

SHALL WE KNOW
ONE ANOTHER?

THE CHRISTIAN RACE

PRINCIPLES FOR
CHURCHMEN

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SHALL WE KNOW ONE ANOTHER?

AND OTHER PAPERS.

BY THE
RIGHT REV. J. C. RYLE,
Lord Bishop of Liverpool.

NEW EDITION.

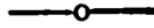
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SHALL WE KNOW ONE ANOTHER?

I PITY that man who never thinks about heaven. I use that word in the broadest and most popular sense. I mean by “heaven” the future dwelling-place of all true Christians, when the dead are raised, and the world has passed away. Cold and unfeeling must that heart be which never gives a thought to that dwelling-place! Dull and earthly must that mind be which never considers “heaven!”

We may die any day. “In the midst of life we are in death.” We must all die sooner or later. The youngest, the fairest, the strongest, the cleverest, all must go down one day before the scythe of the King of Terrors. This world shall not go on for ever as it does now. Its affairs shall at last be wound up. The King of kings will come, and take his great power, and reign. The judgment shall be set, the books opened, the dead raised, the living changed. And where do we all hope to go then? Why, if we know anything of true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we hope to go to “heaven.” Surely there is nothing unreasonable in asking men to consider the subject of heaven.

Now, what will heaven be like? The question, no doubt, is a deep one, but there is nothing presumptuous in looking at it. The man who is about to sail for Australia or New Zealand as a settler, is naturally anxious to know something about his future home, its climate, its employments, its inhabitants, its ways, its customs. All these are subjects of deep interest to him. You are leaving the land of your nativity, you are going to spend the rest of your life in a new hemisphere. It would be strange indeed if you did not desire information about your new abode. Now surely, if we hope to dwell for ever in that “better country, even a heavenly one,” we ought to seek all the knowledge we can get about it. Before we go to our eternal home we should try to become acquainted with it.

There are many things about heaven revealed in Scripture which I purposely pass over. That it is a prepared place for a prepared people; that all who are found there will be of one mind and of one experience, chosen by the same Father, washed in the same blood of atonement, renewed by the same Spirit; that universal and perfect holiness, love, and knowledge will be the eternal law of the kingdom—all these are ancient things, and I do not mean to dwell on them. Suffice it to say that heaven is the eternal presence of everything that can make a saint happy, and the eternal absence of everything that can cause sorrow. Sickness, and pain, and disease, and death, and poverty, and labour, and money, and care, and ignorance, and misunderstanding, and slander, and lying, and strife, and contention, and quarrels, and envies, and jealousies, and bad tempers, and infidelity, and scepticism, and irreligion, and superstition, and heresy, and schism, and wars, and fightings, and bloodshed, and murders, and law-suits—all, all these things shall have no place in heaven. On earth, in this present time, they may live and flourish. In heaven even their footprints shall not be known.

Hear what the inspired apostle St. John says: “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or

maketh a lie but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life"(Rev. xxi. 27). "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. 5). "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 16, 17). "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. xxi. 4).

Hear what that glorious dreamer, John Bunyan, says, though writing with an uninspired pen: "I saw in my dream that these two men, Christian and Hopeful, went in at the gate. And lo! as they entered, they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There were also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them; the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honour. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, 'Enter ye into the joy of our Lord.' I also heard the men themselves sing with a loud voice, saying, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'

"Now, just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and behold the city shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal.

"There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.' And after that they shut up the gates; which when I had seen, I wished myself among them."

But I will not dwell on these things. I purposely pass by them all. I wish to confine myself in this paper to one single point of deep and momentous interest. That point is the mutual recognition of saints in the next world. I want to examine the question, "Shall we know one another in heaven?"

Now, what saith the Scripture on this subject? This is the only thing I care to know. I grant freely that there are not many texts in the Bible which touch the subject at all. I admit fully that pious and learned divines are not of one mind with me about the matter in hand. I have listened to many ingenious reasonings and arguments against the view that I maintain. But in theology I dare not call any man master and father. My only aim and desire is to find out what the Bible says, and to take my stand upon its teaching.

Let us hear what David said when his child was dead. "Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sam. xii. 23). What can these words mean, but that David hoped to see his child, and meet him again in another world? This was evidently the hope that cheered him, and made him dry his tears. The separation would not be for ever.

Let us hear what St. Paul said to the Thessalonians. “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” (1 Thess. ii. 19). These words must surely mean that the apostle expected to recognise his beloved Thessalonian converts in the day of Christ’s second advent. He rejoiced in the thought that he would see them face to face at the last day; would stand side by side with them before the throne, and would be able to say, “Here am I, and the seals which thou didst give to my ministry.”

Let us hear what the same apostle says, in the same epistle, for the comfort of mourners. “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thess. iv. 13, 14). There would be no point in these words of consolation if they did not imply the mutual recognition of saints. The hope with which he cheers wearied Christians is the hope of meeting their beloved friends again. He does not merely say, “Sorrow not, for they are at rest—they are happy—they are free from pain and trouble—they are better off than they would be here below.” No! he goes a step further. He says, “God shall bring them with Christ, when he brings them back to the world. You are not parted for ever. You will meet again.”

I commend these three passages to the reader’s attentive consideration. To my eye, they all seem to point to only one conclusion. They all imply the same great truth, that saints in heaven shall know one another. They shall have the same body and the same character that they had on earth—a body perfected and transformed like Christ’s in his transfiguration, but still the same body—a character perfected and purified from all sin, but still the same character. But in the moment that we who are saved shall meet our several friends in heaven, we shall at once know them, and they will at once know us.

There is something to my mind unspeakably glorious in this prospect: few things so strike me in looking forward to the good things yet to come. Heaven will be no strange place to us when we get there. We shall not be oppressed by the cold, shy, chilly feeling that we know nothing of our companions. We shall feel at home. We shall see all of whom we have read in Scripture, and know them all, and mark the peculiar graces of each one. We shall look upon Noah, and remember his witness for God in ungodly times. We shall look on Abraham, and remember his faith; on Isaac, and remember his meekness; on Moses, and remember his patience; on David, and remember all his troubles. We shall sit down with Peter, and James, and John, and Paul, and remember all their toil when they laid the foundations of the Church. Blessed and glorious will that knowledge and communion be! If it is pleasant to know one or two saints, and meet them occasionally now, what will it be to know them all, and to dwell with them for ever!

There is something unspeakably comforting, moreover, as well as glorious in this prospect. It lights up the valley of the shadow of death. It strips the sick-

bed and the grave of half their terrors. Our beloved friends who have fallen asleep in Christ are not lost, but only gone before. The children of the same God and partakers of the same grace can never be separated very long. They are sure to come together again when this world has passed away. Our pleasant communion with our kind Christian friends is only broken off for a small moment, and is soon to be eternally resumed. These eyes of ours shall once more look upon their faces, and these ears of ours shall once more hear them speak. Blessed and happy indeed will that meeting be!—better a thousand times than the parting! We parted in sorrow, and we shall meet in joy; we parted in stormy weather, and we shall meet in a calm harbour; we parted amidst pains and aches, and groans, and infirmities: we shall meet with glorious bodies, able to serve our Lord for ever without distraction. And, best of all, we shall meet never to be parted, never to shed one more tear, never to put on mourning, never to say good-bye and farewell again. Oh! it is a blessed thought, that saints will know one another in heaven!

How much there will be to talk about! What wondrous wisdom will appear in everything that we had to go through in the days of our flesh! We shall remember all the way by which we were led, and say, “Wisdom and mercy followed me all the days of my life. In my sicknesses and pains, in my losses and crosses, in my poverty and tribulations, in my bereavements and separation, in every bitter cup I had to drink, in every burden I had to carry, in all these was perfect wisdom.” We shall see it at last, if we never saw it before, and we shall all see it together, and all unite in praising Him that “led us by the right way to a city of habitation.” Surely, next to the thought of seeing Christ in heaven, there is no more blessed and happy thought than that of seeing one another.

Shall we get to heaven at all? This, after all, is the grand question which the subject should force on our attention, and which we should resolve, like men, to look in the face. What shall it profit you and me to study theories about a future state, if we know not on which side we shall be found at the last day? Let us arouse our sleepy minds to a consideration of this momentous question. Heaven, we must always remember, is not a place where all sorts and kinds of persons will go as a matter of course. The inhabitants of heaven are not such a discordant, heterogeneous rabble as some men seem to suppose. Heaven, it cannot be too often remembered, is a prepared place for a prepared people. The dwellers in heaven will be all of one heart and one mind, one faith and one character. They will be ready for mutual recognition. But, are we ready for it? are we in tune? Shall we ourselves get to heaven?

Why should we not get to heaven? Let us set that question also before us, and fairly look it in the face. There sits at the right hand of God One who is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, and One who is as willing to save as he is able. The Lord Jesus Christ has died for us on the cross, and paid our mighty debt with his own blood. He is sitting at God’s right hand, to be the Advocate and Friend of all who desire to be saved. He is waiting at this moment to be gracious. Surely if we do not get to heaven the fault will be

all our own. Let us arise and lay hold on the hand that is held out to us from heaven. Let us never forget that promise, “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John i. 9). The prison-doors are set wide open; let us go forth and be free. The lifeboat is alongside; let us embark in it and be safe. The bread of life is before us; let us eat and live. The Physician stands before us; let us hear his voice, believe, and make sure our interest in heaven.

Have we a good hope of going to heaven, a hope that is Scriptural, reasonable, and will bear investigation? Then let us not be afraid to meditate often on the subject of “heaven,” and to rejoice in the prospect of good things to come. I know that even a believer’s heart will sometimes fail when he thinks of the last enemy and the unseen world. Jordan is a cold river to cross at the very best, and not a few tremble when they think of their own crossing. But let us take comfort in the remembrance of the other side. Think, Christian reader, of seeing your Saviour, and beholding your King in his beauty. Faith will be at last swallowed up in sight, and hope in certainty. Think of the many loved ones gone before you, and of the happy meeting between you and them. You are not going to a foreign country; you are going home. You are not going to dwell amongst strangers, but amongst friends. You will find them all safe, all well, all ready to greet you, all prepared to join in one unbroken song of praise. Then let us take comfort and persevere. With such prospects before us, we may well cry, “It is worth while to be a Christian”

I conclude all with a passage from “Pilgrim’s Progress,” which well deserves reading. Said Pliable to Christian, “What company shall we have in heaven?”

Christian replied, “There we shall be with seraphim and cherubim, creatures that will dazzle your eyes to look upon. There, also, you shall meet with thousands and ten thousands that have gone before us to that place; none of them hurtful, but loving and holy; every one walking in the sight of God, and standing in his presence with acceptance for ever. In a word, there we shall see the elders with their golden crowns; there we shall see holy virgins with their golden harps, there we shall see men that by the world were cut in pieces, burnt in flames, eaten of beasts, drowned in the seas, for the love they bore to the Lord of the place; all well, and clothed with immortality as with a garment.”

Then said Pliable, “The hearing of this is enough to ravish one’s heart. But are these things to be enjoyed? How shall we get to be sharers hereof?”

Then said Christian, “The Lord, the Governor of the country, hath recorded that in this book; the substance of which is, if we be truly willing to have it, he will bestow it upon us freely.”

Then said Pliable, “Well, my good companion, glad am I to hear of these things. Come on, let us mend our pace.”

WHAT DOES THE EARTH TEACH?

“Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee.”— Job xii. 8.

GOD has provided two great books for man’s instruction—the book of revelation and the book of creation. The one is that volume whose name is familiar to us all—the Bible; the other is that wonderfully framed universe, whose silent pages are ever lying open to an observant eye.

The lessons of the book of revelation are known to a comparatively small portion of mankind. There are many millions of men and women who never heard of a Bible, and are utterly ignorant of its saving truths.

The lessons of the book of creation are within reach of every human being. The most unlearned savage has a great teacher close at hand, though, as a rule, he knows it not.

To both of these great books one common remark applies. A man may live in the full light of them, and yet be no wiser for them. The book of Scripture may be possessed, and yet confer no benefit on the possessor. To understand the Bible rightly, we need the teaching of the Holy Ghost. The book of creation may be open on every side of us, and yet we may see nothing of God in it. It is pre-eminently a volume which is instructive to none but an enlightened eye. “But he that is spiritual discerneth all things” (1 Cor. ii. 15). Once let a man’s mind be guided by the Spirit of God, and he will see in both volumes things that he never dreamed of before. The Bible will make him wise unto salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. Creation, read with a spiritual eye, will confirm the lessons of the Bible. The words of God’s mouth, and the works of God’s hand, will be found to throw mutual light on one another.

Harvest is a season of the year which always draws me into this train of thought. Harvest, with all its interesting accompaniments, has a voice which always goes to my heart. I think of the thousands of strong arms which are clearing their way, over fields of wheat, and barley, and oats, from one end of the land to the other. I think of the thousands of eyes which are reading every square yard of our English corn-fields. I think it useful, at a season like this, to remind people of the many lessons which the earth is continually teaching. I should like to sound in the ears of every farmer, and labourer, and gleaner in the land the striking words of Job—“Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee.”

But what are the special lessons which the earth teaches? They are many and various—far more than most people suppose—more even, I believe, than many true Christians ever consider. I am one of those who hold firmly that there is a close harmony between nature and revelation. Let me give a few examples of what I mean:—

1. I believe, for one thing, that the earth teaches *the wisdom and power of God*.

This is a point which requires very little proof. None but an atheist, I think, would attempt to deny it. That the globe in which we live and move must have had a beginning; that matchless wisdom and design appear in every part of the framework of creation; that the minutest plants and animals, when viewed under a microscope, proclaim loudly, “The hand that made us is Divine”—all these are great first principles, which few will attempt to dispute. The denial of them involves far greater difficulties than the acceptance. No wonder that St. Paul declares: “The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Rom. i. 20).

2. I believe, for another thing, that the earth teaches *the doctrine of the fall of man*.

How, I should like to know, can we account for the many enemies which often attack the best products of the earth, and prevent them coming to perfection? The weeds which impede the growth of corn, and require to be rooted up; the insects and vermin which prey on it—the slug, the caterpillar, the wireworm, and all their companions; the diseases to which the plant is liable, such as mildew, rust, and smut, and many others; from whence do these things come? They exist, as every farmer could tell us he finds to his cost. They interfere with the full development of many a harvest, and cause many a field to disappoint its owner of a full crop. But how can they be accounted for? I am bold to say that only one answer can be given to this question. That answer must be sought in the 3rd chapter of Genesis, in the old familiar story of sin coming into the world. I assert confidently that nothing but the records of that chapter can explain the state of things which we see continually under our eyes. We cannot for a moment suppose that God created anything imperfect. Everything that God made was, like him who made it, “perfect and very good” at the beginning. But something has evidently come in since the day of creation, which has defiled and marred God’s handiwork. That something is sin! The earth, with all its beauty and fertility, is an earth which is still under the primeval curse—“Cursed is the ground for thy sake. . . Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee” (Gen. iii. 17, 18). I look for better days to come on the earth. I believe that the words of the Psalmist shall be fulfilled when Christ returns the second time, and the curse is taken away. “Then shall the earth yield her increase,” &c. (Ps. lxxvii. 6). But in the meantime, I believe firmly that the earth shows everywhere the footprints of sin.

The infidel and deist are fond of pointing to the works of nature, and bidding us look up through nature to nature’s God. But let them explain, if they can, the anomalies and imperfections which no student of nature can fail to observe on the earth. I tell them boldly that they never can be explained without the Bible. The Bible alone can solve the problem. The Bible alone can make things plain. Without the Bible there are a thousand things in nature which would perplex and puzzle us. But when I read what happened in the garden of Eden, I see a solution of all my difficulties. I find that nature confirms revelation.

3. I believe, for another thing, that the earth teaches *the great truth that life comes out of death*.

No man, I imagine, can study what goes on yearly on the face of the soil without seeing that the death of one thing is the life of another. The annual death and decay of millions of leaves and plants is a part of the process by which vegetation is continually maintained. Leaf after leaf perishes, and contributes to the fertility and productiveness of coming years. Plant after plant is turned into rich mould, and helps forward the growth of another season. Even the seed-corn which is sown exemplifies the same great principle. Grain after grain must die before there can appear “the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear.” The golden harvest which is reaped every autumn could never exist unless this great principle was annually worked out—that life springs out of death.

Now, what is all this but a confirmation of one of the mightiest truths of Scripture? What have we here but light thrown on the great foundation of Christianity— Christ’s death the life of the world! Hear what our Lord himself says: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John xii. 24). The sacrificial death of Christ as our substitute on the cross is the foundation-stone of the whole Gospel. From his cross and grave spring all the lessons of a Christian. Take away his atoning death, and you take away everything worth contending for in revealed religion. His death is our title to life; his sufferings the ground of our claims to glory; his crucifixion our warrant for expecting a crown. What intelligent Bible reader does not know that these are among the first principles of our faith? Is it nothing, then, that this great truth is pictured out every year on the face of the earth around us? To my mind, it is an unspeakable comfort. It helps, and strengthens, and confirms my faith.

