grace,* in earnest in His *righteousness.* He is not slumbering nor sleeping. He is urging us to repent, saying, O that they would hearken to my commandments! Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? He is yearning over us with His 'How shall I give thee up?' He is weeping over us with His 'O that thou hadst known!' His long-suffering is salvation; His patience is life eternal. He pities to the last. Fury is not in Him. Judgment is His strange work.

At such a time the gospel comes with peculiar power. When we tell men that they are living under a fiery cloud of suspended wrath; when we cry aloud to them of coming

doom and treasured vengeance; we are approaching them with the strongest motive of fear; and when we tell them of infinite love, of divine long-suffering, of the patience and forbearance of that God who willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, we approach them with the strongest argument that can win a human heart. We entreat them to flee from the wrath to come. We point them to the cross, and ask them to look and be healed. We beseech them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God; for now is the accepted time; the day of vengeance is at hand.

XXXI.

THE GREAT MULTITUDE.

'*After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*' —REV. VII. 9, 10.

THE vision of pent-up judgment begins this chapter; then the sealing and the ingathering. Our text is the result of the ingathering, as seen in heaven. The process of taking out this people, this election, from Jew and Gentile, may be almost invisible, attended also with labour, and grief, and persecution; but the result is glorious,—visible in heaven. The sower has been doing his work in weeping, but the sheaves are plenteous, and the harvest one of everlasting joy. Let us look at this heavenly vision.

I. *The numbers.*—'A great multitude which no man could number.' The 3000 at Pentecost were a large number, but this is greater. The hundreds and thousands, both in Judea and throughout the Gentile world, at Corinth, Rome, Ephesus, Philippi, and other places, were specimens of the great ingathering; but here we have the aggregate, the summing-up of all. Like Israel, they can-

not be numbered for multitude; they are like the stars of heaven, or the sand which is by the sea-shore. The 'little flock' shall have multiplied into the innumerable company, and the few drops shall become the mighty ocean. What a difference between the *then* and the *now!*

II. *The nationalities.*—This is not the harvest of Israel, but of the world. The word has gone out from Jerusalem into all the earth. All nations hear the gospel, and some out of each of them obey it, and turn to the Lord. Every people furnishes its quota to this great assembly; every tribe has its representatives here; every region, every colour, every language, every kingdom, every people, every age and century. It is the general assembly and Church of the First-born. How various the company in face, in speech, in manners, in dress, in habitation! Here all nationalities meet in one great heavenly nationality, without jealousy or distrust; all one in Him who redeemed them by His blood. Now it is seen that God has made of one blood all nations of the earth, and that under the shadow of the one great Sacrifice all these find shelter,—sinners, yet pardoned; lost, but saved; vile, but washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

III. *The posture.*—'Standing before the throne, and before the Lamb.' 'He that sitteth on the throne' and 'the Lamb' are distinguished the one from the other. This mighty multitude stands before *both.* They 'stand.' It is the posture of triumph and honour; 'having done all, they stand' (Eph. vi. 13). Not bowed down, nor kneeling, nor prostrate, their erect posture indicates the high position to which they have been brought; and especially

is this honour apparent when we see them standing 'before the throne, and before the Lamb;' in the very presence of the King. To stand before the throne is, next to sitting on it, the highest elevation. Both the sitting and the standing are connected with glory; and it would seem as if these 'redeemed' ones sometimes occupied the throne, and sometimes stood before it. Their shame and distance are at an end; glory and nearness are now their portion for ever. They stand before the King, and not before mean men.

IV. *The raiment.*—They are 'clothed with white robes.' Christ's transfiguration-raiment was *white*, shining as the sun; so is theirs (Mark ix. 3). They are like Him in this, as in all else. Their old earthly garments are gone; they have received the glorious raiment which assimilates them outwardly (as they are already inwardly) to their Lord. 'My beloved is white and ruddy' (Cant. v. 10).

(1.) *It is the raiment of heaven.*—Not only is it Christ's robe, but it is that of angels. When they come down to earth, they appear in white, shining garments (Mark xvi. 5; John xx. 12; Acts i. 12); even the seven angels of vengeance are 'clothed in *pure and white* linen' (xv. 6). When Christ appears to John, His 'head and hairs are *white* like wool, as *white* as snow' (Rev. i. 14). The 'stone' is *white* (ch. ii. 17); the horses are *white* (xix. 14); the cloud is *white* (xiv. 14); the throne is *white* (xx. 2). Whiteness, as the combination of all that is beautiful and perfect in colour, is the hue of heaven, and with this the redeemed are invested,—'clothed with *white* robes.'

(2.) *It is the raiment of purity and perfection.*—It is the

fitting raiment of those who are 'blameless' (Phil. ii. 15); 'faultless' (Jude 24); 'unblameable and unreproveable' (Col. i. 22); 'without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing' (Eph. v. 27). No other hue could express the perfect purity of the redeemed. The false Church, the 'mother of harlots,' has her scarlet, and purple, and gold, and gems (ch. xvii. 4); but the true and pure Church has her 'fine linen, clean and white' (ch. xix. 8, 14). 'There is no spot in thee' (Cant. iv. 7).

(3.) *It is the raiment of triumph.*—It is given to him that overcometh (ch. iii. 5). Purple might be the robe of the Roman victor, but Christ's victorious warriors are arrayed in white (ch. xix. 14); as their Captain goes forth on the white horse, 'conquering and to conquer' (ch. vi. 2).

(4.) *It is the bridal dress.*—'White' is the invariable colour used both by the bride and the bridesmaids. So we find it at the marriage of the Lamb. The raiment of the bride is white; at her marriage she wears the robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb. Her dress is connected with the *cross*. She knows what it is to be 'justified by His *blood*' (Rom. v. 9).

(5.) *It is the festal dress.*—At the marriage-supper this is the raiment provided; the bride sits down at the table in the King's pavilion 'arrayed in fine linen, clean and white' (ch. xix. 8). How glad that marriage-day and marriage-feast! How glorious the Bridegroom and the bride!

V. *The badge.*—They had 'palms in their hands.' The palm is the symbol of gladness and of victory. Here it is specially used in reference to the feast of tabernacles, the gladdest of all Israel's festivals (Lev. xxiii. 40). The true

feast of tabernacles, the memorial of our desert sojourn and earthly pilgrimage ended for ever, the saints shall celebrate in the New Jerusalem. Their heavenly palms carried in their glorified hands shall have a meaning then and there unknown before. The days of their mourning shall be ended; their everlasting joy begun.

VI. *The shout.*—They 'cry with a loud voice, Salvation to our God that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb.' It is not a *song* they sing; no measured melody. No harp, nor flute, nor dulcimer are here. It is the irrepressible shout rising and bursting forth from delivered men, from conquerors on a hard-fought field, that have as yet no time to throw their feelings into elaborate song or harmony. What a thrilling shout! Salvation! We are saved at last! We are landed on the shore at last! We are in the New Jerusalem, and before the throne at last! Who would not be there, to join in that 'cry,' that 'loud voice,' that multitudinous shout, that shall fill both earth and heaven! In that day, shall we not be 'satisfied' (Ps. xvii. 15); nay, more than satisfied?

XXXII.

THE EARTHLY AND THE HEAVENLY.

'*What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?*'—REV. VII. 13.
'*We shall be like Him.*'—1 JOHN III. 2.
'*As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*'—1 COR. XV. 49.

'WHO are these?' They are sons of Adam. 'Whence came they?' From the horrible pit and the miry clay. 'We shall be like Him.' When? Not just yet, but when He shall appear; then He shall change our vile body, that it may be like His own glorious body.

'We shall be like Him.' In what? In all things in which it is possible for the created to be like the uncreated. Even now are we the sons of God, but then shall we really *be*, in all respects, soul and body, what we are now only by title.

'We shall be like Him.' Who? They who are His. They who have received this crucified and risen Christ as their Lord and God. He who believeth on Him now shall wear His likeness when He appears.

'We shall be like Him.' How long? For ever. No losing of that likeness in the process of the ages. No feature nor line of a feature becoming effaced, but ever

deepening and deepening,—likeness becoming more like, perfection becoming more perfect, throughout eternity.

Resurrection is presented to us as the terminus of our hope; and yet there is blessedness even before it comes. Not till then is the likeness complete; but there are white robes before. Resurrection perfects the transformation of the earthly into the heavenly; but we read of 'the spirits of the just made perfect.'

In a dying world like ours, it soothes and cheers to think of *resurrection*. Yes, resurrection! How bright the thought and dear the word! But what is that to be to us? For there are two resurrections. Is ours to be the resurrection of the just,—the resurrection unto life? The two last of these three passages speak of the latter; for they refer to those who belong to the risen Head. They are the *we* to whom he refers,—they whom the Son of man came to save, died to quicken, lives to glorify. The white robes are theirs, and likeness to their Lord is theirs.

They are also two sections in the life of such,—one dark, the other bright. There are two heads, two Adams, two images: the first head, or Adam, or image belonging to us as born the first time; the second head, or Adam, or image belonging to us as born the second time.

I. *We have borne the image of the earthly.*—This image or likeness is something which we 'bear' or carry about with us. It is not a casual or occasional thing, but something cleaving to us; inherent in us; evil, carnal, low, unholy. What then is this image of the earthly? It is something pertaining to spirit, soul, and body; it is of the earth, earthly.

(1.) *It is human.*—We are flesh and blood as he was; born of the flesh; as thoroughly human as was our first father; for that which is born of the flesh is flesh.

(2.) *It is sinful.*—The image is not that of his uprightness and perfection, but of his sinfulness. Sin pervades us, actuates us, fills us.

(3.) *It is mortal.*—Death reigns in us, as well as over us. Mortality was Adam's lot; it is ours. Dust we are, and unto dust we return. Corruption, disease, pain, decay, imperfection of every kind, make up the sad image.

This was our lot by birth; it is still in part our lot, though we have been born again. Sad lot! Sad image! Do we not shudder at it? Do we not shrink from ourselves? We are earthly, not heavenly! We are like him who is earthly; nay, we are his sons! We bear his image on us, all over!

II. *We shall bear the image of the heavenly.*—The *as* declares (1) the certainty, (2) the completeness of the resemblance. As certainly and as completely as we have borne the one image, we shall bear the other. The 'heavenly' is of course the last Adam, the Lord from heaven, who was made a quickening Spirit for us. 'We shall be like Him' *hereafter*. We begin to be like Him *now*, as soon as we are begotten again. The *outline* of His image is traced upon us at conversion; our life is to be the filling up of this; the consummation is when He comes again, to raise and glorify us.

Two processes go on: the erasing all the lines of the first Adam's portrait in us; the effacing of our former

selves; the becoming more and more unlike the earthly, more and more like the heavenly. Line by line, feature by feature, the latter takes its place. Intermixed they often are,—the one contending for mastery with the other, like dissolving views,—but in the end the heavenly predominates and prevails; the carnal and grosser elements are struck out or chiselled away, and nothing remains save what is spiritual and celestial. This image, after which we are modelled, is

(1.) *Divine.*—We were created 'in the image of God;' and the new creation restores this lost image, nay, adds to it, intensifies it, stereotypes it for ever. We are made partakers of the divine nature; and thus we take on the image of the heavenly. We are 'born of the Spirit;' 'born from above;' made sons of God; heirs of God; conformed to the image of His Son,—we in Christ, and He in us. All that can be communicated of the divine and the celestial belongs to our regenerated nature. We are raised to a higher level; and while not less truly *human*, we are yet more identified with the *divine*.

(2.) *Holy.*—We take on unholiness at our first conception: 'Behold, we were shapen in iniquity.' We begin to part with this, and to take on the holiness, at our being begotten again; for 'of His own will begat He us.' We are 'born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.' Sin, like the troops of a conquered city, begins to evacuate our conquered being; and holiness, like the troops of the victorious army, enters in to fill up all the room. Sin, all sin, of every form and name, is cast out; holiness, all holiness, of every name and form, in word

and deed, takes its place in us. It is after the image of the Holy One that we are modelled.

(3.) *Immortal.*—The heavenly Adam is immortal. He died once, but He dieth no more; and His immortality is for us. By it we are made immortal; not, indeed, now or here, but in the ages to come, when death is swallowed up in victory. He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like His glorious body. When we awake, we shall be satisfied with His likeness. Resurrection will complete the conformity to the image of the heavenly. Perfection of body as well as soul! No suffering and no sinning!

Is not this hope glorious? Does it not (1) stimulate, (2) sanctify, (3) comfort? Should it not quicken prayer and watchfulness? Such a prospect should not be idle or vain.

In connection with all this, let me notice the apostle's words in another place: 'When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away' (1 Cor. xiii. 10), where we have the imperfect present contrasted with the perfect future.

We love to contrast things. We cannot help doing it,—the past and the present, the present and the future, yesterday and to-day, winter and summer, age and youth, last year and this. Sometimes the contrast is between evil and good, as in the case of death and life. Sometimes it is between the perfect and imperfect, as when we speak of the increase of knowledge. Sometimes it is between the part and the whole, as when we compare the seed and the tree, infancy and age, the progress of a year, and

the progress of a thousand years. These contrasts are profitable. They reprove, or they quicken, or they comfort.

The apostle's object here is to quicken and to comfort. His comparison or contrast is between the present and the future, and this in one special aspect. The present is the imperfect, the future is the perfect; the present the fragmentary, the future the complete. It is not a comparison between the sin of the one and the holiness of the other; between the sorrow of the one and the joy of the other. It is the comparison between the part and the whole; between infancy and manhood; between the blossom and the fruit; between the small fountain and the mighty lake into which its waters expand.

It is of divine revelation, or of our knowledge of it, that the apostle is speaking; and he contrasts the imperfection of our knowledge here with the perfection of our knowledge hereafter. 'We know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.'

All that we have got here are but fragments; perfect in their way and measure, but still fragments. The Bible is but a fragment,—perfect in its different parts, perfect in truth and language, but still a fragment; and if the fragment be so glorious, what will the whole be? It is like photographs or pictures of the different parts of Palestine; each is faithful, but still it is only a part. You have Bethany, or Bethel, or Shiloh, or Nazareth; but these are not the land itself. It is like chips from the temple-wall; true pieces of the very temple; yet mere fragments; not the mighty temple itself. John says that he gives but

a few of the events of his Master's life, telling us that the world could not contain the books that should be written if the whole were told. So is it with revelation in general. All we get here is but a drop; a little light, a little truth, a little knowledge; but we wait for more. And how excellent will that coming fulness be, if the fragments which we have at present be so divinely excellent! O how eagerly should we press forward to this glorious perfection!

1. *There is perfection.*—Blessed thought! Perfection in wisdom, light, holiness, love, and glory. Men speak of the *ideal*, as if perfection were only to be found there; but the perfection announced by the apostle is *real*. It is perfect reality, and it is real perfection. We only get glimpses of it now; but it exists. We see so much evil here, and this is such a broken world, that we sometimes ask, Is perfection possible? It is possible. It is; it shall be: as truly as there is perfection in and with God, so surely is there perfection for us; perfection for heaven and earth; perfection for the universe.

(2.) *It will come in due time.*—God does not mean to keep it for Himself, nor to withhold it from us. He means to give it,—fully, truly, everlastingly. That which is perfect shall come! It may not come immediately, or at once, but in due time it shall. This is God's assurance. Each revolving sun brings it nearer. Nothing shall be able to hinder its arrival and revelation.

(3.) *That which is in part shall be done away.*—The partial, the fractional, the fragmentary, is a necessary part of the present; but it shall cease, and all shall be complete, full-summed, and perfect, in the glorious future.

Nothing of the imperfect shall be carried into the world to come. No vile body there, but the incorruptible, the immortal, the glorified. No dim eye, or dull ear, or falling hands, or feeble knees, or fainting limbs. No ignorance, nor unbelief, nor unteachableness, nor weariness of spirit, nor slowness of comprehension. No haltings, nor stumblings, nor uncertainties, nor doubtings. All that is in part shall be done away. No half-light, nor half-love, nor half-knowledge, nor half-faith, nor half-desires. All that is in part shall be done away. All that we know here we know imperfectly; then shall we know as we are known. Truth we know but in part. Christ we know but in part. His person, His work, His blood, His kingdom, we know but in part. All the things of God, both the natural and the spiritual, we know but in part. But all this is to end. These parts shall become wholes. These beams shall become suns. These drops shall become seas. These fragments of scattered blue in our cloudy sky shall become a glorious firmament. That which is in part shall be done away. No more dimness, or cloud, or vagueness, or guessing, or groping. All shall be fulness, and perfection, and glory, for ever.

What blessedness is in this prospect! How it cheers! How it makes us content with weakness and imperfection for a time! How it quickens us to press forward to the perfect and the glorious!

What misery to miss all this,—to come short of such perfection; nay, to lie down in darkness and sorrow! To have sin, and imperfection, and uncertainty, and weariness, and misery, for our eternal portion!

XXXIII.

THE ALL-FRAGRANT INCENSE.

'*And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.*'—REV. VIII. 3-5.

THE first verse here speaks of the seventh seal and its opening. At its opening 'there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.' As if, in the prospect of some great event about to happen, all heaven was silenced,—only for a brief space,—but still silenced. Its praise ceased; its service was suspended; and all its worshippers were fixing eye and ear upon something which God was about to do. The hush of heaven's perpetual music, its everlasting song, was something awful. The 65th psalm illustrates this: 'Praise waiteth (is *silent*) for Thee, O God, in Zion;' the songs of the sanctuary cease for a season; all is still; no voice is heard of priest or people. Then prayer goes up: 'Unto Thee shall the vow be performed,'—just as in our text, when the much incense goes up with the prayers of all saints. After that all flesh fall down before Him (Ps. lxv. 2); they confess

sin; the chosen ones go in and approach to God. Then by TERRIBLE THINGS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, God answers, as in our text (ver. 5). Such seems to be the meaning of the 'silence in heaven;' as Eliphaz says (Job iv. 16), 'There was silence, and (then) I heard a voice.'

The second verse intimates the great event, or events, for which heaven was silent. God was 'coming out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity' (Isa. xxvi. 20). His people had gone into their chambers (their 'closets,' Matt. vi. 6), and shut their doors about them, and God was coming forth for vengeance. The seven angels who stand before God (nearest to God) receive their trumpets, the sounding of which is to bring woe upon woe on an impenitent earth.

What follows, from the third verse to the fifth, is the first part of the great trumpet scene, or rather the preface to it; the intimation of the terrors in store for earth; the earnest of what is coming; a few drops of the fiery shower; the shower of divine wrath, long pent up, but poured out at last.

I. *The angel and the altar.*—It is the altar that stood in the holy place that is here referred to in the third verse, not the brazen altar; it is the golden altar, the altar of incense; the altar of prayer and praise; the altar at which the priests ministered, and where also blood was sprinkled. In what respects it differed from the mercy-seat (as the place of prayer) does not quite appear. At this altar all who are God's priests, all His royal priesthood, officiate. Here specially they stand, as pleaders with God, as intercessors on behalf of His own or against

His enemies. To this altar the angel comes (not one of the seven), and here he takes his stand for a special purpose. Who he is, and what is his name, we know not. Only once is the name of an angel (Michael) mentioned in this book (xii. 7). All other angels are without name to us, though not without name to God. Strange that so many angels should be spoken of, and no names given! Why he comes to the altar appears from what follows. It is priestly work that he has to perform.

II. *The angel and the censer.*—He comes to act as priest; a priestly messenger from God. As once an angel was seen over Jerusalem with a sword, so here he is seen with a censer. God puts into the hands of one a sword, and of another a censer, as the occasion calls for. The angel is one of those who minister in heavenly places, among heavenly things, which were the pattern of the earthly; and he stands at the incense altar with a *golden* (symbol of what is divine and heavenly) censer in his hands. He has a special errand to discharge. His fellows are about to sound their trumpets of judgment, and, like Aaron and Hur of old, he goes to prepare the way for the avenging of God's people upon the Amaleks of the last days. He goes to awake the slumbering cry of the Church, 'How long wilt Thou not judge?' 'Avenge me of my adversary.' God has sent him on his errand, and given him the golden censer. That censer is the link or connecting rod between the throne of God and the judgments upon the earth. The vengeance is that of the anointed *King* on Zion (Ps. ii. 6); but the introduction of that vengeance is the interposition of the *Priest* above.

III. *The angel and the incense.*—It is no empty censer that he holds; it is not for show that he waves it. Incense is there; incense not his, but supplied by another, though by whom is not said. 'There was *given* him.' It is *much* incense, or, literally, 'many incenses,' out of which were to come innumerable wreaths of fragrant smoke. This incense was to be 'offered with' or 'laid upon,' so as to cover or envelope the 'prayers of all saints,'—yes, all saints, from Abel downwards; for this seems to be the gathering into one of all prayers from the beginning, that at length they may be answered (Luke xviii. 3, 7). Upon the golden altar in front of the throne the prayers of the saints of all ages have been laid; there they have accumulated; the unanswered 'How longs?' not forgotten. At length upon this wondrous heap is poured the heavenly incense; and the whole contents, thus mingled together upon the golden altar, rise up to God in one fragrant cloud, the evil odour of what was earthly, and fleshly, and sinful, and unbelieving in these prayers being so absorbed in the divine fragrance as utterly to disappear, and leave nothing behind but the 'sweet savour' of that heavenly incense, which, like the precious spikenard in Bethany, fills the chambers above, and, going up in its sweetness to the throne, and to Him who sitteth thereon, prevails to draw down at length the long-deferred answers to the prayers of ages.

IV. *The angel and the fire.*[1]—The angel having emptied

[1] The *fire* of the altar, here said to be poured out upon the earth, is the symbol of God's holy wrath against sin. As long as it was confined to the altar, earth was safe; for the altar is the place of sub-

the censer of its incense, fills it with fire; the *pouring out* of the one from the censer being the signal for the *coming in* of the other into that vessel from which the incense had been poured out. The fire that succeeds the incense, and which is the effect of that incense, is not to remain in the censer. The half an hour's silence is all the time allowed for this transaction,—this giving of the incense, this pouring out of the incense upon the altar, this filling of the censer with the devouring fire of judgment. Half an hour for this symbolic prayer! Half an hour for this imparting of power and excellence to the prayers that had been lying on the altar! The long-pent-up judgments are the answer; 'terrible things in righteousness;' first, the 'voices, and thunderings, and earthquake,' the prelude and earnest of something more terrible,—the seven trumpets, with all their fulness of devastation and woe. The fire of the altar did the terrible work of vengeance; but the prayers of the saints were the true and irresistible cause. They prevailed. Hitherto they have lain dormant on the altar; now they awake, and forthwith the mighty works of God's judgment and mercy show themselves in the earth; the arm of the Lord is revealed. The unanswered prayers get a more abundant answer; and

stitution, and there the divine displeasure exhausts itself upon the substitute. But when it leaves the altar, and is poured out upon the earth, then the vengeance against a sinful world has begun. 'Our God is a consuming fire.' There was only fire upon one altar, viz. the brazen altar, or altar of burnt-offering. This is that referred to in verse 5, as distinct from the golden altar in verse 3. Fire not only consumes the victim, but it extracts the fragrance from the incense. The fire of the one altar draws forth the fragrance of the other

God is now seen doing 'exceeding abundantly, above all we have asked or thought.' The whole machinery or instrumentality of judgment is now set in motion. There is delay no longer. 'The seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.' They had stood in silence before God (ver. 2), waiting for the signal. They had received the trumpets, but till the incense is poured on the altar, and the fire shaken out from the censer, they must not use them. Now their successive blasts fill the air, and the effects are stupendous. Many lessons are here.

(1.) *Prayer remains often long unanswered.* — Days, months, and ages it may lie unanswered, yet not one petition shall fall to the ground. The reasons for the long delay are often far beyond our reach; but in the end they will be found infinitely wise and gracious. 'He answered her not a word' (Matt. xv. 23) is a sentence which the saints of God have often pondered, and which the history of the Church has in all ages illustrated. Delays and delays there have been, till hope deferred made the heart sick. But the Hearer of prayer well knows what He is doing.

(2.) *Prayer is not lost.*—It lies on 'the golden altar which is before the throne.' We lay each petition there, as we say, 'for Christ's sake.' We have entered the tabernacle. We have passed the brazen altar, and, accepting the sacrifice there, we have been accepted. We go in to the inner altar, and lay our prayers upon its gold, where there lie heaps upon heaps of prayers waiting for their answer. Not one petition, even the poorest or feeblest, has

dropped from that altar, or been swept away, or lost in the process of time. All, all are there. In themselves they are poor, having no fragrance; but their intrinsic imperfection cannot change the nature of that altar on which they are laid. There they are preserved,—each sigh, each tear, each cry, from child or aged man, from the chief of sinners, from the thief upon the cross, from the chamber of weakness and sorrow, from the crushed spirit and the broken heart,—there they are: the groanings that cannot be uttered; the 'God be merciful to me, a sinner;' the 'How long?' of the tortured martyrs; the moan of the suffering saint upon his tossing sick-bed,—there they are: the father's prayer, 'Lord, save my child;' the child's prayer, 'Lord, save my father,'—there they are: the pleadings for the Church of God, for the overthrow of Antichrist, for the binding of Satan, for the deliverance of earth, for the consummation of the eternal purpose! Not one cry lost; not one petition gone astray. All there!

(3.) *Prayer will be answered.*—Sooner or later every petition will receive its true and proper answer,—an answer that will satisfy the petitioner to the full; an answer from Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think. There is no such thing as unanswered prayer. Delay will only add to the fulness of the answer, and increase our joy when it comes. And it will come. He is faithful that promised. He cannot deny Himself.

(4.) *The answer will come in connection with Christ's surpassing excellence.*—His fragrance is to be cast upon these long-lying prayers, that seem without life or motion, and they shall arise. 'Lazarus, come forth,' will be heard

again, and the prayers of ages shall have life poured into them. It is written, 'Thy dead men shall live; my dead body shall they arise:' so may it be said of our prayers laid upon the altar. His divine perfection cast upon them and pervading them, absorbs and extracts all their imperfection, and they ascend, as odours of divine sweetness, perfect and irresistible, before the throne of God. That which was lacking in them is far more than supplied. Their want of faith, and earnestness, and coherence, disappears. The simple cry which they contained,—the core or kernel within,—thus stripped of its vile accompaniments, goes up in melody and power, bringing down at length the full and glorious answer. Christ is magnified in such answers; out of our infirmities there comes honour to Him.

(5.) *Prayer is often answered in ways we little thought of.* —We know not what we ask, though we think we know it well. We pray for the hastening of the King and the kingdom. Have we considered the judgments which that arrival is to bring? We looked for peace, and behold trouble; yet out of that trouble peace is to come; for light, and darkness has come; yet out of that darkness shall light arise. We ask for faith and holiness; we get sickness, or bereavement, or earthly disaster. Yet out of these the longed-for purity and faith shall come. We plead for the reign of the Prince of peace, and lo, wars and rumours of wars! for the removal of creation's curse, and lo, famines, earthquakes, and pestilences in divers places! Yet out of these are to come the new heavens and earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. We shall one day get all we prayed for, and much more. Let us pray always, and not faint. This is the day

of prayer; the day of the answer is coming. Glorious shall that answer be, though perhaps unexpected; blessed shall it be, yet perhaps terrible in the events which it brings.

Our prayers—'the prayers of all saints'—are lying now on the altar, presented long ago, in much weakness, and imperfection, and unbelief. They are waiting for a fresh application of the divine fragrance, that is to make them irresistible. That fragrance is on its way; it is at hand.

The Church is on her knees. The burden of her cry is, 'How long?' For earth is not improved, and its guilt is accumulating. Human evil, in spite of science, and literature, and art, is growing too great and too hopeless for man to contend with, either for removal or punishment. The unrenewed heart works out its plans of progress and elevation, in defiance of God's sentence against sin, and in contempt of the two divine remedies for the maladies of the human heart,—the cross of the Substitute, and the power of the Holy Ghost. It refines and polishes, and thinks thereby to turn iron into silver, and silver into gold. It charms the adder, and imagines that its sting is gone. It fertilizes the soil, and boasts that the curse is removed. It reforms states and parliaments; it diplomatizes, and musters its armies, and prepares new weapons of war, blind to the will of Him by whom kings reign and princes decree judgment; heedless of the eternal purpose, or of the one bright issue of all earth's confusion, and gloom, and anguish,—the arrival of the righteous King, to break His enemies in pieces with His iron rod, and to sway His holy sceptre over an earth which, having passed through the fires of judgment, shall be meet for the habitation of the just.

XXXIV.

THE CROSS OF THE LORD JESUS.

'*Where also our Lord was crucified.*'—REV. XI. 8.
'*The cross of Christ; . . . the preaching of the cross.*'—1 COR. I. 17, 18.

THE first of these passages strikingly identifies the Master and the servants,—our Lord and His witnesses. They were to suffer *as* He suffered and *where* He suffered: one with Him in life and death, in shame and glory; one with Him on the cross, in the grave, in resurrection, in ascension, and on the throne. The words, 'Where also our Lord was crucified,' come with a strangely solemn power. It is the last reference to the cross of Christ in the Bible, and corresponds well with that frequent expression in the Revelation, 'the Lamb slain;' carrying us back to 'the seed of the woman' and 'the bruised heel.'

The second passage is one of the many (nineteen in all) in which Paul refers to the cross and its meaning, the cross and its connection with the good news, the cross and the way of preaching it. In his estimation that cross stood out pre-eminently as the great centre round which his faith revolved. It was the basis of his hope towards God; it was the main article in his creed, from which all others shot forth like rays from the sun. It stood alone and unapproachable in the matter of salvation; as the

altar of the burnt-offering, as the place without the gate where the sin-offering was consumed,—as the point where all the offerings meet. It was not to him the mere place of the great *self-surrender*, the example or model of self-sacrifice; it was the place of propitiation, the substitution of life for life,—the Just One there suffering for the unjust, the Blessed One bearing our curse, the Holy One bearing our sin. In preaching this cross, the apostle dreaded and shunned the wisdom of words,—human eloquence,—lest thus the naked cross should be disguised and disfigured. It must stand out bare and unadorned, 'majestic in its own simplicity,' as the brazen serpent on the pole. That serpent and that pole needed no ornament of man. There they stood, with the divine medicine for Israel. To cover them, to deck them, to paint them, would be to destroy their power to heal,—to make them of none effect. So is it the naked cross that does the work of healing;—'No meretricious graces to beguile.' To deck it with flowers, and rites, and pomp, and eloquence is to destroy its power,—to grieve that Spirit whose office is to turn the sinner's eye to it as the health of the world. Look and be healed! Look and be saved! The virtue of the cross is drawn out by simply looking. Know and be blest! For 'by His knowledge (the knowledge of Himself) shall my righteous Servant justify many.'

'The cross of Christ!' O world, this is thy one hope. That cross contains all that thou needest of love, and healing, and peace. Under its shadow the chief of sinners may sit down and rejoice.

'Where also our Lord was crucified.' O Israel, O Jeru-

salem, here is thy condemnation. O world, here too will be thy condemnation, if thou lookest not, and believest not! That cross will utterly condemn all its rejecters and despisers. That cross overthrew Jerusalem, city and temple, for her rejection of the crucified One; it scattered Israel: what will it not do to each son of man that has slighted it? Round it the world's history revolves; on it the world's destiny hangs.

(1.) *It was the place of guilt and condemnation* (Matt. xxvii. 22, 26, 28).—The condemned of men were there. The thieves were there; it was their 'own place.' Connection with the cross inferred crime, worthy of death.

(2.) *It was the place of shame* (Heb. xii. 2).—It was *shame* that was there; and each one who was sent there was treated as a shameful thing,—one of whom his fellow-men were ashamed, and who might well be ashamed of himself. It was the type of the shame and everlasting contempt in reserve for the unbelievers. Hence it was a 'reproach' and 'offence' (Gal. v. 11).

(3.) *It was the place of weakness* (2 Cor. xiii. 4).—Christ was 'crucified through weakness.' It was the exhibition of man reduced to the extremity of helplessness. In order to save us who were 'without strength' (Rom. v. 6), our Surety took our helplessness upon Him, and became 'without strength' for us.

(4.) *It was the place of pain* (Heb. xiii. 12).—Anguish of body was there to the uttermost; and thirst was there; wounds and bruises were there. There is no pain like that of crucifixion. Here is the fulfilment of the *roasted* lamb of the Passover; here is the passing through the fire.

(5.) *The place of the curse* (Gal. iii. 13).—'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.' The *Blessed* One was made a *curse* for us. He went to the accursed place, and there bore our curse, that we might receive His blessing.

(6.) *The place of rejection* (John xix. 6).—'Away with Him!' was the cry; 'not this man, but Barabbas.' They who were nailed to the cross were the outcasts of men. Christ was 'despised and rejected of men' (Isa. liii. 3).

(7.) *The place of hatred* (Matt. xxvii. 25).—'Let Him be crucified;' 'His blood be on us.' Here was human hatred speaking out. 'His citizens hated Him;' 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him;' 'They gave me hatred for my love.'

(8.) *The place of death* (Matt. xx. 18, 19).—It was *death* that was there; here we read, 'The soul that sinneth it shall *die*.' Death, the death of the cross, was our Surety's doom. The place of death became the place of life to us. 'By His stripes we are healed.'

Such were the *evil* things connected with the cross, which by the work done by the Son of God have all turned into *good*. All our evils He took upon Him, that He might secure for us all the good belonging to Himself. For condemnation, He gives us pardon; for shame, honour and glory; for weakness, strength; for pain, ease and comfort; for the curse, the blessing; for rejection, acceptance; for hatred, love; for death, life everlasting. He that *believeth* hath all these things. All the evil passes to Him, and all the good to us, on our crediting the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the cross and the things done there.

This cross, where so many evil things meet, is the place where all good things are to be found. God gathered all the evil to that spot, that He might utterly make away with it, through Him who took all the evil on Himself, that He might bring out of it only good. At the cross it was consumed by fire; it was buried out of sight. The crucifixion transformed the evil into good.

(1.) *It is the place of propitiation* (Lev. xvi. 15; Rom. iii. 25).—The altar was there for the burnt-offering. The place without the gate for the sin-offering was there. 'He His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree' (1 Pet. ii. 24). The *sin-bearing* work was completed there, when the cry went up, 'It is finished.' The *expiating* blood was shed upon the cross. The atoning work,—the work that justifies,—was consummated on Golgotha. Nor can justification be separated from the cross, or transferred to resurrection. 'The chastisement of our peace was on Him; and BY HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED.' 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.' The ending of His vicarious course on earth was the giving life for life. *His* death, instead of *ours*, satisfied the law. A divine death was the substitute for a human death. All the sacrificial virtue of the transaction, and all the value of the substitute, were transferred to us. Jesus died that we might not die. He was the propitiation for our sins. He was the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. The cross is the place of exhausted penalty and magnified law. That which covers the sinner entirely and shields him from wrath was finished there. That *covering*,

that *propitiatory covering*, whose power and virtue are unchangeable throughout all ages, and underneath which we are secure from wrath, was wrought out there. The propitiation of the cross is the substance of the glad tidings which we bring. It originated in the love of God; it contained and embodied the love of God; it gave effect to and carried out the love of God; it brought home the love of God to us as sinners.

(2.) *It is the meeting-place* (Ex. xxix. 42).—It is the place where we meet with God, and God meets with us in friendship, and love, and joy. It is the place where the Father meets the prodigal and embraces him. On this spot alone, and underneath this tree alone, can God and the sinner look each other in the face, without fear on the one side or displeasure on the other. There God speaks with us, and there we speak with Him. We take the Lamb, lay our hands upon it, present it as ours, confess our sins over it, that so all the evil in us which stood between us and God may pass from us to it, may be carried by it to the altar, and there consumed, so as no longer to hinder the meeting. With sin thus transferred from us to the divine victim, thus carried away and consumed by fire, we are no longer afraid to look up to God, and no longer stand in doubt of His favour towards us, and His willingness to bless us. Ten thousand times a day we sin; but as often as we sin, that sin passes immediately away from us to the sacrifice, which, once offered and accepted eighteen hundred years ago, is better than ten thousand times ten thousand sacrifices to keep up the reconciliation, to secure perpetual forgiveness, and to maintain unchanged the security of the

meeting-place,—the place of intercourse and fellowship between us and God.

(3.) *It is the place of love.*—God's love is there, shining in its full brightness, unhindered and undimmed. 'God so loved the world' gets its interpretation at the cross. On the one hand, we see how much man hated God, and, on the other, how much God loved man. Herein is love! It is love that has found for itself a channel whereby to flow down to us; love that has opened a well of blessing gushing forth from the foot of the cross.