4. I believe, for another thing, that the earth teaches the deep truth that *God acts as a sovereign in giving life where he wills*.

The profusion of vegetable life which the earth puts forth every year is so great as to baffle all calculation. Millions and millions of living seeds are called into existence which might, for anything we can see, become the productive parents of future vegetation. Yet millions and millions are never used for this purpose. Some are picked up by birds and insects, and used as food. Some fall into the ground and rot, and pass away. Even in the most carefully prepared corn-field, the proportion of seed-corn that springs up and yields a harvest is far smaller than most people would suppose.

Now, why is all this? We cannot tell. The wisest course is to confess our ignorance. The facts are before us, and we cannot deny them; but how to explain the enormous annual waste of life which is incessantly going on, is a problem that baffles man’s understanding.

But does not this state of things assist us in considering that deep and mysterious truth, the sovereignty of God in saving sinners? We know that there are nations on the earth at this moment to whom God has never been pleased to send the light of the Gospel. We know that there are thousands in our own land

who, living in the full sunshine of religious privileges, remain dead in sin, and utterly careless about their souls. Graceless and godless they live, and graceless and godless they seem to die.

Now, if we attempt to explain this condition of things, we are brought to a standstill at once. It is a high thing, and we cannot understand it. It is a deep thing, and we have no line to fathom it. We can only fall back on our own ignorance, and rest satisfied that what we know not now we shall know hereafter. They that are lost at last will be found lost through their own sins and folly. The Judge of all the earth will certainly do right.

Yet surely the face of the earth around us may help us in considering the subject. The great fact that meets our eyes on every side, that not every living seed is allowed to live and grow up into a plant, is a fact that should be pondered well, and kept continually upon our minds. Whatever men may please to say about the doctrine of election in theology, they cannot deny its existence in vegetation.

5. I believe, for another thing, that the earth teaches us *the importance of a diligent use of means*.

The things that grow upon the earth contain in themselves a boundless capability of improvement. The gardener and the farmer know this perfectly well. It is one of the first principles of their business. They cannot give life. They cannot command success. "The earth bringeth forth fruit of itself." But when life has once been given, it seems to admit of indefinite strengthening and increase. By breaking up the earth and manuring it, by weeding and watering, by cleansing and protecting, by draining and irrigating, the results that may be produced are without end.

There is a spiritual lesson here, which is clear, plain, and unmistakable. Life is a thing that no man can give to his own soul, nor to the soul of another. But when life has once been imparted by the Spirit of God, there is no limit to the results that may be produced by spiritual diligence and by pains in the use of means.

He knows but little who fancies that once converted he may sit still, and dream lazily along his journey to heaven. Let him know that his soul's prosperity is most intimately bound up with his soul's carefulness and labour. Let him resist the spirit of slumber, and work hard in the ways that God has appointed. Let him take heed to his Bible-reading and his praying, to his sermon-hearing and use of the Lord's Supper. Let him watch daily over his temper and his tongue, his company and his employment of time. Let him strive and agonise after a complete victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. Let him remember that if it is worth while to do anything for his soul, it is worth while to do it well.

Well would it be for the Church if these simple lessons were more constantly kept in mind. Happy is that Christian who cultivates his soul as if it were a farm or a garden, and learns the wisdom of spiritual diligence from man's treatment of the land.

6. I believe, lastly, that the earth teaches *that great truth, the resurrection of the body*.

Nothing, perhaps, is more remarkable than the wide difference between the appearance of the earth at the beginning of winter and at the beginning of spring. Thousands of herbaceous flowers in winter are dead down to the very ground. Not a vestige of life remains about them. The great majority of trees are naked and bare. The little child is ready to think they are dead, and will never put forth leaves again. And yet both flowers and trees are alive, and in due time will be clothed again with bloom and beauty. As soon as the warm air of spring begins to be felt a resurrection takes place. To use the beautiful words of the Canticles—"The winter is past; the rain is over and gone: the flowers appear on the earth "(Cant. ii. 11, 12).

Cold must that mind be, and dull that heart, which does not see in this great annual change a lively type of the resurrection of man's body. He who formed the world foresaw the weakness of man's faith. He foreknew our slowness to believe spiritual things. He has taken care to provide us with an annual remembrancer of what he intends to do for our bodies at the last day. As plants and trees put forth life in spring, so in due time "our bodies shall rise again." Well may we say, when we look at the difference of the earth in winter and in summer, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" When sneering scoffers ask the question, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" we may boldly reply, "Who art thou that talkest of difficulties? Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee." "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. . . So also is the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. xv. 36-42).

DO WHAT YOU CAN.

“She hath done what she could.”—Mark xiv. 8.

THE text which heads this paper deserves attentive consideration. It contains words which were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ in praise of a woman. Her name we are not told: this single action is all that we know about her. But she was praised by Christ. Blessed indeed are those whom the Lord commendeth!

The circumstances of the history are few and simple. Our Lord was sitting in the house of Simon the leper, at Bethany, “two days” before his crucifixion. The end of his work was drawing near, and he knew it. The cross and the grave were in sight, and he saw them. “As he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves.” They found fault with the woman’s action. They said it was “waste.” They murmured against her. But here at once the Great Head of the Church interposed. He declared that the woman had “done a good work.” She had seized the last occasion she had of doing honour to her Master. She had used the only means she had of testifying her affection. And then he placed on her conduct the seal of his approbation in these solemn words—“She hath done what she could. . . . Whosoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.” Such was the occasion when these words were spoken. Now, what are the lessons they are meant to teach us? There are two which appear to me to stand out prominently on the face of the sentence, two mighty principles which ought never to be forgotten. Let me try to show what they are.

1. We learn, for one thing, that the Lord Jesus likes his people to be *doing Christians*. He commends the action of the woman before him. Others sat by in idle admiration, but never lifted a finger to do honour to their Messiah. It was very different with this woman. She “did” something. She did “what she could.” Hence the praises bestowed on her. The Great Head of the Church likes “*doing*” Christians.

What do I mean by “*doing*” Christians? I mean Christians who show their Christianity in their lives—by deeds, by actions, by practice, by performance. True religion is not made up of general notions and abstract opinions—of certain views, and doctrines, and feelings, and sentiments. Useful as these things are, they are not everything. You must not rest content with them. You must see that they produce a certain line of conduct in daily life. The wheels of the machine must move. The clock must go as well as have a handsome case and face. It matters little what a man thinks, and feels, and wishes in religion, if he never gets further than thinking, and feeling, and wishing. The great question is, What fruit does the man bring forth? What does he do? How does he live?

“*Doing*” is the only satisfactory proof that a man is a living member of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that his faith is the faith of God’s elect. True faith is not like the faith of devils, who “believe and tremble,” but neither love nor obey. True faith will never be found alone, though it alone justifies. Where there is faith, there will always be love, and obedience, and an earnest desire to do God’s will. Living members of Christ will always show something of their Master’s mind. Weak as they may be, they love to follow his example whose whole life was action. It may be little that they are able to do, but that little they will try to do. We may be very sure there is no grace where there is no “doing.”

“*Doing*” is the only satisfactory proof that your Christianity is a real work of the Spirit. Talking and profession are cheap and easy things. They cost nothing. They are soon picked up, soon learned, soon forgotten, and soon laid aside. But “doing” requires trouble and self-denial. It looks like “business,” and makes the world believe that religion is a reality. I care little to hear that a man likes sermons, and always goes to hear, and thinks sermons very good and very fine. I have lived long enough not to be satisfied with this. It is only blossoms; it is not fruit. I want to know what the man DOES?—What does he do in private? What does he do in his family? What does he do on week-days? Is his religion anything better than a Sunday coat—a thing put on every Sunday morning, and put off every Sunday night? —If there is no “DOING” in a man’s religion, it is not of the right sort. It has not got the true stamp on it. Like bad silver and gold, or plated articles, it has not got the Goldsmiths’ Hall mark on it. It is worth little now; it will bring no peace on a death-bed; it will not pass the gate of heaven.

“*Doing*” is the only evidence that will avail a man in the day of judgment. Let any one note the conclusion of the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, and he will see what I mean. Your works will be the witnesses by which your faith will be tried. The question will not be, “What church did you attend? and what profession did you make? and what experience have you had? and what did you wish to be?” The only question will be, What FRUITS did your faith produce? “Faith,” says James, “if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James ii. 17).

Your works cannot justify you, my dear reader. They cannot save. They cannot put away our sin. Christ’s work alone can do that. But there never was a justified man who did not do works—at any rate, some. Your works do not go before you into heaven, nor yet alongside of you. The souls that get there see none of their works. They only see Jesus Christ’s precious blood and all-prevailing intercession. But your works are to “*follow*” you, if you are to go to heaven, in order to speak to your character. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. xiv. 13). Never was there a greater mistake than to suppose that works are of no consequence because they cannot justify and cannot save. The supposition shows gross ignorance, and is a sad perversion of Scripture.

Are true Christians *God’s workmanship*—are they new creatures? Yes! The Spirit made them what they are. But mark what St. Paul tells the Ephesians (ii.

10): “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Are true Christians a *peculiar people*? Yes! God has chosen them out of the world, and called them to be his. But wherefore? St. Paul tells Titus “that they may be zealous of good works—careful to maintain good works” (Titus ii. 14; iii. 8).

Remember this, dear Reader. Let no man deceive you with vain words. Let none persuade you that “doing” is not an important part of Christianity. It is an old saying, “Handsome is that handsome does.” I will mend it. I say, “Christian is that Christian does.” Would you be a happy Christian, and enjoy great comfort? would you be useful and a benefit to others? I trust many would like this. Then store up my advice today. Be a doing Christian. “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James i. 22).

2. We learn, for another thing, from this woman’s history, that *all true Christians can do something*, and that all should do what they can. What do I mean by “doing something?” I mean doing something for God’s glory—something for Christ’s cause—something for the souls of others—something to spread true religion—something to oppose the march of sin and the devil—something to enlighten the darkness around us—something to improve and amend the world. Something or other, I say, every true Christian can do, and what he can do he ought to do.

Now I know well the devil labours to make true Christians do nothing. Doing Christians are the devil’s greatest enemies. Doing Christians pull down his work, and weaken his hands. He will try hard to prevent your being a man of this character. I warn every one who has reason to hope that he is a true Christian to remember this, and to be on his guard. Listen not to the reasons which Satan puts into your heads. Satan was a liar from the beginning, and you must not let his lies prevent you doing good. Stand on your guard and be not deceived.

Satan will tell some that they are *too young* to do anything. Believe him not: that is a lie. The greatest men in the world and Church began to work, and were great, at a very early age. Alexander the Great conquered the world before he was thirty. Pitt was prime minister of England before twenty-five. It is never too soon to begin working for Christ. Yet a little while and the enemy will say, “You are too old, and it is too late.”

Satan will tell others that they *stand alone too much* to do any good. Believe him not: that is another lie. There never was a change for good or evil in the world’s history which may not be traced up to one man. Martin Luther, Mahomet, Napoleon—all are cases in point. They all rose from the ranks. They stood alone at first. They owed nothing to position or patronage. Yet see what they did! Away with the idea that numbers alone have power! It is minorities, and not majorities, that shake the world. Think of the little flock Christ left behind him. Think of the 120 believers in the upper chamber of Jerusalem, and remember what they did to the nations. And then learn what wonderful things a few resolute hearts can do.

Satan will tell others that they have no *power* to do anything. He will say, “You have no gifts, no talents, no influence. You had better sit still.” Believe him not: this also is a lie. Everybody has a certain degree of influence and weight upon earth. Some have a ton-weight, some a hundred-weight, some a pound, some an ounce, some only a grain but all have some. Everybody is continually helping forward the cause of God or the cause of the devil. Every morning you rise from your bed you go forth to gather with Christ or to scatter. Every night you lie down in that bed you have either been building the walls of Zion or helping to pull them down. There are but two parties and two sides in the world—the side of God and the side of the devil—the side of good and the side of evil. No man, woman, or child can ever be neutral, and live to themselves: one of the two sides they are always helping, whether they will or no. Grant that your gifts and powers are but a grain of sand; will you not throw that grain into the scale of God’s cause? It is the last grain that turns the scale, and the last pound that breaks the horse’s back. Grant that you have only one talent; see to it that your one talent is laid out as heartily for God as if you had a hundred. Ah, reader! it is not gifts that are necessary for doing good, but *will*. It is often the “one talent” people that are the most slow to move.

But Satan will tell some that they have *no opportunities* for doing anything—no door open on any side. Once more I say, Believe him not: this also is a great lie. Never believe that you have no opportunity of doing good, till you are cast on a desert island, and cut off from the face of mankind; never till you are the last man in the world, never till then, believe that there is no opening for doing good.

Do you ask me what you can do? I reply, There is something for every true Christian in England to do. The least and lowest, the weakest and feeblest child of God is surrounded by people to whom he may do good. Have you not got relatives and connections, husband or wife, parents or children, brothers or sisters? Have you not got friends, or companions, or fellowservants? Have you not got masters or mistresses, or labourers, or servants? Who in the world, almost, could say, No! to this question? Who but must say, Yes! If you say, Yes! then behold your opportunities of doing good. Harm or good you must do to all about you; you cannot help it. See to it that you do GOOD.

Have you not got a *tongue* to speak with? Might you not often speak a word of counsel? Might you not encourage the wavering, quicken the slothful, recall the backslider, check the profligate, reprove the worldly, advise the weak? Might you not often put in a word for God and Christ, and show your colours? Who can tell the power of “a word spoken in season?” It has often been the salvation of a soul.

Have you not the power of doing good by *your life*? You may work wonders by steady consistency and patient continuance in well-doing. You may make people think by exercising graces before them, when they stop their ears against good counsel, and cannot be reclaimed by the tongue. Patience and meekness, brotherly kindness and charity, a forbearing and forgiving spirit, a gentle,

unselfish, and considerate temper—all these have often a mighty effect in the long run. Like the constant dropping of water, they can wear away prejudices. Thousands can understand them, who cannot understand doctrine. There is such a thing as “winning without the word” (1 Peter iii. 1).

I speak of things within the reach of all who have the will to do something for God. I might say more. The field is wide, the harvest great, and the labourers few. I might speak of the good that might be done everywhere by trying to teach the ignorant, to evangelise the wicked, to promote temperance, soberness, and chastity, to encourage honesty, economy, good temper, faithfulness, diligence, and sabbath-keeping. I might speak of help that might be given to charitable and religious societies, merely by making them known. Thousands of pounds might be got for home and abroad, if only men who cannot give themselves would ask others to give.

But I forbear. I have said enough to give food for thinking. Let a man once have the will to do good, and he will soon find the way. He will find that good can be done.

A true Christian should desire to leave the world, when he dies, a better world than it was when he was born, and should give his mite to improve it, whether in money, talents, or time. Let every man on earth who hopes he is a true Christian remember this. Let every one wake up, rub his eyes, look round him, and see if he cannot do something. Let no one say, I can do nothing, unless he has tried. Let no one say he has tried, and it is no use, because he has not done everything that he wanted. There is much pride and mortified vanity in that thought. If we will do nothing unless we can do it perfectly, we shall do nothing at all. Let no one fancy he is doing no good, because he sees no immediate fruit from it. God’s time is often not our time. Duties are ours and results are God’s. But something let every true man of God try to do.

Set the Lord Jesus Christ before you, reader; and go forward in his footsteps, looking unto him. Let him be your strength, and let him be your example. “He went about doing good.” Go and do like him. You may be able to do very little: but DO WHAT YOU CAN.

WORDS FOR WOMEN.

I HAVE often wondered what Bible-readers think of one particular chapter in the New Testament. That chapter is the last chapter of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. What do they do with it? What do they get from it? What honey do they extract from its contents?

The last chapter of Romans is singularly full of names. The first fifteen verses are almost entirely taken up with greetings to persons of whom we know little or nothing. Many, I fear, are tempted to pass over them with a hasty glance, like the advertisement sheet of a newspaper, and to class them with the first chapter of Chronicles. "This is a barren land," they say to themselves; "there is little or nothing to be learned here."

Now, I believe that this way of viewing the last chapter of Romans is a great mistake. I believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and that every chapter is useful and profitable. I am one of those old-fashioned people who firmly hold that everything in the Bible is inspired. I have faith to believe that the hand of God is in the catalogues of Chronicles as well as in Rom. viii., or John xiv., xv., xvi., xvii. Believing this, I feel no doubt that there is a great lesson in Rom. xvi., and I will try to show what it is.