(4.) *It is the place of acceptance.*—Here we become 'accepted in the Beloved.' Here the exchange takes place between the perfect and the imperfect. Believing in the perfect One, we become 'complete in Him.' Conscious only of evil, we take refuge in Him in whom there is no evil, that we may be represented by Him before God, and so treated by God as being without evil, even in the eye of His holy law. Feeling our utter want of goodness, we flee out of ourselves to One in whom there is all goodness; who is absolutely perfect; so perfect, so infinitely perfect, that He has enough and to spare of His perfection for us. The fulness of evil that is in us is thus not only covered over by the atonement of the atoning Son of God, so as to become invisible, as if it were non-existent, but is supplanted by the fulness of all goodness, is exchanged for the perfection of another, even of the perfect One, so that God, looking at us, sees only our Representative, and deals with us according to His excellency and preciousness. What we should have got, in the shape of punishment, He gets for us; what He claims and deserves in the shape of re-

ward, and glory, and favour, we get, as represented by Him, and treated by God as entitled to all that to which He is entitled.

Our *consent* to be treated on the footing of this foreign merit, this perfection of another, is what God asks of us. Such is the proposal which the gospel makes to us. This is substantially the meaning of our believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Receiving the divine testimony to the Sin-bearer as true, we give our consent to be represented by Him before God. Thus we exchange places and persons with Him. He was made sin, we are made righteousness; He takes the curse, we take the blessing. We hear the cry upon the cross, IT IS FINISHED, and we know that *the work which justifies is done.* All that follows,—resurrection and ascension,—is the result of the completed work; not the completing of it, but the fruits of its completion. 'He was delivered, because we had sinned; He was raised, because we were justified' (Rom. iv. 25). As it was 'by the blood of the everlasting covenant' that He was brought from the dead (Heb. xiii. 20), so was it because our justification was finished on the cross that He rose from the dead. The knowledge of this brings to him who knows it forgiveness, acceptance, justification; we become 'accepted in the Beloved.'

The cross accomplished such things as the following:—

(1.) *It removed the wall of partition* (Col. ii. 14[1]).—Between Jew and Gentile it threw down the middle wall of partition. It rent the veil in twain from top to bottom. It

[1] 'Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us;' or, 'having cancelled the bond which was

swept away all that hindered a sinner's access, and said, 'Come boldly to the throne of grace;' 'Come unto ME.'

(2.) *It made peace* (Col. i. 20).—The great quarrel between heaven and earth, between God and the sinner, it made up; for it removed the ground of that variance, and provided a righteous basis for reconciliation and peace. The peace is made. It is paid for. It is finished. It is a true and righteous peace.

(3.) *It has secured oneness* (Eph. ii. 15, 16).—Thus oneness is not simply between Jew and Gentile, but between both of these and God; between them both, *because* between both and God. At one with God, they are at one with each other. Both are reconciled in one body by the cross, the enmity being thereby slain. He was 'numbered with the transgressors' (Mark xv. 28), that we might be numbered with the righteous.

(4.) *It has brought life* (2 Cor. xiii. 4).—'He was crucified through weakness, yet He LIVETH; we are weak in Him (as He was on the cross), but we shall LIVE.' His weakening and emptying on the cross gave opportunity for the whole *life-giving power* of God to flow in. We, thus weakened and emptied (when, in believing, made one with Him), are filled with the same life-giving power. The cross, the place of weakness and of death, thus becomes to us the place and fountain of life. From a crucified Lord life flows to the dead.

(5.) *It contains power* (1 Cor. i. 18, 23).—It is 'the

against us, with all its covenants (or attestations), which was hostile to us, has taken it away out of the midst, having nailed it to the cross.'

POWER of God unto salvation.' Power for us, for the weak, for the sinful,—'the power of God,'—is there. Omnipotence has made its dwelling there. The cross is its storehouse or treasure-house. There is the hiding of divine power. There is the ARM of the Lord revealed.

(6.) *It is the focus or centre of all wisdom* (1 Cor. i. 24).—The wisdom of God is there. It is the fullest and most glorious exhibition of Jehovah's wisdom. Here is the perfection of wisdom; and all that the sciences (astronomy, or the like) exhibit of wisdom is not to be compared with this. The world thinks it foolishness. God thinks it wisdom; and every soul that has come to know its own wants and sins thinks the same.

(7.) *It crucifies the world* (Gal. vi. 14).—To the believing man the world is a crucified thing; to the world the believing man is a crucified thing. There is now *enmity*, not *friendship*,—*hatred*, not *love*,—between the woman's seed and the serpent's seed. The cross has produced the enmity. It has slain the world, and made it altogether unlovable. One sight of the cross strips the world of its false beauty and attractiveness.

(8.) *It furnishes a theme for glorying* (Gal. vi. 14).—Paul gloried in it, counting it the only thing worth boasting of, worth admiring, worth caring for. It is the scorn of the world; it is the glory of the saint. It is the theme of the Church's song, the burden of her praise. She glories in the cross.

(9.) *It is the model and test of service* (Mark viii. 34; Luke ix. 23).—It calls us to *liberty*, yet to *service* also, the service of liberty. Thus it both liberates and binds. It takes

off one yoke to give another (Matt. xi. 29). It gives us the perfect example and pattern of obedience and service, in Him who was obedient unto death, the death of the cross. It tests our service by giving us a cross to carry; not Christ's cross,—that no man can carry,—but a cross of our own. Each man must take up his own cross and follow the great Cross-bearer. Self-denial, self-surrender, self-sacrifice, are all exhibited there. There especially 'Christ pleased not Himself' (Rom. xv. 3). Not my will, but Thine be done, is to be our motto, as it was His. Looking unto Jesus and His cross fits and nerves us for this. 'Follow me' is the voice of the cross.

(10.) *It is the badge of discipleship* (Luke xiv. 27).—The disciple is not above his Master. He is a cross-bearer,—a 'crusader,' in the true sense of the word. No cross, no discipleship. He who is ashamed of the cross is ashamed of Christ. The daily life of a disciple is to be a carrying of the cross. He who does so will find few admirers and sympathizers. He will know the *loneliness* of his Lord and Master.

(11.) *It is God's way of salvation* (Acts x. 39–43).—Pardon is written on the cross; salvation; life eternal. The saved thief, who went from his cross to paradise, is the great illustration of the saving power of the cross. For salvation we know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. ii. 2). The glad tidings are written on the cross; good news of a free salvation to the unsaved; salvation through Him who came to seek and save the lost; who upon the tree of death bore their guilt in His own body, and now sends out the glorious message,—the

tidings from the saving cross. The love of God is written on it; nay, 'God is love,' is the true inscription for it. 'God is love' beams out from every part of it; and to know this is to be saved.

(12.) *It is the measure of Christ's endurance and obedience* (Phil. ii. 8).—He descended from the highest heaven, that He might take flesh, and in our flesh endure and obey as man. It was a vicarious endurance and obedience, all His life long; He stood in our stead from Bethlehem to Golgotha. The cross, with its agony, and shame, and death, was the extremity of His service for us. In it we have the *measure* of His obedient suffering, the measure of His willingness to do the Father's will, to bear our burdens, to drink our bitter cup of wrath and woe. Thus the perfection of our Substitute not only covers our imperfection, but is legally and judicially ascribed to us by God Himself. The law lets go its hold of us, and deals with our Substitute.

(13.) *It is the pledge and standard of divine love* (Rom. v. 8).—The Father's love is here; for God so loved the world that He gave His Son. Christ's love is here; the love that passeth knowledge, the love which many waters could not quench, nor the floods drown; love to the uttermost; love grudging no toil, nor pain, nor weariness, nor reproach for us. If you want to know how much you have been loved, look to the cross of Jesus. That meets and answers all our doubts.

(14.) *It is the revelation of God's character* (1 John iv. 10).—In the *person* of the God-man, 'the Word made flesh,' God's character is contained; all that is in God is there.

In the *life* of the God-man there is the unfolding of that character as the gracious God; in the death of the God-man upon the cross there is a yet further revelation of the character of 'the God of all grace.' Here the divine perfections came out in full harmony; all that seemed discordant being here reconciled, truth and mercy meeting, righteousness and peace kissing; God just and the justifier of the ungodly; infinitely holy, yet pardoning the unholy. In the cross God has given us His true name, and the true interpretation of that name. His whole character and actings are here announced, explained, and harmonized. Let us listen to the testimony which the cross gives respecting God's gracious nature, His loving heart, His compassionate purposes to sinners; and in accepting that testimony all blessing will flow in. Let us accept God's interpretation of His own character in the cross. Let us beware of misconstruing Him. Let us acquaint ourselves with Him.

(15.) *It is God's lamp of light.*—The world is dark. Here is light. The cross shines with the very light of heaven. He who is the God of light hung there. That which the cross makes known concerning God and His love is the light of a dark world. Only from the cross can the sinner derive his light. 'They looked and were lightened;' for He who hangs there says, 'I am the light of the world.' And never was He more its light than when He was nailed to the cross in helplessness. From the cross that light still shines out to a dark world. Let us walk in the light of the cross. God says to us, 'Arise, shine, for thy light is come;' 'The true light now shineth;'

'The day has broken, and the shadows fled away.' The ever-burning lamp of the cross is sufficient for the darkest child of a dark world, in his darkest day and hour.

(16.) *It is the universal magnet* (John xii. 32).—'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.' Here is the true centre of gravitation. Here is the great attraction or attractive force. The Christ of Bethlehem attracts; the Christ of Nazareth attracts; the Christ of Bethany and Nain attracts; the Christ of Sychar and Jericho attracts; but most of all the Christ of Golgotha. There is that in the cross which *wins* the sinner's heart. The cross *beckons* him; it *calls* him; it *invites* him; it *beseeches* him; it *draws* him. A crucified Christ, the uplifted Son of man, is the one universal loadstone. Its magnetic power is irresistible; yet it is the irresistibility of love and not of law. Law compels; love attracts. Law crushes; love lifts up. And all love is in that cross,—the fulness of God's forgiving love.

(17.) *It is the universal balm and medicine.*—The cross is the balm of Gilead, and the crucified Christ is the Physician there. From that tree distils the healing for the sons of men. The leaves of it are for the healing of the nations. Its medicinal properties have been tested by time, and have been found divine. There is no disease that is able to resist their power; they flow out on all sides, and flow down everywhere. He who approaches, he who touches, nay, he who looks, is healed. Eternal health is yonder. Let it flow in. The world is sick,—sick unto death. Here is healing for it. Wilt thou be made whole, O man? Go to the healing cross; go to the divine Healer and become whole.

(18.) *It is man's estimate of sin.*—Not only was the deed of crucifixion a denial of sin and a defiance of God, but it was the setting up of a new standard of sin. It was man saying, We do not need a Sin-bearer; we are no such sinners as to need a Substitute; sin is not such an evil as to require expiation. This was 'the way of Cain;' it was Cain's ancient rejection of the burnt-offering, his refusal to acknowledge the evil of sin, or to own himself worthy of death. God's intention in the cross was to declare the evil of sin; man's intention was to make light of it, and to defy its consequences. For man, in making light of sin, despises God's threatenings against it, and braves the divine penalties.

(19.) *It is God's verdict against sin, and His estimate of it* (Rom. viii. 3).—Here is God's condemnation of sin, of the flesh, of the world. Look at that cross, and learn how God hates sin; how He sets aside the flesh with all its lusts; how He strips off the world's mask, and exposes its deformity. When disposed to make light of sin, or to indulge the flesh, or to admire the world, let us hear God's voice bidding us look to the cross, and to Him who was nailed to it by that sin, that flesh, that world. The cross says, Oh, do not the abominable thing which I hate! If God thought as lightly of sin as man does, would that cross have been needed? would that Christ have required to suffer? would any expiation have been called for, beyond a few tears or sighs? God points to Christ's cross as the proof of His hatred of sin; and when man would treat it lightly, He bids him listen to the expiring agonies of the Sin-bearer; or when man would excuse himself, or palliate his guilt,

God answers, Did ye not crucify my Son? What does *that* sin deserve, though other sins might be light?

(20.) *It is man's estimate of the Son of God.*—Already He had been valued at thirty pieces of silver. But here we have a still lower estimate. Here is the value man sets on His person, His life, His teaching, His blood. God asks us, What think ye of Christ? Our answer is the cross,—'Crucify Him.' Here is man erecting the cross, and nailing the Son of God to it. Such is the heart of man. Such is man's rejection of the Christ. The cross is the standing proof and witness of man's rejection of God's beloved Son and His salvation. To this day the cross is foolishness and a stumbling-block to man. He both hates and despises it.

(21.) *It is God's interpretation of law and its penalties.*—Not merely *grace*, but righteousness is unfolded here,—the righteousness of *law*, of THE LAW. God here shows us what law is, what law requires, what law can do, how law can avenge itself, how law can vindicate God, as well as how God can vindicate law. In this aspect it is truly law that planned and erected the cross; law that demanded the victim's death; law that cried Crucify; law that nailed Him to the tree. In the cross we see how holy, and just, and good is that law, and that God's commandments are 'very pure' and 'exceeding broad,' applying to everything and everybody; so that, when even the Son of God was 'made under the law' (Gal. iv. 4), and had undertaken to answer its demands for us, He was seized by it and led out to the place of execution as the worst of evil-doers. If the law were not holy, and broad, and pure, why did the Son of God, the giver of the law, hang on the cross? why

was He there forsaken by God? Why did He there die? Thus interpreted by the cross, how perfect does the law appear! God has given us many interpretations of it, but this is the most explicit, and clear, and complete. In the cross, God protests against all attempts to undervalue or dilute the law. Man may think it too strict. God does not; and in proof of this points to the cross and His Son there, bearing our penalty. Would the Father have laid these burdens and pains upon the Son unless the law had absolutely required them? Would He who most honoured the law have been punished by the law, unless He had been bearing sin? Let those who speak of the gospel being a *modified law*, by obedience to which we are saved, look at the cross. Is there any appearance of a modified law there? No; we see the law in all its undiluted perfection exhibited in the *life*, and in all its unmitigated strength and penalty, in the *death* of the Son of God. The gospel is founded on a *fulfilled and unmodified* law,—a law unchangeable and inexorable. Our pardon and salvation are all legal and righteous, springing from *law* as truly as from *love*. Our life comes from the substituted death of another.

Thus we see in the cross an epitome of the Bible. The whole revelation of God is there. From the cross we hear the truth, 'Where sin abounded, grace hath superabounded.' All the love of God is there. The sinner's condemnation and the sinner's pardon are there. God's invitation issues forth from it to the chief of sinners. 'Come;' 'look unto me and be ye saved.' God's eternal purpose is here unfolded: 'the good pleasure of His will.' The fountain

opened for sin is there. The rest for the weary is there. The relief for the conscience is here. The refuge for the guilty is there. The balm of Gilead is there. Peace to the troubled is there. There God meets with man, and man meets with God; heaven and earth embrace each other. HEREIN IS LOVE. It is love that takes in the worst; love that took in the dying thief; love that knows no bounds; love that looks for no qualifications in him who comes, but that he needs it; love which is yearning over the lost, and stretching out its hands to the most rebellious and unholy; love which offers not merely pardon, but the perfection of the Son of God to the sinner, with all which that perfection can claim.

Yet here also is the doom of the unbeliever. He who takes the cross for what God tells him that it is, is saved, and no amount of sin can hinder its virtue from flowing out to him perpetually. He who refuses or neglects the cross must not only bear his own sin, but the sin of rejecting God's salvation. That cross will be the millstone tied round his neck to send him to the lowest hell. When He who hung upon the cross ascends the throne, where will the rejecter of the cross appear, and what will he say for his rejection?[1]

[1] To disconnect the satisfaction of Christ from His death, and to transfer it to something beyond that death, such as His entrance into heaven, was the object of the old Socinians, Crellius and Biddle, against whom Owen wrote his elaborate *Vindiciæ Evangelicæ*, in which occurs the following sentence: 'Christ entered by His own blood into the holy place, inasmuch as, having shed and offered His blood a sacrifice to God, with the efficacy of it He entered into His presence to carry on the work of His priesthood in His intercession for us; as the high priest, having offered without (in the outer court) a sacrifice

to God, entered with the blood of it into the most holy place, there to perfect and complete the duties of his office in interceding for the people' (*Works*, vol. xii. p. 407). To substitute *inherent* for *imputed* righteousness, was Edward Irving's aim in the writings of his last six years. Thus he writes: 'I wish instead of the word *imputed* were continually substituted *inherent* but derived' (*Pref. to Conf.* p. cxxxviii). 'The Church never meant to assert that because it was of Christ's working out for us and of God's serving out to us, it was not therefore true righteousness, heart righteousness, righteousness in the inward parts and in the outward also; holiness of body, and holiness of soul. . . . She never meant to convey by the word imputed that the righteousness was only *skin-deep*, or, if we may so speak, *cloak-deep*. . . . Faith embodies Christ in the believer, and *Christ in the believer is a body of holiness*, a complete man of holiness, an inward and an outward man, as well as a garment' (*on the Rev.* v. 11, p. 889). To withdraw justification from the cross and deposit it in the sacraments, has always been the object of Romanists and High Churchmen. Only, in addition to this, Newman would connect it with resurrection: 'We are declared, pronounced, dealt with as righteous, *through our resurrection unto holiness* in the Spirit' (*Parochial Sermons*, vol. v. p. 159); and in his *Lectures on Justification*, published in 1838, he has a whole lecture on Rom. iv. 25, entitled 'Christ's Resurrection the Source of Justification' (p. 233).

In all these ways the *cross* of Christ has been made of none effect, and the *blood* of Christ trodden under foot, and the *life* of Christ rejected as non-vicarious. Under the pretext of magnifying CHRIST IN US, men have altogether denied CHRIST FOR US. Under the plea of not approaching God under false colours, men have in various ways refused substitution, and supplanted *imputation* by *infusion*, or communication of righteousness, either from the Holy Spirit, or from the resurrection of Christ.

It was reserved for recent years to combine (in a mystical formula of spiritual sentimentalism) all these subversions of the cross into one theory of 'justification in a risen Christ,' and instead of the glorious doctrine of God 'justifying the ungodly,' to give us the worse than Socinian heresy of God justifying us, not as ungodly, but *as new creatures*, thus making *regeneration* our title to acceptance, and not the *righteousness of Him* who was made sin for us. This new form of perfectionism supersedes all necessity for our *judicial acceptance*; for the holiness poured into us out of a risen Christ renders us independent of the blood, and places us, as partakers of this derived and infused sinlessness, in a position where confession of sin is no longer needed;

where the conscience is kept pacified by *the consciousness of internal perfection*, and where the glorying in the cross is exchanged for glorying in resurrection. If this be true, the 'it is finished' of Calvary was *premature:* it ought to have been deferred till after resurrection.

The seventh chapter of the Romans is a stumbling-block to the inventors of this theory; and rather than adopt the experience of that passage, they condemn the apostle, in uttering it, as a backslider. They apologize for him by showing that he got out of the seventh into the eighth chapter, though how he got out of the sixth into the seventh they do not explain. 'Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.' The process by which men slide from THE ROCK, and lay for themselves another foundation, is very subtle and often almost imperceptible; but it is not the less perilous and evil. When the conscience shall awake from its dream of resurrection-perfectionism, how terrible will be its remorse for the slighted cross! and how eagerly (if not too late) will it then betake itself to the undervalued sacrifice! In the searching light of the throne, the deluded perfectionist will be but too glad to appear in what he now calls fictitious colours, and to take his place under the shadow of the cross, 'dressed in beauty not his own.'

> 'Had I an angel's holiness,
> I'd lay aside that beauteous dress,
> And wrap me up in Christ.'

Jehovah-Zidkenu, the Lord our righteousness, is our refuge here; and it is according to His excellency that God deals with us and will deal with us for ever. That excellency cannot fail. Its efficacy is everlasting, knowing neither change nor decay. Blessed is he who, believing the divine testimony concerning it, goes to God, in the assured consciousness, that all that excellency has become judicially and righteously his own.

XXXV.

STRANGERSHIP AND PILGRIMAGE.

'The woman fled into the wilderness.'—REV. XII. 6.
'Strangers and pilgrims.'—1 PET. II. 11.
'They took their journey from Elim.'—EX. XVI. 1.

THE woman fled into the wilderness! Well would it have been with her had she continued there. But she came forth into earth's cities, and dwelt in its palaces, and put on its gay apparel, and said, 'I am a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.' In unbelief and forgetfulness of her true character, she foredated her time of glory, and sought to reign where she should have remained a stranger, and put on purple robes when she should have worn only sackcloth (1 Cor. iv. 8).

'The earth helped the woman,' no doubt; and in so doing saved her from unceasing persecution, giving her some respite. Christianity became fashionable; and the immense number of mere professors of that faith, while really a source of internal weakness, was yet a source of external strength and protection. It was earthly protection, no doubt, and on that account perilous; yet it was just the protection which God Himself had given to the Jewish Church in Babylon, in Shushan, and in Egypt. The flood of persecution was sweeping the Church away, when 'the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.'

This cessation of persecution, this earthly help, became a snare. The woman said, 'I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.' She forgot her heavenly calling, her future kingdom, her incorruptible inheritance, her unearthly hope, and became part of the world which had helped her. Civilisation, science, literature, intellectual enlightenment, became her gods. She set them between her and the cross, between her and the glory. Influence, power, wealth, knowledge apart from God and His Christ, were sought after and obtained. The Church wooed the world, and the world wooed the Church; compromises were agreed upon; the world ceased to persecute, and the Church ceased to 'condemn the world.'

Yet God is ever calling His own out of this mingled mass, and bidding them walk alone. We are not simply to quit the world, but to 'go forth without THE CAMP,' bearing Christ's reproach; and oftentimes that reproach comes sharper from the lips of so-called Christians than from a pleasure-loving world.

Abel was a stranger upon earth; so are all God's Abels still. Enoch was a stranger, yet he was partaker of the *heavenly* calling. Abraham was a stranger, yet he was one of the seekers of the better, even the *heavenly* country (Heb. xi. 16), looking for the New Jerusalem, the Church's special home (Heb. xi. 10). David confesses himself a pilgrim: 'We are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers' (1 Chron. xxix. 15; Ps. xxxix. 12).[1]

[1] Some among us, ignorant of Scripture, tell us that the ancient Jews were not strangers, and had no heavenly calling,—that these things are the portion of the New Testament Church alone.

'Get thee out of thy country,' said God to Abraham (Gen. xii. 1). 'Arise ye and depart,' were the prophet's words to Israel (Mic. ii. 10). 'Let us go forth,' said Paul (Heb. xiii. 13). 'Stranger and pilgrim' is descriptive of a believing man (1 Pet. ii. 11). 'In journeyings often,' said Paul of himself (2 Cor. xi. 26). Again and again is it said of Israel, 'They took their journey' from such and such places.

Strangers and pilgrims! Yes. For this is not our rest or our home just now. We are wayfaring men, tarrying but a night. We are sojourners, as were all our fathers; and we pass the time of our sojourning here in fear; not looking back, but *up* and *on;* with girded loins and staff in hand hasting to the heavenly city. What have we to do with Egypt's treasures, or Babylon's glory; with Corinth's lusts, or Rome's magnificence; with Athenian philosophy, or Ephesian magic; with Paphian wantonness, or Cyprian luxury? We see what eye hath not seen; we hear what ear hath not heard; and we pass by these earthly beauties and pleasures. They perish with the using. The fashion of this world passeth away.

These are memorable words of Paul: 'In journeyings often.' Such is a brief but true picture of a Christian man's life. Rooted, yet unrooted; settled, yet unsettled; at rest, yet ever moving; anchored, yet hurried along with storms; unburdened, yet burdened; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.

Such was the life of Abraham and the patriarchs; such the life of Moses; such the life of Israel in their desert-wanderings. Here have we no continuing city,—not even

a continuing tent. No certain dwelling-place; no rest; sure of a dwelling somewhere, yet not sure of it anywhere. Patriarchal life was made up of comings and departings, of greetings and farewells. Men were then 'strangers and pilgrims on the earth.' They were like seamen, the greater part of whose time was spent in pulling up and letting go the anchor, in spreading and taking in their sails. Their life was the remotest possible from that of the hermit on the one hand, or the bustling merchant on the other. They seemed hardly to touch the soil over which they passed, or to have any firm connection with the things seen and temporal.

Paul's history was in many respects a repetition of Israel's, and even more a repetition of the Master's, who was, above all others, 'in journeyings often;' whose ministry was a continual moving to and fro, having no place to lay His head; to whom even Bethany was only a night's resting-place from which He must depart on the morrow. From the day that the Lord shone upon Paul on his way to Damascus, his life was that of Israel in the desert, only with more of conflict, and weariness, and sorrow, and labour. He had his Ethams, his Succoths, his Marahs, his Elims, his Rephidims, his Kadeshes, with many an intervening resting-place; certain of nothing but that the pillar-cloud was above him, that his bread would be given him, and his water would be sure; that there was no condemnation for him, and that all things would work together for his good.

Many and pleasant resting-places had Paul, like his Master at Jacob's well, enjoying shade and provision of

which the world knew nothing; but the intervals between were long and wearisome. At Corinth, at Antioch, at Troas, he rested once and again, enjoying sweet fellowship with the brethren; but he had scarcely begun to enjoy this, when he was called away. The pillar-cloud rose, and he was constrained to move. Each movement, each stage, was the encountering of a new storm of the desert, or the endurance of more scorching heat. Gladly would he have remained at such places, in the bosom of churches he had planted; but the Spirit suffered him not, leading him on from place to place, to bonds and imprisonment,—to labours and stripes,—to beating and stoning,—to shipwreck and peril by sea and land,—to weariness and painfulness,—to hunger and thirst,—to fastings, and cold, and nakedness. He was a stranger and pilgrim on the earth, through much tribulation entering the kingdom of God (Acts xiv. 22).

Of Israel we read that 'they came to Elim' (Ex. xv. 27), where were the wells and palms; and then that they 'took their journey from Elim' (Ex. xvi. 1), into the wilderness of Sin, where there was neither bread nor water.

They had left Egypt, the land of worldly plenty, where they walked by sight, not by faith, and they had come into a land where sight was nothing, and where faith must be all. The closing waters of the Red Sea, while they cut Israel off from their enemies, cut them off from the land of plenty, and shut them into one of dearth and desolation. They were now alone with God. For good or for evil, they had now to deal with Him only, and that face to face, in a desert land, where earthly supplies were unknown.

If He were against them, who could be for them? if He were for them, who could be against them?

Their arrival at Marah tested them. Is their life to be by faith or by sight? Is earth or heaven to be their recognised storehouse of blessing; their fountain-head of abundance? This was their first real taste of the true wilderness life and walk. It began with the bitter, and it ended with the sweet. The first taste of the waters was distasteful, the second most pleasant. The bitterness was of earth, the sweetness was of heaven. Yet at Marah the comfort was of a *mingled* kind. It was not their *faith* that had turned the bitterness into sweetness, and this was humbling and sad. God had met their murmurings with His own free love, their distrust of Him with overflowing bounty; and, if we may so say, had answered them according to their unbelief, not their faith. He had, in wondrous grace, reversed His own rule of action, and had done the miracle *because of their unbelief, not their faith!* Yet even the outward blessing of Marah was not a full one. It sufficed for the moment, but it was incomplete. There was water, but no shade; wells, but no palms. The water had issued from their unbelief, not their faith; and God marked His displeasure by making them drink it on the unshaded burning sands. There was little then to bind them to this shadeless spot, saddened with the recollection of their own unbelief, though in a measure sweetened by the gracious dealings of Him whose love passeth knowledge. Their journey from Marah would not be an unwilling one, and their arrival at Elim would be most grateful; for Elim contained all that such sojourners

required. Sweet spot! Close girdled with low hills; the higher peaks of the desert not far off; covered with desert shrubs, tall or stunted; wells bubbling over, and losing themselves in the desert sand; a tiny stream finding its way through the sandy hollow to the Red Sea; and clustering palms (*now*, in our day quite a forest) stretching their shades over the smiling valley in all directions! Israel might say, Here let us abide. If we are to have a home in the desert, let it be here. They would say, 'This is our rest;' but God said, 'This is not your rest.' So they left the shade and the cool waters: 'they took their journey from Elim.' The journey to Elim was pleasant; the stay at Elim was still more so. The journey *from* Elim must have been sad and dreary: behind them the refreshing verdure; before and around them the hot wind of the desert, and with no resting-place in view. But such was the will of Him who was leading them on; such was the silent beckoning of the pillar-cloud. They must not stay, though they would fain. It is not to softness, and luxury, and ease that they are called, but to hardness and trial, and a life of faith on an unseen God and a yet distant Canaan.

So it is with us. We are 'in journeyings often.' Egypt is left behind for ever; the blood has been sprinkled, and we have found protection and deliverance from the destroying angel; the march has been begun; the Red Sea is crossed; we have sung the song of Moses; we have entered on the desert; we are pressing toward Jerusalem. Our desert life is the life of discipline, and faith, and hope. We come to Elim, and rest for a few pleasant days beneath its palms. But Elim is not Jerusalem, and we must leave it.

Heavy words these, 'They took their journey from Elim;' and yet, since Elim is not Salem, our hope still shines in front of us. It is not on Canaan that we turn our backs; it is not Jerusalem that we are called to leave; for that city, once entered, is entered for ever. From it we go out no more.

But here we have our changes; our risings and our fallings; our rejoicings and our sorrowings; our movings and our restings; our sickenings and our healings; our partings and our meetings;—often coming close together, like Marah and Elim in the same desert, and within a day of each other. We are 'in journeyings often;' ours is a continual tent-life; this is not our rest. Often we wish it were our rest, we get so tired of these unceasing movements; but it must not be so. We could not be trusted with ease, and comfort, and painless, prosperous days. We should forget ourselves, and forget our inheritance. Every change or sorrow says to us, Onward, upward! Elim is pleasant, with its wells and palms, but it is not Canaan; it is not Jerusalem. It is only a brief halting-place; a rest to recruit and fit you for your further journey. You must leave it on the morrow.

Yet the pillar-cloud is here, for shade, for protection, or guidance. It will not mislead. You shall just have as long at Elim as is for your good; not a minute longer. Wherefore gird up your loins; be ever in readiness either for resting or journeying; for the battle, or the march, or the triumph. Let patience have her perfect work; let faith keep her hold of the unseen; let hope burn brighter and fuller as the journeyings are drawing to their close, and as

we near the gates of the glorious city, and the banks of the river of life, and the palms of the paradise of God.

Be holy. Be separate from the world. Abstain from fleshly lusts. Lay aside all filthiness. Walk soberly. Beware of earth's folly and idle laughter. Set your affection on things above. Be prepared for suffering. Endure hardness. Take up your cross daily and bear it aloft, and be not ashamed of it. The footsteps of the old saints are still visible on the sands of time. Follow them. Their voice is still heard, and their hand still waves, beckoning you to follow. Believe what they believed, till you find a nobler faith than Abraham's, a better book than the Bible, a truer creed than Paul's. For these things are not yet obsolete. Centuries do not alter truth. Time and science have not yet levelled the eternal hills. The cross still stands erect amid the ruins of ages; the blood of Jesus still purges the conscience; and the believing man is still a stranger here.

XXXVI.

THE HEAVENLY SONG OF VICTORY.

'*Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*'—REV. XII. 10.

THIS is a song of heaven,—of that heaven from which the dragon had been cast out. It was sung with a loud voice, that all in heaven and earth might hear. It is a song of triumph and gladness, like that which is sung over one sinner that repenteth. Yet it is not a song of *consummation*, as if the whole work was completed, and the last battle won. For the dragon is only cast down to earth, to do terrible things there in his last wrath. But it is a song of *progress*. Another victory won; another advance made; the glorious termination becoming nearer and nearer.

Often had such a song been sung. Even at the first promise; still more at each successive unfolding of it; at the covenant with Abraham, and again with David; at each prophetic announcement of Messiah; at His birth; at His death (He himself took it up, 'Now is the judgment of this world'); at His resurrection; at His ascension; at subsequent events both in heaven and earth; last of all shall it be sung at His second coming, when the development shall reach its fulness, the consummation be

realized, the kingdom set up, and the glory revealed. It is like the feeling of seamen, at rounding some new promontory which brings them more within sight of home; like soldiers, after defeating one and another squadron of the enemy's troops, and pressing on, flushed with victory; like climbers of some mountain-range, surmounting first one and then another of the intervening heights that lie between them and the object of their ambition.

Thus runs the heavenly song: 'Now has come to pass the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ.' Let us attend to each of the notes separately.

I. *The salvation.*—It is '*the* salvation' that is here sung of,—the salvation of Him whose name is Jesus, the Saviour. It is salvation,—not consisting of one blessing or one kind of blessing, but of many; made up of everything which can be indicated by *the reversal of our lost condition.* It is not done at once, but in parts and at sundry times, each age bringing with it more of 'salvation' in every sense; unfolding it; building it up; gathering in new objects; overcoming new enemies; occupying new ground; erecting new trophies. But little of it has yet taken effect; an 'election,' no more; yet something is doing, age after age. At each new development, or conquest, a new song is sung,—'Now is come the salvation;' and if these intermediate shouts of triumph be so loud and rapturous, what will be the last of all?

II. *The power.*—This is the more common rendering of the word (not 'strength'), as when Christ's miracles are spoken of, or 'the powers of the world to come.' As yet

God's *power* has not been fully manifested; it has been hidden. Man's power and Satan's have been in the ascendant. The counteraction of and victory over these have not yet come fully out. The arm of the Lord has not yet been conspicuously revealed. Many trophies, no doubt, it has won; many enemies it has defeated; many brands it has plucked from the burning; but the full revelation of its greatness is yet to come. When that day arrives, earth as well as heaven shall rejoice,—'Now is come the salvation and *the* power.' That shall be the day of *power;* 'the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.'

III. *The kingdom of our God.*—It is *the* kingdom,—the kingdom of kingdoms; not of Satan or man, as now, but of God, nay, *our* God. *Our* God, says heaven; *our* God, re-echoes earth. God's purpose is to have a kingdom and a king. The original grant or command to Adam involved this,—'Have dominion' (Gen. i. 28); He 'put all things under his feet' (Ps. viii. 6). Man in the person of the first Adam was declared king, with this globe for his dominion. He fell, and forfeited his tenure. The second Adam has come in his room; and the kingdom of our God is yet to be set up. As yet it is but the kingdom of man and of Satan. Earth has not acknowledged God; but in the day when God's original purpose shall be fulfilled, shall be heard the loud voice in heaven and earth, 'Now is come the kingdom of our God.' Then shall the Church's prayer be answered: 'Thy kingdom come.'

IV. *The authority of His Christ.*—'The Christ of God' is the full name for Jesus of Nazareth,—God's Messiah,—He in whom all royal, priestly, judicial, prophetical power

is invested. To this Messiah all power has been given, all authority entrusted, in heaven, and earth, and hell. But now we see not yet all things put under Him. His authority is in abeyance till the fulness of the times shall come. Then it shall be put forth over all the earth. He shall destroy Antichrist; bind Satan; deliver creation; bring all the nations under His sway as King of kings and Lord of lords. His authority shall be supreme. His throne shall be above all thrones. His sceptre shall be acknowledged everywhere. All nations shall submit themselves. Earth shall be as heaven. Then shall the loud voice be heard: 'Now is come the authority of His Christ.'

XXXVII.

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT.

'*The blood of the Lamb.*'—REV. XII. 11.
'*Behold, the blood of the covenant.*'—EX. XXIV. 8.

ALL through Scripture we find traces of the blood. 'Thou shalt bruise His heel' was the first reference to it. The *bruised heel* of the woman's seed was to be the foundation-stone of our deliverance. It was to be deliverance by blood. The bruised heel was to tread upon the serpent's head. In connection with this announcement as to the bruised heel, sacrifice was ordained; and thus the truth began to be developed; victory for the sinner through the blood of One who was to be slain. 'Overcoming by *the blood* of the Lamb' is the meaning of the first promise.

'The blood is the life' (Deut. xii. 23). Not that blood and life are actually the same thing: the one is material, the other immaterial. But the blood is the life made visible,—the liquid link between body and soul, which, once broken, brings death. The blood poured out is *the life* drained away from the body,—the departure of the soul from its material dwelling. Thus the blood and the life are identified. God identifies them; law identifies them. Blood shed is the symbol or visible exhibition of death.

Death was the penalty of man's guilt. The wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. If, then, another life is to be taken for our life, and another death is to stand for ours, the true expression of this is the drawing the blood from the victim, and putting that blood on us. This is the symbolic declaration of the great substitution, the great transference: one life for another, one death for another. Death, with all its consequences, lies on the transgressor till another death comes (in the symbolic form of blood), and washes it away. When the sinner receives God's testimony to the blood, then the transference is at once completed,—death passes away.