The chapter I have mentioned appears to me to contain a *special lesson for women*. The important position that women occupy in the Church of Christ—the wide field of real, though unobtrusive, usefulness that lies before them, if they will enter on it—the good service that they can do for Christ, if they have a mind—all these things seem, to my eyes, to stand out in the chapter, as if written with a sunbeam. I will proceed to show what I mean.

Observe, for one thing, that out of twenty-eight persons whom St. Paul names in concluding this precious Epistle, no less than eleven, if not twelve, are women.

Observe, for another thing, the manner in which St. Paul speaks of these women. He says of Phebe that she was "a servant of the Church" and "a succourer of himself." He says of Priscilla that she was his "helper in Christ Jesus"—of Mary, that she "bestowed much labour on him"—of Tryphena and Tryphosa, that they "laboured in the Lord" and of Persis, that she "laboured much in the Lord."

Now, I say there is much in all this to make us think. St. Paul was an apostle—a man chosen and called by Christ himself—a man eminently useful in his generation—a man who possessed extraordinary gifts and singular fitness for his work—a man who seemed able, if any one ever was, to stand alone and do without the help of others; yet see how this great apostle openly declares his obligation to a few weak women? See how he is not ashamed to publish to the world that they had strengthened his hands and refreshed his spirit, and helped

him forward in his work. Let every woman that reads this chapter mark these things, and inwardly digest them.

I will write plainly the thoughts that come across my mind, while I read of Phebe and her sisters in Rom. xvi. I think how wide is the field of usefulness which is open to professing Christian women: and I wish every Christian woman who may read this paper to lay it to heart. I say, then, that every woman may be most useful, if her heart is inclined to it. Every woman may do much, if only she is determined, and, like the Jews in Nehemiah's time, has "a mind to work."

I would not be mistaken in saying this. I am not speaking of public work. All cannot be district visitors. All cannot teach schools, and direct Bible classes. All have not the gifts of Mrs. Stevens and Mrs. Fry. All cannot write like Hannah More and Elizabeth Fry. Let those who have time, and gifts, and a clear call, give themselves to such work. But I speak of usefulness that all women can attain to—mothers with large families, wives with home engagements, daughters who must consult their parents' wishes rather than their own: and it is of them I say that every woman can do much.

I cannot away with the common notion that great usefulness is for men only, and not for women. Some women, I fear, come into this notion only too readily. I am afraid there is in some minds a kind of proud slothfulness that assumes the name of *humility*, and keeps people idle. Against this false humility let us always be on our guard.

A consistent Christian woman brings God before the eyes of those around her all the week long, whether they like it or not. She is "an epistle" that none can help reading.

It should never be forgotten that it is not preaching alone that moves and influences men. There is something to be done, as the Apostle Peter reminds us, "without the word" (1 Peter iii. 1), and none have the opportunity of doing good so much in this way as women. Humanly speaking, the salvation of a household often depends upon the women.

To bring men, for example, to attend the means of grace, and regularly hear the Gospel, is one grand object that a true minister sets before him. Every minister who "does the work of an evangelist" must know how difficult it is to get some people to attend. There are always obstacles raised and objections started. If the men come one month, they do not come the next. It reminds one of our Lord's expression, "compelling them to come in." And what is the reason of this? Often, far too often, I firmly believe, the simple account is discouragement from wife or mother at home.

If women ask me in what way they can be useful, I answer, unhesitatingly and decidedly, first and foremost, by encouraging religion at home. Show your father, or husband, or brother, that you take a pleasure in seeing him attend to his soul. Let your manner and your words show him plainly that you want to help him forward and not keep him back. Let your household arrangements be

so managed that he shall see you will make any sacrifice rather than keep him from the house of God.

The fire of good inclination often burns very faintly in the conscience of a hardworking man. Let his wife or mother see that she stir and feed it. Let her beware lest she be a wet blanket to put it out. The road of religion is a rough and up-hill journey. Let her strive to take up every stumbling-block, so far as in her lies. The cup of self-denial is a bitter one to weary flesh and blood. Let her labour, as far as possible, to make it sweet.

But, after all, there are a hundred little ways in which a woman can be useful in her own home, of which time would not allow me to speak particularly. Much is to be done by kind tempers, by gentle words, by meekness, by patience, by unselfishness, by attention in little things, by considerateness about little peculiarities, by thoughtfulness about little wants, by bearing with infirmities, and by “not answering again.” All these things tell in the long run. These are the constant dropping which can wear away the stone, the daily returning habits which influence men’s minds. Whatever women may fancy, men’s character is exceedingly influenced by their homes. Tell me the general character of a man’s home, and I generally know something of the man.

It is a true saying, and a sad one, “Cold homes make full public-houses.” I firmly believe that disorder, unkindness, and ill-temper at home drive many a working man into bad company, and make him seek relief in drinking, or frivolous amusements. I have sometimes gone into the homes of poor men late in the evening, and found everything in confusion just before the husband came in from work—children dirty, unfed, and crying—nothing ready, nothing comfortable, nothing in its place. In such a case, I cannot wonder if the husband turns out ill. I am persuaded the true account of many a poor sot I see is just this—“made a drunkard by his wife.”

If a woman would be useful, let her strive to make her home a happy one. Whether she be mother, wife, or daughter, let her make this her aim, that all the members of the family shall say, “There is no place like home.”

Let her strive to make the evenings of the day pleasant. It is the time when most men are wearied and worn with the labour of the day. A wise woman will endeavour to have a stock of cheerfulness in reserve for that time. Ah! these may seem small things to some readers. But you have much to learn of human nature, if you do not know the difference it makes to a tired husband, father, or son, if he finds a cheerful, pleasant, smiling face at home.

If a woman would be useful, let her look well to her home duties. Whatever place she may fill in a family, let her resolve that by God’s help, she will fill it well. I count it nothing for a woman to be active out of doors, however good her work may be, if she does not at the same time, glorify God at home. Home is a woman’s peculiar sphere, and let home, therefore, have her first attention. She ought to endeavour to keep all the machinery of the family in perfect order. She must try to help, to counsel, to restrain, to direct, according as need may require. She ought to make her husband, or father, or son, or brother feel that all is going

on well in his absence—a post for everyone, and everyone at his post. There are a hundred little things in every family which need daily attending to, and none can attend to them so well as women. Little as they are they can harass and vex a man’s mind; and if he can be freed from their burden by a woman’s thoughtfulness, it is no little gain to the peaceful working of the family. The scratch of a pin may be a trifle, but it can keep an elephant awake. Paul mentions it as a special duty of a woman, that she should “guide the house.” It is said of the excellent woman in Proverbs, that the heart of her husband “doth safely trust her”—he knows that all is going on well while his back is turned. It is a high character that is given of Sarah, when Abraham could reply at once to the inquiry, “Where is Sarah?”—“Behold, in the tent.”

If a woman would be useful at home, let her watch well her opportunities of doing good. If she would do good to the soul of husband, father, or brother, let her pray continually for the spirit of wisdom and discretion. Of all people she ought to remember that there is “a time to be silent,” as well as “a time to speak,” and to know the one from the other. She must not appear to set herself up as a teacher of men. There is a foolish pride about a man that makes him kick at the idea of a woman showing him anything he ought to know; and a woman who would do good must never forget that. She must try to win, not to compel; she must endeavour to draw, not to drive. A wife would be acting very foolishly who began preaching the Gospel to her husband when he came in tired, wet, and hungry, without allowing him to rest, to clean himself, or to get refreshed. A sister would find her advice little valued by her brother who thought it proper to give it before company. A mother would be most unwise who gave her sons a severe lecture on the sin of drunkenness at the very moment when they came home intoxicated. Abigail showed her wisdom in not speaking to Nabal while he was full of drink; she knew that her words would be wasted on him, and waited till the morning. The wife of Samson might have known she would lose her hold on her husband’s affections by teasing and vexing him in the days of the marriage feast. Esther watched her opportunity for speaking to her husband; she waited for the door to be made open for presenting her petition, and so gained her end. The saying of Solomon should never be forgotten: “A word spoken in season, how good is it!”

A woman who would be useful in her own home must be careful to encourage the smallest beginnings of religion in those about her. The first actings of grace are often exceedingly small, so small as to escape observation. The first growth of gracious inclination in a soul is often very slow, very easily checked; and if checked, perhaps retarded for years. No man can tell the importance of cherishing the first movings and drawings of the heart towards God. It may be only a willingness to hear, or a readiness to join in prayer, or a different treatment of the Bible; and yet this may be the first step that will lead on at last to a close walk with God. Blessed are those women who lend a helping hand at such a turning-point in a soul’s history, and take up even the smallest stumbling-block out of its way? Coldness and want of sympathy often throw the inquiring

soul back. Happy is the man who has any near him to say, like Leah and Rachel, “Whatsoever the Lord hath said unto thee, do.”

I bring these things forward as seeds of thought. I hope that all women who read them will consider and think them over. I want them to understand how much they can do, how much depends on them, and how great is their responsibility in the sight of God.

Of course it would be easy to add to this paper. I might speak of the vast field of usefulness which is open to women in the training of children. It is not too much to say that the first seven years of life depend entirely on mothers and nurses. The first seven years contain the foundation of character for life. The first seven years of young England are in the hands of women!

I might speak of what women may do in the matter of visiting the poor and ministering to the sick. There are hundreds of cases continually arising in which a woman is a far more suitable visitor than a man. She need not put on a peculiar dress, or call herself by a Roman Catholic name. She has only to go about, in the spirit of her Saviour, with kindness on her lips, gentleness in her ways, and the Bible in her hands, and the good that she may do is quite incalculable. Happy indeed is that parish where there are Christian women who “go about doing good.” Happy is that minister who has such helpers.

I conclude this paper by asking any woman who is not convinced by what I say to take up the Bible and run her eye over the histories it contains. If she wants proof of the influence that women have in their hands, let her notice how women leave their marks at almost every step in God’s Word. Their influence, I freely grant, has not always been for good. But influence they have had, and influence they will have, as long as the world stands.

Eve in the garden of Eden, the daughters of men before the Flood, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Rachel, Potiphar’s wife, Miriam, Pharaoh’s daughter, Jethro’s daughter, Rahab, Jael, Deborah, Jephthah’s daughter, Delilah, Ruth, Hannah, Abigail, Michal, Bathsheba, Jezebel, Athaliah, Jehoshabeath, Belshazzar’s mother, Elisabeth, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, Martha and Mary, Sapphira, Dorcas, Lois, Eunice—who that reads the Bible is not familiar with these names? Who can forget how they come up at almost every turn, and have a place and a portion in almost every story? To say, in the face of these names, that women have no influence and are of no importance, is simply absurd. Let them know that they have a mighty influence, and let them use it for good. What the oil is to the machinery, what the whetstone is to the scythe, what the fire is to the steam-engine, what the stream is to the water-wheel, all this the woman may be to the man. Let her remember it, and strive daily to do good.

LESSONS FROM NERO'S HOUSEHOLD.

LESSONS from Nero's household! How strange that sounds. The master of that household was a bad man, if ever there was one. Nero, the Emperor of Rome, was a very proverb for cruelty, profligacy, tyranny, and wickedness of every description. Yet this is the man to whose household the Bible sends us for instruction!

Lessons from Nero's household! It seems almost incredible. In the households of Abraham, or Moses, or Samuel, or Daniel, or Sergius Paulus, or Gaius, or Stephanus—in such houses we might well expect there was something to be learned. But who would ever dream of lessons from the household of the worst emperor that ever ruled over Imperial Rome?

But what are these lessons? and where are they to be found? They are to be found at the end of one of St. Paul's Epistles. They form almost the last words which the great Apostle of the Gentiles wrote to his beloved Philippian church when he was a prisoner at Rome. He had probably dipped his pen in the ink for the last time when he put down those simple words, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household" (Phil. iv. 22).

I frankly confess that I have long read that verse with deep interest. I am one of those old-fashioned people who believe that every word of Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and that every verse is full of instruction, if we had only eyes to see it. I see in the verse before us two weighty lessons, which I should like to impress on every reader's mind. Who these saints were we are not told. Their names, their rank, their history, their difficulties, their work, their lives, their deaths, all are completely hidden from our eyes, and we shall know nothing more till the last day. We only know that there were "saints" in Nero's "household," and that they were courteous saints. Out of these two facts we will draw two lessons.

We see them, for one thing, in Nero's household, the *almighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ*. He could enable people to be Christians even in Nero's palace. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, which he planted in their hearts, he could give them power to be "saints" in the most unfavourable position that mind can conceive. With the Lord Jesus nothing is impossible; nothing is too hard for Christ's grace.

There is something to my mind most important in this lesson. It ought to come home with power to all who live in great towns. It ought to ring in their ears like a trumpet every day they live. It is possible to be a saint in a great city!

Great cities and towns, as a general rule, are most unfavourable places to a man's soul. Those who live in London, Manchester, Liverpool, or Glasgow, know that very well. The whirl of business in which every one seems to move, the incessant hurry to be rich in which all seem to be rushing along, the intense struggle to "get on," which seems to be the absorbing thought in everybody's mind—all this seems to make religion nearly an impossibility. Let a believer walk through Cheapside, or the Strand, in an afternoon—let him mark the

careworn faces that he will meet at every step—faces in which money, money—business, business—is so plain that you could almost fancy you saw it—and if he does not ask himself, “How can the soul thrive here?” I shall be much surprised.

Now, if this be true of towns in Christian countries, what must be said of towns in heathen lands? What can we imagine more trying to the soul than the position of a Christian at Rome?

A believer at Rome would have all those trials which are the portion of the household of faith in every age—the trials which you and I find it so hard to bear—an evil heart, an ensnaring world, and a busy devil.

But a believer at Rome would have trials over and above these, of which you and I, living in quiet England, by God’s mercy, know nothing.

He would live in a city where he might expect persecution any day, and where the name of Christ was scarcely known, and if known despised.

He would live in a city where idolatry was the fashion, where the temples of false gods would meet his eye on every side, where the mere fact of not bowing down to dumb idols would be an unusual thing.

He would live in a city where the gospel standard of morality was utterly sneered at; where the excellence of truth, purity, meekness, and gentleness would be unknown.

And yet, in spite of all this, God had a people at Rome. Here, in the midst of the darkest superstition and idolatry—here, in the midst of immorality and profligacy, the grace of God was proved all-powerful. Even here there was a Church which could value the longest epistle Paul ever wrote. Even here there were “saints in Nero’s household.”

Can any one of us imagine the difficulties of a Christian in Nero’s household? I suspect not. I believe that in a Christian country like this, amidst all the insensible restraints and benefits of Scriptural religion, we can scarcely have the faintest conception of a heathen emperor’s household eighteen hundred years ago.

We should have seen justice, purity, and truth daily trodden under foot. We should have had around us hundreds who neither knew nor valued the sixth and seventh commandments. Our eyes would have been saddened by fearful sights, and our ears tortured by vile and defiling words. And even if our souls escaped damage, our lives and liberty would have been in constant peril. We might have felt every morning when we rose from our beds, “There is but a step between me and death.” Yet even in a position like this the grace of God triumphed. By the grace of God there were saints even in Nero’s household.

The grace of God can make a man a Christian anywhere, in any position, under any circumstances, however unfavourable those circumstances may seem to be; and not only make him, but keep him so too. It can give him power to follow the Lord alone, while all around him are following sin and the world. It did so for Daniel at Babylon, for Obadiah in Ahab’s court, for Lot in the midst of Sodom and Gomorrah, and for the saints in Nero’s household.

It can enable a man to serve God amidst a family of ungodly relations. It can call him out and make him a witness for Christ, while all his kindred are walking in the broad way. It did so for Jonathan the son of Saul, for Abigail the wife of Nabal, for Josiah the son of Amon.

It can enable a man to serve God in the most dangerous professions. It can keep him unspotted, while all around him are defiled. It did so for Cornelius the centurion in the Roman army, and for Zenas the lawyer.

I know the thought that is in many hearts. I know you fancy your position in life prevents your being a decided Christian. You say to yourself, “Had I a different master, or a different dwelling, different fellow-servants, or different friends, a different position in life, or different children, then I would serve the Lord.” I warn you against this delusion. I tell you, it is not change of condition that you want, but grace.

It is not learning, nor money, nor the favour of the rich, nor the company of the saints, nor plenty of privileges; it is none of these things that makes a Christian. It is the grace of God that is wanted, and nothing else. It is the work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost in the soul.

When the Spirit comes into a man’s heart, he will be a Christian, notwithstanding any disadvantages. I defy the world, the flesh, and the devil, to keep them back. He will follow Christ, glorify God, and be saved in spite of them all.

Till the Spirit comes into a man’s heart, he will never be a Christian, however great his privileges. No! not though he be servant to a prophet: Gehazi served Elisha. No! not though he be companion to a man after God’s own heart: Joab was always with David. No! not though he be an apostle and a friend of apostles: Demas went about with Paul, and Judas followed Christ. Without grace no man ever will serve the Lord.