Let us see the different aspects in which the blood is presented to us in Scripture; the manifold blessings with which it is connected; the various points at which we come into contact with it.

I. *It contains the good news* (Heb. xii. 24).—It 'speaketh better things than that of Abel.' It speaks of grace, not of wrath; of mercy, not of vengeance; of peace returning, not of peace departing. As seen on the altar, it tells the good news of life given for life; as seen upon the mercy-seat, it says, 'Let us come boldly to the throne of grace.' Glad tidings of great joy to the sinfullest are contained in the blood,—the precious blood of Christ. It offers to the sinner a reversal of the sentence of death, by presenting him with the death of another in his stead.

II. *It is the purchase-money for the Church* (Acts xx. 28).—As God's eternal purpose deals both with the Church as a whole, and with each chosen soul, so does the blood. It is the price or ransom of the whole Church; it is the price

and ransom of each soul that is saved. Of the Church it is true, 'she is bought with a price;' of each saint it is true, he is bought with a price. The 'blood of the covenant' is the payment demanded by the Father, and paid by the Son. Not without blood can the purpose of the Father be carried out. It is the legal payment of the price or penalty, because it was the death which the Church should have died, but which her Surety took upon Him.

III. *It is the atonement* (Ex. xxx. 10).—'Aaron shall *make an atonement* upon the horns of the altar with *the blood* of the sin-offering of *atonements*' (Lev. xvii. 11). 'The life of the flesh is in the *blood*, and I have given it to you upon the altar to *make an atonement* for your souls; for it is *the blood* that maketh an *atonement* for the soul.' The Old Testament word means 'to cover;' and the blood is that which 'covers' sin, so that it becomes hidden and undiscernible by God Himself, as if the only thing through which the eye of God could not penetrate was the altar-blood. To him whose sin is thus 'covered' by the blood, God is propitious. The blood propitiates; and the blood, received by the sinner (in the belief of God's testimony to it), propitiates God toward the sinner himself personally. Only the blood can cover. Not mountains, nor seas, nor the thick forests of earth; only blood,—the blood of the one Sacrifice. In this is atonement; and, as the result of atonement, reconciliation with God. Looking at the paschal blood, God says, 'Pass over, slay not;' looking at the sacrificial blood, God says, 'Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.'

IV. *It is the redemption* (Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19;

Rev. v. 9).—Redemption is not the same as the atonement or the purchase-money, already noticed. It is the carrying out of that for which the price was paid and the atonement made. The paying down the money is one thing; the redeeming the person so paid for, so ransomed, is something more. It is nearly synonymous with salvation, only it expresses the way by which the salvation has been obtained,—by ransom or purchase. Hence the expression, 'the redemption of the purchased possession' (Eph. i. 14). Redemption by blood is our gospel; redemption presented fully by the redeeming One to the 'lawful captive,' to the imprisoned and exiled sinner. He who believeth enters into possession of all that it contains.

V. *It is the bringing nigh* (Eph. ii. 13).—The far off are made nigh by the blood. It is the blood that removes the distance; that brings God nigh to us, and us nigh to God. It annihilates all distance, and all variance. The blood brings about the meeting between us and God. Incarnation is not the bringing nigh, nor the thing which brings us nigh; it is merely the first step in a process, which, had it not ended in the blood-shedding, had been all in vain. It is the blood that emboldens us to draw nigh to God, and justifies God in drawing nigh to us. 'Let us draw near' is the voice of the blood, speaking both from the altar and the mercy-seat. And how? 'With a true heart and in the full assurance of faith.' And the blood provides for both of these.

VI. *It contains the cleansing* (1 John i. 7).—This is spoken of also as 'purging' (Heb. ix. 14, 22), and as 'washing' (Rev. i. 5); and it is to this that Zechariah refers, when he

speaks of the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness (ch. xiii. 1); and David, when he prays, 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow' (Ps. li. 7). It is specially to the *guilt* that these passages refer,—the judicial or legal defilement or condemnation, as the consequence of sin committed; so that, when that defilement or condemnation was removed by the application of the blood of the Substitute, the man became clean in the sight of God and of His law. He was purged in conscience and in heart; in body, soul, and spirit. After this, the inward purification began, and was carried on in connection with the blood, through the power of the Spirit. We preach the purging and cleansing blood. It has lost none of its efficacy. The Lamb slain is the same as ever; and the High Priest is the same as ever; and the blood is the same as ever,—as able to purge and purify.

VII. *It contains the peace* (Col. i. 20).—'Peace through the blood of His cross;' for 'He is our peace' (Eph. ii. 14); and because of the blood God 'is pacified towards us for all that we have done' (Ezek. xvi. 63). It is the blood that has made the peace, for it removes that which produced the variance and dispeace. The blood pacifies. It removes that which drew on us the wrath of God, quenching that wrath; it removes that which made us dread God and flee from Him, like Adam. Peace through the blood is our message! To the guiltiest rebel upon earth it comes!

VIII. *It contains the pardon* (Heb. ix. 22).—'Without shedding of blood is no remission.' By the shedding of

blood, then, there is remission of sins. The many blood-sheddings have ceased (Heb. x. 18); and the one blood-shedding, which in its value, and efficacy, and suitableness is everlasting and infinite, remains. Taking it as the payment of the penalty, substituted by God for our non-payment of it, we are forgiven. He who receives the divine testimony to the blood is in so doing forgiven. That blood, by covering his sins, brings pardon,—pardon to any one who is willing to take pardon in this way from God.

IX. *It contains justification* (Rom. v. 9).—'Justified by His blood.' We get justification by His grace and by His righteousness. Here it is said to be by His blood. Justification seems here opposed to 'condemnation,'—the sweeping away of everything that brought us under condemnation. This the blood accomplishes; meeting every accusation, answering every plea, setting aside everything that is laid to our charge. Looking to the blood, we can say, 'Who is he that condemneth?' The blood sets us right in conscience and in law with God. It justifies the ungodly.

X. *It contains that which makes white* (Rev. vii. 14).—'They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' Not only the man, but his garments are made white. This is more than cleansing. It is the word used regarding Christ's transfiguration-garments (Matt. xvii. 2); the angel-robes (Matt. xxviii. 3); the heavenly clothing (Rev. iv. 4); the judgment throne (Rev. xx. 11). Whiter than snow or wool, white as the garments of Christ,—nay, the 'head and hair' of Christ (Rev. i. 14).

This is the result of the application of the blood to those who were 'blacker than the coal,' redder than crimson. What potency, what virtue, what excellency does this blood contain! How it beautifies and glorifies!

XI. *It contains the sanctifying* (Heb. xiii. 12).—'That He might sanctify the people with His own blood.' This is consecrating them as His kings and priests, setting them apart for service, making them 'saints,' holy ones. The blood of the great Sin-offering (without the gate) sanctifies. As soon as the blood touches us, by our believing, we are set apart,—we become the royal priesthood, holy to the Lord.

XII. *It contains the power to conquer* (Rev. xii. 11).—'They overcame by (on account of) the blood of the Lamb.' No victory without the blood! No power to fight; no motive in fighting; no hope of overcoming. The blood takes the strength from the enemy. The blood supplies us with all these. We look to it, and out of weakness we are made strong. We look to it, and we are cheered as well as nerved for conflict with the enemy.

XIII. *It contains our right of entrance into the holiest* (Heb. x. 19).—He entered 'by His own blood' (Heb. ix. 12). He gives us this blood as our right of entrance too. The way is opened; the veil is rent; the entrance is sprinkled and consecrated by His blood. Let us draw near! The blood removes all cause of dread, all possibility of rejection, nay, gives the certainty of reception. Let us go in! We are sure of a welcome. It gives *boldness* as well as right of entrance. It says, 'Draw near *boldly*.'

XIV. *It contains the seal of the covenant* (Luke xxii. 20).

—'This cup is the new testament in my blood.' The blood seals the covenant; and the cup is the symbol of that seal. It is 'the everlasting covenant' (Heb. xiii. 20); the 'covenant of peace' (Isa. liv. 10); 'the new covenant' (Jer. xxxi. 31); the covenant which is absolute and unconditional; which not only gives to each sinner who believes a present standing before God of favour and love, but which secures his eternal future beyond the possibility of a second fall. The blood of the covenant makes us safe for ever. O blood-sealed covenant, ordered in all things and sure, what a foundation art thou for our faith to rest upon, and for our hope to rejoice in! Yes, and the ages to come are all contained within thine ample compass.

XV. *It contains drink for the soul.*—'My blood is drink indeed' (John vi. 55). It quenches the thirst of the soul,—the thirst or parching produced by an evil conscience and a sense of wrath, which dries up the frame like a potsherd (Ps. xxii. 15). It removes the wrath and the sense of wrath, by showing us that wrath transferred to the Substitute. It relieves the conscience when first we come into contact with it; and it keeps it relieved from day to day, as we drink it by faith. It is 'drink indeed.' It calms, it revives, it refreshes, it soothes; it is like cold water to the thirsty lips under a scorching sun. Nothing but the blood can allay this thirst; nothing else can be drink for the soul, for the intellect, the conscience, the heart.

XVI. *It contains life* (John vi. 53).—'Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, ye have no *life* in you.' The blood not only removes death (judicial and spiritual), but it gives and preserves life (judicial and

spiritual). It quickens. Israel was forbidden to taste the literal blood, and would have been punished with death had they done so; we are commanded to drink the spiritual or symbolical blood, with the promise and assurance that it contains *life* for us. Without it we have no life. We are not only to be sprinkled with it outwardly, but we are to receive it inwardly,—to drink it. As with the *water*, so with the *blood*. They are for inward as well as for outward application. We drink them and live; and we are washed with them and made clean.

XVII. *It contains protection* (Ex. xii. 13; Heb. xi 28).—The blood of the paschal lamb was Israel's protection. No sword could reach the man on the door of whose dwelling God saw the sprinkled blood. So the blood of Christ our Passover protects. In believing God's testimony to the blood, it becomes sprinkled upon us; and from that moment we are safe. The blood is our security. God sees it, and bids the sword pass by.

XVIII. *It contains separation from the world* (Heb. xiii. 11).—As the Sin-offering, Jesus suffered without the gate; thereby not only fulfilling His sacrificial work, and completing the sacrificial symbol or type, but leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. 'Let us go forth' is the voice that comes to us from the blood. Come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing; for the blood of the sin-offering is upon us, and Jesus is before us. Let us go forth not only from Babylon and Egypt, but from Jerusalem,—Jerusalem, which had become the type of the false Church,—the mere religious professor,—which, while naming His name, rejects Him and His

cross, nay, crucifies Him afresh. Let us keep ourselves unspotted not only from the world as such, but from a worldly Church,—worldly professors, who, instead of bearing Christ's reproach, bring reproach upon Him.

XIX. *It contains resurrection* (Heb. xiii. 20).—By the blood of the everlasting covenant Christ was raised. Our sins had slain Him, shed His blood, and brought Him down to the grave. But that shed blood was the removal of the sins that had weighed Him down. God saw in that blood the finished substitution. He accepted it, and gave effect to that completed work of propitiation by raising the Substitute. As the great Shepherd, He gave His life for the sheep; His life was accepted instead of theirs; His death made their dying no longer necessary,—nay, unjust. The blood was the payment of that which had brought death on Him and us; and therefore He was raised. With Him we rise,—by the efficacy of the same blood. That blood, which is the symbol of death, is the seal of resurrection.

XX. *It contains condemnation* (Matt. xxvii. 4, 25; Acts v. 28; Heb. x. 29).—It thus contains the condemnation of Judas, of Jerusalem and Israel,—of all rejecters of Christ. The same blood that spoke of pardon speaks of condemnation. Under the weight of *rejected blood* the unbelieving sinner perishes. This is the condemnation which the Church in these last days is preparing for itself,—(1) slighting the blood; (2) rejecting it; (3) trampling on the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Under this aggravated guilt the world shall go down to wrath; for it is guilt of the deepest dye,—the

deliberate refusal of and contempt for all that God has provided for the sinner. If an Israelite had torn down the tabernacle, overthrown altar and laver, slain the priest, cast forth the blood and water, defiled the mercy-seat, he would be but a type of him who sets at nought the Son of God and slights His blood. This is the millstone which the world is fastening to its own neck, which shall sink it in the abyss for ever.

Yet still the value and the virtue of the blood remain. It has lost none of its efficacy. It can still cleanse, and redeem, and purify. It can still pacify the conscience and reconcile to God. Not even its most deliberate rejecters need despair, or fear that it may not avail for them. It cannot lose its power. Up to the very last it availeth. Of its divine value the chief of sinners may avail himself without fear or distrust. In crediting the Holy Spirit's testimony to its undiminished and unchangeable sufficiency, the guiltiest upon earth will draw out all its fulness to himself; the whole value of the blood passeth over to him that believeth, as soon as he has believed. Not upon feeling, but upon believing, does the obtaining of its benefits depend. As soon as we receive the divine testimony, all that the blood has secured for sinners passes over to us as our righteous and everlasting possession. The preciousness of the blood is transferred to us; the preciousness of Him whose blood it is becomes ours, and we are accepted in the Beloved. 'Jehovah our righteousness' is our joy and our song.[1]

[1] The resurrection of Christ must no doubt be kept in view. We preach a risen Christ; and in His resurrection we see God's accept-

ance of His substitution, and the assurance of our justification by that work which resurrection *sealed*, as having been *finished by the death* of the Substitute. But still what follows the cross and the death, is not *part* of the sacrificial work, but the *result* of it. It may be well to note the different effects relating to the believer, which God connects with the death of His Son :—

(1.) *Death unto sin* (1 Pet. ii. 24).—He bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we might be 'dead to sins.'

(2.) *Life unto righteousness* (1 Pet. ii. 24).—Our new life unto righteousness is thus traced to the sin-bearing work upon the tree. The apostle links this life with *the cross*.

(3.) *Healing* (1 Pet. ii. 24).—'By whose stripes ye were healed.' From the cross flow the medicine and the health, as the cure did from the brazen serpent.

(4.) *Reconciliation* (Rom. v. 10).—'Reconciled to God by the *death* of His Son.' In the 9th verse we are said to be *justified* by His *blood* (not by His resurrection); in the 10th we are said to be *reconciled* by His *death*.

(5.) *Destruction of Satan* (Heb. ii. 14).—Through *death*, He destroyed him who has the power of death. The *cross* is the destruction of the devil.

(6.) *Deliverance of the troubled* (Heb. ii. 15).—'To deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' This is a very remarkable passage, as showing the power of the cross, not only in abolishing death and him who had the power of death, but in so bringing life and immortality to light, that troubled souls in bondage by fear of death are set free. This deliverance is *confirmed* to us by His resurrection, but it is His death that *secures* it.

(7.) *Redemption of transgressions* (Heb. ix. 15).—As Mediator of the new covenant, He dies, and by this death there is the 'redemption of the transgressions under the law.'

(8.) *The promise of eternal inheritance* (Heb. ix. 15).—This death has reference to them that are 'called.' To them, through the death of the Mediator, the promise comes, and through the same death the inheritance comes.

(9.) *Eternal life with Him* (1 Thess. v. 10).—'Who *died* for us, that we should *live* with Him.' His death and our resurrection-life are thus linked together.

These are some of the many passages relating to the death of the Substitute. From these we learn the value and the power of that

death as securing pardon, righteousness, and acceptance. Justification in and by a *crucified Christ* is the clear testimony of Scripture. The blessings flowing out of resurrection, and ascension, and intercession, are not for a moment to be lost sight of; but in so far as representation, or substitution, or acceptance is concerned, we have to do directly with the blood and the cross. The sweet savour of the *sacrifice* is that which envelopes us so as to make us acceptable and well-pleasing to God. Of that sacrifice (as in the case of Noah) God smells the sweet savour; and because of *that* He deals with us as righteous, honours us as precious, and blesses us as sons. The divine preciousness of that sacrifice as satisfying justice, honouring God, magnifying the law, suffices to procure for us, by its *imputed value*, what did not belong to us, and what nothing else could have given. That which satisfies righteousness is that which constitutes us righteous. It was the *death*, not the *resurrection* of Christ, that both declared and satisfied the righteousness of God, that proclaimed both the condemnation and the acquittal of the sinner. Yet there are some in our day calling themselves Christians to whom the cross is a stumbling-block, who tell us that the cross was not the place of atonement, who reject imputation as an unreality or a falsehood, and who profess to go to God on the footing of an infused resurrection-righteousness. Thus have men ceased to glory in the cross; nay, have made it of none effect. They have little sympathy with him who said, 'I have determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and HIM CRUCIFIED' (1 Cor. ii. 2).

XXXVIII.

THE CHURCH DWELLING ALONE.

'*Redeemed from the earth.*'—REV. XIV. 3.
'*Redeemed from among men.*'—REV. XIV. 4.
'*The people shall dwell alone.*'—NUM. XXIII. 9.
'*Be ye separate.*'—2 COR. VI. 17.

LET me call attention to these four texts, as making up the different parts of the one great truth concerning the Church's true position in this present evil world, her 'unearthly' calling and 'unearthly' walk. She is the 'redeemed one;' redeemed *from the earth;* redeemed *from among men*, or literally 'from men.' She comes out and is separate; she dwells alone; 'separate from sinners' (Ps. i. 1; Heb. vii. 26).

She is 'redeemed from the earth' that she may DWELL ALONE. She is 'redeemed from men' that she may DWELL ALONE. She comes out and is 'separate' that she may DWELL ALONE. For she is not of the world, even as He who redeemed her is not of the world. She is 'sanctified in God the Father' (Jude 1). She is a stranger in a strange land. Her calling is heavenly; and her affection is set on things above. Her 'conversation' or 'citizenship' is in heaven, and she sits loose from all below,—riches, pleasures, honours, vanities. 'Unspotted from the world' is her designation.

I wish to bring out all this specially in connection with the third of the above texts, concerning Israel's dwelling alone. 'Israel shall dwell in safety alone' (Deut. xxxiii. 28). 'Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations' (Num. xxiii. 9).

These were true sayings, though one of them comes from the lips of a false prophet. In them we seem to have a contradiction of the divine word, 'It is not good for man to be alone.' Yet it is so only in appearance. These two 'alones' are very different,—the 'alone' of Adam and the 'alone' of Israel; the persons are different, the circumstances are different, the words are different; that which was not good for the one was good for the other.

It looks also like an exception to the proverb, 'Two are better than one; . . . for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth' (Eccles. iv 10). But it is not really so; for everything in such a case depends on the friendliness of one's companion. Better to be alone when falling, than to be with an enemy.

Up till Abraham's day the 'godly seed,' the 'saints of the Most High,' had not been alone (save in heart and feeling); but were scattered everywhere; hidden and mixed. Hence before the flood the sons of God intermarried with the daughters of men. But when He called Abraham, He unfolded His purpose of separation from the rest of men. Then He carried out His condemnation of this present evil world, which in and by Noah He had already proclaimed. He appeared unto Abraham as the God of glory; and in that character He called him out of

Chaldea and its idolatry. He called him out to be 'separate' and to 'dwell alone',—nay, to dwell in *tents*. It was not the removal from one nation to another, or one land to another, that we see in Abraham, but the call to 'dwell alone,'—the manifestation of God's purpose to this end. Abraham dwelt alone. So did Isaac. So did Jacob. So also did Moses at last; though for a time he was drawn into the world, not out of it. Yet afterwards he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. First drawn out of the water, then out of Pharaoh's house. Egypt soon cast him out, and he 'dwelt alone' and 'separate' in the land of Midian, a stranger and a sojourner. All his after life was of the same separated kind. He was a true Nazarite, set apart from the world to God.

So was it with Israel. Even in Egypt there was little affinity or sympathy between them and the Egyptians; and the more that their 'hope' came out and brightened, the fellowship became less, the antagonism the more decided. In the desert they were separate,—they 'dwelt alone,'—with no society but that of God. When they entered Canaan, they did it to dwell alone. Even there they were not numbered among the nations. They were in the heart of all that was incongruous and hostile; and all things seemed meant to keep them separate, to make them feel their separation. Their place, their character, their calling, their testimony, all corresponded with each other. First there was round them a wall or barricade of enemies,—the Phœnicians on the north, the Philistines on the west, the Edomites on the south, the Moabites and Ammonites on

the east. Then there was an outer belt of deserts, and mountains, and seas, accomplishing a double separation; and beyond these there was an interminable stretch of hostile territory,—the vast nations of heathenism spreading wide over the world, all of them hostile to Israel.

Truly Israel was separate and dwelt alone. They were not numbered among the nations. The Gentiles never spoke of them but with contempt. A Jew was to a Greek or Roman the name for all that was weak, morose, credulous, and ignorant. The great world-streams swept by the tribes and around them, but they remained alone, unaffected by these mighty motions of earth's kingdoms, till at last their sins drew them into the currents, and they no longer dwelt alone.

But for ages they did dwell alone. They had all things of their own,—borrowing from none, dependent on none. With their own self-sustaining land, their own religion, their own city, their own temple, their own God, they dwelt alone. Their internal resources were enough. They needed not to go down to Egypt for help; and what could Babylon and its idols, or Greece and her gods, do for them? They needed nothing from without. Jehovah was their God, their all; and with His fulness for their inheritance, they could afford to 'dwell alone.'

What was Babylon, or Assyria, or Egypt, to Israel? An enemy, or it might be a tempter,—certainly not an ally or a friend. A distant peace might be between them; but as for fellowship, or brotherhood, or sympathy, that could not be.

What is the world to the Church, or to any single saint?

Just what Babylon or Egypt was to Israel. No more. She dwells alone. We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness.

Israel was 'separate' and dwelt alone. This was her position, her portion, such as was appointed her by the purpose of God. The Church is to dwell alone, like Israel. Let us set both these together, illustrating the one by the other.

I. *Israel did not need the world's help.*—The nations were stronger than she, but she did not require their strength to lean upon. Their strength was their weakness; her weakness was her strength. They would have helped her, but she would not be helped; and when at last she did accept their aid, it was her ruin. Her help was in Jehovah. Her security was in His favour. With Him upon her side, what was the array of the whole world against her? Her pious kings, such as Asa and Hezekiah, felt this: they prayed and acted accordingly.

Neither does the Church need the help of the world. The less of the world there is in her schemes, her enterprises, her hopes, the better. Never has she prospered when she betook herself to an arm of flesh, or to the strength of human greatness, or to the influence of the world's smile. For the world cannot really help one who is not of this world, who has nothing in common with her joys, or cares, or ambitions. And never has the world helped the Church without exacting a favour in return; insisting on or tacitly giving it to be understood that she expects some compromise, some relaxation of her testimony, less of strictness and spirituality,—more of genial

fellowship and participation in her pleasures, if not her lusts and sins.

The Church's help is neither in the world nor in the god of this world. Her help is in the Lord who made heaven and earth. With this divine help she is able to undertake any enterprise, to encounter any foe. Let her lean on this arm alone. It is on this arm that faith leans; it is this arm that unbelief flings from it, to take hold of one more visible, more sensible, more congenial to flesh and blood.

II. *Israel did not need the world's riches.*—The world was rich,—rich in its own way, and according to its own standard. Israel might have had a share in that wealth. But God had said, It is not for you. You need it not. I have given you a land flowing with milk and honey, abundance of corn and wine. What more do you need? Be content. Be strangers with me and sojourners, as all your fathers were. When you need the gold of earth, you shall have it. You needed it once when you were leaving Egypt, and you got it without toil. You needed it when you were building a temple for me in my city, and you got it. But seek it not. When required, it will come to you.

Israel, the world's gold is not for you! Church of the living God, your riches are not of earth; your treasure is in heaven. Labour not to be rich. Covet not luxury, and ease, and splendour. Grudge not to be poor. The cross of poverty, which your Master bore, be satisfied to bear also. In the early Church it was so. 'Not many rich, not many noble,' were called. God chose the poor to confound the riches and greatness of earth. 'Wooden

chalices and golden bishops' was the primitive boast. Poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing all things. Your riches are God's; they are the unsearchable riches of Christ; they are divine and everlasting. They take not to themselves wings and flee away. You shall have enough ere long, when the Lord comes. Meanwhile, be rich in faith, rich in love, rich in all good works.

III. *Israel did not need the world's wisdom.*—Egypt had learning, Babylon had wisdom, Greece had philosophy. Israel might covet these; for these have always been, even more than gold, objects of highest ambition to man. But with these Israel was not to intermeddle. When she tried to do so, she failed. Earth's wisdom would not suit her. The cup of Chaldean magic was not for her. The cloak of Athenian philosophy did not suit a Jew. Besides, she had wisdom of her own; wisdom of heavenly origin; not the wisdom of conjecture or speculation, but of certainty, of absolute truth; wisdom which could fill and satisfy; wisdom which could gladden and illuminate. In a small volume, no doubt, was that wisdom contained; to the secrets of science it did not extend; of man's goodness or greatness it spoke little; to earthly glory or fame it did not point the way. But it was full of God and the things of God; full of infinite and perfect truth; full of all that could fill, and purify, and ennoble the human soul. One page of it was worth all that Gentile sages could boast of. Israel surely did not need to go to Chaldea or Egypt for wisdom and learning. She had all she needed within herself. She might dwell alone

and enjoy it all. Happy Israel! Saved from a thousand doubts, and uncertainties, and vain reasonings, which vex, and fret, and shrivel up the soul! Happy Israel! Led at once by God into the green pastures of eternal wisdom, and made to lie down beside its quiet waters.

Church of God, all Israel's wisdom, more than all Israel's wisdom, is yours! You have now the fulness of Him in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell; Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Rest there. If other wisdom crosses your path, take it, if you are *sure* that it is TRUTH. But let it be subordinate to your own. Place nothing side by side with the wisdom of Christ. Above all, beware of entangling yourself in the perplexities and sophistries of the day, thus rushing into the very thickets from which God, by giving you such a certain revelation, has sought to keep you back. What! Do you covet doubt, when faith is before you? Do you covet speculation, when revealed certainty is presented to you? Do you prefer the vexed and boiling whirlpool to the quiet haven or more quiet lake? Be on your guard against the wiles of the devil in these last days. Should not a people seek unto their God? Is His wisdom not the surest, safest, best? Oh, dwell alone! Enter your chamber; shut your doors about you. Learn of God. Fear not the taunt of the world, that you are not abreast of the age, nor imbued with its spirit. Retire to God. Let the world's Babel-sounds of boasted wisdom pass round you or over you unheeded. In patience possess your souls. Get your wisdom in communion with God and in the study of His book.

IV. *Israel did not need the world's pleasures.*—And why? Was it Stoicism or Cynicism? No. She was happy without them. She had her God to make her happy. Her Sabbaths were happiness. Her feasts were happiness. Her ways were ways of pleasantness, and all her paths were peace. Happy wert thou, O Israel! Who was like unto thee,—a people saved of the Lord? How goodly were thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! She was the specimen of a happy nation, a prosperous nation,—yet dwelling alone; indebted to no nation round for her gladness; indebted to God alone. All joy was poor and transient when compared to hers. What could Phœnicia, or Philistia, or Syria, or Egypt, give her of true happiness?

So and even more with the Church. The joy unspeakable is hers; the peace that passeth all understanding is hers. She does not need to borrow from the world. She is not so poor as to be indebted to any man. She has all and abounds. O child of God, is not the joy of God enough for thee? Dost thou require the pleasures of sin, the gaieties of the ball-room, the excitement of the theatre, the music of the opera, the frivolities of the world's card-table, the stolen pleasures of the private dance, to make up for deficiencies in what God has given thee?[1] If He

[1] The 'Church' is rapidly becoming a province of 'the world.' Christians (so-called) form the greater part of every ball-room company; ministers and elders endorse the gaiety by their presence; Christian parents reckon dancing a necessary part of education; and even religious boarding-schools have their regular dancing parties! Thus the young are trained by their teachers and encouraged by their parents to be 'lovers of pleasure.' Balls, operas, oratorios, theatres,

has not given enough, go tell Him, and He will give thee more. But go not to His enemies to borrow. Go not to Endor, or Ekron, or Egypt,—to the world's haunts of vanity, where the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life are cherished. Dwell alone with God, and His Christ, and His Israel. Let their joys suffice. They have proved enough for prophets and apostles; enough for angel and archangel: they may well be enough for thee.

V. *Israel did not need the world's society.*—Israel knew what that meant,—'It is not solitude to be alone.' The society of Gentile idolaters she was commanded not to seek. It would profit her nothing. It would bring neither joy nor strength. It would only weaken and corrupt. 'Evil communications corrupt good manners.' The tribes were society to themselves; and, within the circle of Palestine, Israel found all that was congenial, and elevated, and blessed. For society she did not need to go beyond her own narrow bounds. Within these her fellowships lay.

Christian, dwell alone! Seek not the society of the world. Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? If you have any sympathies with that world,—if it contains attractions for you,—if God and the

and such-like are no longer forbidden things to the followers of the Lamb! Refined worldliness is the present snare of the Church of God. Christian parents! For which of the two worlds are you training your children? For *this* world, or that which is to come? Be assured that the same training will not do for both. Teachers and guardians of the young, beware of giving those entrusted to you a taste for the world's gaieties! 'Love not the world;' teach not your pupils or wards to love it. Keep them 'unspotted from the world.'

things of God are not enough for you,—there is something wrong. Love not the world! Seek not its society. Seek the things above. Beware of the fascinations of company, the spells which gaiety throws over the young. Stand your ground. Be not whirled away into the tossing current of gay society on any pretext whatever.

Church of the living God, be separate,—dwell alone! That is your security, your strength, your influence. Let the world see that you are not of it; that you do not need it. It needs you,—but you do not need it. And you will serve it best by dwelling alone. Not by coldness, sourness, distance; but by love, geniality, gentleness, patience, by all acts of benevolence and words of peace. These are things which are only to be found by 'dwelling alone.'

XXXIX.

THE MODEL OF A HOLY LIFE.

'*These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.*'—REV. XIV. 4.
'*Follow thou me.*'—JOHN XXI. 22.
'*Leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps.*'—1 PET. II. 21.
'*I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.*'—2 COR. X. 1.

THESE four passages point more or less to our responsibility for a holy life, and to Christ as the true model of that life. We are redeemed, that we may be *holy;* we are freely pardoned, that we may be *holy;* we look to Jesus, that we may be *holy;* we are filled with the Spirit, that we may be *holy.* The true religious life rises out of redemption, and is a copy of Christ's walk on earth. Beholding Him, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

The first of these passages refers specially to the future honour of the saints. Their peculiar privilege is to be *attendance on the Lamb;* 'for ever *with the Lord;*' for ever beholding His face; for ever waiting on Him, sharing His fellowship, doing His will, enjoying His blessedness, when day has broken and the shadows fled away. They are to be to the Lamb in His exaltation, what the

twelve disciples were in His humiliation,—'followers,'—though in a far higher sense than was known in the days of His flesh. Yet we may use this verse to indicate Christ as our present leader and example. We follow Him here in suffering and service, as we shall follow Him hereafter in glory and in joy.

Christ was our substitute when He was here on earth; we are His representatives now that He is absent. We are to be 'lights in the world,' as He was. For this end we are to 'follow His steps,' live as He lived, love as He loved, speak as He spoke. He is our pattern and model. Shine as He shone! He was the 'Israelite indeed,' the true Nathanael, in whom was no guile. He was the true Nazarite. Let us be Nazarites as He was, consecrated to God, and separate from the world. Look up, Christian, look up! Not Babylon, but Jerusalem, is your hope and your home. Thus Peter points to Christ as our 'example,' remembering perhaps His last words to himself, 'Follow me.'

The third of these passages connects together the suffering and the example. In it Peter places both before us at once, that we may have our eye on both, not *separating* the blood from the holiness, yet keeping both *distinct*, the former as the fountainhead of the latter. Jesus by His blood 'washes,' 'sanctifies,' 'justifies' (Rom. v. 9; 1 Cor. vi. 11); and while doing so, presents Himself as our model, the true doer of the Father's will.

Let us note Peter's words more at length. Christ *for us*, or Christ our substitute,—that is the first thing. Christ *in us*, or Christ our life,—that is the next. Christ *before us*,

or Christ our model,—that is the next. These three great truths make up a large portion of Christianity.

We look to Christ for salvation, and we obtain it as surely and simply as Israel obtained healing by looking at the brazen serpent. We look to Christ for conformity to His likeness, and we are changed into His likeness as we gaze.

The model or pattern is a complete one. Others are one-sided, imperfect: this is perfect. Every feature is there; every line is there. We are to grow like it; to be imitators of Christ. We are to copy Him. In copying a man, there is danger of producing a stiff, second-hand, second-rate resemblance. Not so in copying Christ. He is the divine model. It is God's purpose and desire that we copy Him. He is gone to heaven, but has left this pattern as a legacy.

A Christian, then, is a copy of Christ. His inner and outer man are to be copies of Christ. It is Christ's footsteps he is to walk in. It is Christ's image that he is to reflect. It is not Paul, nor Peter, nor Luther, nor Calvin, nor Rutherford that he is to copy, but Christ Himself. Other models may illustrate this, and so help in the imitation of Christ; but only as doing this are they useful; otherwise they are dangerous.

What then is a Christian man?

I. *He is a man of faith.*—It was by giving credit to God's word that he became a Christian man; for it is by faith that we become sons of God. And his whole life is to be a life of faith. As Christ lived by faith on the Father, so does he. Christ is his model as a believing

man. The more that he understands of Christ's life, the more will he see the faith that marks it, and will learn to copy it, to live, act, speak, and walk by *faith*.

II. *He is a man of prayer*.—In this too he follows Christ. Christ's life was a life of prayer. In the morning we find Him praying, a great while before day. All night we find Him praying. No one, we would say, less needed prayer; yet no one prayed more. And the disciple herein imitates the Master. He prays without ceasing. He is instant in supplication. His life is a life of prayer,—constant intercourse with God.

III. *He is a man of hope*.—Christ looked to the joy set before Him, and so endured the cross. He anticipated the glory, and so was a man of hope. There is the same hope, the same glory, the same joy for us. The things hoped for are the things we live upon and rejoice in. Our prospects are bright, and we keep them ever in view. The kingdom, the crown, the city, the inheritance, these are before our eyes. They cheer, and sustain, and purify us. Were it not for the hope, what would become of us? What would this world be to us? Learn to hope as well as to believe.

IV. *He is a man of holiness*.—He is the follower of a holy Master. He hears the voice, Be ye holy, for I am holy. He knows that he is redeemed to be holy, to do good works, to follow righteousness, to be one of a peculiar people. He is not content with being *saved;* he seeks to put off sin, lust, evil, vanity, and to put on righteousness, holiness, and every heavenly characteristic. He seeks to rise higher and higher; to grow more unlike

this world,—more like the world to come. He marks Christ's footsteps, and walks in them. He studies the Master's mind, and seeks to possess it; mortifying his members and crucifying the flesh. He aims at shining as He shone, testifying as He testified.

V. *He is a man of love.*—He has known Christ's love, and drunk it in, and found his joy in it. So he seeks to be like Him in love; to love the Father, to love the brethren, to love sinners, to show love at all times, in word and deed. His life is to be a life of love, his words the words of love, his daily doings the outflow of a heart of love. He is to be a living witness of the gospel of love. Love,—not hatred, nor coldness, nor malice, nor revenge, nor selfishness, nor indifference,—love such as was in Christ,—that he endeavours to embody and exhibit.

VI. *He is to be a man of zeal.*—'The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up,' said Christ. His life was one of zeal for God,—zeal for His Father's honour and His Father's business. So is the disciple to be 'zealous of good works.' Zeal steady and fervent,—not by fits and starts; not according to convenience, but in season and out of season; prudent, yet warm and loving; willing to suffer and to sacrifice; not sparing self or the flesh, but ever burning; zeal for Jehovah's glory, for Christ's name, for the Church's edification, for the salvation of lost men;—this is to give complexion and character to his life.

These things are to mark a Christian man. He is not to be content with less. He is to grow in all these things; not to be barren, not to stagnate, not to be lukewarm, but to increase in resemblance to his Lord; to be transformed

daily into His likeness, that there may be no mistake about him as to who or what he is.

The last of the passages set down at the head of this meditation takes up something special in Christ which we are to imitate,—His 'meekness and gentleness.' In the book of the Revelation He is chiefly known by the name of 'the Lamb.' That is His chief name in heaven. He has other titles, but this is given as peculiarly His in the place of His glory.

As Peter thus points to Christ as our model, so also does Paul in the above passage. One feature in His character he specially notes, which shone out very brightly in this coarse, rude world,—a world where, all along, man has trodden down man, the stronger the weaker; where strong deeds, as well as strong language, have been accounted heroism and manliness,—the proper expression of dignity and superiority;—this feature is the Lord's submissiveness and non-resistance, even with the full consciousness of superior power,—His 'meekness and gentleness.'

This *meekness* of Christ Paul takes up and points to. On this he bases his entreaties to the Corinthians. This is one of the strongest and most earnest of Paul's 'beseechings.' He has many of these; for he 'entreats' when he might 'command;' he uses love when he might wield the rod. 'I beseech you by the mercies of God' (Rom. xii. 1). 'I beseech you by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit' (Rom. xv. 30). 'We beseech you by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Thess. ii. 1). Here it is by the meekness and gentleness of Christ that he beseeches.

And why does he beseech them by this? For two reasons: (1) He reminds them of this meekness and gentleness, as if to say, 'Imitate Him whom you call Lord and Master, and do not proudly withstand the authority of me His servant;' (2) he reminds them of it, as if to say, 'Do not constrain me, the servant, to make use of anything but the meekness and gentleness of the Master.' It is the apostle's last argument in dealing with the rebellious members of the Church. Is it not weighty? Is it not irresistible?

But it is chiefly the *character* of Christ itself that we would dwell upon here, yet noticing also the bearing of that character upon the obedience of saints and the submission of sinners to His rule.

I. *The person.*—It is 'the Christ of God.' He has many names, each revealing His person: the Word; the Son; the Only-begotten of the Father; the Light; Immanuel. These express the marvellous constitution of His person as THE CHRIST; Son of God, and Son of man; very God and very man; the Word made flesh; having all divine and all human perfections, all created and all uncreated excellences exhibited in Him, all fulness deposited in Him; full of grace and truth; the glory of Godhead; the glory of the King of kings.

II. *The character.*—It is that of meekness and gentleness: meekness in bearing and forbearing; gentleness in His tender loving treatment of us, both in word and deed. He is 'meek and lowly;' He did not strive nor cry, neither did any man hear His voice in the street; the bruised reed He broke not, the smoking flax He quenched not; He entered Jerusalem on an ass's colt, as the prophet

had written, 'Behold, thy King cometh' (Zech. ix. 9). No doubt there are other declarations which speak of wrath, and judgment, and vengeance; but these are His 'strange acts' as the great Judge. His character, as exhibited on earth in all His words and works, was that of lowliness and love. Fury was not in Him. He bore the contradiction of sinners against Himself; when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not. He loved, He pitied, He wept, He invited, He entreated, He blessed. He frowned on none save the Pharisee. He spoke no harsh words; He displayed no repulsive looks or tones; He was ever courteous, polite, and affable. All in Him was grace,—grace to the uttermost. He was the embodiment of that charity or love which the Apostle Paul has described. He was long-suffering, kind, not easily provoked, thinking no evil, rejoicing not in iniquity, bearing all things, believing all things, enduring all things, never failing! Meeker than Moses, gentler than John, more patient than Job, tenderer by far than His own tender earthly mother, He is the embodiment of all that is winning and attractive. All this He was on earth; all this He is still; unchanged and unchangeable; with nothing in Him or about Him to repel, but everything to attract; everything to win our confidence. At once the highest of the high, and the lowliest of the lowly. His is the almightiness of divine royalty, for all power is given here; yet the disposition to use that almightiness only to save, and comfort, and bless. Almighty meekness, and meek almightiness! Almighty gentleness, and gentle almightiness! How admirable! How glorious! How blessed! So holy,

yet so meek and gentle to the unholy! So abhorrent of sin, yet so pitiful and long-suffering toward the sinner! So capable of executing vengeance and utterly destroying His enemies, yet so patient, so gracious; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance! So terrible as the Judge, yet so tender as the Saviour! His is the iron rod, and the sword of vengeance, and the purging fan, and the devouring fire; yet He says, Come unto me. He weeps over Jerusalem. He prays for His murderers. Ah, what meekness and gentleness are His! Nothing like it on earth, or in heaven,—the meekness and gentleness of the God-man. 'Even Christ pleased not Himself.'

III. *The bearing of all this on us.*—It is not in vain that He is thus presented to us. This meekness and gentleness ought to tell both on the believer and the unbeliever.

(1.) *On the believer.*—It is the strongest motive to obedience and submission. It is the most impressive rebuke to all pride, or murmuring, or self-will. Having daily to do with one so meek and gentle, shall we not become like Him? Shall we not love Him, and shall we not honour His laws? Shall we not fear to offend Him, and shrink from wounding Him? O believer! Look at this meekness and gentleness, and put away all stubbornness, and self-will, and self-pleasing. And having to do with one so meek and gentle, shall we not put away from us all doubting, all despondency? Shall we allow one hard, one suspicious thought to linger within us? Shall we not put ourselves implicitly into His hands and trust Him for ever?

(2.) *On the unbeliever.*—'Come unto me' are His first words to you. And His second are like unto them,

'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' Yes, He bids you come; He asks you to learn. He is the most *accessible* of all beings. His door is ever open; His heart is ever open; His arms are ever open. There is nothing in Him or about Him to repel you, though the chief of sinners, the worst of men. His words to the sinner are pre-eminently the words of meekness and gentleness. They are infinitely attractive and encouraging. 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' Look at Him; listen to Him; draw near to Him; speak to Him; doubt not, despair not, depart not. Go up to Him; He will receive you. Tell Him your case; He will bid you welcome. He will not cast you away. He has patience to bear with all your foolishness, and ignorance, and stupidity, and unteachableness. He will not get angry with you, as proud men lose their temper with the unteachable or obstinate. He will bear with you. The greatness of your sins shall be no hindrance. The desperateness of your disease will not make Him repel you. He will receive you graciously, and love you freely. Yea, He comes to you. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'

XI.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL.

'*Having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth.*'—REV. XIV. 6.

THIS world-wide proclamation of the glad message has been going on for ages. It is to be wider, and louder, and more urgent as the end draws near. The gospel is to be preached to all nations for a witness ere the end come.

The proclamation is made by an angel,—an angel flying in mid-heaven, the position of the sun at noon,—that all may see and hear. Angels in this book are representatives of the invisible agencies at work on earth. They are *living and personal agencies*, though invisible; not dead, mute laws, but superhuman powers, setting in motion the whole machinery of the world; and in the case of the present angel, the special machinery for the promulgation of the everlasting gospel. This book of the Revelation (like Daniel and Zechariah) takes us within the veil that hides the material from the spiritual, the human from the superhuman. It gives us the inner or supernatural side of Church history; the secret springs and invisible agencies which produce events and facts,—changes for good or evil; it gives us a glimpse of the true laws of nature, or

at least of those living powers and processes by which these laws are regulated and made to subserve the Creator's purpose; it shows us that angels have far more to do with our world and its history than we suppose; it keeps before us, what is so much needed in our day, the supernatural world of intelligence, and life, and strength, outside of ours, yet quite as real and true,—closely though invisibly connected with us, and operating at all points, animate and inanimate, spiritual and physical, upon the course of things in this lower sphere of ours. These 'ministering spirits' (Heb. i. 14) have far more numerous and various ministries in connection with earth and its history than we usually ascribe to them.

This angel is seen 'preaching' (he has the 'evangel to evangelize,' as the words are literally), making the good news known. Not that he actually preaches as men do; but in ways unknown to us he sends abroad the gospel, both by stirring up human agencies and in other more secret ways communicating it to men. Satan and his angels work for evil, in the dissemination of error, the sowing of tares, the inventing of strong delusions; and why should it be thought incredible that good angels might, in their sphere of good, do the like service for truth and righteousness? How Satan tempted Christ,—how he made Ananias lie to God,—how he sowed the tares,—how he leavens the world with error,—how he beguiles us with his subtlety,—we know not; but he does so. Just as the law was given by angels, as the 'word was spoken by angels' (Heb. ii. 2), as 'the angel testified these things in the Churches' (Rev. xxii. 16), so this angel in mid-heaven

may be understood as proclaiming the everlasting gospel. Angelic lips may not be heard; but human lips, set in motion by agencies which eye hath not seen, may proclaim it. There is here a new proclamation of an old thing; a re-promulgation on a wider circle of the everlasting gospel in the last days, just before the great act of judgment is consummated.

I. *The gospel.*—It is a 'glad message' from God to man; good news from heaven to earth. In it we have not man speaking to God, but God to man; not earth crying to heaven, but heaven to earth; it is love descending, not love ascending. It is the gladdest of all glad tidings that ever came to earth. It is THE good news.

(1.) *Of God's free love.*—To be good news they must be the news of love. And for that love to be available or accessible to the sinner, it must be absolutely and unconditionally free. God's free love is the very essence and marrow of the gospel. And it is as large as it is free.

(2.) *Of God's great gift.*—God *gave* His Son; and the Son *gave* Himself. Here is a gift beyond all measure and price,—an 'unspeakable gift.' Of this the gospel is the glad message.

(3.) *Of God's propitiation for sin.*—It was not a mere gift, but a gift which was to be a propitiation, an atonement,—a sacrificial gift,—the gift of a substitute and surety. One special part of the value and suitableness of this gift,—that which made it so pre-eminently a gift for sinners,—was its sacrificial character. It was an offering for sin. It contained cleansing and reconciling blood. Yes, Christ is the propitiation for our sins! God hath

set Him forth as a propitiation. This is the very gladness of the glad message.

(4.) *Of God's righteousness.*—He is the righteousness of God; and He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We bring glad tidings of a divine righteousness in preaching the gospel of the grace of God,—righteousness for the unrighteous, yea, for the most unrighteous of the sons of men!

(5.) *Of God's kingdom.*—The 'gospel of the kingdom' is its special designation. It is good news of a kingdom, and of the new and living way, and of the open gate into that kingdom for sinners. There is a glorious kingdom; there is free access to it; its gates are open; God bids us welcome. This is our gospel. Enter in, O man, O sinner, into the kingdom of God!

II. *The everlasting gospel.*—We read of eternal or everlasting salvation, eternal or everlasting redemption; and here is the same word applied to the good news concerning these.

(1.) *Its past is everlasting.*—It came forth from the bosom of Him from whom the only-begotten Son came; it is the embodiment of His eternal purpose. It was hidden in the eternal ages; and from these it has come out to us. It is no new thing to God; no unexpected thing devised to meet a sudden emergency. It is from everlasting, like the love and grace out of which it sprang.

(2.) *Its future is everlasting.*—It is for ever and ever. Its gladness is for ever; its provisions last for ever; and what it does for those who believe it, it does for ever. The eternal future is filled with the trophies and bright with the splendours of this glorious gospel.

(3.) *It is illimitable.*—It extends on all sides,—through all space as well as through all time. Its centre is the cross; its circumference is nowhere, or rather everywhere, round the whole universe of God.

(4.) *It is unchangeable.*—Like Him of whom it brings good news, it is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It is without variableness or shadow of turning. *One* gospel, only *one;* and yet that one sufficient for worlds of sinners,—the same for ever. It does not know *progress* or progressive development, for it is PERFECT.

(5.) *It is the gospel of every age and nation.*—It is not for one century more than another, but for all; not for one nation more than another, but for all. It suits the nineteenth century as truly as the first; civilised Europe as truly as barbarian Madagascar. It is the gospel of the ages,—in every age the same, supplying the same wants, addressing itself to the same kinds of sinners, pardoning the same sins, removing the same fears and sorrows. It is the everlasting gospel; more truly such than the everlasting hills or the everlasting stars. It is a gospel for the sons of men; human, and yet divine; of earth, and yet of heaven.

And this gospel is to be enforced in the last days by a special argument,—'Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come.' The gospel changes not, yet each age furnishes its own potent reasons for receiving it,—the last age the most potent and irresistible of all. Now or never! for the last trumpet is about to sound. Now or never! for the Son of man is just at hand.

XLI.

THE SWIFT AND SUDDEN ADVENT.

'*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they (men) see his shame.*'—REV. XVI. 15.

THESE are words specially for the last days. They suit all times, no doubt;—for Christ is ever coming; the last trump is ever about to sound; the fire is ever ready to be kindled; the Judge is ever at the door. But they suit the last days best, and are meant for these. With eighteen hundred years behind us now, we may take them home most solemnly to ourselves. (1) They warn; (2) they quicken; (3) they rouse; (4) they comfort.

I. *The coming.*—It is the long-promised advent. Christ comes! He comes,—(1) as Avenger, (2) as Judge, (3) as King, (4) as Bridegroom. The same Jesus that left the earth is about to return to it. 'Behold,' says He to a blind, heedless world; 'behold,' says He to a cold and slumbering Church. 'I come:' He is herald to Himself. 'As a thief;'—at midnight; when men are asleep; when darkness lies on earth; when men are least expecting Him; when they have lain down, saying, 'Peace and safety.' 'Behold, I come as a thief.' Without warning, though with vengeance for the world in His hand; when all past warnings of judgment have been unheeded. With-

out further message; for all past messages have been vain. Like lightning; like a thief; like a snare. Like lightning to the world, but the Sun of morning to His Church; like a thief to the world, but like a Bridegroom to the Church; like a snare to the world, but like the cloud of glory to His own.

II. *The watching.*—Not believing, nor hoping, nor waiting merely; but watching,—as men do against some event, whether terrible or joyful, of which they know not the time. *Waiting* was the posture of the Jewish Church for the first advent; *watching* is ours for the second. Watch, said the Master. Watch, said the servants in primitive times. Watch, we say still, for ye know neither the day nor the hour of His arrival. Watch, for that day is great and glorious. Watch, for ye are naturally disposed to sit down and take your ease. Watch, for Satan tries to lull you asleep. Watch, for the world, with its riches, and vanities, and pleasures, is trying to throw you off your guard. Watch upon your knees. Watch with your Bibles before you. Watch with wide-open eye. Watch for Him whom not having seen you love.

III. *The keeping of the garments.*—Be like Nehemiah, who, when watching against the Ammonites, did not put off his clothes night nor day. Keep your garments all about you, that when the Lord comes He may find you not naked, but robed and ready. Do not cast off your raiment either for sleep or for work. Do not let the world strip you of it. Keep it and hold it fast. It is heavenly raiment, and without it you cannot go in with your Lord when He comes.

IV. *The blessedness.*—Blessed is the watcher; blessed is the keeper of his garments. Many are the blessed ones; here is one class specially for the last days. How much we lose by not watching and not keeping our garments! (1.) It is blessed, for it cherishes our love. (2.) It is blessed, for it is one of the ways of maintaining our intercourse. (3.) It is blessed, for it is the posture through which He has appointed blessing to come, in His absence, to His waiting Church.

V. *The warning.*—Lest ye walk naked, and men see your shame. 'Shame' has three meanings: (1) the shameful thing or object; (2) the feeling of shame produced by the consciousness of the shameful thing; and (3) the exposure to shame and scorn from others. The first of these is specially referred to here. But all the three are connected.

Adam was ashamed at being found naked when the Lord came down to meet him; how much more of shame and terror shall be to unready souls at meeting with a returning Lord! It will be the beginning of shame and everlasting contempt. They shall be put to shame before men and angels; they shall be overwhelmed with confusion before the great white throne. The universe shall see their shame. O false disciple, come out of your delusion and hypocrisy, lest you be exposed in that day of revelation! O sinner, make ready, for the day of vengeance is at hand!

XLII.

THE ONE WITNESS AND THE ONE TESTIMONY.

'*The testimony of Jesus.*'—REV. XIX. 10.
'*He who testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.*'—REV. XXII. 20.

JOHN was overpowered with the glory. It was but the glory of an angel, and the words were the words of an angel; but the glory and the words were those of one who had come from the presence of God. Perhaps he was like Peter on the mount, who wist not what he did and said. He forgets for a moment that it is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,' and he falls down at his feet to worship him. 'Stop,' cries the angel, 'don't worship me!' And if the holy men and women, to whom the idolatry of the Church of Rome is paid, could speak, they would say the same, shrinking back horrified at the robbery of being made equal with God. But it is to the answer of the angel, and his declaration concerning himself, that I ask your attention.

Who am I, that you should worship me? Am I God? No, I am thy fellow-servant; and shall the servants worship each other, and forget the Master? Nay, I am the fellow-servant of thy brethren that keep the sayings of this book (ch. xxii. 9). Nay, I am the fellow-servant

of the prophets of old (*i.e.* the same angel who ministered to them). Nay, I am the fellow-servant of all who 'hold the testimony of Jesus;' for 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'

Thus then we have a proclamation made to us as to *the oneness* of the whole Bible.

I. *The oneness of the testifier.*—He is the *one* God. The sender of the testimony is the one Jehovah; the subject of the testimony is the one Jesus; the inspirer is the one Spirit. Through many lips He has spoken, by many pens He has written; but it is the mind, the will, the purpose, the revelation of the *one* God that is here.

II. *The oneness of the messenger.*—It is intimated here that it was *one* angel alone that was employed to communicate the testimony. He was sent to patriarchs and prophets of old, to apostles and brethren in later times. The instrument or medium of communication was a created being, an angel; but it was the same throughout.

III. *The oneness of the testimony.*—It is not many testimonies, but *one;* it is the *word* (not words) of God. It was given at sundry times and divers manners; in fragments and portions, great and small; by many lips and pens; spread out over more than four thousand years, for it began in Paradise and ended in Patmos; yet there is *unity* throughout, not discord or contradiction,—marvellous unity, which can only be accounted for on the fact that there was in reality but *one* writer,—He to whom one day is as a thousand years; and that therefore the truths enunciated are the offspring of *one* mind, the thoughts

of one heart. This testimony bore all upon one point, one person, one work, one kingdom. It was the "testimony of Jesus;" that is, it testified of Him from first to last; for Christ is the all and in all of prophecy, the all and in all of the Bible.

But let us consider the *oneness* of this testimony more in detail.

(1.) *Its oneness as to the character of God.*—His is *one* name throughout, Jehovah. He is the Holy One; righteous, good, true; hating the sin, loving the sinner. He is King eternal, immortal, and invisible; infinite in all things; without variableness or shadow of turning. It is the same good and gracious God that you meet with at man's creation, that you meet at the close of time; it is the same holy God that you find driving Adam out of Paradise, and bringing His deluge over the world, that you find pouring out His vials upon earth, and preparing His judgments for the sons of men.

(2.) *Its oneness as to the character of man.*—He was made upright, but he sought out many inventions. And since sin came in, we see him uniform in evil; a dark understanding, a rebellious will, a heart full of sin; thinking evil, speaking evil, acting evil. His "progress" is always downward, not upward. God's testimony to man throughout the Bible is the same. Patriarch, and prophet, and apostle tell us the same thing about the evil of man, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It nowhere hides the sins of the good; nor does it exaggerate the crimes of the evil. It bears one unvarying and undeviating testimony to man and man's heart, 'deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.'

(3.) *Its oneness as to the way of salvation.*—That salvation is described in many aspects, under many figures and types; yet it is but one salvation,—one way to life for the sinner, through a death and a righteousness not his own. God's free love; the great sacrifice; the sinner's faith. 'The just shall live by faith.' Salvation free, complete, present, everlasting; this is the announcement of Scripture from first to last.

(4.) *Its oneness as to the Saviour.*—He is the Seed of the woman; the Son of Abraham; the Seed of David; the Child of Mary. He is the Man with the bruised heel; finite, yet infinite; created, yet uncreated; dead, yet living for ever. Through His death life comes to us; through His blood cleansing comes. He is Jesus the Saviour; able to save to the uttermost; Messiah, the Sin-bearer, the Lamb of God. Every book of the Bible bears on this with marvellous concord.

(5.) *Its oneness as to the Church's hope.*—It is resurrection; glory; a kingdom; and all connected with Messiah. 'Behold the Lord cometh, with ten thousand of His saints,' was Enoch's utterance at the beginning; and, 'Behold He cometh with clouds,' is John's at the close. One unvarying testimony to our eternal future.

(6.) *Its oneness as to the sinner's doom.*—Death, wrath, woe;—a fearful judgment, and an endless darkness!—Throughout it is the same. It began with 'Thou shalt die;' it ends with 'They were cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.' They shall have death without hope who have refused the death of the Substitute.

XLIII.

THE GREAT PROPHETIC BURDEN.

'*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*'—REV. XIX. 10.

THE meaning of this passage may be given in the two following propositions: (1.) The theme or burden of prophecy is Jesus; (2.) The Holy Spirit who inspired the prophets bears testimony in them throughout to Jesus; His great object in the prophecies is to bear testimony to the Christ of God. Perhaps there may be special reference to the Apocalypse, 'the spirit of *this* prophecy;' as we read in the early chapters: 'Let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.' But the words cannot be confined to this, as their connection with the previous clause carries their reference back to the Old Testament prophets.

'For' connects the two clauses thus: 'I am the angel that ministered to the Old Testament prophets; I now minister to you, communicating the same testimony to *you* as to *them*,—the one testimony of Scripture concerning Jesus. I am nothing but a creature, a fellow-servant with thyself in the same work and mission, testifying to Jesus: worship not me, but that God from whom I come, to testify of His Son.'

Let us take these words in their widest sense,—thus:

I. *The theme or burden of the Bible is Jesus.*—Not philosophy, nor science, nor theology, nor metaphysics, nor morality, but *Jesus.* He is the alpha and omega, the first and the last. We acknowledge Him as the theme of the Gospels; let us no less acknowledge Him as the theme of all Scripture, all inspiration.

II. *The theme of Bible-annals is Jesus.*—Not mere history, but history as containing Jesus. Not the mere rise and fall of nations and kingdoms, but these as connected with the promised seed of the woman.

III. *The theme of the Psalms is Jesus.*—It is not mere poetry, Hebrew poetry, that we find in them, but Jesus. It is poetry embodying Jesus; it is praise, of which every note is Immanuel.

IV. *The theme of prophecy is Jesus.*—It is not certain future events, dark or bright, presented to the view of the curious and speculative; it is Jesus; earthly events and hopes and fears only as linked with Him.

What man needs, then, is *Jesus;* not mere knowledge or wisdom. What humanity,—unconsciously and ignorantly, it may be,—sighs for, is Jesus. What earth, ruined and accursed because of sin, groans for, is Jesus,—nothing less than this. No other prophet or priest or king can meet the exigencies of the race and its dwelling, the earth, but Jesus only.

Yes; 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.' I might take up these words and show how they are fulfilled in the things written concerning His first and second comings. But I prefer taking them up under the two

great heads—(1) Himself; (2) His work. This will embrace the whole Christology of the Bible.

I. *Himself.*—It is He, His own self, that shines out to us in the prophetic word. There we have His Person announced to us;—the God-man; Son of God, and Son of man; the Wisdom of God; the Word made flesh; the Seed of the woman; the Bruiser of the serpent's head; the Man with the bruised heel; Seed of Abraham; Seed of Judah; Seed of David; Star of Jacob; Root of Jesse; the Lamb slain; the Lion of the tribe of Judah; Prophet, Priest, and King, Judge and Lawgiver. As the Creator of all things, He has relationship to the universe; as Redeemer of His chosen, He has special relationship to earth. As the Light of the world, He is connected with the present state of the world's darkness; as the Morning Star, He is connected with the dawn; as the Sun of Righteousness, He is connected with the promised day,—the day of the Son of man.

II. *His work.*—This, of course, is in correspondence with His character and person. It is *prophetical* work; it is *priestly* (or sacrificial) work; it is *royal* work. He is both teacher and lesson, the prophet and the prophecy; He is both priest and sacrifice, the altar and the victim; He is King,—King of kings; and all things are His, though not yet put under Him. This work is (1) past, (2) present, (3) future.

But let us mark the bearings of this work upon—

(1.) *Heaven, and the things of heaven.*—It has revealed God, in His love, wisdom, power, and righteousness; the three-one God, Father, Son, and Spirit. It has formed

the *great lesson for angels;* for from it, and the Church redeemed by it, principalities and powers learn the wisdom of God. 'Angels desire to look into it;' and angels in Him have received their head; for He is the head of principalities and powers, and shall yet be manifested as such. He is King of heaven, seated on the throne of the universe.

(2.) *Earth, and the things of earth.*—Here it is that His cross once stood, and His blood was shed, and His grave was made. Truly He is connected with earth; for He was of the substance of the Virgin, and therefore linked with the dust of earth. Here it is that He has been saving sinners; redeeming to Himself a Church, a bride; preparing His kings and priests for the universe, as well as for this earth itself. It is from this earth (by virtue of His blood) that He removes the curse; it is of this earth that He says, 'Behold, I make all things new;' it is here that He is to reign as King.

(3.) *The grave, and its inmates.*—He did not enter the tomb merely to show that He could come out again. He entered that He might acquire power over it, in virtue of His death. He is now Lord of the grave, and Conqueror of death. 'O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.' He is 'the resurrection' as well as the risen One; from Him comes the first resurrection, with all its glory; the better resurrection; the resurrection unto life.

(4.) *Hell, and its possessors.*—He came to pluck brands from the burning; to deliver from the wrath to come; to take the prey from the mighty; to spoil the spoiler; to

destroy the works of the devil,—him who has the power of death, the prince of darkness. He comes to bind Satan, and shut him up; to smite Antichrist, 'prince of the blood-royal of hell.' He comes to fight the last battle with Satan, when the cup of his iniquity is full; for Satan's enmity to Christ and His Church during these six thousand years is filling that cup; and though Satan has not the guilt of rejecting Him as the Saviour, he has the guilt of deliberately warring with Him and His saints.

Thus, then, Jesus is the great Bible-theme. For *Him* let us search the Scriptures,—for Jesus; nothing less than Him. What think ye of prophecy? What think ye of Jesus? What think ye of the testimony to Him given by the Father and the Spirit? Shall earth be ashamed of her coming King? Shall His Church be ashamed to bear testimony to His royal prerogatives in this dark day of His absence?

XLIV.

MESSIAH'S MANY CROWNS.

'On His head were many crowns.'—REV. XIX. 12.

GOD'S great eternal purpose was to rule this world by a man;—not directly by Himself, but mediately by a man, such as he whose creation is recorded in Genesis; not by an angel or mere spiritual creature, but by a being of flesh and blood. Earth's government was to be *in* and *by* humanity. 'To the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come' (Heb. ii. 5).

The first intimation of this is in Genesis, in the history of man's creation,—'God blessed him and said, HAVE DOMINION.' This is man's investiture with regal power; this is earth's *magna charta;* this is God's constitution for our world; a monarchy, not a republic, nor an oligarchy; the crown is put upon man's head and the sceptre into his hand by God Himself.

Man sinned away his dominion; the crown fell from his head, the sceptre from his hand. Yet still, ages after, God speaks of dominion as his, and teaches us to ask the question, 'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?' nay, puts into our lips a new acknowledgment of the original title, 'Thou hast put all things under his feet' (Ps. viii. 6). Therefore it is that the redeemed sing, 'We shall reign on the earth' (Rev. v. 10).

But the sceptre was not to pass from the hands of humanity. God's purpose must stand. In its first unfolding it seemed to break down; but it cannot fail. One in our very flesh, a true son of Adam, has the crown secured to Him. Messiah, the Word made flesh, is earth's King,—the last Adam, the Lord from heaven. Man and man's earth are not to be disjoined.

But before Messiah reigns, there are to be ages of misrule and evil, rebellion and treason against the righteous King; for now 'we see not yet all things put under Him.' God puts man on trial to see if he can rule the earth;—to see if he *will* rule it according to the holy principles of its original constitution. In every region of earth this has been tried; and man's total incapacity for righteous government has been proved, as well as earth's persistent refusal to submit to righteous rule. Earth is at this day no nearer order, and peace, and holiness, than at first.

Yet God has enunciated the true principles of government to man. He did it briefly at first; He did it more fully afterwards, when He chose a land for the special scene of His dominion, and a people in whom the divine principles of government might be exhibited. He has done it most fully of all in His revelations of the future of man and man's earth. All prophecy, more or less directly, points to this. Isaiah's predictions of latter-day glory contain in them not only the germs of such principles of government, but their full and frequent exposition. God has told us how He wishes His world to be ruled. 'He that ruleth over men must be just;' judges and rulers should be fearers of God, seeking to do His

will, and glorify His name. The crown and sceptre are to represent holiness and righteousness, as well as power. The throne is to be established in judgment and justice. The legislation is to be religious; interwoven in all its acts with God and His laws. The king rules for God, and in the name of God; all that he says and does, are to remind his subjects of Him by whom kings reign.

Thus all God's history of the past, and His revelation of the future, declare the principles on which He desires His earth to be governed; the true theory of earthly rule and legislation. He who dissevers God from government, or would exercise dominion without religion, is setting aside what God has taken such pains to affirm. Divine politics are heavenly in their nature; and it is by these politics that our world is to be swayed.

All that is good, and holy, and just, is concentrated in the person of Messiah. He is the Just One. His sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness; the centre of His dominion is the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Messiah then is the representative of Adam, yet also of God. To Messiah, when all else have failed, is committed the government of earth. He, the true Adam, with His true Eve, the Church, is set by God on the throne, when the four great monarchies that have tyrannized over earth and trodden down the saints shall have been broken in pieces, and made like the chaff of the summer thrashing-floor. God casts down the thrones of earth; sets up the true throne, and places His Son upon it, King of kings, and Lord of lords. 'On His head are many crowns.'

I. *The crown of heaven is on His head.*—'We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour' at the Father's right hand. Heaven is His dominion. He sits upon its throne.

II. *The crown of earth is on His head.*—Not yet, not yet; but soon. All the present crowns of earth shall pass away, He shall take to Himself His great power and reign. He shall yet wear the crown, and exercise dominion here, when all things are made new: 'Come forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him.'

III. *The crown of principalities and powers is on His head.*—He is the Head of these. I do not mean merely that the powers of hell are put under His feet; but the powers of heaven. He is the King of angels.

IV. *The crown of the Church is on His head.*—He is King of saints. He is at once the Husband and the King of the Church. 'He is thy Lord, worship thou Him.' The saints *sit with Him* on His throne; yet they *fall down* before Him.

Thus Christ is all and in all. Earth was made for Him as well as heaven. Men were made for Him as well as angels. Might and dominion are His here below; and He shall yet take the sceptre and show what holy government is; what holy legislation is; what holy judgment is; what holy politics are; what a holy king is. Earth waits for His arrival. Men rebel against His government. They would cast out the heir. They would not have Him to rule over them. Yet God shall set His Son upon His holy hill of Zion.

XLV.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION.

'Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.'—REV. XX. 6.

RESURRECTION is our hope, not death. It has always been the Church's hope,—the hope of patriarchs and kings and prophets. Martha only uttered the confession of the Church universal when she said, 'I know that he shall rise again.' Israel knew resurrection well; and the Old Testament assumes the truth of it.

It is not the putting off this vile body (or this 'body of our humiliation'), but the putting on of the immortal and incorruptible that is our hope; not our going to Christ, but His coming to us; not merely our victory over sin and its spiritual consequences, but victory over death and the grave. This hope grew brighter as the ages went on, till it was fully revealed in Him who is the resurrection and the life. But still more was needed; and it was reserved for Paul and John fully to unfold the hope.

This twentieth chapter of the Revelation is a very wonderful one, and specially valuable as giving us details of the resurrection-hope.

An angel is seen descending out of heaven; he has the

key of the bottomless pit,[1] or abyss, and a great chain in his hand. He seizes the dragon, the *old* serpent (the murderer and liar *from the beginning*, John viii. 44), who is the Devil, and Satan; binds him a thousand years; casts him into the abyss;[2] shuts him up; sets a seal above or upon him, to hinder his escaping and deceiving the nations for a thousand years. Then thrones are set up (Dan. vii. 9); and there are sitters upon them, to whom judgment is given (1 Cor. vi. 2); the souls (Acts ii. 41, vii. 41) of the martyrs and the non-worshippers of the beast are made to live again; and being thus raised, they reign with Christ (ch. v. 10). But the rest of the dead are not raised till the end of the thousand years. This is the first resurrection.[3]

[1] The Greek word ἄβυσσος is unfathomable, boundless, bottomless. It occurs frequently in the Old Testament, referring to the depths underneath. Gen. i. 2, 'Darkness was on the face of *the abyss*;' vii. 11, 'All the fountains of *the abyss* were broken up;' viii. 2; Deut. viii. 7; Job xxviii. 14, xxxviii. 16, 30; Ps. xxxiii. 7, xxxvi. 6; Prov. iii. 20, viii. 24; Ezek. xxvi. 20, xxxi. 4, 15. Thus it is used to mean a vast deep place, generally underneath the ground. So in the New Testament—Luke viii. 31; Rom. x. 7; Rev. ix. 1, 2, 11, xi. 7, xvii. 8, xx. 1, 3.

[2] See Isaiah xxiv. 21, 22.—There is described the punishment of 'the host of the high ones on high,' 'the principalities and powers, the spiritual wickednesses in high places.' 'They shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days (a thousand years) shall they be visited.'

[3] There are two comings, two judgments, and two resurrections. The double resurrection is referred to in Isa. xxvi. 14, 19, and in Dan. xii. 2, which is to be thus rendered: 'Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; *these* (the awakers) are for everlasting life; and *those* (the non-awakers) are for shame and everlasting contempt.' See Heb. xi. 35; Isa. xxv. 8; Hos. xiii. 14; Luke xiv. 14, xx. 35, 36; John v. 29; 1 Cor. xv. 52; Phil. iii. 11; 1 Thess. iv. 16.

It gets the designation of 'first,' not because of its pre-eminence and glory, but because it is before another. Properly speaking, the great resurrection-fact is but *one*,—'all that are in their graves shall arise;' but it divides itself into two parts or acts, separated from each other by a considerable interval,—an interval (like that between the Lord's two comings) not at first revealed. But here the interval is explicitly announced,—a thousand years. The righteous rise to glory at the beginning of that period, and during it they live and reign with Christ. At its close, the wicked rise, and are judged. This resurrection of the wicked at the close of the thousand years, sets aside the doctrine of annihilation entirely. They do not rise in order to be annihilated. They do not get new bodies merely in order to have these new bodies destroyed.

I. *When is it to be?*—When the Lord comes the second time. In the preceding chapter He is described as coming with the hosts of heaven for the destruction of His enemies. (See 1 Cor. xv. 23; 1 Thess. iv. 16; 2 Thess. ii. 1.) He comes as the resurrection and the life; the abolisher of death, the spoiler of the grave, the raiser of His saints.

II. *Who it is to consist of.*—This passage speaks only of the martyrs and the non-worshippers of the beast; but other passages show that all His saints are to be partakers of this reward. 'This honour have all His saints;' all who have followed Christ, or suffered for Him, from Abel downwards. They have suffered with Him here, and they shall reign with Him here. They have fought the good fight; they have overcome the world, and the god of this world. The conflict and the tribulation have been

sore, but the recompense is glorious. Oneness with Christ *now* secures for us the glory of that day.

III. *What it does for those who share it.*—It brings to them such things as the following:—

(1.) *Blessedness.*—Peculiar blessedness is to be theirs. God only knoweth how much that word implies, as spoken by Him who cannot lie, who exaggerates nothing, and whose simplest words are His greatest.

(2.) *Holiness.*—They are pre-eminently 'the saints of God;' set apart for Him; consecrated and purified, both outwardly and inwardly; dwelt in by Him whose name is the 'Holy Ghost;' and called to special service in virtue of their consecration. Priestly-royal service is to be theirs throughout the eternal ages.

(3.) *Preservation from the second death.*—They rise to an immortality which shall never be recalled. No dying again, in any sense of the word; not a fragment of mortality about them, nothing of this vile body, and nothing of that corruption or darkness or anguish which shall be the portion of those who rise at the close of the thousand years. 'Neither shall they die any more' (Luke xx. 36). They 'shall not be hurt of the second death' (Rev. ii. 11), but shall feed upon the tree of life. Their connection with death, in every sense, is done for ever.

(4.) *The possession of a heavenly priesthood.*—They are made priests unto God and Christ—both to the Father and the Son. Priestly nearness and access; priestly power and honour and service; priestly glory and dignity;—this is their recompense. They, with their glorified and reigning Head, form the link between creation above and crea-

tion below, between the Creator and the creature, carrying up the incense of prayer and praise and service from all parts of a holy universe, now linked to Godhead for ever, beyond the possibility of fall. They maintain the communication between God and His world, between Paradise regained and the Paradise that was never lost; nay, between God and His innumerable worlds throughout all space. For priesthood is not for sacrifice alone, but for carrying on the endless intercourse between heaven and earth.