It is grace, grace, nothing but grace, that makes a Christian. You that would be saved remember this. Let this be your first step, your starting-point—Come to the Lord Jesus Christ and ask for grace.

After studying human nature for twenty-four years as a minister, I feel that I ought to know something of it. I believe that one grand reason why many never take up decided religion is a dread of the difficulties connected with it. You say to yourselves, “It is no use; I never can alter; I never can break off from my old ways; I never shall be saved.” I charge you, and entreat you, not to give way to such notions. I tell you that the grace of God can do anything. With grace nothing is impossible.

I have learned never to despair of any one as long as he lives, and is within the reach of the Gospel. I may see no change in many at present. I may die, and see little or nothing done. But still I will hope on. I shall hope to meet in glory, at Christ’s appearing, many of those who now walk in the broad way. They may be far off, but grace can yet bring them in; they may seem hardened, but grace can make them tender as a weaned child.

I do not despair of hearing that the most careless have learned that “one thing is needful”—the most formal, that baptism and church-membership are

useless unless a man becomes a new creature—the most self-righteous, that other foundation but Jesus no man can lay—the most scoffing, to delight in nothing so much as prayer.

I cannot despair with this verse of Scripture before me. I read this little sentence. I remember what Rome was. I remember what Nero was, and yet I see what grace can do. So long as I live I must and will hope on.

We see, for another thing, in Nero's household, a *bright example of Christian courtesy*. Many as the trials of these saints must have been, countless as their daily vexations and distractions, they did not forget to think of others. They had large and sympathising hearts. They remembered their brethren and sisters at Philippi, though, perhaps, they had never seen them in the flesh. And so, when they heard that the great Apostle of the Gentiles was writing to the Philippian church, they took care to send a kind message: "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household."

There is something to my mind inexpressibly beautiful in this little message. It gives me a most pleasant idea of the ways and manners of the early Christians. It shows me that there was nothing rough, and hard, and stern, and harsh, and austere about their Christianity. Oh, no! They were a feeling, warm-hearted, loving, genial, considerate people. They were not entirely taken up with themselves and their own duties, crosses, conflicts, and trials. They could think of others.

Courtesy and consideration for others are Christian graces which receive far less attention than they ought to have. All like to be remembered by others, even if it is only in the postscript of a letter. None like to be altogether forgotten. "Little attentions," as people call them, are anything but little in reality; and that man knows little of human nature who fancies they are of no importance. None are above being pleased by them, whatever they may profess to the contrary. Courtesy, and civility, and manners may doubtless be made too much of; but, for all that, they are not to be despised. They are everything with some, and they are something with all. The Christians of the New Testament day did not despise them, neither should we.

I fear there is a fault among Christians in this matter. Some behave in such a manner that one might fancy they thought it a Christian duty to be rude. But they have utterly mistaken the spirit of the Gospel when they act so; and I tell them so now.

There is no true religion in rudeness. A man who is led by the Spirit ought to be more courteous and polite than others. "What do I more than others?" should be his question. Certainly not, "What do I less?" He will have within him the roots of all true courtesy—humility and charity. He will be lowly in his own eyes, willing to count every one better than himself, and more worthy of honour, attention, and respect. He will be ready to take the lowest place, if need be. He will not be always thinking of self, self's ways, self's desires, and self's wishes; his great aim will be to make others comfortable and happy. Selfishness and pride are the two chief enemies of courtesy, and they are feelings to which a real

Christian should feel ashamed to give way. Reader, depend upon it, to be uncivil and un courteous is no mark of grace.

Do we seek for examples of courtesy and considerateness in the Bible? Let us study the conduct of Abraham, as recorded in Gen. xiii. See how he gives Lot the choice of the land:—"If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." Lot was a much younger man than himself, and could have found no fault if he had been left to take what Abraham rejected. Lot had no promise of the land for his inheritance, and had received no special marks of God's favour. Yet Abraham treats Lot as the most deserving of the two, declares himself willing to make any sacrifice, and is ready to make any arrangements by which peace and good feeling may be kept up between them. And he lost nothing by it at last. God loves to honour practical charity and humility.

Do we ask for another example of courtesy? Let us study the character of the Apostle Paul. Let us mark how he frequently sends kind messages to individuals in the epistles that he writes to the churches. Amidst the constant thought and attention which the care of churches demanded—with all the anxieties of doctrinal and practical questions coming daily upon him—troubled on one side by Corinthian immorality, on another by Galatian false teaching, on a third by Hebrew scruples—who, I say, would have expected an apostle to remember so many persons, and to have sent them so many kind messages as are recorded in the last chapter of the Epistle to the Romans? And he reaped his reward. No wonder that Christians loved him tenderly, when they saw such largeness and sympathy of heart. No wonder that a great writer has called him "the most finished gentleman" the world has ever seen—the most complete combination of charity and humility.

I wish, with all my heart, that this subject received more attention than it does from the churches of Christ in the present day. I wish that Christians thought more of "adorning their doctrine," and making their religion lovely, beautiful, and attractive in the eyes of men.

I fear, even now, that many will think this lesson from Nero's household a matter of small importance. I fear that some reader is saying in his heart, "What waste of space is this! How much better to speak to us about inspiration or justification—about election, or grace, or the Millennium, or unfulfilled prophecy! Who knows not such things as these?" Reader, if this be your thought, I am sorry for you. I think you have much yet to learn.

I call nothing *little* in religion which may be practised every hour of the day. From morning to night there is always room for exercising Christian courtesy and consideration.

I call nothing *little* which tends to make religion more beautiful in the eyes of the world. Little arrangements make all the difference in the appearance of a room; little adornments make all the difference in the looks of a bride; little attentions make all the difference in the comfort a master feels in a servant. I

am very jealous for my Master's cause. Anything, anything, to make it more lovely before man!

Cease, I beseech you, to think these things matters of little importance. The practice of them costs little, but the value of them, in the long run, is very great. A kindness of manner and demeanour—a readiness to sympathise with others, to weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice—a forwardness to offer assistance when it seems likely to be wanted—a kind message in time of trouble, or a kind inquiry in time of sickness—all these may seem very small matters, but they are not so small as you think. They are not forgotten. They tend to increase your influence; they help to open a door of usefulness; they make people more willing to hear what you have got to say for your Master's cause. When people see that you care for them, they are more disposed to care for you.

Reader, study to be courteous and considerate. Pray for grace to be so. No man is so by nature. Few children can shut a door behind them without being desired, or say “if you please” unbidden, or “thank you” without being taught. By nature we are all for ourselves.

I leave the subject now to calm consideration. Circumstances, no doubt, make a difference. Early habits, peculiarity of temperament, a solitary life, forgetfulness of mind—all these are things that will have an influence. It seems more easy to some people to be courteous than it does to others. But that all professing Christians should aim at courtesy, I am fully persuaded. Well indeed would it be for the cause of Christ if all Christians walked in the steps I have tried to trace in this paper, and were like the “saints in Nero's household.”

BE CONTENT.

I.

THE words which head this paper are soon spoken, and often cost the speaker very little. Nothing is cheaper than good advice. Everybody fancies he can give his neighbour good counsel, and tell him exactly what he ought to do.

Yet to practise the lesson which heads this paper is very hard. To talk of contentment in the day of health and prosperity is easy enough; but to be content in the midst of poverty, sickness, trouble, disappointments, and losses, is a state of mind to which very few can attain.

Let us turn to the Bible and see how it treats this great duty of contentment. Let us mark how the great Apostle of the Gentiles speaks when he would persuade the Hebrew Christians to be content. He backs up his injunction by a beautiful motive. He does not say nakedly, "Be content;" he adds words which would ring in the ears of all who read his letter, and nerve their hearts for a struggle: "Be content," he says, "with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Reader, I see things in this golden sentence, which, I venture to think, deserve special notice. Give me your attention for a few minutes, and we will try to find out what they are.

1. Let us first examine *the precept which St. Paul gives us*—"Be content with such things as ye have."

These words are very simple. A little child might easily understand them. They contain no high doctrine; they involve no deep metaphysical question; and yet, simple as they are, the duty which these words enjoin on us is one of the highest practical importance to all classes.

Contentment is one of the rarest graces. Like all precious things, it is most uncommon. The old Puritan divine, who wrote a book about it, did well to call his book "The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment." An Athenian philosopher is said to have gone into the market-place at midday with a lantern, in order to find out an honest man. I think he would have found it equally difficult to find one quite contented.

The fallen angels had heaven itself to dwell in, before they fell, and the immediate presence and favour of God; but they were not content. Adam and Eve had the garden of Eden to live in, with a free grant of everything in it excepting one tree; but they were not content. Ahab had his throne and kingdom, but so long as Naboth's vineyard was not his, he was not content. Hainan was the chief favourite of the Persian king; but, so long as Mordecai sat at the gate, he was not content.

It is just the same everywhere in the present day. Murmuring, dissatisfaction, discontent with what we have, meet us at every turn. To say, with Jacob,

“I have enough,” seems flatly contrary to the grain of human nature. To say, “I want more,” seems the mother tongue of every child of Adam. Our little ones around our family hearths are daily illustrations of the truth of what I am saying. They learn to ask for “more” much sooner than they learn to be satisfied. They are far more ready to cry for what they want, than to say “thank you” when they have got it.

There are few readers of this very paper, I will venture to say, who do not want something or other different from what they have—something more or something less. What you have does not seem so good as what you have not. If you only had this or that thing granted, you fancy you would be quite happy.

Hear now with what power St. Paul’s direction ought to come to all our consciences: “Be content,” he says, “with such things as ye have,” not with such things as ye once used to have—not with such things as ye hope to have—but with such things as ye have now. With such things, whatever they may be, we are to be content—with such a dwelling, such a position, such health, such income, such work, such circumstances as we have, we are to be content.

Reader, a spirit of this kind is the secret of a light heart and an easy mind. Few, I am afraid, have the least idea what a short cut to happiness it is to be content.

To be content is to be *rich* and well off. He is the rich man who has no wants, and requires no more. I ask not what his income may be. A man may be rich in a cottage and poor in a palace.

To be content is to be *independent*. He is the independent man who hangs on no created things for comfort, and has God for his portion.

Such a man is the only one who is always happy. Nothing can come amiss or go wrong with such a man. Afflictions will not shake him, and sickness will not disturb his peace. He can gather grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles, for he can get good out of evil. Like Paul and Silas, he will sing in prison, with his feet fast in the stocks. Like Peter, he will sleep quietly in prospect of death, the very night before his execution. Like Job, he will bless the Lord, even when stripped of all his comforts.

Ah! reader, if you would be truly happy (who does not want this?) seek it where alone it can be found. Seek it not in money, seek it not in pleasure, nor in friends, nor in learning. Seek it in having a will in perfect harmony with the will of God. Seek it in studying to be content.

You may say, It is fine talking: how can we be always content in such a world! I answer, that you need to cast away your pride, and know your deserts, in order to be thankful in any condition. If men really knew that they deserve nothing, and are debtors to God’s mercy every day, they would soon cease to complain.

You may say, perhaps, that you have such crosses, and trials, and troubles, that it is impossible to be content. I answer, that you would do well to remember your ignorance. Do *you* know best what is good for you, or does God? Are you wiser than He?

The things you want might ruin your soul. The things you have lost might have poisoned you. Remember, Rachel must needs have children, and she had them and died. Lot must needs live near Sodom, and all his goods were burned. Let these things sink down into your heart.

2. Let us, in the second place, examine *the ground on which St. Paul builds his precept*. That ground is one single text of Scripture.

It is striking to observe what a small foundation the apostle seems to lay down, when he bids us be content. He holds out no promise of earthly good things and temporal rewards. He simply quotes a verse of God's word. The Master hath spoken. "He hath said."

It is striking, beside this, to observe that the text he quotes was not originally addressed to the Hebrew Christians, but to Joshua; and yet St. Paul applies it to them. This shows that Bible promises are the common property of all believers. All have a right and title to them. All believers make one mystical body; and in hundreds of cases that which was spoken to one may be fairly used by all.

But the main point I want to impress on men's minds is this: that we ought to make the texts and promises of the Bible our refuge in time of trouble, and the fountain of our soul's comfort.

When St. Paul wanted to enforce a grace and recommend a duty, he quoted a text. When you and I would give a reason for our hope, or when we feel that we need strength and consolation, we must go to our Bibles, and try to find out suitable texts. The lawyer uses old cases and decisions when he pleads his cause. "Such a judge has said such a thing, and therefore," he argues, "it is a settled point." The soldier on the battle-field takes up certain positions, and does certain things; and if you ask him why, he will say, "I have such and such orders from my general, and I obey them."

The true Christian must always use his Bible in like manner. The Bible must be his book of reference and precedents. The Bible must be to him his captain's orders. If any one asks him why he thinks as he does, lives as he does, feels as he does, all he has need to reply is, "God has spoken to such an effect: I have my orders, and that is enough."

Reader, I know not whether I make the point clear, but it is one which, simple as it seems, is of great practical importance. I want you to see the place and office of the Bible, and the unspeakable importance of knowing it well, and being acquainted with its contents. I want you to arm yourself with texts and verses of the Bible fastened down in your memory, to read so as to remember, and to remember so as to use what you read.

You and I have trouble and sorrow before us: it needs no prophetic eye to see that. Sickesses, deaths, partings, separations, disappointments, are sure to come. What is to sustain us in the days of darkness, which are many? Nothing so able to do it as texts out of the Bible.

You and I, in all probability, may lie for months on a bed of sickness. Heavy days and weary nights, an aching body, and an enfeebled mind, may make life

a burden. And what will support us? Nothing is likely to cheer and sustain us so much as verses out of the Bible.

You and I have death to look forward to. There will be friends to be left, home to be given up, the grave to be visited, an unknown world to be entered, and the last judgment after all. And what will sustain and comfort us when our last moments draw nigh? Nothing, I firmly believe, is so able to help our heart in that solemn hour as texts out of the Bible.

I want men to fill their minds with passages of Scripture while they are well and strong, that they may have sure help in the day of need. I want them to be diligent in studying their Bibles, and becoming familiar with their contents, in order that the grand old Book may stand by them and talk with them when all earthly friends fail.

II.

From the bottom of my heart I pity that man who never reads his Bible. I wonder whence he expects to draw his consolation by-and-by. I do implore him to change his plan, and to change it without delay. Cardinal Wolsey said on his death-bed, "If I had served my God half as well as I have served my king, he would not have left me in my trouble." I fear it will be said of many, one day, "If they had read their Bibles as diligently as they read their newspapers, they would not have been devoid of consolation when they needed it most."

The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost is the only magazine of consolation. Without it we have nothing to depend on; "our feet will slide in due time" (Deut. xxxii. 35). With it we are like those who stand on a rock. That man is ready for anything who has got a firm hold of God's promises.

Once more, then, I say to every reader, arm yourself with a thorough knowledge of God's word. Read it, and be able to say, "I have hope, because it is thus and thus written; I am not afraid, because it is thus and thus written." Happy is that soul who can say with Job, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job xxiii. 12).

Let us examine, in the last place, *the particular text St. Paul quotes* in enforcing the duty of contentment. He tells the Hebrews, "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

It matters little to what person in the Trinity we ascribe these words, whether to Father, Son, or Holy Ghost. It all comes to the same in the end. They all are engaged to save man in the covenant of grace. Each of the three Persons says, as the other two, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

There is great *sweetness* in this peculiar promise. It deserves close attention. God says to every man or woman, who is willing to commit his or her soul to the mercy that is in Christ, "I will never leave thee, and never forsake thee." I, the eternal Father, the mighty God, the King of kings, "will never leave thee."

The English language fails to give the full meaning of the Greek. It implies, “never—no never—no, nor ever!”

Now, if I know anything of this world, it is a world of “leaving, forsaking, parting, separation, failure, and disappointment.” Think how immense the comfort of finding something that will never leave nor fail.

Earthly good things leave us. Health, money, property, friendship, all make themselves wings and flee away. They are here today, and gone to-morrow. But God says, “I will never leave thee.”

“We leave one another. We grow up in families full of affections and tender feelings, and then we are all thoroughly scattered. One follows his calling or profession one way, and another in another. We go north and south, and east and west, and perhaps meet no more. We meet our nearest friends and relations only at rare intervals, and then to part again. But God says, “I will never leave thee.”

We are left by those we love. They die and diminish, and become fewer and fewer every year. The more lovely—like flowers—the more frail, and delicate, and short-lived, they seem to be. But God says, “I will never leave thee.”

Separation is the universal law every where, except between Christ and his people. Death and failure stamp every other thing; but there is none in the love of God to believers.