(5.) *The possession of the kingdom.*—They shall reign for a thousand years over a renewed earth, where there are traces still of the fall, and on which Satan is for a brief season to be let loose; and they shall reign for ever and ever over a world thoroughly restored and purified, into which Satan shall never again find entrance. They are kings as well as priests, both in one; God's Melchizedeks, wearing the priestly mitre, and wielding the royal sceptre. Having their home and place and throne in the new Jerusalem, they rule over a delivered creation, over the converted nations, over a world now filled with the Holy Spirit in all its nations.

Such are our prospects; let us live accordingly. Let our coming honours influence us now; making us self-denied, consistent, heavenly; quickening us to zeal and love.

Sinner, walking on in unbelief, and worldliness, and pleasure, what are your prospects? Have you considered them? Are they satisfactory? What is your hope? What is judgment to do for you? What is resurrection to bring? Look at the following alternatives, and ask which is to be

yours: Everlasting gladness, or everlasting sorrow? Everlasting glory, or everlasting shame? Everlasting songs, or everlasting wailing? The marriage supper of the Lamb, or the perpetual banishment from all that is good and holy? The new heavens and earth, or the eternal wilderness, with its parched and burning wastes? The heavenly Jerusalem, with the Lamb as its light, or the blackness of darkness? The fruit of the tree of life and the waters of the celestial river, or the eternal hunger and the unquenchable thirst? (Luke xvi. 24.) The first resurrection, or the second death? These are the alternatives before you; and there is no middle doom. O that second death, and that resurrection unto condemnation! (John v. 29; Rev. xx. 13.)[1] Thou shalt arise, O man; but what will that rising do for thee? When thou wert carried out at the first death, there were tears shed upon thy bier; but shall it be so when thou art carried out at the second death? Thy funeral procession moves on; but there are no friends, no mourners. What means that dark procession? It is a legion of fallen angels come to escort thee to that place where the worm dieth not. They lament not, but rejoice that they have got thee, both soul and body, into their keeping for ever. O man! Man, made in the image of God, and made for fellowship with God, is this to be thine end? Man, with a soul susceptible of such gladness and such sorrow, and with a body capable of such pleasure and such pain, is this to be thy doom? Is this the end of all time's hopes,

[1] This cannot mean that they are *raised* in order to be *annihilated*. The *resurrection* of the wicked is inexplicable upon the annihilation theory.

and fears, and dreams; its songs, and smiles, and laughter? Is this the end of sermons, and Sabbaths, and sacraments? Is this the end of warnings, and judgments, and providences, and entreaties, and messages of love? Well may hell from beneath be moved at thy coming, and say, Art thou too become like one of us?

Oh, ere the last trumpet sound, ere thou liest down upon thy earthly deathbed, lift up thine eyes to the saving cross! There is healing in a look. Look and live! Though it were thy last look here, ere the eye closes for ever, it would suffice. The uplifted Saviour saves even at the last,—saves even the chief of sinners.

XLVI.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE.

'*And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*'—REV. XX. 11-15.

THIS ought to have begun a new chapter, or formed a separate section. It is a new scene,—following, no doubt, close on the judgment-terrors of the preceding verses, but still separate from them. It is a scene of infinite grandeur and solemnity; a scene from which the world shrinks back, but which shall one day be realized on this very globe. John 'saw' it,—in vision, no doubt; but in a vision presented by God Himself,—a true picture of coming realities to man and man's world. All this scene shall one day come true.

It is the 'vision,' and it shall be one day the reality of

(1.) *A throne.*—Yes, a royal seat, a seat of judgment, the seat of the great King and Judge of all. There have

been many thrones on earth, but none like this; *one* throne in place of the *many*.

(2.) *A great throne.*—All earth's thrones have been little, even the greatest,—Nebuchadnezzar, or Alexander, or Cæsar, or Napoleon; but this is 'great;' greater than the greatest; none like it in magnificence.

(3.) *A white throne.*—White is purity, truth, justice, calmness. Such is the throne to be,—unsoiled, untainted, incorruptible; no one-sidedness nor imperfection; no bribery nor favour there. All is 'white,'—transparent and spotless perfection.

(4.) *One seated on it.*—It was not empty or unoccupied, nor filled by a usurper, or by one who could not wield the power required for executing its decrees. God was seated there; that very God before whose face heaven and earth flee away; that God whose presence melts the mountains, and made Sinai to shake. (See Ps. cii. 26; Isa. xxxiv. 4, li. 6; Jer. iv. 23, 26; Rev. vi. 14, xvi. 20.) In the last two passages we find men upon the earth, and hail falling from heaven upon them, after it had been said that all had fled away; which shows that it is not *annihilation* that is meant in any of them. Nothing is annihilated. Our bodies return to dust, but return out of dust into themselves again; so earth will undergo changes, but will come out of these the same earth, only purified. For our bodies there is *resurrection*, for earth *restitution*, but for neither *annihilation*. If annihilation is the portion of the wicked, what does their *resurrection* mean? He who sits on this throne is the mighty God, able to judge and to carry out His decrees in spite of all human or

hellish resistance. How terrible to stand unready before such a Judge and such a throne! *All* justice, *all* perfection, *all* holiness! Who can abide His appearing?

But besides the Judge and the throne, there are the millions to be judged. They are—(1) *The dead;* they who did not rise in the first resurrection, called 'the rest of the dead' (xx. 5). They remained behind the dead in Christ, but they must rise at last. (2) *Small and great;* from the youth to the old man, from the feeblest to the strongest, all are there. 'They shall not escape.' They have to do with unerring eyes. These 'stand before God.' There are others who 'stand before God,' or 'before the throne of God,' but for a very different purpose. 'The angels stood before God' (viii. 2); the two witnesses 'stood before the God of the whole earth' (xi. 4); the great white-robed multitude 'stood before the throne' (vii. 9–15); the elders 'sat before the throne of God' (xi. 16). But all these are very different from the 'small and great' who stand before 'the great white throne.' The former stand for honour and glory and gladness, the latter for judgment.

The process of judgment is also seen. (1) *Books* are opened,—books probably containing *God's* history of the sinner's life, His record of the sinner's deeds. How different from man's! How different God's story of our great men, our literary men, our poets, our philosophers, our captains, our kings, from man's! The divine version of human history, how strange it will be! How unlike all earthly annals! Most of the leading facts the same, yet how differently told! Most of the scenes and events

and actions the same, yet how differently put and interpreted! What a strange thing will be a biography, a human life, seen by divine eyes and recorded by a divine pen! What 'books' these will be! Alongside of these is another book, called the book of life,—the register of those whose portion is LIFE eternal, whose home is to be the land and city of LIFE, whose heritage is to be that God in whose favour is LIFE. (See Phil. iv. 3; Rev. iii. 5, xiii. 8, xvii. 8, xxi. 27.)

The books first mentioned contain the materials for the Judge's decision. Out of them the individuals are judged, 'every man according to his works.' The 'things written in these books' being thus connected with the 'works' mentioned, lead us to conclude that they are the record or annals of the *works* of each. All things are written down. God keeps His diary of every soul's doings and sayings and thinkings. Nothing forgotten! Every deed awakes from its slumbers and speaks on that day. What a resurrection of each buried thought and word at that judgment-seat!

The judgment will be just and fair; nothing overrated, nothing underrated. Every fact will speak exactly for itself. Each word will be weighed in perfect balances. No one shall be able to complain. God will be justified in all. What a scrutiny! What impartiality and calmness, yet what exactness and minuteness!

It shall be *universal* judgment then. Sea and land shall give up their dead. Death and the grave shall part with their victims. Each region of earth shall furnish its thousands or millions of the dead for judgment. And again

it is said, 'according to their works.' On these each man's judgment is to turn.

Then death and the grave are utterly destroyed. They exist no more, but are consumed. The lake of fire is their portion; and in this lake there is the second death. The first death passes away only to give place to a second far more terrible; a death that never dies, that has no grave, and no end. The *second* death! The lake of fire! What words of horror are these! Yet they are not exaggerations, but God's own calm and solemn language. It indicates *real* punishment, not annihilation.

And all who are not found in the book of life are cast into this fiery lake,—handed over to this second death, this eternal mortality, this never-ending dying,—this death that is always both present and to come,—the worm that never dies, the fire that is never quenched. Such is the eternity of the lost, according to God's account of it. Man may dilute or disbelieve or allegorize the statement, but there it stands. Eternal sorrow or eternal joy!

(1.) *Is it all true?*—Do we believe it?—all this about the great white throne, and the Judge, and the books, and the lake, and the second death? Are all these things true?

(2.) *Does it bear upon us?*—Have these scenes of judgment any bearing upon us? Are their terrors for us? Has humanity anything to do with that lake of fire? or is it for lost angels?

(3.) *Is it rousing to us?*—If anything could awake us, it would be a futurity like this. That Judge, that judgment, that woe!

XLVII.

DEATH AND THE GRAVE.

'And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.'—REV. XX. 14.

IT is of His two chief enemies that God here speaks, —'death and the *grave*,' or 'place of the dead' (Hades); for such, and not *hell*, ought to be the rendering of the latter of the two words.

This is not the first time, nor the only place, in which they are thus classed together. There is a striking series of passages, running through all Scripture, in which they are named as allies,—fellow-workers in the perpetration of one great deed of darkness from the beginning. Often are death and the grave in the lips of Job. David thus speaks of them: 'In death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?' (Ps. vi. 5.) Solomon thus uses them in figure: 'Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave' (Cant. viii. 6). Hezekiah thus refers to them: 'The grave cannot praise Thee; death cannot celebrate Thee' (Isa. xxxviii. 18). Isaiah thus mentions them in their connection with Messiah: 'He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death' (liii. 9). Hosea thus proclaims their awful fellowship in evil: 'I will ransom them (His

people) from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes' (xiii. 14). Paul thus takes up the language of the old prophets: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' (1 Cor. xv. 55.) And then, as the summing up of the whole, we have these strange words of the Apocalypse: 'Death and the grave delivered up the dead which were in them; and death and the grave were cast into the lake of fire.'

These last words accord strikingly with those in Hosea; yet they are not meant as a mere quotation or reference, but as an intimation of fulfilment; an announcement as to the way in which God is to execute His threat. 'O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction,' is the old prediction; and of this John records the awful fulfilment, 'Death and the grave were cast into the lake of fire.' This is the end of that death-power which was let loose in Paradise, and which has continued to exercise dominion upon earth through these two channels. The reign has been long and sad; it has been one of dissolution, and blight, and terror; but it ends at last; this dynasty of darkness, this double vice-gerency of hell, is broken in pieces; death and the grave are cast into the lake of fire,—which is the second death, the death that absorbs all other deaths, the death of deaths, the deepest death of all, the death after which there is no life, and no resurrection, and no deliverance for ever.

These two enemies of God and man are here personified as two powers of evil, the one the handmaid of

the other; twin demons, coming forth from the blackness of darkness, and returning to the darkness from which they sprang; servants of, or rather co-operators with, the prince of darkness, with him who has the power of death, even the devil, in carrying out the inexorable sentence, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.' They are treated as two hideous criminals; who, though for a time permitted to go forth, like the Assyrian and Babylonian ravager, to execute the divine commission, are at last called to reckoning for the havoc they have wrought, and dragged forth, as pre-eminent in crime, to receive their sentence of doom, and to be cast into the lake of fire.

Death has been the sword of law for ages; but when it has done its work on earth, God takes this sword, red with the blood of millions, snaps it in pieces before the universe, and casts its fragments into the flame, in the day of the great winding-up, in token that never again shall it be needed, either on earth or throughout the universe. The grave has been the chain and the prison-house of justice; but when its purpose is served, and justice has got all its own in the heaven of the saved and the hell of the lost, God gathers up each link of the chain and flings them into the lake of fire upon the head of the great potentate of evil; He razes the dungeon to its foundation, and buries its ruins in a grave like that of Sodom, the lake of the everlasting burnings. Death and the grave were cast into the lake of fire.

The great truth taught us here is God's abhorrence of death, and His determination not merely to end it, but to

take vengeance on it. Let us then inquire into this, and into the reasons for it.

I. *God abhors death.*—The fact of its existence on earth by His permission is no proof of His non-abhorrence; else would the prevalence of sin, side by side with death, be demonstration that He does not hate it. Not familiarized with death, as we sometimes are by its frequency, He abhors death more truly than even we do who are the subjects of his ravages. We cannot but hate death, even when we have ceased to fear it, and know that for us its sting has been extracted. We hate it, and thrust it from us; loathing its advances, and waging daily war with it,—seeking by every appliance of skill to overcome it and ward off its stroke. We hate it because of its shadow, and its coldness, and its silence. We hate it as the great robber of our loves and joys, who gives nothing but takes everything. It cuts so many ties; it rends so many hearts; it silences so many voices; it thins so many firesides; it comes with its dark veil, its screen of ice, between friend and friend, between soul and soul, between parent and child, between husband and wife, between sister and brother. Of human sympathies it has none; it concerns not itself about our joys or sorrows; it spares no dear one, and restores no lost one; it is pitiless and dumb; it is as powerful as it is inexorable, striking down the weak, and wrestling with the strong till they succumb and fall.

No wonder, then, that death is so unlovable to us,—nay, of all objects the most unlovable in itself, though occasionally acquiring some faint attractiveness, or at least losing some little of its hatefulness by its being made the

termination of pain, and conflict, and weariness, and the gate into the presence of Him who is our life and joy.

After all, however, our estimate either of its attractiveness or repulsiveness would be of little moment were it not that on this point God takes our side. His estimate of death coincides with ours. It is to Him even more unlovable than it is to us. He has set limits to its power; He has made it to His saints the very gate of heaven,—for blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; He has proclaimed resurrection and incorruption. But still, with all these abatements, He loves it not, nor is reconciled to it in one act or aspect. It is, in His eyes, even more than in ours, an enemy, a destroyer, a demon, a criminal, a robber. So thoroughly does He loathe it, that in order to make His displeasure known, He reserves it to the last for doom; He sets it apart for a great outstanding condemnation, and then casts it into the lake of fire.

But besides this final condemnation, He has given us others equally explicit. He calls it 'the king of terrors;' 'the last enemy;' and thus addresses it: 'O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes,'—*i.e.*, never will I revoke my sentence against thee (Hos. xiii. 14). Hardly could words be found to express more strongly God's estimate of death, and His determination to abolish it utterly and for ever. For six thousand years it has been the fulfiller of His purposes, His rod for the chastisement of His saints, His scourge for clearing earth of His enemies,—yet He loves it not; and as soon as His ends

with it are accomplished, He will show His displeasure against it by casting it into the lake of fire.

There is then abundant consolation for us in this dying world, from the thought that God sides with us in our abhorrence of death and the grave. He is the enemy of our enemies; and specially of this the chief. When He raised His Son from the dead, He showed us that life and not death was in His purpose, both for Him and for us. Resurrection is at once our faith and our hope. In His great love He has revealed to us the coming victory over death, when He who is our life shall appear to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them who believe. Because He rose, we shall arise. He has taught us to say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth;' and to add, 'God shall redeem my soul from the power of the grave.' He has made us to hear the sure words: 'Thy brother shall rise again;' 'I will raise him up at the last day;' 'He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His own glorious body.' So that in covering dust with dust at the grave of a saint, we look beyond the tomb and see the glory; our eye rests not upon corruption, but upon incorruption; our fellowship is not with death, but with life. We shall arise. That which is sown in weakness shall be raised in power. The reign of death is hastening to a close, the reign of life about to commence its eternal gladness. Our true life is coming; the conqueror is on His way; He will redeem His own from the power of the grave, and swallow up death in victory. Behold, I come quickly, He cries. We respond, Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

II. *God's reasons for abhorring death.* — It contains nothing in itself that is lovable; nor has it done any excellent works because of which God or man might love it. Its history is one of evil, not of good; of wrong, and sadness, and terror; of breaking down, not of building up; of scattering, not of gathering; of darkness, not of light; of disease, and pain, and tossings to and fro, not of health and brightness. But God counts it specially unlovable for such reasons as the following:

(1.) *It is the ally of sin.*—'Sin entered into the world, and death by sin' (Rom. v. 12). With sin it has gone hand in hand, passing down the generations, and spreading itself round the earth. Partners in evil, sin and death have held dark fellowship together from the beginning, the one reflecting and augmenting the odiousness of the other; like night and storm, each in itself terrible, but more terrible as companions in havoc. God abhors death as the fellow and the offspring of sin.

(2.) *It is Satan's tool.*—One of the most fearful of Satan's designations is, 'he that has the power of death.' Death is Satan's most congenial work,—his trustiest weapon. To inflict disease, but not to heal; to wound, but not to bind up; to kill, but not to make alive;—these are the works of the devil which God abhors, and which the Son of God came to destroy. The workman and his tool, the master and his servant, are alike hateful in the eyes of that God who loves not evil, but good; not death, but life.

(3.) *It is the undoing of His work.*—'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very

good.' Specially did He rejoice in man as His handiwork and His property, and in man's body as that material form which His Son was afterwards to assume. God did not mean creation to crumble down or evaporate. But death has seized it. The poison of hell has penetrated everywhere. Man's body and man's earth are falling to pieces, undermined by some universal solvent; the beauty, and the order, and the power giving way before the invader. The sculptor does not love the hand that spoils his statue, nor the mother the fever that preys upon her darling; so God has no pleasure in that enemy that has been ruining the work of His hands.

(4.) *It has been the source of earth's pain and sorrow.*— Pain is the messenger of disease, and disease is the touch of death's finger; and with disease and death what an amount of sorrow has poured in upon our world! *We* come into contact with sorrow only in fragments or drops, as it falls upon ourselves and our friends. We cannot estimate the accumulated grief of a year or a century, or even of one day, all over earth. There is no sorrow-gauge to measure the quantity that has fallen, all over our earth, since the first drop alighted. If there were such a measurement, we should be appalled at the amount of sorrow which death has inflicted on our race. But God has measured it. He knows what the amount of human grief has been; and He abhors alike the evil and the doer of it. He does not love sorrow; He has no pleasure in pain; He is not indifferent to creation's groans; and He will yet avenge Himself, and avenge man and man's earth for all the woe which death has wrought, in the day when

He destroys death, and banishes pain, and dries up tears, and delivers creation from the bondage of corruption.

(5.) *It has laid hands on His saints.*—Though He permitted Herod, and Pilate, and Nero, and the kings of the earth, to persecute His Church, He did not thereby indicate indifference to the wrong, far less sympathy with the wrong-doer. He treasures up wrath against the persecutor; He will judge and avenge the blood of His own. So will He take vengeance on the last enemy. He will yet vindicate His saints, and honour the holy dust that has been scattered over sea and earth. Death and the grave shall be cast into the lake of fire, to make known to the universe eternally His sense of the wrong done to the bodies of His saints, and His purpose to make a public example of the wrong-doer. Speaking of the resurrection of His own, and His plucking the prey from the spoiler, He says, 'I will redeem them from death, I will ransom them from the power of the grave;' and then, shaking His hand against the spoiler, He proclaims His purpose of vengeance: 'O death, I will be thy plagues! O grave, I will be thy destruction! Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.' For in proportion to His love for His own is His abhorrence of their injurers: 'He that toucheth them toucheth the apple of His eye.'

(6.) *It laid hands upon His Son.*—Death smote the Prince of life, and the grave imprisoned Him. This was treason of the darkest kind, the wrong of wrongs, perpetrated against the highest in the universe, God's incarnate Son. And shall not God visit for this? Shall not His soul be avenged on such a destroyer for such a crime? If the

meanest of His saints shall be avenged, how much more His beloved Son? In the day when God shall judge the world, this deed of darkness shall come into remembrance; and God, in casting death into the lake of fire, shall intimate His abhorrence of death, and His displeasure against this the worst of all his deeds,—the slaying of His only-begotten Son.

It is not then resurrection merely, but something more than this, that our text reveals,—even God's condemnation of all that death has done. We see, too, His joy in resurrection, and His determination to prevent the recurrence, nay, the possibility of the recurrence, of such an evil as death. To take the sting from death was much; to abolish death was more; but it is something more still to cast death and the grave into the lake of fire. Surely as over Babylon, the prison-house of the saints, so over death and the grave, when they descend into the abyss, we may sing this song of triumph, 'Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you of her; for in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.'

Then shall resurrection be not merely a prospect and a hope, but an accomplished fact; and not merely an accomplished fact, but an irreversible condition of creaturehood. 'Neither shall they die any more,' is the consummation to which resurrection brings us. The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the eye shall not be dim, and the ear shall not be dull, and the brow shall not wrinkle, nor the hair be grey, nor the limbs totter,

nor the memory fail. There shall be no more curse, nor death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain; for the former things have passed away.

We know that our Redeemer liveth, and because He lives, we shall live also. He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and when He shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory. And He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry; and them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

We preach Jesus and the resurrection; Jesus the resurrection and the life; Jesus our life. We bring glad tidings concerning this risen One, and that finished work of which resurrection is the seal; glad tidings concerning God's free love in connection with this risen One. The knowledge of this risen One is forgiveness, and life, and glory. Oh then, what is there in our dying world like this to impart consolation and gladness? We shall not die, but live. Eternity is a life, and not a death; a life with Christ, and a life in Christ. For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead us to the living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

XLVIII.

THE VISION OF THE RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS.

'*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*'—REV. XXI. 1.

OF these two last glorious chapters, might we not say, 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now?' They take us into the shrine of shrines; into the very heart of the glory; into the paradise of God; into the royal banqueting-house; into the very splendour of eternity. What a summing up of God's purposes is here! What a conclusion of the divine oracles! What a termination to the long, long desert-journey of the Church of God, calling forth from us the exulting shout which broke from the lips of the Crusaders, when first from the neighbouring height they caught sight of the holy city, 'Jerusalem! Jerusalem!'

The first book of Scripture and the last fit well into each other; the first two chapters of Genesis and the last two of Revelation fit together like the two halves of a golden clasp set in gems. Enclosed between the two is the history of six thousand years. And what a history! What a beginning, and what an ending! It began with the new, and it ended with the new,—the strange checkered 'old' lying

mysteriously between. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' 'I saw new heavens and a new earth.'

Of these Revelation visions, some were seen by John on earth, and some in heaven, according as the point of view suited best the vision and the seer. His sight of Jesus in His priestly glory was from earth, Patmos itself; Jesus had come down to him and showed Himself face to face. The epistles to the seven Churches are written from Patmos also. But after this John is called up to heaven, like Paul, to see and hear unspeakable things, which, however, unlike those which Paul saw, would be 'lawful for a man to utter;' and most of the subsequent visions are from this heavenly standing-place. What eyes must his have been, to look upon such terrors and such glories unmoved and undazzled!

Let us notice a few of the many things regarding which he says, while standing in these heavenly places, 'I saw.' We cannot cite even one half. 'I saw four-and-twenty elders sitting,' iv. 4. 'I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice,' v. 2. 'I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain,' vi. 9. 'I saw, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands,' vii. 9. 'I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud,' x. 1. 'I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire,' xv. 2. 'I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast,' xvii. 3. 'I saw the woman drunken with the blood of saints,' xvii. 6. 'I saw an angel standing in the sun,' xix. 17. 'I saw

thrones, and they sat upon them,' xx. 4. 'I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it,' xx. 11. 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God,' xx. 12. 'I saw a new heaven and a new earth,' xxi. 1. 'I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven,' xxi. 2.

This new heaven and earth which John saw were no doubt still future. He saw the future as if it were the present. Yet this new creation shall not be shadowy, but real,—as real as that described in Genesis. The former creation passes away, and the new creation comes; new heavens, new earth, new sea. The old creation is not annihilated, but only purged and renewed. It passes away as the gold passes into the furnace, to come out purified. It passes away as this 'vile body' does into the grave, to come forth glorious and immortal, yet the same body. The 'restitution of all things' is to do for earth and heaven what resurrection is to do for the body. What a change! What a perfection! What a holy blessedness! Oh when shall the day break, and the shadows flee away!

This first verse most significantly brings before us such things as these,—all of them blessed.

I. *Here is the end of sin.*—The world has lain in wickedness, but it shall do so no more. The overflowing flood of evil shall then be dried up, and sin be known no more upon this earth and under these heavens. What an ending shall be the ending of sin! For six thousand years it has triumphed; then its triumph ends. Not the shadow of sin or evil in any form shall pass over this fair globe. It shall, even more than at the first, be very good.

II. *The end of the serpent and his seed.*—How many ages had run out from the time that the serpent seduced Eve and ruined our world,—from the hour when God said, 'Thou art cursed above all cattle; I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed!' The seducer's triumph is now over; he himself is cast out of this earth and bound; the terrible battle of so many ages has been fought, and the battle-field cleared for ever; earth is now no longer at Satan's mercy; and not a trace of his long dominion over it remains. The creation that he marred rises from its ruin and sorrow more glorious than at first. His reign is ended; his legions are in chains; his spell is dissolved; his work of disfigurement all undone.

III. *The end of the curse.*—From this time there shall be 'no more curse.' He who was made a curse for us has cancelled earth's curse for ever. No cursed thing in any shape shall again be seen; only that which is blessed and holy. The earth and its fulness shall then be the Lord's, in a way till now unknown. Blessed kingdom, and blessed King! From every particle of dust, from air and earth and sea, shall the curse be expelled for ever. O fair and spotless creation, great paradise of God! The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

IV. *The end of corruption and mortality.*—These are the fruit of the curse, and with the curse they disappear. Death is no more. The grave is emptied. Disease is abolished. The inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick. Feebleness and weariness are unknown. The head aches

not, nor the heart. The eye grows not dim, nor the ear dull. All is immortality and incorruption, and beauty and eternal health.

V. *The end of sorrow.*—Into this new creation no grief shall ever enter. The days of mourning shall be ended. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. God shall wipe away all tears. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying. There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun,—for it is written, 'The Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory;' 'Thou shalt weep no more.' Everlasting joy shall be upon our heads. The vale of tears shall then be the land of song.

And with the end of these things shall come the beginning of the glorious and the blessed. The old passes away, and the new comes up like the sun in its strength. Winter is over and gone. It is sweet spring and perpetual summer now. It is the kingdom that cannot be moved, the undefiled inheritance, the reign of righteousness, the reign of the righteous King. Into this nothing that defileth shall enter, nothing unworthy of the presence of the glorious King.

All this for those who once were sinners,—the lost and worthless. Blood has bought it. The cross has done it all. Through death life has come. The crucified Christ has opened the gate for us, and all may go in. The same Jesus who has bought the glory for us bids us come. Far and wide go out the messages of invitation, Come in, Come in! At each gate waves the blessed hand afar, beckoning us with all urgency to enter. Echoing amid earth's vales

and hills, through every land, the trumpet sounds that summons the wanderer, and assures him of most loving welcome. Will you hesitate, O men, or neglect, or scoff, or refuse? All this glory waiting you! These open gates inviting you! And this poor, dark, death-stricken earth speaking to you each hour, and saying, This is not your rest; I have nothing for you but sorrow, and pain, and despair! O men of earth, will you miss the prize thus placed within your reach? Will you despise the love that yearns and weeps over you in your folly? Will you not listen and live? Will you not listen, and go in and become heirs of the glory and the joy?

XLIX.

GOD'S TABERNACLE ON EARTH.

'*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men.*'—REV. XXI. 3.

THE voice that uttered these words is said to have been a *great* one, indicating their importance, and God's desire that we should listen to the announcement. It is not surely without a meaning that a great voice should be thought needful to speak the words, and that a special note of its greatness should be left upon record for us.

We are not told who uttered it. It 'came out of heaven;' that is all we know. It was not the inhabitants of earth looking round and wondering at something which had thus taken place in the midst of them; it was the inhabitants of heaven looking down from the upper glory, and rejoicing in what had at length, after so many ages and so many hindrances, been accomplished upon earth. It reminds us of the joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, though the occasion is one of far greater magnitude and wider compass.

Yet it does *not* seem in this place to be the voice of God Himself, but the voice of the angel-multitudes that fill the heaven of heavens, and stand before His throne. That the tabernacle of God should be pitched in heaven, and among themselves, was nothing new; but that it

should be pitched upon earth, and among the sons of men, this calls forth admiration and gladness. 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with *men*!'

Frequently in the course of these visions does John hear 'voices,' which, like explanatory words, come in to cast light upon the symbols, and to tell us the impression which the scenes are making, not merely upon John, but upon other beings, both in earth and heaven. Sometimes it is the voice of a 'mighty angel' (ch. v. 2); sometimes the voice of 'many angels' (ver. 11); sometimes the voice of the elders and living creatures (*ib.*); sometimes it is the voice of 'much people' (ch. xix. 1); of a 'great multitude' on earth (ver. 6); sometimes it is a great voice 'out of the temple' (ch. xvi. 17); sometimes it is a voice from the 'altar' (ch. ix. 13); sometimes from the 'throne' (ch. xvi. 17); sometimes it is a voice '*in* heaven' (ch. xi. 15, and xii. 10); sometimes it is a voice from or 'out of heaven,' which two last expressions come with fuller meaning when contrasted with that other passage, 'there was *silence* in heaven' (ch. viii. 1). This great voice from heaven is heard making such announcements as these: 'Come up hither' (ch. xi. 12); 'the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.' It is this voice which is as the voice of many waters and of a great thunder; which is as the voice of harpers harping with their harps, who sing new songs before the throne, which none could learn but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth (ch. xiv. 1–4). It is this voice out of heaven which, in our text, proclaims, 'Behold, the

tabernacle of God is with men.' Perhaps it is the same with the 'shout' (1 Thess. iv. 16).

Taking up this announcement as containing something of unspeakable interest and importance to us, we consider the great event which it proclaims, not indeed as yet accomplished, but most assuredly to be so in God's wise time; so that just as eighteen hundred years ago the cry was heard from earth, 'It is finished,' so the second great cry shall be heard from heaven, 'It is done.' 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men;' 'Behold, I make all things new.'

As to the *time* when this great issue comes to pass, I do not say much. It is, of course, *after* Christ has come the second time; yet not perhaps immediately, at least to its full extent. For while the millennial age of peace and glory may be truly called the tabernacling of God with men, the new heavens and the new earth, it is still imperfect, being but the first and preparatory stage of the more glorious, and perfect, and eternal consummation which is to succeed, and to which specially our text refers.

Keeping this in mind, we consider, *first*, The desirableness of this issue; *secondly*, God's declared purpose as to this; and, *thirdly*, The manner or process by which God has brought it about.

I. *The desirableness of this state of things.*—Many things show us this.

(1.) *The interest which the inhabitants of heaven take in it, as seen in the words before us.*—Though not of the race of man, nor dwellers on earth, they rejoice in the holy blessedness which has now taken possession of earth.

They do not envy our race, nor are they jealous of our earth as having obtained an honour which once belonged exclusively to themselves and to heaven. There is no bitterness of selfish rivalry, no uneasiness felt at the prospect of having their monopoly of glory thrown down, and their prerogative of being the metropolis of the universe shared with a planet like ours, so inferior in size, and once the seat of most hateful evil. They can do nothing but rejoice in seeing earth become the dwelling-place of Jehovah,—in beholding the tabernacle of God now pitched among the children of men.

(2.) *The pains and costs which God has been at to bring about this issue.*—He has grudged nothing; He has not spared His only-begotten Son,—so infinitely desirable does He reckon this result. Surely *that* must have a large space in His eye and heart, for the accomplishment of which He was willing to make such a sacrifice! Surely that ultimate glory must be precious in His estimation, when, in order to bring it about, He can submit to allow such developments of evil, such an overflow of sin, such a reign of Satan for so many thousand years, instead of at once setting fire to the guilty world, and burning it into a second hell.

(3.) *The work of Christ, through which it has been brought about.*—Not without the sacrificial work of Chirst could this end have been attained. As it would have been unrighteous in God to pardon a sinner without this work, so would it have been no less so without this to restore and re-glorify the sinner's world. The leper's habitation, no less than the leper himself, requires the

sacrifice, and the blood, and the cleansing water. In the restoration of earth, and its re-inhabitation by God, Christ sees of the travail of His soul.

(4.) *The desire with which prophets and righteous men have desired this issue.*—The times of the restitution of all things have been spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began. All prophecy is full of this coming glory. Holy men spoke of it, prayed for it, waited for it, saw it afar off, and were glad. Surely that which their pens so largely wrote of, and their hearts so earnestly longed for, must be infinitely desirable.

(5.) *The change which it will produce on earth.*—Over all its face sin has spread itself, like the overflowings of some dark river of hell. Evil has prevailed, Satan has reigned, a rebellious hatred of Jehovah has showed itself, pain and sorrow have poisoned it in every part, disease and death compass it about. It is a blighted, withered, ruined, woe-stricken region. It is so as seen by our eyes, how much more when seen by angels' eyes! how much more still when seen by the eyes of God! How infinitely desirable that all this evil should be undone, this curse uptorn, this death exchanged for life, this sorrow turned into joy! And what a difference it will make when such shall actually be the state of things on earth! Sin shall no longer defile, death shall no longer destroy, sorrow shall no longer overshadow. God shall no longer be banished from His own creation. Who, when reading such prophetic descriptions as the following, can fail to realize the desirableness of the glorious change?—'There shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the

Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him;'—'There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever;'—'There shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth;'—'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.'

If, then, that change be so infinitely desirable,—if the issue described in our text be so inconceivably glorious,—how needful that those who are expecting to share it should meanwhile walk worthy of it! The prospect of such a glory should be as transforming as it is comforting, as sanctifying as it is gladdening. If this be our hope, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! Is it so with us?

II. *The declared purpose of God as to this glorious issue,—God having His tabernacle with men.*

One of the earliest statements is an intimation of God's purpose respecting this. Paradise was meant not merely as man's abode, but as God's abode with man; so that when man sinned, God is represented as coming down to the garden in the cool of the day. Man's sin then frustrated, if we may so speak, God's purpose in the meantime, yet it did not hinder that purpose from being made known. This great original purpose of God to have His dwelling with men continued to be presented to man in type and prophecy from that day forward, to show that it had only been postponed, not abandoned,—postponed in

order to be carried out more fully and more gloriously than it could have been before. Especially was this the case in Israel's history, from the time that the tabernacle was erected in the wilderness to the day when the temple and city were laid in ruins by the hand of the aliens. The name of the tabernacle was 'Jehovah's Tent,'—the tent in which He took up His abode, and round which He gathered the tents of Israel,—'the tent which He placed among men' (Ps. lxxviii. 60). The whole story of Israel is the exhibition of God's desire to dwell with men, and man's refusal to allow God to dwell with him.

The statement in the Gospel of John regarding the Son of God is another declaration of this same purpose: 'The Word was made flesh, and *dwelt* among us;' literally, tabernacled or pitched His tent among us. And, in our Lord's words, we have more than once the intimation of the same thing, or rather of a twofold purpose,—that God should dwell with man, and that man should dwell with God; as in that remarkable answer to one of His disciples, 'If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him' (John xiv. 23). And it is this which is the complete fulfilment of Christ's name Immanuel, 'God with us.'

God then has all along been telling us not merely that He has a heaven of which He desires to make us partakers,—His own blessed heaven, the paradise that was never lost,—but that He means to make a second heaven of this very earth of ours; and out of that paradise, that Eden, that earth, which was lost and marred by man, to

bring a more blessed and incorruptible paradise, in which He will pitch His tent, and where He will make His dwelling with the sons of men. As in the person of Christ we see these two things,—man taken up to God, and God coming down to man, so as indissolubly to combine in one perfect being all that is excellent in the Creator and in the creature; so in the universe of God the same twofold perfection is to be exhibited,—man taken up to dwell with God in God's holy heaven above, and God coming down to dwell with man in man's holy earth below. And are not these two things brought before us in these words of Christ spoken to the Laodicean Church: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and *sup with him*, and *he with me*?'—I *with him* as well as he *with me!* And is not this the filling up of all blessedness, the consummation of all glory? Without it would not something have been awanting both in earth and heaven,—both to God and man?

From the beginning, then, God has announced this as His purpose. Age after age has He set this before us, in type and prophecy. All that has taken place on earth has been bearing upon this, and helping it forward. God means yet to dwell with men. This is the Bible message to us. God means to dwell with men. This is His eternal purpose; and had it not been so, would He not long since have abandoned such an earth as ours, and either made it pass into nothing or turned it into hell?

Nor have there been any intimations of God's design

ultimately to abandon earth, after He has accomplished certain ends. He has nowhere said that after having spared it, and made use of it for a certain time, and for certain ends, He will leave it to desolation, or reduce it to nothing. On the contrary, all that He has said and done hitherto indicate His intention to restore it, to glorify it, and to fit it for being His abode. God has, beyond mistake, declared His purpose as to the destiny of earth; and that purpose shall stand. The barriers in the way of its accomplishment are vast and many. The whole power of the fallen creature, both men and devils, is arrayed against it. Sin and righteousness alike oppose it,—the former blighting it, and the latter forbidding the removal of the blight. Death and life alike oppose it,—the former destroying it, the latter refusing to come and restore the desolation. The evil, too, has waxed so great, and has been of so long standing; the curse has had its full and protracted sway, so as to eat into the very core of everything good and beautiful; the poison has had time so thoroughly to infuse itself into the constitution of creation, that its life's blood seems poisoned, and the taint of corruption become ineradicable; the weight of guilt which is upon it, calling for eternal judgment, seems so tremendous, specially the guilt of crucifying the Lord of glory; the authority of Satan over it seems so complete and so irrevocably established;—that the hindrances in the way of creation's restitution seem all but insurmountable. Yet the eternal purpose shall stand. Not a jot of it shall fail,—even that pertaining to the smallest atom of this mouldering earth. All shall come to pass. Eternal Sovereignty has decreed

it. Infinite Wisdom has planned it. Omnipotence will bring it to pass.

III. *The means, or process, by which God is bringing all this about.*

This whole process, from first to last, centres in His Son. As the Christ of God, He is the accomplisher of the Father's purpose; and through Him God has been all along ripening that purpose, removing the hindrances, and hastening on its full revelation.

1. *The first actual step was the incarnation.*—When 'the Word was made flesh,' the first link was formed which was to secure creation from sinking into utter ruin, to fasten it to Godhead, and in the end to raise it up to a brighter glory and excellence than that from which it had fallen. The Son of God took bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and as our bodies are part of the dust of the ground, out of which they were formed, so He, in taking to Himself a true body, took into His person the materials of creation, the dust of our very earth,—thus linking creation to Himself by an indissoluble tie, and fastening earth to heaven. He took not upon Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham; and while this identified Him with our race, it no less identified Him with that earth which was given us as our special home and dwelling-place and kingdom. By thus taking a body made out of the substance of earth, He joined Himself in perpetual affinity with man and his world;—and that which God has thus joined together, who shall put asunder?

2. *His life on earth was the second step towards the end in*

view.—His living here for thirty-three years was the declaration of His desire and purpose to make earth the seat of His tabernacle. But in this life we see more than this. We see Him taking possession of creation; we see Him doing battle with its oppressors; we see Him casting out Satan, healing diseases, overcoming death. We see Him hushing the winds, calming the sea, exercising dominion over its inhabitants, creating bread for the multitudes, walking upon the deep, and giving others power to do the same. In all this we see not merely power and love, but we see the visible and material pledges of the deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption. He who did these things has, by doing them, pledged Himself to do more, nay, to do all that earth requires. He who did these things in the day of His humiliation and weakness, and before His great work upon the cross was accomplished, will surely do exceeding abundantly more than all these, in the day of glory and power, now that He has finished His work, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

3. *His death was the next step.*—For it is through death that life is to come both to man and to his earth. Only the death of Him who has identified Himself with us and with our world can remove the guilt under which earth was groaning, can secure the revocation of the sentence, can obtain forgiveness for *earth*, as well as for man, its dweller. He was earth's Sin-bearer as well as man's. He took upon Him the curse of earth as well as man; and the thorns which formed His crown showed how truly He was bearing the curse upon creation which Adam's sin

had caused. As the bearer of man's guilt, He was nailed to the cross; as the bearer of earth's curse, He was crowned with thorns. Earth has now been sprinkled with His blood; and that blood cleanseth from all sin.

4. *His burial was the next step.*—Death had taken up its abode upon earth, and every sepulchre on its surface was one of his strongholds. Till death then be overcome in his very fortress,—till he be dispossessed out of his dwelling,—there can be no hope for earth. Mortality would still reign. But Christ went down and fought the lion in his den. From his lair He drove him out; and in demonstration of His victory He compelled him to let go a company of saints, who, when He rose, rose with Him as an earnest of His final victory over death, and of the expulsion from earth of the last enemy which had hitherto wasted it. By death the Prince of life overcame death; and in His burial He was pursuing the routed foe, and compelling him to deliver up his prey. Thus did He commence the expulsion from earth of that mortality and corruption which had defaced it so sadly.

5. *His resurrection was the next step.*—Wresting His own body from the dominion of death, He showed how ere long He is to wrest, not only the bodies of His saints, but the whole creation, from the bondage of corruption. If He on whom sin was laid, and who on account of that load went down to the grave, thus threw off mortality, and shook Himself free from its fetters, bringing life and immortality to light, how certainly may we conclude that He is able to do the same thing for that creation which was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason

of Him who had subjected the same in hope! Christ's resurrection not only proclaimed Him to be the Son of God with power, but also the Prince of the kings of the earth.

6. *His ascension into heaven was the next step.*—When He ascended, He not only led captivity captive, but He carried up into heaven His own body as the representative of earth. That body is now at the Father's right hand, the pledge of earth's security and final glory. An ascended Christ is earth's great pledge of restitution, and another step of the process towards the accomplishment of the purpose of God. That portion of earth which, in His body, He has carried up into heaven, proclaims to the inhabitants of heaven His interest in earth, and to the inhabitants of earth the certainty of His purpose respecting earth's final restitution. And for what is this ascended Saviour interceding? Not only for His Church, but for *earth* itself. 'Ask of me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost *ends of the earth* for Thy possession.' He pleads for earth,—earth, where He was born, and lived, and died; earth, whose air He breathed, whose plains and hills He walked, and whose soil He watered with His blood; earth, out of whose dust His body is composed, and the future bodies of His risen saints. Nor shall these intercessions be long in vain. Soon shall they be all answered, and the cry be heard, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men!'

1. Saint, are you making ready for that day? Are you walking worthy of an heir of that glory? Are you remembering that your *body* is the temple of the Holy Ghost?

Are you at one with Father and with Son in your desire for that restitution of all things? Do you not only long to depart and to be with Christ, but do you also long for the arrival of Christ here, and for God's making His tabernacle with the children of men?

2. Sinner, what are your thoughts of that day? What hopes have you of sharing its blessedness? At present, none! none! What have you to do with it? What has an unforgiven soul to do with a forgiven and delivered creation? What has an unrenewed sinner to do with a glorified world,—a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness? From that world all sin is swept away; and can you hope to dwell in it? Nothing that defileth shall enter; and do *you* expect to enter it?

Yet Christ says, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' Let the Son of God enter now; His entrance now will be the earnest of your entrance into the new Jerusalem. Admit this Christ whom you have long shut out. Admit Him at once. He will come in, and dwell in you and with you; and that will be the pledge of the eternal indwelling, the eternal fellowship, the eternal blessedness, when the tabernacle of God shall be with men!

I.

THE COMING OF THE PERFECT, AND THE DEPARTURE OF THE IMPERFECT.

'*The former things are passed away.*'—REV. XXI. 4.

'THE things which are seen are temporal,' says the Apostle Paul; and again he says, 'Old things are passed away;' and again, 'The fashion of this world passeth away.' These are words that suit us well in our changeableness, and vanity, and mortality. It would not be well for us were such a condition as the present immoveable and eternal. Fading and dying, and then entering on the possession of an unchanging life,—this is surely far better than a prolonged mortality of pain and weakness like that which we have here and now.

The words do not teach annihilation of any kind,—of man or matter. When one is renewed of the Spirit, there is a new creation: old things pass away, all things become new, yet the man's identity is unchanged. He is the same individual, and yet a new man. So is it here. Former things pass away, all things are made new; yet all are in the truest sense the same,—the same, only without the sin, and the evil, and the pain, and the decay.

These former things are many,—great and small,

material and spiritual;—all of them more or less connected with earth and man. Note some of these:

I. *The former things connected with the body have passed away.*—Our bodies shared the ruin into which sin brought our race. Mortality and corruption took possession of them. They became subject to pain, and weariness, and disease, in every organ and limb. The one drop of poison coming from Adam's sin has spread itself out and pervaded every part of us. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. We begin with pain, and we end with it. Our flesh, from the cradle to the tomb, is feeble, broken, ready to faint, the cause and the inlet of a thousand sorrows. It is truly an 'earthly house,' a frail tent or tabernacle, in which we groan, being burdened; a 'vile body,' needing such perpetual care, and food, and medicine, and rest,—yet, after all, incapable of being preserved; the seat of a daily warfare between life and death; in spite of all our cherishings, hastening on to the sick-bed and the separation from its guest the soul. All this shall yet be reversed. Former things shall pass away. This head shall ache no more; these hands and feet shall be weary no more; this flesh shall throb with anguish no more. 'God shall wipe away all tears from these eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things are passed away.' He who once hung upon the cross, but now sits upon the throne, says, 'Behold, I make all things new.' 'This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality, and death be swallowed in victory.'

II. *The former things connected with the soul have passed*

away.—The beginning of this renovation was our 'being begotten again unto a lively hope.' This re-begetting displaced the old things and introduced the new. The sin, and the darkness, and the misery, and the unbelief, and the distance from God,—all these shall come to a perpetual end. In their place shall come holiness, and love, and light, and joy, and everlasting nearness,—unchanging and unending fellowship with that Jehovah in whom is life eternal. Every fragment of evil shall be expelled from our souls; and we shall then know what perfection is,—perfection according to the mind and after the image of God,—perfection without a flaw, or taint, or shade,—perfection without the possibility of reversal or diminution. From our heart, from our conscience, our intellect, our feelings, our affections, from every part of our spiritual being, shall all evil depart. 'Former things shall pass away.' We shall be holy as God is holy; we shall be perfect as He is perfect; we shall be children of the light and of the day in the fullest sense,—no trace remaining of sin in any part of us. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. We shall be changed into His image from glory to glory. He that is righteous shall be righteous still; he that is holy shall be holy still.

III. *The former things connected with the earth have passed away.*—This earth is the seat of evil since man fell. The curse came down on it; creation was subjected to the bondage of corruption; Satan took possession of it. It has been overshadowed with sin, overspread with misery; its air full of sighs and groans; its soil made up of corrupted bodies; its cities the centres of ungodliness

and rebellion; its thrones the fountainheads of misrule; God disowned; Christ rejected both in State and Church; the Bible despised; the gospel mocked; blasphemy resounding on all sides; evil everywhere. These are the former things which shall pass away. Satan shall be bound, and his angels traverse earth no more. The devouring lion shall be in chains, and 'no lion shall be there.' The curse shall vanish from creation; the blight disappear. Beauty shall clothe all things. Paradise shall return. Holiness shall revisit earth. God shall once more delight in it and set His throne in it. The second Adam shall be its Lord and Ruler. His sceptre shall supersede the oppressive sceptre under which the race has groaned from Nimrod downwards. Righteousness shall flourish, and holiness to the Lord be inscribed everywhere. The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. The meek shall inherit the earth; and the glory of the Lord shall shine over all its expanse. There shall be the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

And all this irreversible! No second fall. No second overflow of evil. No failure on the part of the righteous King. No waxing old; no ruin; no decay; no return of disease and death. All is everlasting. Messiah,—even He who died for us and who rose again,—is on the throne, and no usurper can assail it. He ever lives and ever reigns.

Blessed consummation and hope! It draws nearer and nearer. Soon shall time no longer be. Soon shall this present evil world give place to the glorious world to come. Our King is coming; He will not tarry. Our Bridegroom is at hand; He is not slack concerning His promise. In an hour when we think not He will arrive. Are we ready? Is the oil in our vessels? Have we got on the garments of beauty? Are we preparing to bid Him welcome? 'Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him.'

LI.

THE NEW THINGS OF GOD.

'*And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*'—REV. XXI. 5.

THERE are many *new* things spoken of in Scripture, some of more, and some of less importance. Of the less important we have such as these:—Samson's *new* cords (Judg. xv. 13); David's *new* cart for the ark (2 Sam. vi. 7); the *new* sword of the giant who sought to slay David (2 Sam. xxi. 16); Elisha's *new* cruse (2 Kings ii. 20); the *new* tongues of Pentecost (Matt. xvi. 17); Joseph's *new* tomb (Matt. xxvii. 60). These are not so directly connected with things spiritual and eternal, and so we may call them of less importance; yet they have all their important lessons.

But let us take up the following as specially the new things of God:—

I. *The new testament or covenant* (Matt. xxvi. 28).—That which was old has vanished away. It was insufficient; it could not help the sinner; it said nothing of forgiveness. But the new covenant is all a sinner needs: it comes at once with a free pardon; it presents a work done for the sinner, not a work for the sinner to do. The

motto or burden of the new covenant is, 'Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.'

II. *The new man* (Eph. iv. 24).—This seems to correspond with the 'new creature' (2 Cor. v. 17); with the 'new heart' (Ezek. xviii. 31); with the 'new spirit' (Ezek. xi. 19); with the 'heart of flesh' (Ezek. xxxvi. 26); with the 'new birth' (John iii. 3); and the being 'begotten again' (1 Pet. i. 3). It supposes the destruction or removal of the old man and the creation of the new,—this new thing being the workmanship of God, the production of the Holy Ghost. Newness of nature, of heart, of life, of words, of the entire being, is the basis of all religion and true worship.

III. *The new way* (Heb. x. 19).—The approach or access to God by the sinner is said to be by a 'new and living way,'—that way being Christ Himself, for through Him we have access by one Spirit to the Father. It is a *new* way in contrast with Adam's old way; a new way, because *newly* made by Him who had newly died; a way into the holiest; a way through the veil, by means of the blood. All God's dealings with the sinner are on a new footing, that of free love, simple grace. It is a free way, a sufficient way, an open way, a perfect way. He who walks thereon is safe; for the way not only leads to life, but IS THE LIFE. Yes, life and truth are in Him who is the way; for Christ is all and in all.

IV. *The new song* (Ps. xxxiii. 3; Rev. v. 9).—Every new day brings with it a new song; or rather it brings materials for many new songs, which we should be always singing. Our whole life should be full of new songs.

Yet the old songs are not thereby made obsolete; they do not grow tame or unmeaning. As the old songs of a land are always fresh and sweet, so is it with the old songs of faith. They never come amiss, and they help us with the new. These new songs have to do with the past,—for often, in looking into the past, we get materials for a new song,—with the present, and with the future. They are connected with ourselves, our families, with the Church, with our nation, with the work of God just now, with resurrection, with the restitution of all things, with the glory, the new Jerusalem, and the new creation. It is specially with the last that the new song of the Apocalypse is connected.

V. *The new commandment* (John xiii. 34; 1 John ii. 8).—It is both an old and a new commandment which Christ gives us; substantially the same as from the beginning, yet in many respects altogether new; a new lawgiver, a new motive, a new standing-place (Zion, not Sinai), new light and fulness; everything in the commandment now connected with Christ Himself and with His love. This new commandment bases itself on 'God is love,' revolves round the cross. Love me, says the Master; love one another with a pure heart fervently; love the brethren as I have loved you;—thus fulfilling both the old and the new commandment at the same time, nay, treating them as one.

VI. *The new wine* (Matt. xxvi. 29).—In one sense the Lord's Supper is new wine; and there we remember His love, which is 'better than wine.' But Christ, in using the expression, 'till I drink it *new* with you,' refers to the heavenly feast, the marriage supper of the Lamb. There

is in the highest sense and degree 'the new wine;' wine made from no earthly vine, but from Him who is the true vine, and from the juice of whose grapes there comes the new and royal wine, the wine of the kingdom. He is Himself the giver and the gift. His blood is drink indeed here; much more hereafter. It is 'new' here; it will be much more new hereafter.

VII. *The new Jerusalem* (Rev. iii. 12, xxi. 3, 10).—This is no earthly city. It is not the old Jerusalem rebuilt; that is another thing. This is a new and more glorious city, heavenly and divine, which cometh down out of heaven from God; and it has the glory of God and of the Lamb. It is altogether *new;* for the risen and the glorified; for God's kings and priests; the city and the palace of the Great King.

VIII. *The new heavens and new earth* (Isa. lxv. 17; 2 Pet. iii. 13).—The whole of what God had made, and which sin had defiled, is made new. The universe is renewed; it is the restitution of all things; it is the replacing of all creation on a higher and more glorious footing, from which there shall be no second fall. There dwelleth righteousness; it is the kingdom of the righteous King.

IX. *The new name* (Rev. ii. 17).—This is for the dwellers in the new Jerusalem, the inhabitants of the new heavens and earth. Let us consider what it is and what it means. What the actual individual name is we know not; it will be as unlike the past as 'Israel' (the prince with God) was unlike 'Jacob' (the supplanter). It will be a name,—

(1.) *Of love.*—The Father's love will be in it; Christ's love will be in it.

(2.) *Of honour.*—It will be no mean nor common name, but glorious and celestial.

(3.) *Of blessing.*—It will proclaim blessing; it will be a name of blessing, a blessed name.

(4.) *Of wonder.*—It will astonish the possessor, and every one who hears it; no one shall know it or guess it till it comes out. As Christ's new name is one which no one knows but Himself (Rev. xix. 12), so with the conqueror. It will be a name of glad astonishment.

(5.) *Given by Christ.*—'I will give.' As He gave names to Abram, Jacob, Peter, John, so will He give this new name, superseding our old earthly appellation.

(6.) *Most suitable and characteristic.*—It will in itself condense and summarize our past history and character, or perhaps our eternal prospects, as seen by God Himself. It will be a name full of divine meaning,—interpretative, perhaps, of God's dealings with us, and indicative of His love.

(7.) *Contained in a white stone.*—The white stone is the stone of acquittal. In that stone of acquittal the new name is inscribed by Christ. It is as an acquitted man, a conqueror, one to whom the Master says, 'Well done,' that we get the name. It is the everlasting seal of forgiving love.

They shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads. The Father's name is there (Rev. iii. 12, xiv. 1). But this new name is something more. What manner of love is this?

LII.

THE CONQUEROR'S REWARD AND THE COWARD'S DOOM.

'*And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end: I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*'—REV. XXI. 6–8.

THE speaker here is 'He that sat upon the throne.' He is the author of the new creation: 'Behold, I make all things new.' He declares the truth and certainty of what has been, and what is to be spoken in this book: 'These words are true and faithful.' For His name is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. He calls Himself the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending; the all-possessing, all-comprehending, all-communicating One, whose fulness is from eternity.

He was the babe of Bethlehem; he is now the risen and glorified Son of God. He spoke on earth the words of grace; He speaks the same from heaven. There is no change in His heart. As it did not require ages to make

Him the gracious One, so the lapse of ages and the glory of heaven cannot make Him less gracious or alter the feelings of pity with which He yearns over a rebellious world, even as He wept over impenitent Jerusalem when He saw her doom approaching.

For these words refer to the crisis of earth's history: 'He said unto me, It is done;' just as He said on the cross, 'It is finished.' The fulness of the times has come; the prophetic word has been fulfilled; the seals are opened; the trumpets are blown; the vials are poured out; the battle of the great day of God Almighty has been fought; Babylon has fallen; Satan is about to be bound; creation about to be delivered from the bondage of corruption; the saints to be raised; the great kingdom to begin! It is just at the crisis; just when the consummation is about to take place; just when the last vengeance is about to descend, and the gate to be closed,—that the Lord sends out this *last* and most urgent summons of grace. Come! Enter! In another hour you will be too late. The door will be shut.

I. *The fountain for the sons of men.*—Each word here deserves special notice.

1. *The thirsty.*—These are they who are seeking rest but finding none; going after pleasure, yet obtaining no happiness; hewing out the ever-breaking cisterns; 'spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not.'[1] They are not those thirsting after righteousness, but after pleasure, saying,

[1] Isa. lv. 2; 'satisfieth,' here used for quenching the thirst with water, as Prov. xxx. 16, Isa. lviii. 11, lxvi. 11, Jer. xlvi. 10.

'Who will show us any good?' They are the weary, worn-out, empty, sorrowful, broken-hearted sons of sin.

2. *The water.*—That which refreshes, satisfies, fills, makes happy. 'This He spake of the Spirit' (John vii. 39). Frequent are the allusions to this water both in the Old Testament and the New. It is called 'living water,' 'water of life;'—it is that which quickens and revives, which fills the soul with heavenly gladness. This Jordan is better than Abana and Pharpar, though the world slights and shuns it. All joy is in it. The life of heaven is in it.

3. *The Giver.*—It is He who gave Himself,—Jesus the Christ, who not only *has* all fulness, but *gives* it. The Son is the gift of the Father, and the Spirit is the gift of the Son. He is the great Giver of all blessing to a poor and empty world. He gives from the Father's throne. He gives according to His love. He gives of the water of life,—nay, of its *fountain*,—freely. Undeserved and unpurchased He *gives!* The wells of salvation (Isa. xii. 3) are His, and He lets down His bucket and draws for us;—not merely the surface water, but its depths,—'creating in us a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.'

Thirsty spirit, take the living water! Drink and be happy. Deal with Jesus about it. Deal with Him alone, and face to face. Deal with Him as One who desires sincerely that you should drink and be refreshed.

II. *The conqueror and his reward.*—The designation 'he that overcometh' carries us back to the seven epistles, in each of which the expression occurs. As *believers* we are saved, as *conquerors* we get the recompense. Seven kinds of reward for seven kinds of victory; and here is the

eighth! It says, Fight, for the great Captain leads you on. Fight, for the reward is as great as it is sure. The reward here is threefold:

1. *The inheritance of all things.*—We are heirs of God; joint-heirs with Christ. As such the universe becomes our possession; heaven and earth, and the wide regions of farthest space; all that God possesses, all that Christ has become heir to;—all is the portion of the conqueror. A kingdom wide as widest space, large as God's possessions, endless as the eternal ages,—such is the overcomer's heritage, the conqueror's recompense.

2. *The divine portion.*—'I will be his God,'—a repetition of Abraham's blessing (Gen. xvii. 7). Jehovah is our God! Does not this include everything? If God be not my God, I have nothing. If God be my God, I lack nothing; nor should I be poor though stripped of everything, and though not an atom of the universe were mine (1 Cor. iii. 21, 23).

3. *The divine adoption.*—The conqueror becomes a son, and all that is contained in sonship is his,—all the paternal love, all the divine patrimony, all the endless glory. He our Father, we His sons (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18). Noble paternity, blessed sonship! 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called sons of God!' (1 John iii. 1.) This glory, this new and peculiar relation to Godhead, we shall owe entirely to the free love of Him who gave His Son for us.

III. *The coward's doom* (ver. 8).—Though the 'fearful' or coward is specially singled out here, yet there are others associated with him in his awful doom. The

'coward' is the first in the roll; but the whole roll is dark. They are all of earth, sons of Adam, men,—not devils. Let us take them as they are set down here.

1. *The fearful.*—This does not mean those who are full of fears,—timid, doubting Christians,—those 'who are of a fearful heart' (Isa. xxxv. 4; 1 Thess. v. 14). It means the cowards who refused to come out from the world and join Christ, though their consciences urged them; who shrunk from confessing Christ; who, through fear of men, of the world, of their good name, of earthly honour and gain, either kept their religion to themselves or threw it away. Of this class was the young man in the Gospel and Demas; those who 'drew back,' in Heb. x. 38; the opposite of the 'overcomers.' Of this class are they who tell you they keep their religion to themselves, and would not in company name the name of Christ; would blush if caught upon their knees, and apologize if a Bible were seen upon their tables. They are those whom our Lord denounces,—'Whosoever shall refuse to confess me before men.' Beware of COWARDICE in the things of God, of being ashamed of Christ!

2. *The unbelieving.*—These are the rejecters of Christ. The fearful do not *actually* go so far, though virtually they do. They (the fearful) shrink from owning, but the unbeliever refuses Him. It is this disowning of the cross, this rejection of the testimony, this turning the back on Christ, that is here condemned. It is 'the evil heart of unbelief' which is held up to view as fit only for 'the second death.' 'He that believeth not shall be damned.' Oh the hatefulness of unbelief! For it there is no place

but the ever-burning lake. What must it be to refuse God's testimony to His Son! to refuse that Son Himself!

3. *The abominable.*—Those who were partakers of the abominations and filthiness mentioned before (xvii. 4),—revellings, banquetings, riots, blasphemies. These are open sinners, swearers, lewd talkers, gluttons, drunkards, and the like,—fetid, ill-odoured, emitting the stench of hell. They do 'the abominable thing' which God hateth.

4. *Murderers.* — Whose hands are red with blood; whose heart is full of angry passions, envy, malice, revenge, grudging; whose lips give vent to irritating and angry words; all who either in heart or by hand defy the sixth commandment,—'Thou shalt not kill.'

5. *Whoremongers.*—All who give way to their lusts, who live in uncleanness; those whose eyes are full of adultery, and who cannot cease from this sin. What a warning to our young men and women, who make light of this abomination, and forget the doom of the unclean!

6. *Sorcerers.*—They who have taken part in Babylon's sorceries and witchcrafts; who consult with the evil one; all spirit-rappers and allies of the evil one, and workers of the lying wonders of the last days.

7. *Idolaters.* — Not only the heathen worshippers of graven images, but all who have chosen another god; who love the creature more than the Creator; who bow before crosses or crucifixes; who worship mammon, pleasure, art, splendour, or gold, for 'covetousness is idolatry.'

8. *All liars.* — All who speak falsely in any way; who practise dishonesty; who care not for truth. Not Cretans only, who were pre-eminently liars, but every false

tongue, every dishonest lip,—hypocrites, pretenders, formalists; all the untrue and unreal; who vow to serve Christ at His table, but give the lie to their vow every day of their life; who vow at baptism to teach and pray for their children, yet never do; who come to the sanctuary, yet go away and serve the world; who are at the prayer-meeting one day, and at the ball the next. These are the *liars!* How much of lying is there in the life of every man! How little of the real, the open, the sincere, the true!

The doom of all these is sure. They cannot deceive God; He will not be mocked. He will bear long, but not always. Hell is waiting. Its gates are open. Its fires are kindled. Its tormentors are ready. The sentence is coming,—'Depart, ye cursed;' for their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

Yet remember the apostle's words to Corinthian sinners, 'And such were some of you, but ye are washed!' O man of earth, come and be washed! Fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, come! Murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, liars, come! Come, let us reason together, saith the Lord; your scarlet sins shall be as snow, your crimson sins as wool!

LIII.

THE GLORIOUS BRIDE.

'*And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.*'—REV. XXI. 9.

THESE are two names for the Church of God, the redeemed from among men. They are not the same in meaning, though both referring to the Church's peculiar relationship to Christ. They point out her two successive states, her present and her future, in the former of which she is the bride, in the latter the wife. First the bride, then the wife; the 'bride' up till the day of the Bridegroom's return, after that the 'wife,'—the 'Lamb's wife.' She is represented here as the new Jerusalem; but this is in a figure, just as God speaks of the old Jerusalem as His wife,—meaning thereby the people, the dwellers in that city, His chosen Israel, whom He had betrothed to Himself by an everlasting covenant (Isa. liv. 5–10). In the wilderness, Israel was the bride or betrothed one (Jer. ii. 2); in Jerusalem, she was the 'married wife' (Isa. liv. 1, lxii. 5): so is it with the Church. In this, her wilderness state, she is the bride; in her coming city-state, or Jerusalem-state of glory, she shall be the wife, —the days of betrothment being ended, and the marriage

come. Hence it is that the bride addressing the Bridegroom says, 'Come;' and the Spirit, who had been preparing and adorning her for the marriage day, joins her in desiring its arrival,—'The Spirit and the bride say, Come' (Rev. xxii. 17).

Regarding this 'bride' or 'wife,'—for we consider her as both in what follows,—we inquire,—

I. *Who and what she was before she became the bride.*—She had no high descent to boast of. Her lineage was not royal, but low and mean. Of the old Jerusalem it was said, 'Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite' (Ezek. xvi. 2, 3); all this, and much more, may be said of the Church. She was an outcast, utterly poor and unknown,—nay, defiled and hateful. Without goodness, without beauty; without personal or family recommendation; unloving and unlovable; an alien, a captive, a rebel. She lacked everything that could make her comely in the eyes of one seeking a bride; she possessed everything that could forbid and repel. Such were you once, O saint; such are you still, O sinner!

II. *How and why she was fixed upon.*—The Father chose her; that is all that we can say. 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.' In the good pleasure of His goodness, and according to the exceeding riches of His grace, He fixed on her, the unlikeliest of all, to be the bride of His Son. Of the 'how' and the 'why' of this sovereign purpose, what can we say but this, that in one so unlovable and worthless it found opportunity and scope for the outflow and display of free love, such as could be found in no other? She is the

object of the Father's eternal choice, as Rebekah was the choice of Abraham for his son. She is also the object of the Son's choice and love, as Rachel was Jacob's choice, and as Pharaoh's daughter was Solomon's. It was the Father's free choice, and the Son's free choice, that made her what she is now, the bride, and what she is through eternity to be, 'the Lamb's wife.'

III. *How she was obtained.*—She is a captive, and must be set free. This the Bridegroom undertakes to do; for her sake becoming a captive. She is a criminal, under wrath, and must be delivered from condemnation and death. This also the Bridegroom undertakes; for her sake submitting to condemnation and death, that so her pardon may be secured, her fetters broken, and life made hers for ever. Thus she is plucked from the dungeon and the curse and the wrath which were her portion.

IV. *How she was betrothed.*—The Bridegroom Himself came down in lowly guise to woo and win her for Himself. But now He is carrying on His suit in absence, through the intervention of others, as Isaac's proposals to Rebekah were carried on through the faithful Eliezer of Damascus. It was with this suit that Paul felt himself charged when he went about 'preaching Christ;' for, speaking to the Corinthians, he says: 'I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ' (2 Cor. xi. 2). So it is with this suit that ministers are charged,—nay, all friends of the Bridegroom. We come to sinners as did Eliezer to Rebekah. We tell of our Isaac's noble lineage, His riches, His honours, His worth. We tell of all that He has done to win your love,

and set before you the glory of His person, that you may see how worthy He is of all this love; how blessed, how honourable it would be for you to be the bride of such a bridegroom; and we say, 'Wilt thou go with the man?'

V. *How she is prepared and adorned.*—It is through the Holy Spirit that this is carried out. This Spirit having overcome her unwillingness, and persuaded her to consent to the glorious betrothment, immediately commences His work of preparation. He strips her of her rags, and puts on royal apparel. He cleanses her from her filthiness, and makes her whiter than the snow. Having taken her out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, having drawn her with the cords of love and the bands of a man, He proceeds to divest her of everything that made her unlovable, and to bestow on her everything that could make her comely and attractive in the eyes of the Bridegroom. Part of the preparation is *now;* but much is reserved for the future, and especially for the day of the first resurrection. White robes are given her: not purple, or scarlet, or glittering jewels, such as the harlot Church is decked with; but the fine linen, which is the righteousness of the saints. For her a throne is prepared; a beautiful crown set upon her head; a royal banquet is made ready; and all this in the Bridegroom's own glorious city, the new Jerusalem.

Of this wondrous future we know but little now. It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. To that day when the marriage shall take place, and the long-waiting bride shall become the

Lamb's wife, Scripture has bidden us look forward as our hope. And it is a blessed hope. For then shall the long absence cease, and we shall see Him face to face, whom not having seen we loved. Then shall the day break and the shadows flee away. Then shall the everlasting festival begin in the great palace-hall of the new Jerusalem. Then shall the Bridegroom rejoice over the bride. 'He shall rest in His love, He shall joy over her with singing.' Then shall the Song of Songs be sung, and understood in a way such as it could not be sung or understood before; and we shall hear the Bridegroom call his bride the 'fairest among women,' 'His love, His dove, His undefiled;' and we shall hear her call Him 'the Chief among ten thousand.'

Such then is the honour in store for the redeemed,—to be 'the bride, the Lamb's wife!' As such He writes upon her the name of His God, and the name of the city of His God, and His own 'new name;' so that after the marriage is completed, the bride loses her own and takes her Husband's name; the Lamb and the Lamb's wife becoming more indissolubly one,—one in name, and nature, and glory, and honour, and dominion for ever. To get the tree of life and the hidden manna; to get the white stone, and the white raiment, and the morning star,—all that is much; but to be the bride, the Lamb's wife, and as such to be partaker of His love, and blessedness, and glory,—this is surely more;—how much more only the day of the Bridegroom's coming will reveal.

Such is the love of God. It is the love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Father chooses in His own sove-

reignty; the Son washes in His own blood; the Spirit purifies and prepares by His mighty power. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us! It is free love; sovereign love; eternal love; unchanging love; boundless love; love which not merely delivers from wrath, but which makes the delivered one an heir of God, nay, the bride, the Lamb's wife.

This is the day when the proposals are made to the sons of men; when, in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we urge the blessed suit upon sinners, that they may be partakers of this infinite honour. We set before you all the worth, and the glory, and the love of this divine Bridegroom, and ask you to accept the proposal and ally yourself to this glorious One. Among men, to be offered the prince's hand in marriage is counted no mean honour; what then must be the offered hand of the King of kings?

O men, accept the glory! Listen to the proposals made to you in the name of the Son of God. We describe His excellency and beauty. We tell you also of the honour for which the Church is destined. We say, 'Come hither, and I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife!' We point you to the resplendent glory of that city, which is after all but part of her dowry, part of her adorning; and we invite you to a share in its glory. We make known the Father's testimony concerning His own free love, and concerning the blood and righteousness of His Son. We demand your present acceptance of that testimony, that in the belief of it you may become a sharer of the glory and the kingdom.

LIV.

THE HOLY CITY.

'*That great city, the holy Jerusalem.*'—REV. XXI. 10.

THIS city is not earthly, but heavenly, and is among the heavenly things said by the apostle to be purified by the 'better sacrifices' (Heb. ix. 23). Why did such a city need 'purifying?' Not because unclean, but because sinners were to dwell in it; and they would have defiled it, had it not been for the great sacrifice. For the blood does two things,—it makes the unclean clean, and it keeps the clean from being defiled. Its use in the holy of holies was not to cleanse that place, but to prevent its being defiled by the entrance of the sinner. Our possession of this heavenly city, then, we owe to the blood of the Lamb; and hence He stands on Mount Zion, and sits on the throne, as the Lamb slain (Rev. v. 6, xiv. 1). The earthly Jerusalem is to be *cleansed* from its impurity by the blood of the Lamb; and the heavenly Jerusalem is to be *preserved* from impurity by the same blood. The inhabitants of both will find that they owe all to this blood. It is the blood that gives entrance, and it is the blood which secures the everlasting possession for sinners. This double efficacy of the blood we see also in the case of the

elect angels. It is this that keeps *them* from falling, just as it is this that raises *man* out of his fall. Let us prize that blood which works such wonders. It is 'precious blood.' O man, do not trample on it!

But let us meditate on the city as described in these two chapters. It contains in it everything that is excellent and fair, perfect and enduring.

1. It is a *great* city.—'That great city,' said John, gazing on it. Its circuit is vast, beyond Babylon, or Nineveh, or Paris, or London. That 'mighty city,' says John, speaking of Babylon the Great (Rev. xviii. 10); but this is mightier far. There has been no city like it. It is *the* city, the one city, the great metropolis of the mighty universe, the mighty city of the mighty God.

2. It is a *well-built* city.—Its builder and maker is God. Its foundations are eternal; its walls are jasper; its gates pearls; its streets paved with gold. It is 'compactly built together,' lying four-square, and perfect in all its parts, without a break or flaw, or weakness or deformity.

3. It is a *well-lighted* city.—Something brighter than sun and moon is given to fill its heaven. The glory of God lightens it; the Lamb is its 'light' or 'lamp,' so that it needs no candle, no sunlight. There is no night there.

4. It is a *well-watered* city.—A pure river of the water of life flows through its streets, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb. What must its waters be! What must be the rivers of pleasure there! Who in it can ever thirst? Its inhabitants shall thirst no more.

5. It is a *well-provisioned* city.—The tree of life is there, with its twelve variety of fruits and its health-giving leaves.

It has more than Eden had. It is Paradise restored; Paradise and Jerusalem in one; Jerusalem in Paradise, and Paradise in Jerusalem.

6. It is a *well-guarded* city.—Not only has it gates, and walls, and towers, which no enemy could scale or force; but at the gates are twelve angels, keeping perpetual watch.

7. It is a *well-governed* city.—Its King is the Son of God, the King of kings, Immanuel, the King eternal, whose sceptre is righteousness, who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity. No misrule is there, no disorder, no lawlessness, no rebellion.

8. It is a *well-peopled* city.—It has gathered within its walls all generations of the redeemed. Its population is as the sands or the stars; the multitude that no man can number; the millions of the risen and glorified.

9. It is a *holy* city.—Its origin is heavenly, and it is perfect as its builder. Nothing that defileth shall enter; no spot or speck or shadow of evil. All is perfection there, divine perfection.