The closest relation on earth—the marriage bond—has an end. To use the words of the Prayer-book service, it is only “till death us do part.” But the relation between Christ and the sinner that trusts in him never ends. It lives when the body dies. It lives when flesh and heart fail. Once begun, it never withers. It is only made brighter and stronger by the grave. “I am persuaded,” says St. Paul, “that neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. viii. 38, 39).

But this is not all. There is a peculiar depth of wisdom in the words, “I will never leave nor forsake.” Observe, God does not say, “My people shall always have pleasant things; they shall always be fed in green pastures, and have no trials— or trials very short and few.” He neither says so, nor does he appoint such a lot to his people. On the contrary, he sends them affliction and chastisement. He tries them by suffering. He purifies them by sorrow. He exercises their faith by disappointments. But still, in all these things he promises, “I will never leave nor forsake.”

Let every believer grasp these words, and store them up in his heart. Keep them ready, and have them fresh in your memory; you will want them one day. The Philistines will be upon you; the hand of sickness will lay you low; the king of terror will draw near: the valley of the shadow of death will open up before your eyes. Then comes the hour when you will find nothing so comforting as a text like this—nothing so cheering as a realising sense of God’s companionship.

Stick to that word “*never*.” It is worth its weight in gold. Cling to it as a drowning man clings to a rope. Grasp it firmly, as a soldier attacked on all sides grasps his sword. God has said, and will stand to it, “I will never leave thee.”

“*Never!*” Though your heart often faints, and you are sick of self, and your many failures and infirmities: even then the promise will not fail.

“*Never!*” Though the devil whispers, I shall have you at last. Yet a little time and your faith will fail, and you will be mine. Even then God will keep his word.

“*Never!*” Though waves of trouble go over your head, and all hope seems taken away. Even then the word of God will stand.

“*Never!*” When the cold chill of death is creeping over you, and friends can do no more, and you are starting on that journey from which there is no return. Even then Christ will not forsake you.

“*Never!*” When the day of judgment comes, and the books are opened, and the dead are rising from their graves, and eternity is beginning. Even then the promise will bear all your weight. Christ will not leave his hold on your soul.

Oh, believing reader, trust in the Lord for ever, for he says, “I will never leave you.” Lean back all your weight upon him: do not be afraid. Glory in his promise. Rejoice in the strength of your consolation. You may say boldly, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear.”

I conclude this paper with three practical remarks. Consider them well, reader, and lay them to heart:—

(1.) Let me tell you *why there is so little contentment in the world*. The simple answer is, because there is so little grace, and true religion. Few know their own sin; few feel their desert; and so few are content with such things as they have. Humility, self-knowledge, a clear sight of our own utter vileness and corruption, these are the true roots of contentment.

(2.) Let me show you, secondly, *what you should do*, if you would be content. You must know your own heart, seek God for your portion, take Christ for your Saviour, and use God’s word for your daily food.

Contentment is not to be learned at the feet of Gamaliel, but at the feet of Jesus Christ. He who has God for his friend and heaven for his home can wait for his good things, and be content with little here below.

(3.) Let me tell you, lastly, that *there is one thing with which we ought never to be content*. That thing is a little religion, a little faith, a little hope, and a little grace. Let us never sit down satisfied with a little of these things. On the contrary, let us seek them more and more.

When Alexander the Great visited the Greek philosopher Diogenes, he asked him if there was anything that he wanted and he could give him. He got this short answer: “I want nothing but that you should stand from between me and the sun.” Let the spirit of that answer run through our religion. One thing there is which should never satisfy and content us, and that is, “anything that stands between our souls and Christ.”

“CERTAINLY I WILL BE WITH THEE.”

EXODUS III. 10–12.

THE words which head this paper are well known to all Bible readers. They were spoken by God to Moses in the day when he appeared to him in the burning bush.

At the time when they were spoken, the children of Israel were suffering hard bondage in Egypt. They were slaves under the tyrannical dominion of Pharaoh, King of Egypt—oppressed, afflicted, and trampled in the dust. Yet the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had not forgotten his people. At the time appointed, he summoned Moses in the wilderness of Horeb to go back to Egypt and deliver his brethren from captivity. “Behold,” he said, “the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”

But Moses was a man of like passions with ourselves. He saw the immense difficulties of the work proposed to him, and his first thought was to flinch and draw back. Forty years before he had been only too forward. He had thought to relieve his brethren by carnal weapons, and in his zeal had killed an Egyptian. At the end of forty years he is ready to go into the other extreme. Age has cooled down that fiery heart, and in solitary communion with God he has learned his own weakness, and distrusts himself. “Who am I,” he cries, “that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” At once he is cheered by a gracious promise, which deserves to be written in letters of gold, and remembered by all God’s people—“Certainly I will be with thee.” That promise turned the scale.

Now there are three lessons contained in the passage, which all who desire to be true Christians will do well to remember. Let me try in a few words to explain what these lessons are.

(1.) We learn, first of all, *what weak instruments* God sometimes uses to carry on his work in the world.

The children of Israel had to be delivered from the land of Egypt—redeemed from the hand of Pharaoh, and brought into the land of Canaan. This was a mighty work; indeed, a work surrounded with such immense difficulties, that to the eye of man it might well seem impossible. Six hundred thousand men, beside women and children, with all their goods and possessions, were to be led through a howling wilderness, and planted in a country full of enemies. These men were a company of weak and timid serfs, without arms or money, and ground down to the dust by two centuries of most oppressive slavery. They were held in subjection by the most powerful king in the world, with an army

prepared at a moment's notice to put down any attempt at insurrection. Such was the work to be done. Now what were the means that God used to do it?

He chooses for an instrument an old Hebrew, eighty years of age, who was keeping sheep in the wilderness. He suddenly gives him his commission, as he is feeding his flock on Mount Horeb, and bids him go back to Egypt, to deliver Israel from Pharaoh. He gives him no money, no army, no weapon of war; no, not so much as a servant to accompany him. Alone he sends him forth on this astounding errand. "Come now," he says to Moses, "and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people."

It almost takes away our breath to think on the apparent impossibility of the work laid upon Moses. To the eye of man it seems like folly and madness. One single shepherd pitted against Pharaoh and the armies of the Egyptians! The very idea of such an unequal conflict sounds ridiculous and absurd. Yet this is GOD'S way. He loves to carry out his purposes in this marvellous fashion. Look over the history of his dealings with the world in all times, and you can hardly fail to see many like things.

Mark what he did when the proud giant, Goliath, was to be slain, and Israel to be delivered from the Philistines. He sent forth young David, without arms or armour—a shepherd youth, with nothing but a sling and five stones in his hand. Yet before that youth the haughty giant fell, and in a single day the power of the Philistines was broken.

Mark what he did when the time arrived for planting Christianity in the midst of the heathen world. He sent forth from a despised corner of the earth twelve poor and unlearned Jews—fishermen, publicans, and men of like occupation. He bids them preach a religion which to the Jews was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. And yet, before the preaching of these men idolatry fell to the ground and melted away.

Mark what he did when he began the Protestant Reformation three hundred years ago. He raised up a solitary German monk, without money, rank, or friends, and put it into his heart to denounce popish error, and teach scriptural truth. Alone, and without carnal weapons, that monk proved more than a match for pope, cardinals, bishops, and all the hierarchy of Rome. Armed with the sword of the Spirit, that monk defied the thunder of the Vatican, and lighted a candle which is burning even to the present day.

Now why does God carry on his work in this fashion? He does it to hide pride from man, and to prevent man glorying in his own strength. He makes it impossible for man to say, "Our own wisdom and our own might have given us success." When the huge host of the Emperor Napoleon was stopped in its career of victory, not by earthquakes, thunder, and lightning, but by silent frost and snow, all Europe was obliged to confess it was God's hand. And when the world sees the weak things confounding the things that are mighty, the world is forced to acknowledge, "This is God's doing." It is the glory of a good workman to show his skill by making excellent work with bad tools. Just so it is the glory of God's wisdom and power that he employs weak instruments to perform great

exploits. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,” is God’s eternal principle of doing. He puts the treasure of the Gospel into earthly vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man.

We must beware lest a sense of our own weakness become a positive snare to us, keeping us back from attempting anything for God. There is a false humility in some men, which is only another name for laziness and cowardice. “Who am I, that I should do anything?” is their constant cry, when the real truth is that they are idle and afraid. What though you are weak as water and feeble as a child? yet the Almighty God is on your side. What though you stand alone comparatively—few with you, many against you? yet the Lord Jesus has said, “I am with you always.” Then fear not, but arise and try what you can do. There is much to be done for your own soul, and much for the souls of others. Try in the name of Christ, and you may yet find that nothing is impossible. Try in dependence on Christ’s help, and you shall find that he who sent Moses from Midian to Egypt is one who never changes. He says himself, “my strength is made perfect in weakness.” The Apostle Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.” In sending missionaries to the heathen world, in evangelising overgrown parishes at home, in gathering congregations, in building schools, in aggressive measures on drunkenness and immorality, in bold opposition to false doctrine, in steady maintenance of pure truth, in speaking to sinners privately, in public preaching in season and out of season—in all these things try on, try on, and hold not your hand. Look not to your own feeble force. Wait not for ever, counting up allies and numbering supporters. Look away to Jesus, and go forward in his might.—“When I am weak,” said a mighty man of God, “then am I strong.”—Think of the plagues of Egypt. Frogs, and flies, and lice, and locusts were not too small and insignificant to bring the wealth of Egypt to nothing. Moses, the solitary shepherd of Midian, was not too weak to bring Israel out of the hand of Pharaoh and the house of bondage. And you, even you, weak as you are, by God’s help, may do great things for God, if you will only try.

(2.) We learn, in the second place, *what doubts and fears* even a good man may feel.

We cannot doubt that Moses was a good man, and had the grace of God in his heart. It is recorded of him by the Holy Ghost that forty years before this time, “by faith he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” Yet see how this man of faith shrinks and draws back when God proposes that he shall go back to Egypt. Great was the honour laid on him! glorious were the prospects before him! mighty was the God speaking to him! but, behold, even then this man of God doubts! “Who am I,” he cries, “that I should go?”

He thought of *himself*. Who was he that, at the age of eighty, he should go from keeping sheep in Midian to address the King of Egypt, and demand the

freedom of his people? Who was he that he should undertake to manage a nation of three million serfs, and lead them forth from Egypt to Canaan? And as he thought of these things he doubted.

He thought of *Pharaoh*. Was it likely that a proud, self-willed tyrant like him would listen to the demand of an old Israelitish shepherd? Would the ruler of majestic Thebes, and the builder of enormous pyramids, pay the slightest attention to a sudden summons to give up all his slaves? He thought of these things, and he doubted.

He thought of his brethren the *children of Israel*. Was it probable that they would believe his mission, and trust him as their leader? Would they, after being mentally and bodily crushed down by centuries of captivity, suddenly arise and venture all on the hope of an unseen promised land? Once more, I say, Moses thought of these things, and he doubted.

Now can I excuse him for his doubts? I cannot for a moment. I believe that the simple fact that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was speaking to him, ought to have silenced every fear. The simple fact, that with God nothing is impossible, ought to have checked any feeling of hesitation. All I say is, that a man may be a child of God and yet be tossed about with inward conflicts. A man may have the faith of God's elect, as Moses had, and yet be brought low occasionally by a spasmodic fit of unbelief. The doubting spirit of Moses is not an example to be followed, but a landmark to instruct us, and a beacon to show us what we must avoid.

I am sure the lesson is one of vast importance. I suspect that scores of Christians go mourning all their days because they are ignorant of their own inward nature, and know not what they must expect to find in their hearts. They are apt to fancy they have no grace, because they see in themselves much remaining wickedness; and to think they have no faith, because they feel within a root of unbelief. And then comes the devil, and bids them give up God's service altogether. "You will never be able to serve Christ," he whispers; "you had better go back to the world."

Now I ask all such Christians to look at the case of Moses, and to take comfort. I do not tell them that their doubts and fears are to be commended; but I do tell them that they must not make them give way to despair. Painful and annoying as they unquestionably are, they are an ailment by which the best of saints have often been troubled. Like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint, they may make your journey toward heaven very uncomfortable; but they are no proof that God has forgotten you, or that you will die in the wilderness. They are a humbling evidence that you are yet in the body, and need Christ's mercy every day; but they are no sign that your heart is wrong in the sight of God. Nay, rather, I am bold to say, that where there are no fears there is no grace; and where there are no doubts there is no faith. So long as the world, the flesh, and the devil are what they are, God's children must expect to feel inward warfare, as well as inward peace.

But what are you to do with these doubts and fears? You must expect to meet with them but of course you must not encourage them. They are Canaan-ites, that will dwell in the land; but they must not be tolerated, countenanced, nor spared. You must resist them manfully, and watch and pray against them every day. You must not be thrown into confusion, like a raw recruit, at the first sight of the enemy; but be always on the look-out for him, and always ready to fight. You must form a settled habit of contending with unbelief, as a foe that never dies; and the longer you keep up the habit, the easier will the path of duty appear. The first steps toward heaven are, undoubtedly, always the hardest. When Moses stood on Pisgah, at the end of forty years, and saw Canaan spreading out before him in all its glory and beauty, I daresay he wondered that he could ever have cried, “Who am I?” When you and I find ourselves in heaven at last, we shall marvel that we ever gave way to doubts and fears.

(3.) We learn, lastly, *what kind of encouragement* God gives to doubting people. He answered the fears and questionings of Moses with one broad gracious promise—“Certainly I will be with thee.” The wisdom and fulness of that sentence are alike admirable. The more we look at it—like the cloud which Elijah’s servant saw rising from the sea—the greater and more satisfying shall we find it to be.

God did not promise Moses that he should have no cross or trouble. He did not say that Pharaoh would prove gentle and kind, and at once grant everything that was wanted. He did not undertake that the path to Canaan would present no difficulties, and that Israel would be faithful and obedient throughout the journey. He simply declared, “I will be with thee.” In every time, in every circumstance, in every place, in every company, in every condition, I will be at thy side.

It was a promise of *companionship*. When thou standest alone before Pharaoh and all his courtiers, despised, insulted, and scorned,—when thou goest forth toward the Red Sea, not knowing how thy people are to cross over,—when thou findest thy people faithless and idolatrous in the wilderness, and even Aaron timid and vacillating,—even then thou shalt not be alone, I will be with thee!

It was, a promise of *protection*. When the fierce Egyptian army pursues thee, and all hope of escape seems cut off,—when Amalek, and Moab, and the Amorite oppose thee, and the way to Canaan seems barred—even then I will be thy shield and defender. I will be with thee!

It was a promise of *advice and counsel*. When thou standest by the shore of the Red Sea, not knowing what to do for the timid multitude around thee—when there seems neither bread to eat nor water to drink in the wilderness,—when even thine own people murmur against thee, and are ready to cast off thine authority—even then I will not leave thee destitute of counsel. I will be with thee!

What a glorious promise was this! How admirably it suited the occasion! Well did that all-wise God who spoke it know the want and necessities of man’s heart. Well did he know that nothing cheers and supports us in trial like companionship, that nothing so nerves and sustains us in the hour of darkness as the

society of a strong friend. Over and over again I find the same promise given to God's children. It seems as if God had nothing better and nothing greater to bestow on them than his own company. When Jacob was ordered to go back to his father's country, the Lord said, "Return, and I will be with thee." When Joshua was appointed leader of Israel, in place of Moses, the Lord said, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." When Paul was preaching the Gospel almost alone at Corinth, the Lord said, "I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee." When Jesus was about to leave his apostles alone in the world, the parting words of encouragement he spoke were simply these: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

What, after all, can a Christian desire better than the company of God and his Christ? Where he is, there must be safety. Where he is, his people can take no harm. What does an infant care for house, or rooms, or climate, or furniture, so long as it feels its loving mother's arm around it? And what can a Christian possibly lack that is for his good, so long as Jesus Christ is by his side? He may be called to go to the farthest corner of the earth; but he will not go alone. He may be placed in the most difficult post of duty; but he has near him a helper. He may have a heavy cross to bear; but he has by his side a friend. Live for the world, and sin, and pleasure, and you are sure one day to find yourself alone, helpless, friendless, desolate, none to comfort, and none to cheer. But live for God and for Christ, and you are never alone. You have always the best of companions. You are always guarded, kept, watched over, and cared for by love that passeth knowledge.

Reader, I leave the subject here: I only ask you, as we part, to remember that whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. That glorious promise, "Certainly I will be with thee," was not meant for Moses only, but for every true Christian. Lay hold on this promise, and go forward in God's name, and be bold in God's service. Lay hold on it, and be not afraid. None ever laid their weight on it and found it fail. Is it not written by Him that cannot lie, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away?"

THE END.