10. It is a *glorious* city.—The glory that fills it, and encircles it, is the glory of God. All precious stones are there; no marble nor granite such as we boast of now; all about it is gold, and pearls, and gems. Everything resplendent is there. It shines like the sun.

11. It is a *blessed* city.—It is truly 'the joyous city.' It is the throne of the blessed One, and all in it is like Him. Its name is Jerusalem, the city of peace. Its King's name is Solomon, the Prince of peace. There is no enemy there; no sickness, no curse, no death, no weeping, no pain, no sorrow, no change for ever. They that dwell

in it shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more (ch. vii. 16, 17).

Blessed city! City of peace, and love, and song! Fit accompaniment of the new heavens! Fit metropolis of the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness! How eagerly should we look for it! How worthy of it should we live! It has not yet arrived. Eye hath not seen it. But God points to it above, and assures us that it shall come. The right of citizenship is to be had now; and they who are to dwell in it are not angels, but men; not the unfallen, but the fallen. It is as such that we apply for the 'freedom of the city.' He who is its Builder and Maker gives it freely. He who is its Prince, whose blood has bought and opened it, gives it freely. He waits to receive applications; nay, He entreats men to apply. He announces that whosoever will only take Him at His word, and trust Him for entrance into it, shall have it. He specially proclaims to us His own sacrifice, His infinite propitiation, His divine blood-shedding on the cross, and gives us to know that whosoever will receive the testimony to this great work of atonement shall enter in through the gates into the city. It is the blood that brings us to the mercy-seat; it is the blood that brings us into the city. It will be a joy to enter that joyous city. By this joy we beseech you now to make sure of your citizenship, by making sure of your connection with the King. He who has the King has the city.

It will be a sorrow to be shut out. By that sorrow we entreat you to make sure. Believing the good news, become citizens of no mean city. Then all shall be well with you for ever.

LV.

THE LIGHT OF THE NEW JERUSALEM.[1]

'And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.'—REV. XXI. 23.

IT is of the 'new Jerusalem' that these words are written; the city of glory and blessing; the city of the saints and home of the redeemed; the metropolis of creation; the city of God and of the Lamb; the habitation of the bride, the Lamb's wife; the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The passage might more truly be rendered, 'the Lamb is the *lamp* thereof,' or 'its *lamp* is the Lamb;' for *lamp*, not *light*, is the correct translation. The two clauses in this verse are meant to give us the complete idea of the illumination of the city. 'The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is its lamp.' All that sunlight-splendour is to a city, the 'glory of God' or Shekinah is; and all that lamps are to a city, publicly or privately, the Lamb is. As with us now there is the alternation of the lights of day and night, so then and in that city there is to be the

[1] This was a communion sermon, preached at Kelso on Sabbath, September 25, 1864, our last Sabbath in the church where we had worshipped for twenty-seven years.

alternation of the glory of God and the Lamb. There shall be no night there; and they 'need no candle (no earthly "lamp"), neither light of the sun,' for they have that which is better than both; not created nor borrowed light, but uncreated, unreflected light from the divine and eternal fountainhead. That which is written of the earthly Jerusalem is much more true of the heavenly, for the one is the image or counterpart of the other. 'The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended' (Isa. lx. 19, 20).

The figure here carries us back to the temple and the lamp in the holy place,—the seven-branched lamp of gold which burned day and night in the sanctuary. As the Shekinah, which rested between the cherubim, enlightened 'the most holy,' and the seven-branched lamp 'the holy place,' so in that coming day, when both these places shall be one,—the veil no longer existing,—the type shall be fulfilled, when that shall come to pass which is written, 'The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light (lamp) thereof.'

But the figure of our text is wider than this, and refers not to a temple merely, or a chamber in a temple; but to a city, and to every house and chamber of that city. It gives us the idea of a resplendent lamp hung in some vast hall or palace, shedding a mild and tempered light down upon some festal assembly, such as that in the

father's house upon the prodigal's return, when the household were gathered together to eat and make merry. But it does more than this. It shows us a wondrous lamp, of infinite lustre, suspended above a whole city, as was the pillar-cloud above the camp of Israel in the desert. This is the picture presented in these words: 'Its *lamp* was the Lamb.' Christ the light of the heavenly city; the crucified One the lamp,—a lamp at once human and divine. The Lamb in the midst of the throne is the lamp of the new Jerusalem. All is concentrated in Him,—all excellency, and power, and perfection, and beauty, and glory. Now at last He gets the praise, the love, the admiration that are His due.

I. *It is peculiar light.*—There is none like it. Fed by no earthly oil, its blaze is not earthly. Yet it is truly light for men. It is divine, but it is also human. All created and all uncreated brilliance is concentrated in it. The man Christ Jesus is there. God over all is there. The Word made flesh, and that flesh truly ours,—that flesh broken and given for the life of the world,—this is the essence of the light. Christ Jesus filled with the Spirit,—the Lamb to whom pertain the seven lamps of fire,—Christ Jesus, the Lamb slain;—it is He as such that is the lamp of the holy city, possessing and giving forth all the light the city needs, yet that light softened and mellowed by His cross and grave. It is not so much as God, or as the Christ, that He is the lamp of the city, but as the Lamb.

II. *It is unchanging light.*—He from whom it emanates is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Here there is

no rising nor setting; no clouding nor eclipsing. It is one calm, full, clear light, from which nothing can be taken, and to which there can be nothing added; without variableness or shadow of turning. It terminates and supersedes all other lights, and itself remains for ever, like the lamp of the temple which went not out by night nor by day. The lamps of the virgins who went forth to meet the Bridegroom are no more needed now; and He who in the dark ages of His own absence from earth walked in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, has now become so fully the light of His saints and of their city, that they shall fear no darkness. He Himself has become their everlasting light, and that in a larger and completer sense than when He announced Himself as the light of the world. The foolish virgins might say 'our lamps are gone out;' but of this eternal lamp there shall be no quenching, no going out. The wise virgins would find that when they entered into the marriage-hall of that Bridegroom whom they had gone forth to meet, there was no more need of their lamps; for the Bridegroom Himself would be their light for ever; a lamp that should never burn low or wax dim, but retain its brightness for evermore.

III. *It is festal light.*—The feast is spread; the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. 'Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' The light of this great feast,—the lamp of this hall and of this city,—is the Lamb. This feast-day hath not yet come; the Bridegroom is absent, and His friends are fasting, not feasting; and not only fasting, but passing through this land of deserts with just

enough of light to show them the way. But when they enter the festal hall and sit down at the marriage supper, then shall they not only feed on the royal dainties, but enjoy the light of that lamp which is to gladden their festival with its soft rays,—rays which shall be altogether in harmony with the bridal feast, the bridal dress, and the bridal song.

IV. *It is all-pervading light.*—It is not confined to a few favoured dwellings; to a palace, or a temple, or one region of the city. The whole city shall be full of light. It shall enter every house, and room, and chamber, till each corner and crevice is illuminated, and every face made to shine with the gracious splendour, as was the face of Moses when he conversed with God, or the faces of the disciples on the transfiguration mount. The light is all-pervading. It penetrates everywhere; it fills all things; it can be excluded by no hindrances; nay, the very walls, which here on earth shut out the light, there help to introduce it and to enhance its brightness. Christ is all and in all, spiritually and materially, for soul and for body. As our atmosphere finds its way everywhere, unbidden and unsought, so shall it be with this light. We shall not need to go in search of it. It shall be in every place, night and day, round the whole year. Its walls are Christ; its foundations are Christ; its corner-stone is Christ; its joy is Christ; its glory is Christ; its light is Christ.

V. *It is the light of life.*—It is living light, life-giving light; not dead and inert like that of our sun, and moon, and stars, but living; instinct with life, and health, and immortality. It fills the whole man with life,—body, soul,

and spirit. Where it is, death cannot enter, and the curse cannot exist. It diffuses blessing as it shines,—the blessing of undecaying health and an endless life. When enjoying summer's sunshine here, we feel as if there were health in it, life in it; much more shall we find of the true health and life in this more glorious light. The Sun of righteousness has healing in His wings, and He who is the Sun of righteousness is the lamp of the new Jerusalem.

VI. *It is the light of love.*—For that name, 'the Lamb,' contains within it the revelation of the love of God. Where the Lamb is there is love, the love of God,—the love of the Son in coming, and the love of the Father in sending. That lamp, which is the Lamb, then must be love; its light must be the light of redeeming love. It pours its radiance through transparencies, which all speak of the cross and the blood, of Gethsemane and Golgotha, flooding the golden streets of the jasper city with an effulgence that shall speak throughout eternity of the broken body and shed blood of the Lord. Every ray shall carry us back to the cross; and the light which shall be cas by it on every object in the happy city shall partake of that crimson tinge, which shall not merely remind us of the 'Word made flesh,' but of the great propitiation, the sacrifice of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. From the lamp of the new Jerusalem there shall shine forth the eternal gospel, in blessed harmony with the eternal song, 'Unto Him that loved us and washe us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory and dominion for ever.'

We have then a city for our residence hereafter; a city

well as His; ours, because His; the centre and capital of our kingdom, because the centre and capital of His. There Christ is ALL. He is not only its King,—the Son for whom the Father built the city;—but He is its joy, its glory, its lamp and light. All that makes it bright and blessed is from Him. All that gladdens its citizens is from Him. Its foundations speak of Him. Its gates proclaim Him. Its golden streets reflect Him. Its river glows with Him. Its trees tell of Him. Its dwellings are His; its palace is His; its throne is His; its beauty is His; its festivals are His; its songs and hallelujahs are His.

The Lamb is everywhere. He is on the throne; He is at the head of His redeemed, leading them to living fountains of waters; He is in every dwelling and in every chamber; He is the glory over all; Prince, Shepherd, Bridegroom, lamp and sun; alpha and omega, beginning and ending, first and last. He meets you at every step; He is seen in every object; He is heard in every sound; His name is the burden of every melody; and the chorus of each psalm and hymn is, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive blessing, and glory, and honour.'

What are the attractions of that city to us? Are they the gold and gems that make up its everlasting splendour? And when we read, or hear, or sing of its glory, is it the external brilliance that dazzles? Is it its exemption from sorrow, and change, and death, and night, and darkness, and the curse? Or is it the presence, the universal presence, of the Lamb? Sentimentalism can feast itself upon the former, but only faith and love upon the latter.

The question, What think ye of the new Jerusalem? is

intimately connected with the more searching one, What think ye of Christ? What is He to you? What is His cross to you? To be engrossed with the splendour of the new Jerusalem, while yet you have not tasted that the Lord is gracious, nor been begotten again unto a lively hope, will profit nothing. Your imagination is kindled or soothed with the picture of our text, 'Its lamp is the Lamb;' but what say you to His own words on earth, 'I am the light of the world?' Has that light which has enlightened millions enlightened you? He is the light of life, the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world, and all light is darkness save that which radiates from Him. What has that light been to you, or done for you? It is this present light on earth, filling the soul, that is the preparation for enjoying the light of the city; and he who walketh in darkness here, shall walk in darkness for ever.

We bid you look away from every other light and turn to this. It is the light of the cross. For the cross is light and not darkness. It is the light of love. It sheds its rays of pardon, and reconciliation, and joy into the darkest soul. These rays go out with each proclamation of the gospel; for our gospel is the gospel of the light, the gospel of the risen Sun. He who receives that gospel receives the light; and he who holds fast that gospel abides in the light, being a child of the light and of the day. He who receives it not is a child of darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

LVI.

THE LIFE RIVER.

'And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.'—REV. XXII. 1.

IN the first Paradise, and in connection with the first creation, we find a river,—'a river went out of Eden to water the garden' (Gen. ii. 10); and in connection with the second Paradise and the new creation, we find a river also,—a river without a name,—but simply designated 'a river of life.' The earthly and the heavenly thus run parallel with each other, though the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

In connection, not merely with earthly fruitfulness and beauty, but with spiritual blessings, we have many allusions to rivers. 'The *river* of Thy pleasures' (Ps. xxxvi. 8); 'there is a *river*, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God' (Ps. xlvi. 4); 'Thou enrichest it with the *river* of God, which is full of water' (Ps. lxv. 9); 'peace as a *river*' (Isa. xlviii. 18); '*rivers* of water in a dry place' (Isa. xxxii. 2); 'the Lord shall be to us a place of broad *rivers* and streams' (Isa. xxxiii. 21).

The earthly river beautifies, fertilizes, refreshes, gives life, quenches thirst. All these and much more does the

heavenly river do for us. In this life-river is the reality of those things of which the earthly river is the shadow. What would the first Adam's Paradise have been without the river? What would the second Adam's Paradise and city be without the river of life?

But let us gaze a little on this life-river which John describes, and see its qualities and glories. Of it we may say, 'It is good for drink, and pleasant to the eyes, and a river to be desired;' for no river on earth, Nile or Jordan, can be compared with it. It contains all that a soul needs; and it is not for angels, but for men.

I. *It is a river of heaven.*—These two concluding chapters speak of no earthly city, no earthly Paradise, no earthly tree of life, and no earthly *river*. It is a stream fed from heavenly sources, filled with heavenly water, and resplendent with heavenly beauty. Everything pertaining to its origin, and course, and nature partakes of heaven. It is the river of God, conveying on its pure water all that heaven contains of blessedness. They that drink of it must drink immortality and love. 'It is the river of God.' To gaze on it, to wander by its banks, to bathe in its pure flood, to drink of its waters,—this is heaven itself.

II. *It is a river of grace.*—It flows from the throne of the *Lamb;* and everything that has connection with the Lamb is necessarily of grace. The Lamb is, of all the names of Christ, that which most explicitly expresses *grace*, and the channel through which that grace flows to us. Name but the Lamb, and you proclaim God's love to sinners, His riches of grace towards the most worthless

of human creaturehood. The Lamb is the name by which Christ is most commonly spoken of in this book; and this seems to be done, in order that we may, in the midst of the terrors and the glories of which it is full, be made to feel the *grace* of God as it pours itself out over the dwellers in this poor earth. And this grace goes on through eternity; there is grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. There is the grace of earth, there is the grace of heaven. There is the grace of the first coming, there is the grace of the second.

III. *It is a river of power.*—It comes from the *throne*,—the throne of God; and therefore possessing the properties of that throne. It communicates, it infuses *power* into the soul of every one that drinks, or even that walks along its banks. The power and authority of God are in it; for it issues from the fountainhead of universal power. O mighty river of God! How mighty do they become who betake themselves to thee! Mighty river! The symbol of the Holy Ghost (John vii. 37), proceeding from the Father and the Son, from God and the Lamb,—what infusion of power may we not receive from thee here; how much more hereafter! In this wilderness much; in the glorious city, more.

IV. *A river of purity.*—'A *pure* river of water of life!' The word pure (καθαρός and καθαρίζω) almost invariably refers to priestly or sacrificial cleansing. This river then owes its purity to the same blood that makes the garments of the redeemed white; and just as the *gold* of the city is called *pure* gold, like unto *clear* ('pure,' καθαρῷ) glass, so the river gets the like designation. A *pure* river!

Like the Lamb from whose throne it comes, who is without blemish, and without spot! A pure river! Like the city through which it flows, into which nothing that defileth shall enter! As it pours its heavenly waters on us now, it *purifies*, it cleanses; and hereafter it will preserve in us eternally that purity which it began in time, as the tree of life will preserve for ever the immortal life which it created here in us. Think often of this river, thou who feelest the impurity of thy soul; wander by faith along its banks even now; refresh thyself with its transparent waters; for is it not promised, I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely? The earnest of this we get just now; but the full accomplishment is reserved for the day when 'the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead us to the living fountains of waters' (Rev. viii. 7).

V. *A river of life.*—Wheresoever the river cometh it quickeneth; just as of Ezekiel's river it is said, 'The waters shall be healed, and everything shall live whither the river cometh' (Ezek. xlvii. 9). Each drop is life-giving; it contains everlasting life, for the Spirit of life is in that river. And He from whom it comes is the Lamb, even He who said, 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish;' 'because I live, ye shall live also.'

VI. *A river of brightness.*—The words 'clear as crystal' should be '*bright* as crystal,'—the same word (λαμπρός) as in ver. 16, 'the *bright* and morning star.' It is a river of splendour, divine and heavenly splendour. No earthly river, shone upon by the brightest earthly sun, can equal this. It is radiant all over, and it communicates its radi-

ance to those who dwell upon its banks. It makes them shine as the sun. It is a river of glory; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the fountain of its splendour! O river of brightness, wilt thou not cast down on us here some of the radiance of thy pure water? River of glory and holiness, wilt thou not gladden and purify us, by causing us to behold thy beauty in some measure here, that we may be prepared for beholding that splendour in fuller measure hereafter, when the days of our shame, and sin, and mourning are ended?

LVII.

THE TREE WITH ITS TWELVE HARVESTS.

'*In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*'—REV. XXII. 2.

FAITH looks into the unseen past, hope into the unseen future. The 'things hoped for' are very glorious. Eye hath not seen them, nor ear heard them; but 'God hath REVEALED (the name of this book is the "Revelation") them unto us by His Spirit.' That Spirit has given us (1) eyes to see; (2) objects to look upon; and (3) light to see them with.

It is the glory of the new creation, and specially of the new Jerusalem, that is here described. It is no longer, as at first, Paradise alone without a city, and with only our first parents to inhabit it; nor is it Jerusalem alone without Paradise, and without a river, and without a tree of life. It is Paradise and Jerusalem together. The city is in the garden, and the garden in the city; the tree of life springing up in fruit-bearing beauty, and the bright river flowing through the street and under the shade of the trees. Nor is this Paradise without its 'Adam,' nor this city without its Solomon. The second Adam is here, the

Lord from heaven. The throne of God and of the Lamb is here. All is heavenly, yet all is earthly too; all is divine, yet all is human. There is perfection everywhere; there is glory over all. It is the perfection of the material and visible, as well as of the spiritual and invisible. Creation has reached its summit,—the eternally-predestined height from which it cannot fall.

Into the regions of this glory we would seek to enter now. Time is going. The world passeth away. Our life is but a vapour. This is a waste, howling wilderness. Darkness and cloud are here. The ice and frost, the blast, the storm, the earthquake are here. Night, and death, and the curse, and the grave are here. We eagerly look beyond these, and anticipate the promised perfection and blessedness of the new creation.

I. *The street of the city.*—The word refers to the *main* or *broad* street of the city. A wide central street, in the midst of which the river flowed, is the picture here. It is the great street of a well-built city,—the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. The city is the 'heavenly Jerusalem,' the 'holy city,' of which we become citizens even now in believing, so that 'our citizenship is in heaven,' and we 'are come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God,' realizing ourselves as already in the city, and the city as already here. That glorious city is to be the eternal centre of the universe, the seat of government, and the centre of social life and blessed being. We need not try to sketch the city and its street, nor to answer the question, Is all this to be real and material, or is it only spiritual? Spiritual certainly,

in the sense in which our resurrection bodies are to be (1 Cor. xv. 44), but still real and material; for the gold and gems, the walls, and foundations, and gates, are evidently given to indicate something *material*, corresponding to all these, and which could only be represented to us by these. This 'street,' or great thoroughfare of the celestial city, suggests to us all that a similar street in any of our great cities now calls up to view. It is the place of concourse; the place of fellowship; the place of splendour; the head and heart of the city,—that city which is to be the metropolis of the universe, as the lower Jerusalem is the metropolis of earth.

II. *The river.*—This is described in the previous verse. It is like, and yet unlike, all earthly streams. Its source is divine; its waters are bright; its flow is endless. Jordan, and Nile, and Euphrates cannot be compared to it. This magnificent river flows right through the centre of the street, which is in the centre of the city, dividing it into two, so that the whole city equally gets the benefit of its waters. It distributes on both sides its heavenly blessing as it pours along, carrying on its fair bosom refreshment, and gladness, and beauty. 'Well-watered' is this city; and with store for every beneficent purpose. It is 'the river, the streams of which make glad the city of our God' (Ps. xlvi. 4); it is the river of peace, for on it 'shall go no galley with oars (no war-ship), neither shall gallant ship pass thereby' (Isa. xxxiii. 21). It contains in it all physical blessings which a river can contain, and it is the symbol of all spiritual blessings. 'Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures' (Ps. xxxvi. 8). Not

from any earthly source does this river flow; not even from the rock of the desert; not from the sanctuary (Ezek. xlvii. 1); not from the eternal hills;—but from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

III. *The tree of the life.*—This carries us back to Paradise, with its unfallen glory. It is the 'tree of righteousness' (Isa. lxi. 3); the 'plant of renown' (Ezek. xxxiv. 29); the tree of the old creation, and the tree of the new; the living and life-giving tree. There is the earthly tree and the heavenly, just as there is the earthly and the heavenly Jerusalem; the tree of the lower Paradise, and the tree of the upper Paradise; but the glory of the terrestrial is one, and the glory of the celestial is another. Here we have the celestial; and yet, when we read this chapter in connection with the forty-eighth of Ezekiel, we see that the two are connected the one with the other,—like the upper and the nether springs; like the higher and the lower stories of the great palace; like the outer and the inner courts of the great temple. This tree of life lines the river of life; extending like a fringe along its margin on both sides, between it and the street; shooting up like a long avenue of palms in the midst of the broad street, through the centre of which the river flowed. A wondrous tree; or rather a forest of wondrous trees pleasant to the eye, good for fruit, and excellent for shade and fragrance, under whose shadow we shall sit down with great delight, in the day when the tabernacle of God is with men.

IV. *The fruit of the tree.*—It is 'good for fruit.' Take it either physically or spiritually, it is so. Take it in *both* ways,—referring to both body and soul,—the food of our

risen life, the sustenance of our risen bodies and perfected souls, it is 'good,'—it is 'very good.' It nourishes and cherishes. It imparts and sustains the incorruptible life. It communicates its celestial properties to the whole being of the redeemed,—body, soul, and spirit. It bears twelve manner of fruits, or rather 'twelve fruits,'—*i.e.* harvests or crops. Like the orange tree amongst us now, it is always blossoming, and always bearing. The revolving year is one perpetual harvest, every month producing new fruit. The description of the 'celestial' is very like that of the 'terrestrial' in Ezekiel, which runs thus: 'Behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. And by the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed (cease): it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine' (Ezek. xlvii. 7, 12). Here then is the food of the redeemed,—eternal nourishment, suited to their redeemed being; here is perpetual spring, perpetual summer, perpetual autumn; no winter, no withering, no famine; no decay! Life for eternity, sustained by the fruit of the life-giving tree, which shall nourish all the parts and powers, mental and material, of our everlasting and incorruptible nature.

V. *The leaves of the tree.*—These are for health. This *lower* region of earth shall be dependent on the *upper* region (at least during the millennial ages) for healing

and for light; 'the nations of the saved shall walk in the light of it' (ch. xxi. 24). As the fruit is for food to the celestial dwellers, so the leaves are for healing to the terrestrial. Of Israel restored and blessed, dwelling in their renovated land, it is said: 'The inhabitant shall not say, I am *sick*' (Isa. xxxiii. 24); 'for the Lord shall bind up the breach of His people, and *heal* the stroke of their *wound*' (Isa. xxx. 26). But among the nations of the saved on earth there will still be sickness, and for these are provided the leaves of the healing tree. It may be also that these leaves are needful for the *preservation* of health, as well as for the *removal* of sickness; so that all earth, in that coming *millennial* day of great but still imperfect glory, shall need them. In any case, we see the meaning of the words, 'The leaves of the tree are for the healing (or health) of the nations.'[1]

All this is beyond doubt connected with the Lord Jesus Christ,—'the Lamb as it had been slain;' for as every infliction of the curse here or hereafter is connected with Him as such, so every part of present and future blessing is linked with Him. We might in this aspect say, He is the river, He is the tree, He is the fruit, He is the healing leaf. But perhaps it is more correct to say, He is the fountain-head of all blessing in heaven and earth, in this world and

[1] This passage proves that the millennial and still imperfect earth is referred to in the two concluding chapters of Revelation. The prophecy, like many Old Testament ones, is *double*,—embracing two conditions of earth very much akin to each other: the first imperfect, the second perfect; one description answering both, but requiring spiritual discernment to discriminate the details, and to separate the one from the other.

in that which is to come; and these material things are the channels through which He pours out His fulness.

(1.) *The bright and refreshing river.*—Weary man of earth, come hither. There are waters for thee, enough and to spare. All free and all accessible. 'Come ye to the waters;' 'let him that is athirst come;' 'I will give to him that is athirst of the *fountain* of the water of life freely;' not merely of the 'water' or of the 'river,' but of the 'fountain,' 'the spring shut up, the fountain sealed.'

(2.) *The plenteous and life-giving fruit.*—It is the 'bread of life;' it is better than angels' food. It is the hidden manna; the fruit of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Eat, for it is the nourishment you need; eat, for it is free and within your reach; eat, for it is living and life-giving food. You will find it sweet to your taste. It confers immortality on the eater. He who eateth of this fruit shall live for ever.

(3.) *The healing leaf.*—We cannot say of this tree, 'Nothing but leaves;' still there are leaves in abundance, and each leaf is precious. It is like the *hem* of Christ's garment, through which healing came to all who touched it. It is like 'the handkerchiefs and aprons' from Paul's body that healed the sick (Acts xix. 12); or like 'the shadow of Peter passing by' (Acts v. 15) that 'overshadowed' and healed the sick of Jerusalem. These were healings for the body. In like manner there come healings for the soul. Christ is the healer of a sick world. The simplest touch in any part heals. Wilt thou be made whole? Take a leaf from the healing tree. Art thou sick again? Take another and another. Take them every hour.

LVIII.

THE SERVING AND THE REIGNING.

'*His servants shall serve Him*;' '*they shall reign for ever*.'—REV. XXII. 3, 5.

SETTING these two passages together, we get these two truths, that the redeemed are *servants*, and that they are also *kings*. Their eternity is to be an eternity of service, and an eternity of dominion. For both of these they have been redeemed. It is not mere deliverance from the wrath to come, but glory, honour, dominion, and power that are their portion. The new Jerusalem is to be specially the place of service and the centre of dominion.

I. *Service.*—His servants shall serve Him. They are the servants of God, and the servants of the Lamb. Once servants of self, of the world, of Satan; now servants of God. As Christ was the Father's servant, so do we become. Let us ask,—

(1.) *When this service begins.*—It begins at conversion. For conversion is (1) a change of service, (2) a change of masters, (3) a change of motive, (4) a change of work.

(2.) *How it begins.*—Christ answers this: 'If any man serve me, let him follow me.' It begins by taking His yoke; by taking the cross; by denying self; or, as the

apostle expresses it, by 'obeying from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto us.' Yes, we must be made *free* that we may serve.

(3.) *How it is carried on.*—By a life of devotedness to God and His Christ; by doing His will, working His work, carrying out His plans, running His errands, looking after His interests. We are, as it were, His domestic servants, His public servants, His agents and instruments; in all things waiting on Him and carrying out *His* will daily, not our own.

(4.) *Where it is carried on.*—First here on earth, and afterwards in the new Jerusalem before the throne. It is carried on *everywhere;* in the closet, in the family, at the table, round the hearth, in the market, in the shop, in the field, on the highway,—everywhere. We are to be the servants always, less than the servants never; always able to say, Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? How it is to be carried on hereafter we know not. In the city and out of it; at the throne and away from it; all over space; from star to star; doing every kind of work, and going on every kind of errand; such shall be the service hereafter.

(5.) *How long it shall last.*—For ever. It has a beginning, but not an end. It is an eternal service. It is not the service of the hireling, who earnestly desireth the shadow; it is not limited by days and nights; it knows no end. Nor would any one engaged in it wish it to terminate; it is so blessed and so glorious; it wins us so many smiles from the Master; it is rewarded so bountifully; and it is itself so unspeakably joyful!

Who then would not serve? Who would not engage himself to this heavenly Master? All other services are bondage, this is liberty; all others are drudgery, this is blessedness throughout. Who would not serve *now*? Who would not serve hereafter? The Master now waits to hire you; will you not be hired?

II. *The dominion.*—They shall reign for ever. This is wholly future. The dominion is not now. The kingdom is not yet set up. We are indeed kings, but the crown and throne are yet in reserve. The name and the title we get just now; the reality we enter on when the Lord returns. Then we shall reign; all things shall be put under our feet as under His.

(1.) Who are these reigners? They are men, not angels. They sing, 'Thou hast redeemed us.' They are from this earth of ours, not natives of heaven.

(2.) Whence came they? They came out of sin, out of weakness, and persecution, and tribulation. They once were not what they are to be for ever. From the lowest pit they came, and from the miry clay.

(3.) How did they become what they are? They washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. They sought and found the Lord. They obtained mercy. They were forgiven. They believed and became sons of God.

(4.) What raised them to this dignity? Grace; God's free love. It was His love, His sovereign love alone, that made them what they are and shall be. They did not raise themselves, nor obtain it by inheritance, or merit, or purchase. Free love did it all; the free sovereign love of God.

(5.) In what way did they reach the throne? They fought their way to it. For the crown and kingdom are to THE OVERCOMERS. 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne.' It was through much toil and warfare that they won the crown.

(6.) How extensive is this dominion to be? He that overcometh shall inherit all things. It is the universe that is to be their dominion. Heaven and earth are theirs. For they are 'heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.'

(7.) How long is it to last? For ever. It is an everlasting dominion; a kingdom that shall not be destroyed. The throne, and crown, and glory are all eternal.

How great the contrast between the present and the future! The Church few, trodden down, afflicted now,—then reigning! Now the lowest, then the uppermost! Now like Joseph in the pit, then upon the throne!

What a hope! How quickening, purifying, comforting! Let us keep gazing on it. Let nothing of earth come between, neither sorrow nor joy, life nor death. It may soon be realized. Let us live as men who believe it.

LIX.

THE CURSE CANCELLED, AND THE KINGDOM BEGUN.

'*And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.*'—REV. XXII. 3-5.

HERE we are carried back to the third chapter of Genesis; for here we have the undoing of the evil which the first Adam and the first sin wrought on man and man's earth. Here is blessing and dominion; nearness to God, and deliverance from all evil; the kingdom of light, and the endless reign of His saints. How bright the picture! What a contrast with the scene of the sentence and the expulsion from Paradise! What a contrast with the present evil state of earth, and the present tribulation of the Church! Here is the glory to be revealed in us; the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; the ending of all the woes and wickedness that have been depicted in this book. No more room for Satan and his angels. No more place for Antichrist; or for the beast, and false prophet. No more tolerance for evil and error. No more scope for misrule and disorder; no more con-

flict, and darkness, and tempest. All is perfection,—the perfection of God and of the Lamb; not simply a perfect and glorious heaven, but a perfect and glorious earth.

I. *The removal of the curse.*—Many are the curses that have lighted upon earth,—the primeval curse, with all the many curses that have flowed out of the first sin. It is true that there is no curse pronounced against the man, or the woman, or their race. That would have been inconsistent with the revelation of divine grace. It would have rendered unintelligible the love of God just announced. The curse is on the ground, and on the serpent; and this, though not directly aimed at man, affects man and his whole race. The curse has come in like a pestilence upon earth; and man must breathe the poisoned air. All this is now reversed; the sentence is cancelled; the curse is exchanged for blessing. The cursed one is cast out of air and earth, into the bottomless pit. The atmosphere is purged. The sun scorches not by day, nor the moon by night. Thorns and thistles disappear. Fertility is restored to earth. The wolf lies down with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid; and there is nothing found to hurt nor to destroy in the holy mountain of the Lord. There is the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

II. *The eternal throne.*—Here is the setting up of the throne. In the King's absence all things have fallen into disorder; while the presence of a hostile claimant or usurper has intensified the evil and increased the confusion. But now the usurper has been dethroned, and the true monarch comes in. 'The throne of God and of the

Lamb are in it.' The new Jerusalem has come down out of heaven from God. The great kingdom has come. It is not only the kingdom of God, but of the LAMB. He is King for ever. He is the centre of the universe; head of all things in heaven and earth; the second Adam, who with His redeemed bride the Church is to reign for ever and ever. This earth shall be honoured in being made the seat of His eternal throne. It is no longer to be said, 'Earth is His *footstool;*' but the THRONE is to be IN IT; and its rulers are to be they who claim kindred with its once cursed soil. O matchless honour conferred on earth and on its sons! O exceeding riches of grace! Where sin has abounded, grace much more abounds.

III. *The eternal service.* — 'His servants shall serve Him.' 'They serve Him day and night in His temple' (Rev. vii. 15). The word 'servant' is here the usual word (δοῦλος): 'Paul the servant of Jesus Christ.' For we are in one sense servants for ever; that name being really one of blessedness, and honour, and liberty. But the word 'shall serve' is not the same. It is used about twenty-five times in the New Testament, and always in reference to *religious* service, the worship of God (Matt. iv. 10; Phil. iii. 3; Heb. ix. 14). There the throne and the temple are one; they who serve in the *kingdom* serve in the *temple* too. They are kings and priests unto God. It is priestly-royal service to which they are called. And as the throne and the temple are *one*, so are 'God and the Lamb,' whether this means 'the Father and the Son,' or 'He who is both God and the Lamb.' It is not '*their* servants shall serve *them;*' but *His* servants shall serve *Him.*

It is to this high service that the redeemed are called;—eternal service, in the city and palace and temple of God and the Lamb.

IV. *The eternal vision.*—'They shall see His face.' They who 'saw the king's face' (Esther i. 14) were 'the first in the kingdom;' the peerage of the peerage, who stood nearest the king. It was blessedness, it was pre-eminence, it was honour. 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God' (Matt. v. 8). 'I will behold Thy face in righteousness' (Ps. xvii. 15). Not in a glass darkly, but face to face; not afar off, but nigh; not with cloud or veil between, but unclouded and unveiled,—they shall see the face that is most glorious to behold. 'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty' (Isa. xxxiii. 17). They shall be employed in that worship and service which is the most honourable of all. They shall occupy the innermost circle of the universe; for they are the redeemed from among men. And then shall that word 'BROUGHT NIGH through the blood of Christ' be no figure, but an eternal and glorious reality. 'Thou settest me before Thy face for ever' (Ps. xli. 12).

V. *The eternal inscription.*—'His name shall be in their foreheads.' The *one* name of God and the Lamb shall be engraven,—not on their 'vesture or thigh,' not on the palms of their hands, but on the *forehead*, visible, conspicuous, glorious, never to be erased; engraved by no earthly Bezaleel, upon earthly gold or gems, but upon foreheads which have been washed in blood, and smoothed from every wrinkle and stain by the hand of Him who redeemed them for Himself. Jehovah's name, written by

Himself, on our foreheads, how great the honour and the blessedness! (Rev. iii. 12).

VI. *The eternal day.*—This is stated negatively. No night, no need of lamp nor of the sun! (Isa. lx. 19). Here night alternates with day; here we must either have lamp or sunlight because of the darkness. Not so there. All is day,—day without night; light without darkness. No night! nor any of the things that make night so dreaded and dreary; no pain, nor sickness, nor weariness, nor tossing to and fro, nor danger, nor enemy, nor storm. All these have passed away with the night, out of whose bosom they came. Everlasting day! Everlasting light! Everlasting spring!

VII. *The eternal Sun.*—'The Lord God giveth them light.' The Lord God is a SUN even here. He is in every sense to be our Sun hereafter, superseding all other suns and lights. 'The Lord shall be their everlasting light.' 'The Lamb is the lamp thereof.' The light of heaven and earth, of all things material, and all things spiritual, is to come from the face of Jehovah Himself,—the ONE SUN of the universe, the ONE SUN of the soul! Then shall we know, as we have never done before, the meaning of the words, 'I am the Light of the world.' 'The day shall break, and the shadows flee away.' All that we have hitherto known of light, outward or inward, material or immaterial, shall be as nothing to the effulgence of that eternal day.

VIII. *The eternal reign.*—'They shall reign for ever and ever.' It is not merely everlasting *life*, but an everlasting kingdom, that is in store for us. It is dominion,

and glory, and honour, such as that which belongs to Him who has redeemed us by His blood, and made us God's kings and priests. From the lowest depths we are taken to the highest heights; from the degradation of bondage to the liberty of the sons of God,—the inheritance of the saints in light. And of this kingdom there shall be no end. Christ does not deliver up the kingdom in the sense of *parting with* it, but in the sense of presenting it complete and glorious (1 Cor. xv. 24; Eph. v. 27; Col. i. 22). Ours is like Christ's, an eternal reign.

A bright future is this for every one who has received the testimony of the Father to His beloved Son; for on our reception of that testimony does our right to that kingdom depend. That future is meant to tell upon our present,—and that in many ways. It is so fair a prospect that it cannot fail to influence us now.

(1.) *It purifies us.*—For all in it is pure and perfect. We gaze into its glorious vista, and take on its perfection and purity. Like light it transforms each object on which it rests into a brilliance like itself.