THE CHRISTIAN RACE

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

THE RIGHT REVEREND J. C. RYLE, D.D.,

Lord Bishop of Liverpool

LONDON HODDER AND STOUGHTON
PATERNOSTER ROW

MCM

PREFATORY NOTE

ALTHOUGH the Bishop of Liverpool has published many books—Commentaries, Biographies, and Theological Dissertations—he has never published a volume of sermons.

When his many friends heard that he was about to resign the See of Liverpool, they urged him to publish a volume of his sermons as a “memorial” of his *sixty years*’ ministry. The Bishop kindly consented to do so, and invited me to make a selection from his MSS. and to prepare the sermons for the press. I need hardly say that I willingly undertook the task as a “labour of love” for my aged Bishop. The selection I have made for publication sets forth the great doctrines of our Faith—Sin, Redemption, Regeneration, and Sanctification. I have also added sermons which call attention to the *Practical* side of Christianity, and which especially emphasise the “DUTIES” of the Christian life. The closing sermons proclaim the coming of our Lord; the Reward of His Saints; and the Rest of Heaven.

Friends, who knew of the preparation of these sermons for the press, have been praying that the “message of God” which they contain may bring blessing to many thousands. In the sure and certain hope that His Word will not return unto Him void I have prepared this volume of sermons by the first Bishop of Liverpool—and in this hope it is sent forth.

T. J. MADDEN,

Archdeacon of Warrington,

LIVERPOOL, *March 1st, 1900.*

The Bishopric of Liverpool was declared vacant on March 3rd, 1900. [Bishop Ryle died 10th June 1900. (ET editor)]

THE COMPASSION OF JESUS

“Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.”—MARK vi. 34.

THERE is a certain island called Madeira, lying many hundred miles to the south-west of this country, where the climate is said to be the most healthy and delightful on the face of the earth. In Madeira they know nothing of those sudden changes from heat to cold which we sometimes experience in England. They seldom see anything of frost and snow during the winter, the air is always mild and soft, and particularly well suited for those whom God thinks fit to afflict with diseases of the chest and lungs. Such being the climate, you will not be surprised to hear that great numbers of sick and consumptive persons are in the habit of visiting Madeira from this country, to restore their failing health, to prolong their lives as much as possible, to obtain a short relief from pain which cannot be overcome at home, to catch at the last chance of recovery which a physician holds out,—aye, and often they only arrive in time to be gathered to their last home, to lay their bodies in the dust even as their fathers, and be carried to their graves by foreign attendants in a foreign land. Oh! what pain and trouble men will undergo to get a few years’ health! how many hundred miles of sea and land they will cross to secure a short-lived peace of body! and yet they will not understand us when we call upon them to strive and labour after eternal life—to care for nothing, to count all things loss until they have won Christ and obtained peace for their everlasting souls, such as the world can neither give nor take away.

But the point I wish to call your attention to is this: It is said that these unhappy persons, who meet in this island of Madeira, as it were, upon the edge of the grave, do show towards each other a degree of affection and tenderness and sympathy, and kindness and love and attention and interest, such as we hardly ever see among ourselves. And why is it so?—Because they are obliged to live in the constant prospect of death—because they cannot put the subject from them as an unpleasant one, like too many among ourselves—because they feel their thread is so slender it may snap any day—because they see before their eyes death and the tomb and judgment and eternity—because they really believe their time is short and their end at hand; and under all these feelings, and many more too, they have a strong compassion for others, and a strong compassion for themselves—they feel the need of comforters, and so they do as they would be done by.

Now, wherefore have I told you all this? I would fain see in you the same spirit of faith; I wish, before I speak to you of millions of souls in distant parts of the world fast going towards destruction, before I lay before you the immediate subject of this afternoon’s sermon, I wish, I say, to remind you that the great spiritual disease which is carrying these millions towards hell is naturally

your own too. I desire, if possible, to lift the veil from off your eyes, and press upon you that their case may be your own: are they sinners?—so by nature are you; are they perishing?—so by nature are you; are they ignorant of Christ?—so by nature are you; and if you really know the danger of sin, and the excellence of the gospel-remedy, you will not require much persuasion on my part, you will rejoice to give assistance to your brethren according to the flesh, you will count it a labour of love to contribute according to your means for the souls of all who are still without God in the world.

Now, I wish to bring under your notice two points, and these are: I. The example that our Lord Jesus Christ has set us in our text; and II. The case of the unfortunate people whom you have an opportunity of assisting.

I. First, then, I will say a few words upon our Lord's example. We read that "He saw much people as sheep not having a shepherd." He beheld a mighty multitude collected together—not altogether disposed to receive instruction, but ready to listen to the voice and direction of anyone who would take them in hand, and still in utter ignorance about the way of life. The scribes and Pharisees, who ought to have been their natural teachers, had done nothing for them; they had sought their own advantage, and not the advantage of the flock, and as for the little doctrine they did preach, it was ruinous to men's souls, because contrary to the Bible. It was not agreeable to the law and the testimony. And thus deserted, these poor sheep, these Jews, were perishing in the barren wilderness of this world, scattered, wandering, and ready to faint for lack of the bread of life and the water of life. They were starving in places where there was no pasture, carried about by every kind of doctrine, unable to defend themselves against that roaring lion the devil, without a friend to guide their feet into the paths of peace, without a hope to comfort them in the hour of death and on the bed of sickness, without a counsellor to say, "Here is life and light and love—this is the good way, walk ye in it."

But we are told the Lord Jesus "saw them, and was moved with compassion." See what a merciful and loving Saviour we have to do with; wonderful indeed must be the hardness and unbelief of men's hearts, when such a one stands knocking at the door and is only rejected and refused.

"He saw, and was moved with compassion." He saw a mighty crowd of persons in the dark about the way of salvation, He saw that in a few years all would be lying in their graves. He saw them unprepared for that great day when the books shall be opened and every one shall be judged according to his works, and "He was moved with compassion." He felt a deep affection towards their souls, a tender pity and concern because of their spiritual necessities. He felt that each before Him would soon be for ever and for ever in heaven or hell, and we may well suppose that He whose gentle and loving spirit was moved to tears over Jerusalem, that cruel unbelieving city, He who wept at the grave of a chosen friend—we may well suppose that such a one as Jesus was touched at this moving sight. O Christless sinners! O careless, unconverted men and women, you little know the depth of that affection which your Lord and Master feels

towards you; you little think how great a value He doth set upon those neglected souls of yours; you little consider how much He grieves and wonders at your sleepiness and unbelief.

But think you, He was content with pity and compassion. Oh no! His was no empty feeling, such as many now profess. He acted on it. He knew that ignorance would never excuse anyone in the day of judgment, and He would not leave this great people to perish in it. "He began to teach them many things." Although He was fatigued and weary, hungry and thirsty, although He had gone apart to rest awhile, although He knew that nearly all would go away without faith, without inquiry, without consideration, still He would set before them the kingdom of heaven. He was always ready to work for the good of souls, it was His meat and drink to do His Father's will, and so "He began to teach them many things."

The wickedness of their own hearts, the danger of hell, the value of the soul, the happiness of heaven, the free grace of God, the power of the Holy Ghost, the need of some righteousness—these are some of the matters which no doubt He taught—for many indeed are the things we are naturally ignorant of, and many are the things the gospel of Christ contains. O, beloved, we all need much teaching, much instruction, line upon line, and precept upon precept. We are naturally all in darkness, knowing nothing of ourselves and our sins and the gospel. We must call upon the Lord Jesus, if we would be saved. He shall enlighten, He shall teach us great things that we know not, for unless we are taught of Him we shall most assuredly perish.

Such was the conduct of our blessed Lord, and if you are sincere in making Him your example, if you really desire to be like Him, if you wish to be conformed to His image and follow in His blessed steps, you will be moved with deep compassion towards the people of whom I am about to speak, you will do what lies in your power to teach them many things and deliver their souls, you will look to Jesus and say, "Lord we would do likewise."

II. I have to tell you now that there are multitudes throughout the world who are truly and literally as sheep without a shepherd, and it is on their behalf you are now invited to contribute to this Missionary Society.

There are the heathen: I mean the men who know nothing of the Bible and its contents, who never heard of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, who have not even a head-knowledge of the gospel, who worship idols or nothing at all, who live in ignorance of either heaven or hell, or die as the very beasts that perish. It has been calculated that upon this earth there live and move about eight hundred millions of men and women, and out of these it has been ascertained there are at this moment at least six hundred millions of idolaters, that is no less than three-fourths of the whole world, who do not make the smallest profession of Christianity: out of every four of the inhabitants of this earth, God looketh down and seeth three who do not know the name of Jesus. Oh, what a fearful, what a soul-chilling thought is this! After all that Christ hath done and taught, after all the miracles and labours of the apostles and preachers

of the gospel, behold we are living in the last days, and there still exist no less than six hundred millions of immortal souls who are every one strangers to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.

Away with the delusion that may come across your minds that these unhappy men are doing well enough without the Bible, and are pleasing God after their own fashion. I tell you it would be easy to fill books with the accounts of the cruelty and the lust and the pride and the blasphemy which prevails among these miserable multitudes, and above all in the religious worship of their idols, their gods made with hands. Alas! there is not one word of that fearful description given in the first chapter of the Romans, there is not one word, I say, which is not being daily fulfilled in those dark places of the earth where Christ is not known. "They do not like to retain God in their knowledge, and so God has given them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. They are filled with all unrighteousness, fornications, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murders, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." These words were written of the heathen eighteen hundred years ago, but they are a most accurate description of the state of things in the present day. So true it is that without the Bible man's natural heart is always the same; that without Christianity there is no real morality; so true that without true religion the corruption which is within us comes to the surface, and we are fully shown to be little better than a mixture of the beast and the devil.

These are the heathen whom this great Missionary Society desires to bring unto Christ, these are the heathen who are dying in their sins at the rate of two thousand every hour and thirty every minute, without hope and without God in the world. These are the sheep without a shepherd whose wretched state should move you Christians to compassion, and make you give all you can to help to send them ministers to teach them the way to heaven.

But I would not have you ignorant, beloved, that there are others whose case is quite as pitiable as that of the heathen, who have quite as strong a claim upon the compassion of all who follow Jesus. There are those thousands of Englishmen who live in our colonies abroad—in India, Canada, Australia—those bold and industrious men who have gone forth as emigrants to settle in a new country, and are gradually clearing and civilising wild districts which no Christian ever trod before. And I tell you that these settlers are indeed in every sense too often sheep without a shepherd. They find themselves in a land that is very thinly populated. It often happens that a man is thirty, forty, fifty miles from any place of worship. He never has the opportunity of going with a multitude to the house of God; he never hears the joyful sound of the preaching of the gospel; he has no minister to consult if he is in difficulties; he has none other than the private

means of grace, the Bible, and private prayer. Oh, when it comes to this, it is indeed a fiery trial of a man's foundations: to be alone with your own family in a howling wilderness, to have no witness of your dealings but the Lord, to have no bell to summon you, to have no minister to invite you, to see no church to remind you, to find no neighbours to encourage or shame you,—I say that this doth put a man's religion to the proof. This soon brings out his real character. This soon discovers whether he has had a form of godliness without the power, or whether he has indeed the root of the matter in him, and is one of that little flock which will follow Jesus, yea, even in the dark. Truly you little know the value of regular means of grace, so long as you are familiar with them. But go into a wilderness, place yourself where there is no church and no minister, and no public prayers and no preaching and no sacraments, nothing but yourself, your Bible and your God, and you would soon feel a mighty difference—you would discover that without these helps the road towards Zion is a weary pilgrimage. Think you there would be much religion in Exbury, if all the places of worship were pulled down, if all the ministers were withdrawn, and each was left to the care of his own soul? There may be lewd men of the baser sort who think it would make no difference; but I do sadly fear that in a very few years sin would abound, and God would be almost forgotten, and true religion would be starved and frozen into the smallest possible space.

But such is just the condition of a large part of those colonies where many of your fellow-countrymen dwell. Oh, have compassion on them, and let them not famish for lack of the bread of life!

And then consider the miseries to which a man is liable who lives beyond the reach of any of God's messengers. People may think they get on well enough, when everything in this world appears favourable, while health and strength and temporal prosperity is given them; and "What good we should get from a minister?" is their thought. But when the evening of life draws on, when sorrow and sickness break in like an armed man, when death and hell begin to stare them in the face, when one is taken and another taken from the family circle, and conscience reminds them of forgetfulness of God, and Bibles are taken down from shelves where they had long been neglected, and prayer is found a more difficult matter than they had thought—I say that then the want of God's appointed ordinance is deeply felt, and many a secret wish comes out, "Oh, that we had some minister of Jesus close at hand!" But this is just a picture of many thousand families of our own flesh and blood in foreign parts. The Lord incline your hearts to have compassion on them, and help to send them teachers of the way of life.

III. And now, beloved, I have fulfilled the promise that I made, to show you a mighty multitude of sheep which have no shepherd, and it only remains for me to press home upon you all the duty and the privilege of giving according to your power in aid of Foreign Missions.

Behold, I set before you the great machine by which Christ crucified may be preached to the hearts of those who are now sitting in darkness and the shadow

of death. "Go ye into all the world," said Jesus, "and preach the gospel to every creature." Oh, how unworthily and coldly are we listening to His voice! There is not more than one missionary to a million of souls in the present day, and shall not God visit such a nation as this? Shall He not punish us if we stand calmly by, and fold our arms and never lift a finger, while thousands are dying without having seen the Lord's Christ.

I do beseech you all, if you have one spark of the mind that was in Jesus, if you have any value for the everlasting gospel, if you know anything of the guilt of sin, if you have ever felt anything of the grace of God, if you are not utterly dead to all spiritual things,—I do beseech you to prove the sincerity of your profession by contributing liberally to the support of this missionary society. Oh that the money which will be spent in so many places this week in drinking, idleness, and sin could only be applied to spreading Christ's Gospel!

I say, it is impossible for anyone to know the truth and not to burn with anxiety to bring all men to the knowledge of it. He that has no zeal about the souls of others can have but little about his own. He that is not with Jesus in this work is indeed against Him. Where is the use of a man praying "Thy kingdom come," if he has no mind to help it forward? It is as bad as saying to your brethren, "Be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful." "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

Say not "We are very sorry for these people, but we can do no more; we are too poor, we have other uses for our money." What! do you forget the widow who gave two mites which made a farthing out of her poverty, and cannot ye do anything? The Lord Jesus saw her, and He sees you and knows the worth of your excuse. And have ye never read that it was thought a solemn duty in the New Testament churches to give to the necessities of others? They were afflicted, persecuted, tormented. Many of you would have said, "Better keep our money at home," but this deep poverty abounded, "and to their power," says St. Paul, "yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves, praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift." And who were ever poorer in the end for giving anything to God? He that watereth shall be watered himself. He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord; and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again.

Say not, "We are no keepers of other men's souls: every man for himself," Oh, but this will not avail you at the bar of Christ. "The King shall say to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

And what should you think of one in time of plague who had a special remedy and took no pains to give it to his neighbours? Be sure you will never sit in Abraham's bosom if any damned soul shall be able to say, "Father Abraham, that man might have cared for my salvation; he might have sent me help, and he would not."

But oh, remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive," and small as the contributions of Exbury may seem, who knows but they may be the means of saving precious souls? who knows but you will give cause to heaven itself to rejoice?—"for there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over ONE sinner that repenteth."

A PILLAR IN GOD'S TEMPLE

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.”—REV. iii. 12.

BRETHREN, the Christian who does not turn to the book of Revelation in his hours of trial is one who misses a great privilege. Glorious things are written *there* for the people of God: *there* is the strong wine of consolation for the heavy in heart; *there* are distant views of the good things prepared for true believers. We seem as we dwell upon it to catch a glimpse of the New Jerusalem; we seem to hear something of that blessed Song of Angels in which the redeemed shall one day join; and little can there be of reality about our religion, if the reading of that book doth not make us more earnest and more spiritual Christians.

Let us try to draw away our minds for a season from earth and fix them on heaven; let us look into the matter of the passage now before us, and consider the eternal rest that remaineth for the children of God.

Now the words of our text were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ to the Church of Philadelphia, which was one of the seven famous churches in Asia. To each of these seven we find our great Chief Shepherd sending a word of warning and a word of encouragement; and in each of these seven messages a believer will find something useful to his own soul: seven times over they are commended to our especial notice in the second and third chapters, in this solemn manner: “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

Now I see in our text two things—a *character* and a *promise*: the character is, “the man that overcometh,” the promise, “I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God and he shall go no more out”; and these two things by the blessing of God I shall endeavour to set before you in order. Characters and promises are always linked together in Scripture; they must never be separated. Who are those of whom Jesus says, “I will in no wise cast them out”?—they that come unto Him; who are those of whom He declares, “I will give them the water of life”?—they that are athirst; who are those of whom He proclaims, “I will give them rest”?—they that labour and are heavy-laden. And so also it is here: it is the man that overcomes who shall be made a pillar in His temple and no more go out. We press this point upon you, because there are carnal persons who often take to themselves promises to which they have no claim; they feed on Christ’s sweet sayings, but they will not touch Christ’s commands; they forget that characters and promises are like lock and key, they fit one into the other. He that has not got the character has no part or portion in the promises, for what God has joined together must never be put asunder.

1. First, then, what is the character under which Jesus speaks of a true believer, and gives him encouragement in our text: he is one “that overcometh.”

Overcometh! that is a strong expression, a searching expression, an expression that ought to teach us many things. There must be work to be done, enemies

to be conquered, a battle to be fought, a warfare to carry on; all these things must be, or else the Lord Jesus would never tell us that we must overcome.

And, brethren, if ever you would have your souls saved, we tell you plainly there are many adversaries; you must remember you have to contend with bitter foes. There is the old man—your own *natural heart*; you have a disposition which grows and bends of itself towards evil; in your flesh there is no spiritual good thing; the service of God is all against the grain of your mind; you carry that within you which in religion is wicked and deceitful and corrupt. That old man must be fought against. These desires of the flesh must be crushed down. This carnal heart must be changed and made new. But even when changed this heart will need continual mortifying and keeping under; so cold will it sometimes feel, so careless, so dead to heavenly things, so full of vain thoughts, so sleepy and forgetful of God; be sure it will cause you many a painful struggle. No enemy requires such watchfulness as your own heart; one traitor within the camp is more dangerous than an army without; and well does the wise man counsel when he says, “Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of that are the issues of life.” Christian, watch and remember; do not give in to the old Adam, the flesh must be resisted, battled with, and overcome.

And then there is the *world*. You live in the midst of unconverted persons, and how can there be concord and agreement between you and them? Think not that all men will speak well of you, and encourage you if you become Christ’s disciple; you will find at once that you have to swim against the stream. The world’s ways, you will discover, are not your ways, nor the world’s thoughts your thoughts. You may try hard to keep in with the world and yet be a Christian, but it will not do. The friendship of this world, saith Scripture, is enmity with God. You are to be the light in the midst of darkness; you are to be as salt in the midst of corruption; you are to be a witness for Christ and the gospel; and so long as you dwell among the ungodly it is impossible, if you are faithful, that there can be entire oneness and peace. Alas! how many are the occasions on which you must be ready to contend: the fear of this world; the mockery of this world; the vanities of this world; the over-carefulness of this world; the flattery of this world; the persecution of this world: all these are things against which you must be prepared to fight. Christian, watch and remember—the world must be resisted, battled with, and overcome.

And then there is the *devil*. He is that liar and murderer from the beginning; there is no end to his devices. He has a snare for every age, a pitfall for every circumstance, a trap for every place: snares for the learned and snares for the unlearned; snares for the godly, snares for the profane; rich, poor, master, servant, old, young, he can fit you with every possible temptation for the head, for the heart, for the temper, for the belly, for the tongue. Think not he will always meet you as a roaring lion. He can transform himself into an angel of light; lead you on as he did Eve, little by little, gently and softly, a step at a time, and make you captive unawares if off your guard. Christian, watch and remember; give Satan no vantage-ground for an instant; the devil must be resisted, battled with,

and overcome.

Such, then, are our three great enemies—the world, the flesh and the devil. One of two things must happen: they will overcome us, or we must overcome them. Brethren, we desire to urge this point on your attention. We would not have you for a moment suppose that Christ's people have no work to do, that once converted they may live as they please and sleep their way towards heaven. No! far from it. Sleep and carelessness are the marks of impenitence and sin; to be labouring, striving, contending, that is the stamp of a true Christian, that is the proof that you are dead in trespasses no longer. We warn you, therefore, if you would be saved, you must be content to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. You must fight the good fight of faith, or you will never lay hold on eternal life. You must make up your mind to a conflict and struggle if you would win heaven; yes, and it is a daily struggle that must be carried on, never will sin be so dead in your members but it will need crucifying and subduing. Never will Satan, the prince of this world, let a subject leave him without throwing every possible obstacle and hindrance in his way. And well does John Bunyan say in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, there is need to cry to the Strong for strength, and when you have got it there is need to use it too.

Think not that we would discourage you, as if this warfare was a burden that none could bear. We only wish you to consider well what you are doing, lest perchance you set forth towards Zion unprepared, and by-and-by turn back offended. We have to tell you of armour, weapons and provision which the great Captain of your salvation will furnish if you will only use them; and we know that they who use them shall go forward conquering and to conquer. I read of the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, the breastplate of righteousness, the girdle of truth, the sword of the word; and these the Holy Spirit will give to all who ask Him. I read of the bread and water of life: he that eats of that bread shall never hunger, and he that drinks of that water shall never thirst; and these the Son of God offers freely to all who will come unto Him. And above all I read of the precious blood of Christ the Lamb of God, in which the worst of sinners are invited to wash and be clean, and before which not all the powers of darkness can stand. This is that blessed means through which all the saints of the most Highest have had victory and triumph. They overcame, I am told in Revelation, by the blood of the Lamb. This blood has been the strength and confidence of all the company of the redeemed. This is the sure title to eternal life which nothing can overthrow; and this title, if you will only believe, shall be your own.

And, brethren, who with all these aids and helps need shrink from the battle? Greater indeed is He that is with you than they that are against you; mighty are your adversaries, but the Captain of your salvation is mightier still. His army, His grace, His Spirit shall bear you up. No man so ungodly in time past but grace can make him a good soldier of Jesus Christ; no woman so weak but faith in her Redeemer shall carry her through to the end. Doubtless you may lose a battle or two, but you shall not lose all; you may faint, but you shall not be quite cast down: watch against sin and sin shall not have dominion over you; resist

the devil and he shall flee from you; come out from the world, and the world shall be obliged to let you go, and you shall find yourself in the end more than conquerors through Him that loved you.

Brethren, we would have you pause and consider how much of this warning character belongs to you? We would say to each, Dost thou know anything of this strife against iniquity? Art thou familiar with the shield, the sword, and the battle? Oh! that we could only see more of you engaged in this holy warfare, fighting upwards towards Zion; leaving the vain and unprofitable jangling of talk and controversy; setting your faces steadily towards Jerusalem. Surely there must be something more in religion than a mere profession and a name. There must be actual warfare against sin. There may be short roads to heaven invented by sect and parties; but ancient Christianity, the good old way, is the way of the cross, the way of conflict: no conflict, no victory; no victory, no reward.

Brethren, how are we straitened till we see this decided character in you! how can you suppose without it that the promises of God can be your own?

II. Now what is the special promise of our text: “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.”

I shall not delay you by dwelling on the first portion of these words—him “will I make a pillar.” The meaning of it is plain. The conquering Christian shall have in heaven an abiding habitation. He shall no more be wavering and tossed on doubt and uncertainties. He shall have a mansion that shall never be taken down, a dwelling that shall be firm and unshaken when the world shall be burned up. And he shall have an honourable place too; fashioned and fitted by the Spirit while on earth, he shall shine as a polished stone in that heavenly temple whose walls are salvation and whose gates are praise. But I pass on to the last part of the promise, because of its exceeding sweetness and consolation. In heaven, we are told, the believer shall go no more out.

(a) No more shall he go out from the presence of his Lord. Now are the days of weakness and shortcoming; the best of believers are frail and backsliding compared to what they ought to be. How cold are their prayers, how faint their praises, how dull their affections; how heavy their hands in doing the Lord’s work, how slow their feet in walking in the Lord’s way; how poor is their zeal in fighting the Lord’s battle! Alas! there is not one child of God but could tell you he often finds his sin separating between himself and God. His corruptions seem to rise up as a cloud between him and heaven, and hide the Sun of Righteousness from his eyes. Many is the time that he could say, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?—many the time that he humbles himself before his Maker and says with holy David, “I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me; cast me not away from Thy presence, take not Thy Holy Spirit from me: restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit.”

But all this shall be at an end in heaven. God Himself shall be there with His people and be their God; and sin and the devil shall be without. And there shall

be no more trembling and fear of falling; for temptation shall cease, and the former things shall all pass away. Then shall the believer see his Saviour face to face, and know Him at last, even as He has been known; and in His presence there shall be fulness of joy without anything to break it off, and at his right hand shall be pleasures for evermore.

(b) But again. In heaven the believer shall go no more out from the company of his Christian brethren. Here in this world we have often to walk with God alone. We seem to have none like-minded with whom to take sweet counsel together. We feel cut off and separated from the excellent of the earth in whom we delight; and oh! it is a hard trial to bear—a trial which none but a Christian can understand. We know, indeed, it is for our good. We are naturally selfish, we love to nestle down amidst friends and think only of our private comfort, and this is wrong. We know that God would rather plant us singly up and down in the world as witnesses of the truth, in order that our light may shine before men and make them think. But still, these partings and separations, these rendings asunder and divisions, are a painful thing to flesh and blood, and cost the Christian many a tear. We are journeying the same road, but how little do we see of each other. We are fighting the same battle, but how seldom do we commune with each other to our hearts' full content. But in heaven all this shall be at an end. We shall meet all them that have slept in Jesus, and never be obliged to leave them any more. We shall enjoy the blessed society of all God's children without that bitter thought, "I must soon leave you and go back to my post." We shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. We shall have all our dear brethren in the Lord around us, not one shall be wanting; and none shall hurry us away or make us afraid—for time shall be swallowed up in eternity—and nothing shall be wanting to make our happiness complete.

(c) Once more. In heaven the believer shall no more go out to battle. Here we are continually watching and warring: the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. Here we cannot put off our armour for a day with safety. We can never say to the sword, "rest and be still." Here we have to keep up a perpetual struggling against sin in every shape. It may be against our neighbour; it may be against those who are near and dear to us. It may be against some whom we naturally love as our own souls. But there shall be an end of this, too, in heaven; there at length the wicked shall cease from troubling, and there the weary shall at last be at rest.

And, brethren, what can we say to you in conclusion? If there be any among you who have friends that died in faith, if you can really feel the departed ones whom you love are with Christ, we bid you to look at the promise of this text, and not to sorrow for them but for yourselves. Their battle is fought, their strife is over. They have passed through that gloomy valley we must one day tread, they have gone over that dark river we must one day cross. They have drunk that last bitter cup which sin hath mingled for us. They have reached the land of everlasting life, where sorrow and sighing are no more. Oh! weep not, then, for them, but for yourselves. We are warring still, but they are at peace. We are

labouring, but they have entered into rest. We are watching, but they are sleeping. We are wearing our spiritual harness, but they have put it off. We are still at sea, but they are safe in harbour. We are sowing, but they are reaping. We have tears, but they have joy. We are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, but as for them they are at home. Oh! better are the dead in Christ than the living, and therefore we bid you weep not for them but for yourselves.

Brethren they are gone before. It is ours to follow after. It is ours to walk in their steps, to show the same faith and patience, to bless God for their good example. But still if you would be with them you must do as all Christ's people have done, you must overcome. "To him that overcometh," said Jesus, "will I give to eat of the Tree of Life"—"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death"—"to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna"—"He that overcometh to him will I give power over the nations"—"he that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment"—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne." Brethren, we would have you bear this in mind: you must overcome. There must be nothing sleepy, easy-going, careless, about your Christianity. You must be active, bold, decided on the Lord's side. It is not enough to eat the king's bread and wear the king's livery. You must also fight the king's battles. "Watch ye," therefore, "stand fast, quit you like men," be strong; "lay aside every weight and the sin which doth most easily beset you; and run with patience the race set before you; looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith," and to the joy He has prepared for all who love Him. "It is a faithful saying, If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us."

KNOCKING! KNOCKING!

“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.

IT is one of the marks of an unconverted man that he does not like the plain doctrines of Scripture—if we offer to him salvation by free grace, tell him he is a miserable sinner and can do nothing for himself, and must be saved only by the blood of Christ together with the publicans and harlots,—immediately he is offended: “No, no,” he says, “this is all cant and enthusiasm: I am not quite so bad as all that; I am not perhaps what I ought to be, but I can do something, I am sure, whenever I think seriously.” If we preach the necessity of holiness, show him what a true believer really is, and how much purity and spiritual-mindedness the law of Christ requires, again he is offended—he cannot receive it. “No, no,” he says, “you are wrong now the other way: you are righteous overmuch, you are too strict; there would be no living in the world on your plan. I wish to do my duty, I do not wish to be a saint.” It is in vain we reply, “But will you not just look at your Bible, and see whether a faithful minister can teach you any other doctrine; is it not all written there, as clear as the sun at noonday?” No! he has not time, or he will not take the trouble to do that; but it matters not, our preaching displeases him, and he is satisfied in his own mind we must be wrong.

Now, I always wonder what such persons can make of the text you have heard read, if ever it falls in their way. To me it does appear the most extraordinary verse in the whole Bible. Consider who is the Speaker. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings, the Light of the world, the Lord of all, the mighty God, the Prince of peace, the Sun of righteousness, the Resurrection and the Life, of whom St. John says, “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.” Consider also the tone of His speech. You have heard sometimes His gracious invitations, such as, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden;” “Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely,” and pointed out how inexcusable are those who will refuse them; but here, behold, the scene changes: we read, “I stand at the door and knock,” we see Jesus coming Himself to the heart of every unconverted man in person, we find the Creator entreating the creature! God beseeching man! the Saviour supplicating the sinner; and all for what? simply that you will accept the friendship of your Creator, that you will consent to admit God into your hearts, that you will welcome your Saviour as your guide, your companion, and your familiar friend. “If any man hear My voice,” says Jesus, “and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me.”

Truly this is wonderful language! God has set before us many figures in the Bible to convince us of His tender love, but none that can be compared with

this, none which seems so unanswerable, none which seems so well calculated to make a careless, thoughtless, cold-hearted member of a church consider his ways, and bring him to his senses, and show him the full value of that soul which he is neglecting. Jesus appeared on earth, suffered and died for a wicked world; and was not this enough? Does not this leave all without excuse who are so ungrateful as to forget Him? No doubt it does; and yet behold grace still abounds: here is the Son of God Himself again descending from above, and trying to prevail on unbelieving man to forsake destruction, and become an heir of everlasting life. What think you, beloved? How can anyone dare to neglect this verse? How can anyone shut his eyes against its meaning? Indeed, I know not any stronger proof that God is most willing and anxious to save men, and that men are naturally unwilling to be saved, than you will find contained in these words.

Let us then consider them, remembering that our Lord is not speaking to heathens, but to the church of Laodicea, to men who were called Christians, to baptised persons who were not walking worthy of their high calling. God grant that this address may awaken some sleeping one among yourselves; may the startling earnestness of the language rouse some of you to think of your own state, that you may not in the last day open your eyes too late, and find that you have got your portion with the unbelievers.

I. Let us in the first place examine our Lord's declaration: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." What is this door? It is the entrance into the heart of man, it is the way into that house of which the strong man Satan loves to keep possession, and which he often finds swept and garnished for his abode. And Jesus stands waiting at this door, and asking every unconverted man to let Him in. It shall not profit you, O man, to say the door has never yet been opened, and I do not know how to do it, for I shall show you this is not the case, I shall prove that you have always admitted other guests most readily. Have not your own relations knocked? parents, wife, and children; yes, and the door was at once opened, and they entered in and took up a large place in your affections. Has not the world knocked? Yes, and the door was at once opened, and in there came cares about the things of this life, and anxieties about earthly matters, and love of money, and excessive attention to business, and desire to have treasure here below, and hopes built on temporal foundations, and a great love for the good opinion of men, and a long train of lying vanities and cheating promises and unsatisfying pleasures, and they have dwelt there, and taken up another large portion of your heart. Has not sin knocked? Yes, long ago; and the door was at once opened, and there entered evil tempers, and polluted thoughts, and abominable lusts, and all those fleshly dispositions which make men drunkards and revellers and noisy rioters and unclean livers, and they have dwelt there, and filled up many chambers in your imagination. And lastly, Satan knocked, and told you it was a mistake to think sin so very sinful: God would not be so very strict, ministers were far too particular, it was not so very necessary to think of Christ, and be watchful, and attend church regularly, and search the Scriptures,

and pray without ceasing; only let him in and he would show you a more excellent way. And at once the door was opened, and he entered in and dwelt there, and took possession of your goods; and then your house was filled, and you have dared to be at peace.