(2.) *It invigorates.*—The prospect of an inheritance like this nerves us for conflict, and makes us invincible. It rouses us when called to the great battle of life with Satan and the world. It quickens mightily.

(3.) *It cheers.*—A hope like this lifts us out of depression, and bids us be of good cheer. The light will soon swallow up the darkness. The time is short. The glory will be enough to make up for all.

(4.) *It comforts.*—We need more than cheering; for sorrow sometimes covers us with so thick a cloud that we

cannot see through. It crushes us, and breaks us to pieces. It smites us to the dust. Then we get a glimpse of the glory beyond, and are comforted. After all, ours is 'light affliction,' and 'but for a moment.' It will soon be swallowed up in the eternal joy.

Our title to all this surpassing and eternal glory is simply THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB. He has bought it for His Church; and it is hers for ever. The nightless day, the unsetting sun, the incorruptible life, the undefiled inheritance, the new name, the heavenly city, the everlasting kingdom,—all are hers; hers through 'the blood of the everlasting covenant.' She is to walk worthy of it here,—worthy of such a crown, such a heritage, such a city, such a Bridegroom, such a joy. 'Be holy;' 'be perfect;' 'walk worthy of the Lord.'

The entrance stands ever open, and each son of man is invited to go in. 'All things are ready.' Ye dwellers in the highways and hedges, go in. There is the marriage-hall, and the marriage-feast, and the loving welcome of the Master; go in.

'He that believeth' entereth in. We go in when we credit the divine record concerning the Son of God, and concerning the eternal life that there is in Him, for the dead in sin. It is not working, nor buying, nor waiting, but BELIEVING, that secures the kingdom. Believe, and enter! Believe, and be blest!

LX.

THE VISION OF GOD.

'*They shall see His face.*'—REV. XXII. 4.

IT is the new Jerusalem that John is describing,—the city of glory; the home of light; the metropolis of the universe; the palace of Jehovah, where is the throne of God and of the Lamb. No sin there; no curse; no night; no death; no tears; no sorrow. There is the tree of life; the river of the water of life; the never-closed gates; the never-fading beauty; the never-setting sun. But of all the happiness and honour that fill that city of glory, this is the sum, and the centre, and the overflow: 'They shall see His face.' Let us ask—

I. *Whose face?*—It is the *face* of God; and that face is *Jesus*, the Word made flesh; the brightness of His glory, and express image of His person: for we know that the light of the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ. On the transfiguration 'His face did shine as the sun' (Matt. xvii. 2). And that face is at once the face of the Son of man and the face of the Son of God; fairer than the children of men; the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. It is the face of majesty, yet the face of love; the face of a king,—nay, the face of the King of

kings. Like unto it there is not any face in earth or heaven,—in all the vast universe of God,—so bright, so fair, so perfect, so glorious, so divine.

II. *Who shall see it?*—His servants. 'This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.' 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.' 'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.' They of whom it is written, 'If any man *serve* me, let him follow me;' and 'where I am, there shall also my *servant* be;' 'if any man *serve* me, him will my Father honour.' It is they only who are admitted within the resplendent walls of that holy city that shall see His face. From all who are shut out that face is for ever hidden. They are called 'servants' here, yet are they sons, kings, joint-heirs with Christ. As He is a servant, so are they; servants, yet sons and friends; and the name of servant is one of honour and dignity.

III. *What is it to see His face?*—This is explained by Ps. xli. 12, 'Thou settest me before Thy face for ever;' and by Esther i. 14, 'The seven princes which saw the king's face, and which sat first in the kingdom;' and by 2 Kings xxv. 19, 'Five men of them which were in the king's presence,' lit. 'which saw the king's face.' In this, then, there is implied:

(1.) *Nearness.*—These servants form the inner, nay the innermost, circle of creation. They stand nearest to God, 'always beholding the face of their Father in heaven.' There is no nearness like this; even that of angels is distance when compared with it.

(2.) *Blessedness.*—The *nearest* of the disciples was the most blessed, the disciple whom Jesus loved. The *nearest*

to Him in heaven will be the most blessed. For nearness is blessedness; and seeing Him face to face is the perfection of joy.

(3.) *Honour.*—To see the king's face was the great earthly honour; so is it the greatest heavenly honour. They who see it nearest and oftenest are the most honoured; they are those whom the King delighteth to honour,—His peerage, His princes, His sons, nay, His bride. Theirs is the place of honour.

(4.) *Power.*—They who see the King's face are His counsellors, His vicegerents, the doers of His will. They are invested with His authority, and go forth to exercise His dominion. 'Power over the nations' (Rev. ii. 26); 'Dominion over ten cities' (Luke xix. 17). This power belongs to the redeemed. Christ's throne is theirs; His crown, His sceptre, His kingdom,—all these *universal;* —for 'he that overcometh shall inherit all things.'

This seeing of the face of God and His Christ will be:

(1.) *Eternal.*—It cannot end. It is an everlasting vision; and therefore an everlasting nearness, blessedness, honour, and power. No lapse of ages can cloud the vision, or dim the eye that sees it. The vision and the joy are alike for ever.

(2.) *Unchangeable.*—No interruption; no eclipse; no cloud; no darkness; no setting; no dimness of eye; no unbelief; no distance! The glory cannot change. No intervention of the world; no faintness on our part; no veil drawn by Satan; no old age or failing faculties; no distraction from other objects; no discomposure from cares or sorrows; no unsteadiness of sight; none of these

can diminish the vision. It is as perpetual as it is perfect and divine.

Learn from this hope such lessons as these:

(1.) *Live a joyful life.*—May not a prospect such as this make a man joyful? Should not the very hope of it make his countenance to shine?

(2.) *Be strong for toil.*—Let this hope nerve us for labour, and animate our zeal. Let it rouse us out of sloth, and make us grudge nothing, either of labour or sacrifice. Toil on; fight on; spend and be spent.

(3.) *Be comforted under trial.*—The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. The vision of the face of God will more than make up for all.

And it may be soon! He will not tarry. The Lord is at hand. The new Jerusalem is coming. The glory will soon be revealed. The time is short. A few years, perhaps less, and we shall see His face and share His glory.

LXI.

ENTRANCE INTO THE CITY.

'*Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*'—REV. XXII. 14.

THE last three chapters of Revelation correspond with the first three of Genesis. Creation, and new creation; the Paradise of man, and the Paradise of God; Paradise lost, Paradise regained; man expelled, man brought back. This fourteenth verse fits in with the twenty-fourth verse of the third of Genesis. Let us look at its parts.

I. *The city.*—It is the new Jerusalem. At the first creation there was no city,—only a garden with one man in it; now there is a city in the midst of the garden, and the citizens are the multitude that no man can number. It is a glorious city; well-built, well-watered, well-founded, well-paved, well-lighted; altogether perfect. 'God hath prepared for them a city,'—a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

II. *The gates.*—These gates are twelve; each one a pearl; gates for redeemed men to enter by; gates never shut; gates for both men and angels; gates which lead into the palace of the King, through which the sons of

the second Adam can enter into the new Jerusalem. They are made by God's own hand. They are the everlasting gates or doors sung of by David, at which the King of glory enters. They are the gates through which there is the 'abundant entrance' into the everlasting kingdom. Not 'strait' now, but wide; not painful to pass through, but pleasant and glorious. Divine gates, for a divine city, in the midst of which there is the palace of the King.

III. *The tree.*—It is the tree of life, spoken of in Genesis, and also specially noted in the promise to the Church of Ephesus. It is the life-giving tree,—not only now in the midst of the earthly Paradise, but the Paradise of God; nor only in the midst of Paradise, but in the midst of the city: for Jerusalem and Paradise are now one. The tree, which no doubt symbolizes Christ Himself (as does the water of life), is doubtless a real tree; only more heavenly, more spiritual, than that which grows on earth. The tree is laden with fruit; it has twelve kinds of fruit; it has a monthly harvest; its leaves are for the healing of the nations. As there is the bread of life, and the hidden manna, so is there also this tree of life,—this true plant of renown.

IV. *The blessed ones.*—It is God who calls them blessed, and they must be so whom He calls by such a name. Throughout this book this word occurs several times. 'Blessed is he that readeth;' 'blessed is he that watcheth;' 'blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.' In our text let us notice three points of blessedness.

(1.) *They keep His commandments.*—This carries us back to the 119th Psalm, and reminds us of the blessed-

ness in which David rejoiced. In keeping of these commandments there is great reward, and great peace. We are called and forgiven, that we may keep these. It is to a life of such keeping that we are called. By such a life, we partake of blessedness as well as glorify God. We are redeemed that we may be holy,—that we may walk in the commandments of the Lord our God, and delight in His law after the inner man. This delight is blessedness. Thus one of the names of a Christian is a keeper of the commandments of God.[1]

(2.) *They have a right to the tree of life.*—Not by *merit*, only by *grace*,—yet still a *right;* something which they can claim. The reception of pardon is simply in believing; but the reward is the result of good works. This statement as to keeping the commandments and its fruits, is no more inconsistent with a free salvation than such an expression, 'Holiness, without which no man can see the Lord;' nor with our Lord's 'Beatitudes,' each of which gives expression to the same kind of thought as here. What joy to have access, rightful access, to the tree of life! Adam's expulsion and forfeiture reversed, and we introduced into the better Paradise, with the conscious certainty that we cannot fall or be driven out! No flaming sword to guard the way! All open and free! To feed on that tree for ever; and in feeding find ourselves nourished and invigorated in every faculty! No death, nor disease, nor weakness, nor weariness, in sight of such a tree as this! All life and health for ever!

[1] I leave untouched the question of the various reading, 'Blessed are they who wash their robes.'

(3.) *They shall enter in through the gates into the city.*—They are blessed in a threefold way, as doers of the commandments, as partakers of the tree of life, as triumphant conquerors, entering in procession through the gates into the city.

(*a.*) *The city is their city.*—Its name is the new Jerusalem. It is not for angels, but for men. God has built it for them; and so He is not ashamed to be called their God. The 'fire' into which the unrighteous are cast is 'prepared for the devil and his angels.' But the city is wholly prepared for these redeemed ones; they belong to it just now; their citizenship is in heaven, though they shall not enter it till their Lord returns as the King of glory. As Paradise was Adam's garden, so is the new Jerusalem their own city.

(*b.*) *They shall enter through the gates into it.*—Not over the wall; not by stealth; but as conquerers in triumphal procession, their Lord, as King of glory, at their head. They are the conquerors so often mentioned in this book; and they shall be seen as such in the day of their entrance.

(*c.*) *They shall possess it for ever.*—This is evidently implied. Eternal possession! They shall go out no more. They are citizens of no mean city,—of the joyous city. They shall not be driven out. They, as the true cherubim, shall occupy the true Paradise, in which not only shall the tree of life be accessible, but the tree of know ledge shall be no more forbidden.

LXII.

COME, O SAVIOUR! COME, O SINNER!

'*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*'—REV. XXII. 17.

THE speaker here is Jesus Himself, as the context shows. But who is it that is spoken to? Is it *one* person or *more* than one? Is it the sinner that is addressed (as most think)? or is it first Christ and then the sinner? The last is the truth. The verse is twofold. In the first part, Christ is addressed; in the second, the sinner,—though the word 'come' runs through the whole. 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come,' are words addressed to Christ, pleading for His advent. 'Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,' are the words of invitation to the sinner.

I. *The cry for Christ's advent.*—It is this advent that is the great theme of the Apocalypse, and the central object of its scenes. It opens with, 'Behold, He cometh;' it goes on with, 'Behold, I come as a thief;' and it ends with, 'Behold, I come quickly.' All the predictions throughout the book bear upon this event, and carry forward the Church's hopes to this great goal. But there are

three parties here represented as uttering this prayer:—(1.) *The Spirit.*—He cries, 'Come.' He who has been speaking to the Churches; who has inspired all the predictions relating to the event;—He Himself is brought in *personally* as breathing the desires which He has dictated. He has sympathized with them all; and those longings which He had put into the lips of others now come forth from His own. 'The Spirit says, Come.' What so interests the Spirit in the advent? (*a.*) Christ will then be fully glorified, and it is the Spirit's office to glorify Christ. He has not yet got His glory on earth at all, nor even His full glory in heaven. (*b.*) Then the whole earth will be converted, and the Spirit will get full scope to all His longings and yearnings over men. He shall no longer *strive*, but *prevail;* He shall no longer be vexed, and grieved, and quenched. No wonder that He cries, 'Come.' (2.) *The Bride.*—The Lamb's wife, the whole Church as a body, as a virgin betrothed, looking for the marriage day. In one sense an injured widow, in another the bride. She expects the marriage; the union, the fellowship, the blessedness, the glory; the ending of loneliness and weariness, of sorrow and shame. No wonder, then, that she sighs for the Bridegroom's arrival, 'Come.' (3.) *He that heareth.*—'Blessed is he that heareth.' Not as if the hearer was not part of the bride; but the word thus singles out each one on whose ears the message is falling. The moment you hear it, you should cry, Come. Come, Lord Jesus! For then our sins and sorrows are ended; then our victory is won; then this vile body is changed; then we meet and unite for ever with the loved and lost;

then shall the ransomed of the Lord return, and come to Zion with songs. Let this, then, be the burden of our morning and evening cry, Come; as we read of wars, and blood, and human passion, cry louder and louder, Come!

II. *The invitation to the sinner.*—In this latter part it is clearly the sinner that is spoken to,—'Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will.'

(1.) *The inviter.*—Christ Himself; the same who said, 'Come unto me.' He invited once on earth; He now invites from heaven with the same urgency and love. He speaks to us with His own lips; He would have us know that He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever; that He still receiveth sinners; that there is still joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

(2.) *The persons invited.*—They are first described as the 'thirsty;' but lest this should be supposed to narrow the message or to exclude any class of men, it is added, 'whosoever will.' 1. *The thirsty.*—They who would fain be happy, but know not how; who are seeking rest, but finding none; who are asking for good, 'any good,' anywhere; who are hewing out broken cisterns; who are betaking themselves to dried-up wells; who are drinking of the Dead Sea's bitter water. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth!' (Isa. lv. 1.; John iv. 10, vii. 37). 2. *Whosoever will.*—This is a wide enough description. It shuts out none; it names every one. Are you in quest of water for your soul? It is here. Do you want to be happy? Joy is here for you; *whoever and whatever you are.*

(3.) *The blessings invited to.*—The water of life. 'Water,' that which will thoroughly refresh you and quench your

thirst; 'water of life,' living and life-giving; a quickening well; a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. Not a shower, nor a stream, but a well,—a fountain (ch. xxi. 6). This water is the Holy Ghost Himself, who comes to us as the bringer of God's free love, with all the joy which that love introduces into the soul. His wrath withers up the soul, His free love revives it, like rain upon the mown grass. His condemnation carries death, and gloom, and bondage; but His forgiveness reverses all this. What is there that this free love of God does not contain?

(4.) *The price.*—Freely! without money; so that the poorest can have all they need. The *free gift* of God! Free as the rain and dew; free as the sunbeam; free as the reviving air around. Absolutely, unconditionally free! Free to each one as he is; though the chief of sinners, the emptiest, wickedest, thirstiest of the sons of men.

(5.) *The time.*—The invitation comes forth at the close of that book which sums up all revelation. It contains Christ's *last* words, meant specially for the last days of a weary, thirsty world; when men, having tried every pleasure, vanity, lust, folly, and found nothing, having exhausted every cup and broken every cistern, will be found more thoroughly weary and thirsty than before. The last generation of earth, as it will be the wickedest, so will it be the *thirstiest* of all. Just when human thirst is at its height, when the gates are about to close, when the last trumpet is about to sound, the message of free love to the sinner comes forth, in unstraitened largeness, in undiminished fulness. It is no feeble, no fettered gospel; no dried-up well!

LXIII.

THE DIVINE WORD AND THE DOOM OF ITS DEFACERS.

'*For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*'—REV. XXII. 18, 19.

THIS warning in reference to the Book of Revelation is applicable to all Scripture, and carries us back to Deut. iv. 2: 'Ye shall not *add* unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye *diminish* from it;' and also xii. 32.

It is given in the form of a *testimony;*—from the faithful and true *witness*, to show its importance, and its truth. To every one who hears that testimony the warning comes. How great the responsibility of those who have the Bible in their hands! How solemnly they should look on it, and listen to it, and handle it! In this testimony, then, there is declared to us,—

I. *The perfection of God's word.*—Man may not intermeddle with it,—either to add, or to take away. He may meddle with his own words, or doings, or plans,—to alter,

to correct, to complete,—but not with what is divine. The words and things of God are not for him to touch. They are perfect; perfect for the ends required; perfect for God's purpose in speaking them to man. Can man improve the *works* of God?—the mountains, rivers, flowers?—the blue sky, the stars, the sun? Even so is the *word* of God too perfect for him to touch.

II. *The honour God puts on it.*—He has magnified it, even above His works; so that he who disparages the *word* of God is more guilty than he who disparages the *works* of God. Whether we *see* its perfection is not the question. We may be blind to it; but whether blind or seeing, God expects honour at our hands for His word. It is the fullest expression of His mind, the completest revelation of His character. It is such a declaration of the name of God as can be found nowhere else.

III. *Our responsibilities in regard to it.*—It is not given us for mere speculation or gratification; but for something far higher. We are responsible for the way we treat it, study it, profit by it. Its *perfection* makes our responsibility very great, and appeals to our consciences most powerfully. Were it not so perfect, we might deal with it as we deal with a human volume; were it not divine, we might forego the honour to it of which we speak. Hence the modern dislike to the idea of a perfect Bible; because the pressure upon the conscience is felt to be so solemn and so overpowering, with no possibility of evasion or escape. Definite dogma the age hates, as trammelling its freedom,—specially dogma defined by a divine revelation.

IV. *The sin of tampering with it.*—In regard to many of the things of God, the idea is, that while it is a *misfortune* to be in error, there is no sin in it. No sin in differing from God! No sin in trifling with His truth, or denying it! No sin in undervaluing His revelation! The *sin* of tampering with the Bible is one of which man is not easily persuaded; yet in the reckoning of God it is real and great. Every low thought about the Bible is *sin*. Every attempt to touch it, either in the way of addition or subtraction, is *sin*.

V. *The danger of meddling with it.*—The danger is exceeding great; and the punishment awarded to the intermeddlers is the declaration of the danger. God will not be mocked in this thing.

There are two opposite ways in which men treat the Bible,—to add or to take away; and both these our text condemns in the most fearful way.

(1.) *The doom of those who add.*—'God shall *add* unto them the plagues written in this book.' Those plagues are very fearful. Read the plagues of the seals, the trumpets, the vials. Are they not fearful? They are for this life, as well as for that which is to come. The very mention of them is appalling. Who in our day credits such things, or believes that God will execute such terrible vengeance upon all such as add to His word! The Pharisees added to it; the Romanists add to it; and we ourselves often add to it, by the way in which we enter on its perusal with unteachable hearts, with preconceived opinions, which would make the literalities of the word give way before them. Let us tremble at the word!

Add thou not unto His word, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. God *adds* His plagues to the *adders* of His book.

(2.) *The doom of those who take from it.*—This is especially the sin of our age. We sit in judgment upon its verities; we tamper with its certainty; we trifle with its words. We take from it; we render it null and void; we deny its authority; we object to its inspiration; we cut off what books we please! But let us not be deceived. God is not mocked. *He* also can take away,—and He will! He will take away,

(*a.*) Our part of the book of life,—effacing our names, and inserting them in the book of death!

(*b.*) Our part in the holy city. No holy city, no new Jerusalem, for the deniers of His word!

(*c.*) Our part from the things written in this book. These are many: the promises to the seven conquerors, the first resurrection, the marriage supper! How much we lose! What a condemnation is there for those who reject or mutilate the divine word!

LXIV.

THE FREE LOVE OF CHRIST.

'*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*'—REV. XXII. 21.

THUS the Bible closes with blessing. In this prayer we have the summing up of all the blessings which the word of God has uttered.

In the prospect of the Lord's coming, and with His voice proclaiming, 'Surely I come quickly,' the apostle breathes out the prayer, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.' It was sent to the seven Churches of Asia; it is sent to us in these last days. Nor do we need it less. It suited well the Church in the beginning of her history; it suits her as well at its close. The love that passeth knowledge is contained in it; and in that love all that a sinner needs at first, as well as all that a saint needs to the last. Grace abounding, grace reigning, grace conquering, grace justifying, grace comforting, grace purifying,—such is the key to the history of the Church of God. It is the history of Christ's free love, and of 'salvation to the uttermost,' through that free love flowing down to earth. For everything pertaining to the sinner's deliverance and life eternal comes down

to us from God. Man is simply the receiver and the enjoyer of a love as boundless as it is unbought.[1]

I. *What is this grace of the Lord Jesus Christ?*—Free love! Divine favour, unbought, unsolicited, and undeserved! With this the Bible begins, and with this it ends. The free love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! This is the 'good news' which the messengers of God have brought to us; the 'good news' which the cross of Christ has made available and accessible; the 'good news' which remain 'good' to the last, unchanged and unweakened by the lapse of time. The gospel has not become a dried-up well or broken cistern. The free love of God, coming to us through His Son, has not been exhausted or made less free. In these last days, we can take up the old message of grace to the sinner, and sound it abroad as

[1] This grace or free love was Luther's perpetual theme; and it was by his urging this so strongly (and, as some would say, unguardedly) that he has laid himself open to the attacks both of Romanists and Protestants. In one of his early letters to Melancthon (A.D. 1521) the following paragraph occurs:—

'Si gratiæ prædicator es, gratiam non fictam sed veram prædica; si vera gratia est, verum non fictum peccatum ferto. Deus non facit salvos ficte peccatores. Esto peccator et pecca fortiter; sed fortius fide et gaude in Christo, qui victor est peccati mortis et mundi; peccandum est quamdiu hic sumus. Vita hic non est habitatio justiciæ, sed expectamus, ait Petrus, cœlos novos et terram novam, in quibus justicia habitat. Sufficit quod agnovimus per divitias gloriæ, Dei agnum qui tollit peccatum mundi.'

This letter is not found in the early editions of his works. We quote it from the volume intituled 'Epistolarum Rev. patris D. D. M. Lutheri, tomus primus, a Joanni Aurifabro.' Avr. 1556. Jhenæ.

It was found in the library of Spalatinus, and is dated from 'Patmos' (the castle of Wartzburg). It occupies, as we now have it, about five quarto pages, and is of a somewhat miscellaneous character, discussing confession, vows, celibacy, 'both kinds,' grace and sin.

loudly and as freshly as at the first. No delight in the death of the wicked! Delight in his turning from his ways, and living! Yearning over the impenitent, tears for Jerusalem sinners, stretching out of the hand to the rebellious, invitation upon invitation to the weary; the open door, the universal call, the beseeching to be reconciled, the pressing of the cup of life to the lips of a thirsty world;—all this, continued to the last, marks he unutterable compassion of God to the sinner, the riches of the divine grace, the boundless fulness of God's heart, as it pours out its longings, and proclaims its long-suffering to the chief of sinners. Return to your Father's house, and be blest! Come, and be forgiven! Look, and be saved! Touch, and be healed! Ask, and it shall be given!

It is in answer to a letter of Melancthon (which is not extant), apparently about the *fictitious* sins of the Papacy,—*i.e.* things which Popery had made sins (neglect of feasts and worship of saints, etc.), and which lay heavy on many a half-enlightened conscience in these days, while *real sin* was overlooked, and men were made to go to God confessing unreal sins and neglecting real sins. Luther says: Away with such fictions and fictitious confessions. In dealing with God, be what you really are, and bravely confess it. 'Be a sinner, and sin bravely;' which does not mean what Bossuet represented it as meaning, 'Go on sinning,' but 'Speak out boldly as a sinner, hiding nothing; come out with all your sins to Him, whose grace is sufficient for all sins, though they be thousands, and millions; go to Him with *real* sins, and be not afraid to go to Him as what you really are.' Luther's idea of the grace or free love of God was, that it was as boundless as it was free, and that the only thing which could hinder or straiten it would be attempts on our part at cowardly palliations of our guilt; confessions which only confessed the half, instead of the whole; which confessed unreal or fictitious guilt, and weakly or ignorantly concealed the true. It concludes with these memorable words: 'Ora fortiter, es enim fortissimus peccator.'

II. *How it has been shown.*—In many ways, but chiefly in the CROSS. The words of Christ were grace; the doings of Christ were grace; but at the cross it came forth most fully. Grace all concentrates there; grace shines out there in its fulness. The cross is the place and pledge of grace. The cross did not make or originate the grace; but it made it a righteous thing that grace should flow out to us. It threw wide the gates of the storehouse; it unsealed the heavenly well. From the cross comes forth the voice of love, the message of grace, the embassy of peace and reconciliation. This grace flows everywhere throughout a guilty earth; but its centre is the cross; and only in connection with the cross is it available for and accessible to us. The 'it is finished' of Golgotha was the throwing down of the barriers that stood between the sinner and the grace. The grace itself was uncreated and eternal; it did not originate in the *purpose*, but in the *nature* of God. Still its outflow to sinners was hemmed in by righteousness; and until this was satisfied at the cross, the grace was like forbidden fruit to man. Divine displeasure against sin, and divine love of holiness, found their complete satisfaction at the altar, where the 'consuming fire' devoured the great burnt-offering, and gave full vent to the pent-up stores of grace. The love of the *Father*, giving His Son, was there. The love of the *Son*, giving Himself, was there. The love of the Holy Ghost, by whom a body was prepared for Him, and by whom 'He offered Himself without spot,' was there. Here is the great exhibition of the grace.

III. *How we get it.*—Simply by taking it as it is, and as we are; by letting it flow into us; by believing God's testimony concerning it. Grace supposes no preparation whatsoever in him who receives it, save that of worthlessness and guilt, whether these be felt or unfelt. The dryness of the ground is that which fits it for the rain; the poverty of the beggar is that which fits him for the alms; so the sin of the sinner is that which fits him for the grace of Christ. If anything else were needed, grace would be no more grace, but would become work or merit. Where *sin* abounds, there it is that *grace* much more abounds. How many are shutting out the grace by trying to prepare themselves for it! Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it, is all that God asks. Our thirst may be but the thirst for happiness; our hunger may be but the hunger of earth; our feelings may be altogether unspiritual; our sense of sin nothing: yet all this does not make us less qualified for Christ's free love, or that free love less immediate or less bounteous in its flow. In the belief of God's testimony to the grace of His Son, we let in the grace, and become partakers of the pardon and the joy.

IV. *What it does for us.*—It does so many things, that we find it not easy to reply to this question, any more than to such,—What does the light do for us? What does the air do for us? It does for us exceeding abundantly, above all we ask or think.

(1.) *It pardons.*—Forgiveness through the grace and work of Christ is the beginning of the good news. He who believes God's record of the grace of Christ is forgiven.

(2.) *It pacifies.*—It brings peace to the conscience. Not the grace without the blood, but still the grace that comes to us through the blood, pacifies.

(3.) *It liberates.*—Dread of God's anger kept us in bondage; the knowledge of the grace of Christ reaching us through the finished propitiation of the cross sets us free, by removing this dread.

(4.) *It enlightens.*—With the *grace* there pours in *light* from Him who is the Light of the world. The grace dispels the darkness.

(5.) *It strengthens.*—The sight of the free love brought to us by the blood invigorates the soul. Till we see it, our hands hang down, and our knees fail us.

(6.) *It purifies.*—It is holy grace, holy love; and it carries its purifying power into the soul that receives it. The cross is the awful revelation of divine holiness, and the love that comes to us through the cross is purifying love.

(7.) *It comforts.*—Only such free love can sustain the soul in sorrow, or speak consolation, or bind up the wounds of the broken-hearted.

V. *How long it lasts.*—For ever. It has no end. Christ loveth for ever. His grace is unchangeable like Himself. Its fulness is inexhaustible. It will be a perpetual fountain throughout eternity. It does for the evil days here, and for the glorious days hereafter. It suits us on earth, it will suit us in the kingdom. There is grace that is to be brought to us, at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and in the ages to come God will show us the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus our Lord.

LXV.

THE LAST AMEN.

'*Amen.*'—REV. XXII. 21.

AMEN is a Hebrew word, signifying truth and certainty in the first place; and then our affirmation of something as a certainty, or our desire that it should be so.

It comes also to signify faithfulness and stedfastness in a person, so that that person is himself regarded as truth personified,—*the* truth, *the* Amen. Hence it is that Christ takes to Himself the designation of the Truth, and the Amen,—the faithful and true Witness. Hence it is that He so often (eighty times at least) uses the word 'Amen' or 'Verily' in His discourses. As the True One and the Truth, He is the Amen. As the confirmer and fulfiller of all the promises of God; as the channel through which they flow down to us,—He is the Amen.

Further, it has come to signify faith and confidence,—specially faith and confidence in God. It is the word used in reference to Abraham, 'He *believed* God,' and to Israel, 'They *believed* the Lord.'

But it is with the common use of it that we have now to do,—that use of it which we make daily when we conclude even our shortest prayer. Amen; that is, so let

it be; let it be according to our request, and according to Thy promise. Used in this way, it means much. It is the summary or recapitulation of the whole previous prayer; and therefore it should be uttered in no light or heedless spirit, but with profound reverence and fervour; for it is 'in testimony of our desire and assurance to be heard that we say Amen.'

There are, however, different ways of using it; different feelings with which it is uttered: and it is to these that we would now attend.

I. *There is the Amen of ignorance.*—Simple and common as the word is, thousands use it without knowing what it means, or what they themselves intend. We might say that not one out of a hundred uses it intelligently. It is the approved way of finishing off a prayer; it is the word which intimates that the prayer is concluded,—that is all; and were it to be introduced at the beginning or middle, as well it might be, men would wonder. It is to them a word, no more; a concluding word or sound, where the voice ceases, and after which the eyes are opened, and the hands unclasped! This is the Amen of ignorance. Are your Amens of this kind? or are they uttered with the understanding,—the full realization of the large and solemn meaning which they contain?

II. *The Amen of habit.*—All are not ignorant of its significance. Ask many what they intend by affixing it to their prayers, and at once they will tell you. Yet mark them, and you will find the word slipping from their tongue without any corresponding thought as to its sense. They have uttered it quite unconsciously thousands of

times. They would not terminate a prayer without it; yet it has become a mere word of habit, into which, when used, no feeling, no earnestness is thrown; a commonplace, random expression, with nothing of soul attached to it, like a well without water; a mechanical utterance, into which they have been educated, and without which they would think the prayer incomplete, but which means no more to them than the oscillations of a pendulum, and which has no more connection with genuine prayer than have the garments in which they are dressed, or the floor on which they kneel. Are *your* Amens those of habit,—pieces of ornament,—the useless appendages of useless devotion,—or is your soul thrown into them? Are they the *essence* of your previous petitions,—the concentration and summing up of all your desires? Do you say Amen simply because you are done? or, like David, do you say 'Amen and Amen; the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended,' that is, summed up in this? How many Amens of habit have you uttered? Amens of indifference, that are no better than mockeries? Nay, and do not some of us, whose petitions are fervent throughout, make void all their earnestness by the lifeless, mechanical, heartless Amen with which we sum them up? Is not our Amen sometimes the dead fly that spoils the precious spikenard of the apothecary?

III. *The Amen of unbelief.*—It seems strange that a word like this should ever be uttered in unbelief; yet such is the case. Nay, sometimes it would seem as if the most unbelieving part of our prayer is that which should be the most believing,—the Amen. We may well won-

der how it should be so. It seems almost incredible that a word like this, meant to be associated with faithfulness, and truth, and certainty, should be connected with unbelief, nay, should be the utterance of unbelief,—the frequent, the daily utterance of unbelief; yet so it is. Our unbelieving Amens are about the most melancholy parts of our prayers,—the worst indications of distrust in God. It is vain to speak of wandering thoughts, or to excuse ourselves for such thoughts, by the number of the petitions. For here we have but *one word*, and in that one word our whole prayer is recapitulated and summed up; so that, if unbelief or vain thoughts had pervaded the previous parts, they might have been made up for, as one may say. Yet that single word is the vainest of the vain words spoken; that word, in which faith seeks to infuse itself twice over into our prayer, is the word from which it is specially excluded. Oh what a reproach to us are our unbelieving Amens! What a mockery of God, and of His promises! The sin of these would be of itself sufficient to shut out our supplications. Yet how little we think of this! With what ease and carelessness do we pronounce that word of unbelief, which should have been the great and special word of faith!

IV. *The Amen of faith.*—This is the true Amen; the Amen of souls who have heard the gracious words of Him who cannot lie, and who act upon these. Amen is the proper and natural voice of faith. Whether it is we who are speaking to God, or God who is speaking to us, we say Amen. In the one case it is the expression of faith, in the other the response of faith.

But why should Amen be thus linked with faith? Because that which calls it forth is not simply a desirable thing, but a truth and a certainty. Amen is not the mere utterance of desire,—earnest desire,—but of *believing* desire. Let us see how this is. It has to do with such things as the following:—

(1.) *The free love of God.*—It is God's testimony regarding His own free love that we listen to in the gospel; and our first belief of that gospel is our saying Amen to His declarations regarding that free love. And as we begin, so are we to go on. Each Amen goes back to this free love, to the beginning of our confidence, and is a renewal of that confidence. In every prayer we keep our eye on this; for without the recognition of this grace, this abundant grace, what would prayer be? Let all our Amens then do justice to the free love of God.

(2.) *The truthfulness of God.*—The faithful saying was that to which we first said Amen; for we had made the discovery that it was the true utterance of Him who cannot lie. We were satisfied that He could not speak an untrue word, nor promulgate a statement fitted to mislead, nor hold out to us a promise which He did not mean to fulfil. Being thus persuaded of the divine truthfulness, we 'believed the report;' we said Amen to each gracious declaration, satisfied of its absolute truth and certainty. So did we at the first; so do we to the last. God is true,—truthful, faithful; we will not make Him a liar in any one thing, in any of our communications with Him,—least of all in our prayers. Let all our Amens do justice to the truthfulness of God.

(3.) *The power of God.*—What He has promised He is able also to perform. He is able to do for us exceeding abundantly, above all we ask. Our prayers rest themselves as much upon His power as His grace and truth. On this we rested when we first came to Him as 'able to save unto the uttermost;' on this we rest still. Every prayer is a recognition of power, and of divine willingness to put forth that power in the behalf of all who will apply for it. It is infinite power,—omnipotence. Let each Amen of ours do justice to the power of God.

In addition to these things, to which the faith of our Amens attaches itself, we would only further say that it specially leans upon the cross of Christ in connection with these three. It is round that cross that this faith flings its arms; it is here that it sits down in quiet satisfaction. It sees the grace, the truth, the power of God flowing to us through the blood of Golgotha; and it says Amen to all that God has testified concerning that blood; to the 'it is finished' of the Son of God upon the tree.

It is thus that the believing Amen of our prayers springs out of that which we know of God and His crucified Son. Knowing all this, shall our Amens be those of uncertainty or doubt? Shall they not be the Amens of faith? Shall we ever go to God mocking Him with a distrustful Amen? Rather let each Amen be the utterance of triumphant faith; so that even though unbelief may have mingled with our previous petitions, we at the close dismiss all that unbelief, and, looking back upon each petition, quicken them into happy life by the believing Amen with which we conclude the whole.

V. *The Amen of hope.*—God has written much to us concerning our hopes. He has filled our future with 'things hoped for;' and He has bidden us desire them, wait for them, pray for them. There is the hope of the kingdom, of the inheritance, of the glory; above all, there is '*the* blessed hope' of the Lord's appearing. These hopes occupy large space in our expectations and prayers. They are still futurities; but they are certainties,—bright and blessed beyond what eye hath seen or ear heard. In our pleadings regarding these, we use the Amen of hope; realizing it as a hope that maketh not ashamed. We say, 'Hallowed be Thy name,' and we add the Amen of hope; 'Thy kingdom come,' and we add the Amen of hope; 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,' and we add the Amen of hope. We hear the Lord's own voice from heaven saying, 'Surely I come quickly,' and we add with the apostle: Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen!

Are our Amens bright and big with hope? As we utter them on our knees before God, do thoughts of the glory fill us? Does that glory stand out before our eye as a certainty,—a divinely revealed and divinely promised certainty,—a certainty quite as great as that which rests over the past? Each time we utter the Amen in connection with these blessed futurities, does our hope kindle up anew,—the hope calling up the Amen, and the Amen making the hope to shine out with fresh brightness? In anticipating such a future, how can we utter a cold, heartless, passive, or despairing Amen? Let all our Amens be those of exulting hope.