But all this time, while these things have been taking place, Jesus has been standing, knocking, waiting, asking to be admitted, and so far it has been all in vain. Think what an insufferable insult! The Lord Jesus Christ comes offering freely righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and the door is not opened; he brings white raiment to cover your uncleanness, and the water of life, which He purchased with His own blood, and the door is not opened; day after day He stands there patiently waiting and knocking; He sees every other guest from earth or hell admitted, but to Him the door is never opened, and He is left there standing and knocking in vain. Truly, beloved, it has been well said that the heart of the natural man is like the inn of Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, in which every guest could find room and every guest was welcome except the Saviour of mankind. To think that men can be grateful to each other, but feel no gratitude to Jesus; can love frail changeable creatures like themselves, but will not love Jesus; can be warm in their affections towards their brethren according to the flesh, but cold as death towards Christ; can be anxious to obtain the favour of the great of this world, but indifferent about their Redeemer; can delight in the company of the children of Satan himself, but reject Him who died for our sins! Surely, I say, there is in this so much of corruption and iniquity that it is impossible to understand how anyone can doubt that the “heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.”

But we must not pass over the other expression—“I knock.” Perhaps someone may say: “I never heard this knocking. Jesus has never knocked at my heart, as far as I can recollect, or doubtless I would have let him in. I may have been careless, but I never willingly insulted God.” O unconverted man or woman, this cannot avail you; I must try to convince you, you are wrong, Look back, I pray you, for an instant, on the life you have spent, and sift and examine the days that are past. Cannot you remember some occasion when a minister of the Gospel has said something which startled you more than usual, when he has so preached about man’s wickedness, and God’s love, or death, or judgment, or eternity that you have felt very uncomfortable and rather alarmed? Heard you then no knocking at the door of your heart? Was there not a voice within speaking to you of your folly and ingratitude in slighting Christ and putting off the one thing needful? Cannot you call to mind some verse in the Bible which has struck you on hearing it read, and made you think, “If this be true I am neglecting the care of my soul”? Has not the thought, “I am not living as the Bible commands, though I profess to believe it,” come across your mind at some worldly feast or dwelling, and made you grave in the midst of your festivity, like the handwriting on the wall of which Daniel speaks? Have you not ever in the middle of the night, when all around were sleeping, and you alone lay awake, felt as if there was an eye looking down upon you which pierced your inmost

thoughts? Know for a certainty your Saviour was then knocking at the door of your heart. Or have you been graciously placed in the furnace of affliction? has it pleased God to take away your worldly goods and blight your earthly expectations? has He thought fit to send upon you sickness and disease, to chasten you by nights of weariness, and days of pain? Surely you must have heard sometimes at such seasons: "I stand at the door and knock; I have sent these trials in mercy to your soul; they are My remembrancers and messengers to prepare My way; they are to remind you man is of few days, and full of misery; they are to teach you things you are too ready to forget: will you not now admit me?"

Or have you sat beside the bed of one who was the desire of your eyes, whom you loved as your own soul, and watched that daily change of countenance which speaks of dissolution, and traced the footsteps of him whom Job calls the king of terrors drawing nearer and nearer, and observed those many different feelings which come uppermost in last hours, till the last struggle was over, and all was silent, still—very still? Or have you ever gone as a mourner to accompany someone you knew in life to his long home, and stood beside the grave, and looked into that narrow bed, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest," and seen the chilling preparations for burying the dead out of sight, and heard that cold, hard sound, which announces the return of earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. I never can believe you felt no voice within on such occasions. I never can believe you did not find the questions rising in your mind: "Where am I now? What am I doing? Whither am I going? Where shall I be found on the morning of the resurrection?" Be sure it was your Saviour himself, saying, "I stand at the door and knock: open to Me now, and I am ready to come in." Alas! that anyone should harden his heart, while Christ himself is speaking. Think on these things, beloved, before it be too late, or else you will not die the death of the righteous, and your last end will not be like his.

II. Let us, in the second place, look shortly at the *manner* of the invitation and request: "If any man hear My voice and open the door." See now how wide and general is the form of this address. There is no limit, no reserve, no condition here; it is not confined to particular classes; it is not for the rich more than the poor, for the learned more than the unlearned; for the moral Pharisee rather than the despised publican: it is for all without exception. "If *any* man hear;" however sinful, however unworthy, however abominable he may have been it matters not, anyone may become a partaker of the privileges of the gospel, and have right to that tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

Let us, however, go on to the contents and substance of the invitation. Jesus calls on you "to hear His voice and open the door." Truly this is a simple demand, it is a small condition, a moderate requirement, and one entirely in keeping with the whole tone of the gospel. He does not say, "Go make yourselves fit for my presence by acting up to what you know; become holy, become perfect, fulfil every duty without a single failing, and then I will become your Saviour"; but He brings to our door pardon, grace and merit; sufficient to put away every

sin, and present us faultless in the sight of God; and then He invites us to listen to His counsel, to believe, to throw open our hearts and affections to Him, and so He declares we shall live; we shall be saved. "Hear my voice," says Jesus, "and open the door." There is little consolation here for those who are content with hearing only, and never seem to go beyond that point. No doubt it is the first duty of every man to hear the gospel; but woe to him whose notions of religion go no further! he has forgotten the exhortation of St. James, "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"; and he has yet to learn that we must believe and love as well as hear. Our lives must show that Christ has really entered in our hearts by faith. "Hear my voice," says Jesus, "and open the door." How truly this describes the experience of true believers in every age! There was a time, probably, when, like Gallio, they cared for none of these things; they lived as others did, laying up treasure on the earth, and little heeding Jesus and the resurrection. At last there came a day, a season when their hearts were touched. They heard a knocking, and a voice to which they felt obliged to listen. Perhaps it was a voice of terror which drove them to their knees in fear and trembling and brought their sins to remembrance, and made them, like the jailer of Philippi, cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" Perhaps it was a still small voice, which gently spoke of peace, and rest, and goodwill, and drew them by the cords of love, until they felt they could deny nothing to Him who promised such comfort to their souls. At any rate, they would tell us, it was a voice of power, a voice which humbled all their pride, and made them willing and obedient,—a voice which turned their inclinations like the waters of the south, until they said, "Come in, Lord Jesus, come quickly: blessed Lord, why standest Thou without, let my beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits." Happy indeed are all who hear His voice and know the joyful sound, and open to Him quickly.

III. Let us, in the third place, consider the *privileges* which are here held out and promised—"I will come in to Him," says our Lord, "and will sup with him and he with Me." By this you are to understand that perfect and close union which exists between Christ and a true believer. The Lord Jesus enters into the heart of every converted man, and makes it His dwelling-place, as a king to rule and govern it; as a teacher to guide and instruct, saying, This is the good way, walk in it; as a friend to comfort and encourage, who can feel for all our infirmities, in that He has been tempted Himself. This is that thing of which our Lord spoke in the Gospel of St. John, "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." This is that of which St. Paul spoke, when he told the Ephesians, "Ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." This is that which St. John has in view when he says in his first Epistle, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." This is that thing of which our Church speaks in her Communion Service, saying, "The benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive the Holy Sacrament, for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood; then

we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, we are one with Christ and Christ with us.”

Mark here how great, how astonishing, how incomprehensible is our Redeemer’s love towards men. “Lord, what is man,” says David, “that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him!” Too many of you are disposed to look on God as a hard master, as one whom it is their duty to serve, and that is all; they seem to live in fear of His displeasure, and to have no feeling towards Him excepting as a taskmaster, whose demands must be satisfied. But how unworthy such a feeling is you may learn from these words: “I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”

If there be any tenderness in earthly unions, if there be any love, if there be any affection, if there be any sympathy, if there be any oneness of spirit, all is contained in this connection between Jesus and the souls of His believing people; and every support and comfort, and consolation and assistance and counsel that we expect from earthly friends we are fully warranted in expecting from our Redeemer, and if we trust Him we shall surely find it, in life and in death, in sorrow and in joy, in sickness and in health. He that loved us and gave Himself for us is not ashamed to be called our God and to look upon us as dear brethren. We read that it was often said of Him during His ministry, “He is gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner”; let us remember He is still the same; He never changes, there is not one amongst you Jesus would not visit if you would only unbar those hard hearts and willingly receive Him.

Mark now how well this proves who are God’s children and who are not; how plain is the evidence it furnishes, for which we are to look, if we would discover who are the pilgrims of the narrow way. It is not simply hearing the gospel preached, it is not only talking much about religion, it is not merely the outward attendance upon services—it is the indwelling of Christ in the heart, it is the constant presence of your Saviour within, showing itself by tempers and words and behaviour like His own. If you are really on the road towards Zion, if Jesus be within you, your life will show it, it will speak for itself; as a member of His body, you will daily study more and more to resemble Him, you will purify yourself even as He is pure.

Remember, in the last place, if you desire to have your Saviour as your guest, you must give Him undivided possession of your house—you must renounce and cast forth those old inhabitants, the world, the lust of the flesh and the devil. Jesus must reign alone; He has stooped low for your sakes, He has endured shame and contempt and death for an ungrateful world; He has stood long knocking at your door, but He can stoop no farther. He will not have less than your whole heart. Think you, He will consent to dwell in a heart divided between Himself and the world? think you He will bear the insult of sitting down as a guest at your table together with unclean spirits, corrupt affections, evil passions, earthly desires? Will you ask Him to come in and take a portion of your goods together with them? He will not do it: He loves you much, but He will not be mocked. They are His enemies—either He or they must depart—you must either drive them out with His assistance, praying much that He will help

you, or else He will withdraw. He will never share the throne of your heart with Satan, or hold fellowship with one who takes pleasure in the fellowship of sin.

And now, beloved, it remains for me, in conclusion, to apply this text to your souls. We are the ministers of peace, and happy should we be if we could always speak to you smooth things; but we should not be charitable if we forgot the truth, if we did not reprove and rebuke as well as exhort, if we did not endeavour to give every man his portion in due season. I say, then, that our text contains a word for three classes of hearers: for the really *unconverted*, for the *inquirer*, and for the true *Christian*. God grant that each of you may have the eyes of his understanding opened, and not take anything to himself which is not his own.

1. First, then, I speak to those whose hearts have never yet been changed by the Holy Ghost, whatever their lives may have been, whether they have made any profession hitherto or not. Beloved, I beseech you by the mercies of God, consider what you are doing. Jesus says to you, “I stand at the door and knock.” How long do you intend to keep Him waiting? How long will you insult Him by allowing everything else to go out and come in freely, while to Him, the only lawful owner, your heart is barred and bolted? How can you defend the course you are now pursuing? Have you found a new Bible? Can you show us that the doctrine we preach is not true? Can you prove that this text does not mean everything I have said?

You will not tell us that Christ is now within you; your life, your conversation, your habits all deny that. And if He is not within you at this minute, you actually are keeping Him standing without. Laugh if you choose, despise the doctrine if you please; it is written, and therefore true; you cannot overthrow it or blot it out.

Listen! Harken! What is Jesus saying now to each of you? “I stand these many years knocking at thy door: why is it not opened to me? Why am I thus shut out from your affections? What have I done to deserve such scorn and ingratitude? For your sake I left my Father’s bosom and endured hardships in the form of a servant. For your sake I was numbered among the transgressors and shed My blood upon the cross. I came to offer you abundance of happiness and life and peace: why is your heart continually closed against me? Why am I counted unworthy of a place in your thoughts? Why is a traitor and a rebel, the prince of this world, preferred before Me? ”

O unconverted man, your Lord and Master is saying this, and what can you plead by way of excuse? Perhaps you tell us it is all true,—you mean some time or other to turn to God and repent, you hope to have a more convenient season. A more convenient season!

Jesus, remember, is waiting for an answer; He does not look to what you say; your life speaks more plainly than your lips, and let me tell you what the answer of your life is: “I know,” you say, “I am insulting God, but I am willing to go on doing so for the present; I love my sins more than Him at present; I love my business more than His favour; I love my fleshly pleasure more than

His blessing; I love this earth more than heaven. When I have had enough of enjoyment here, and am tired of it, I shall think of listening to Christ,—when my bodily strength and the power of my mind is wasted, I may perhaps become the servant of God; but at present the Lord Jesus may wait; let the Lord Jesus wait my convenience.” Think not I mean you dare say this with your lips, but I do mean you are plainly saying it by your actions as long as you put off repentance and calling upon God; and I would simply ask you, Is it wise? is it reasonable? is it prudent? is it safe? Hath not God written in the book of Proverbs, “Because I called and ye refused, I stretched out my hands and no man regarded, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me”? Oh, fearful words and fearful thought! A time is coming, and may be very near, when the Lord Jesus will laugh, when the Lord Jesus will mock,—when you shall call on the Lord Jesus and He will not answer, when you shall seek the Lord Jesus early and shall not find Him. Tremble sinner, and repent; awake while it is called today, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall yet give thee light.

2. Secondly, I speak to those who are inclined to inquire about the things they hear, but have not yet decidedly made up their minds to follow the Lord fully. You are beginning to think there is some truth in the gospel, and to see some necessity for being in earnest; but you are doubting whether you will be able to act up to your profession; and you see so many careless about their souls, that you are holding back, you do not feel quite certain what to do. To all such Jesus says, “Hear My voice, and open the door.” Go forward; do not hesitate; be not faithless, but believing; think not of others; look to your own salvation; do not resist the leadings of your conscience, quench not the Spirit; follow the Lamb of God whithersoever He goes, and trust Him with the consequences. Open wide the door of your heart; let Jesus enter in, and make Him Lord of all. Do not reject His counsel. He will say, “I want to enrich thee”: do not answer, “I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” He will say, “I want to purify thee”: do not answer, “I have a few failings, but I can soon get rid of them; I do not want so much cleansing.” He will say, “I come to clothe thee”: do not answer, “I have no need of raiment, I am not naked.” But if you are at present ignorant of everything else, do this at least: hear the voice of Him who calls; open to Him the door of your heart; let His kingdom be set up within you; and be sure you will never repent, though all things seem against you.

3. Lastly, I have a word for those who have admitted Christ into their hearts by faith. Let your light so shine before men, that all may take knowledge Jesus is within you, when they find you daily striving to please Him who has become your guest. See that you do not grieve Him by any inconsistent habits in your lives. Do not be ashamed of your guest: you must confess Christ before the world, or He will not confess you before His Father and the angels. Fear not that anything shall separate you from the love of God; take heed that you despise not any of the means of grace; live fully up to the privilege to which you have

been called; walk by faith, and remember your exceeding great and precious promises; be humble, be watchful, be diligent to cleanse out the old leaven; be much in prayer and self-examination; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. Your union with Christ on earth shall only be a foretaste of good things to come, for all with whom He has supped on earth shall sit down with Him at the marriage supper of the Lamb; “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.” “He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. vii. 15-17).

PRINCIPLES FOR CHURCHMEN

A MANUAL OF POSITIVE STATEMENTS
ON SOME SUBJECTS OF CONTROVERSY

WITH AN

*EXPLANATORY INTRODUCTION ON THE PRESSING DANGERS
WHICH BESET THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND*

BY THE RIGHT REV.

BISHOP RYLE, D.D.

AUTHOR OF

"EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS" "OLD PATHS"
"LIGHT FROM OLD TIMES" ETC.

Fourth Edition, Revised

CONTAINING THE BISHOP'S FAREWELL LETTER TO THE DIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

LONDON

CHAS. J. THYNNE

WYCLIFFE HOUSE, 6, GREAT QUEEN STREET,
LINCOLN'S INN, W.C.

MAY 1900

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BISHOP RYLE'S FAREWELL TO HIS DIOCESE.

REVEREND AND DEAR BRETHREN,—Almost the last words of the great Apostle to the Gentiles are before the eyes of my mind today: “I have finished my course; the time of my departure is at hand.” After filling unexpectedly the office of your Bishop for nearly twenty years, I am about to resign a post which years and failing health at the age of eighty-three told me I was no longer able to fill with advantage to the diocese or to the Church of England.

I have resigned my Bishopric with many humbled feelings. As I look back over the years of my episcopate, I am conscious that I have left undone many things which I hoped to have done when I first came to Liverpool. I am equally conscious that the many things I have had to do with—meetings, ordinations, confirmations, and consecrations—have been done very imperfectly. I only ask you to remember that I was sixty-four, and not a young man, when I first came here, and to believe that, amidst many difficulties, I have tried to do my duty. But I am thankful that our God is a merciful God.

I can truly say that my approaching separation from Liverpool will be a heavy wrench to me. I shall never forget you. I had ventured to hope that I might be allowed to end my days near the Mersey, and to die in harness. But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, and He has gradually taught me by failing health that the huge population of this diocese requires a younger and stronger Bishop.

Before I leave you I ask you to accept a few parting words from an old minister who has had more than fifty-eight years' experience, and during that time has seen and learned many things. It is written, “Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom” (Job xxxii. 7). Let me, then, charge all the clergy whom I am about to leave behind me never to neglect their preaching. Your districts and population may be comparatively small or large. But the minds of your people are thoroughly awake. They will not be content with dull, tame sermons. They want life, and light, and fire, and love in the pulpit as well as in the parish. Let them have plenty of it. Never forget that a lively, Christ-exalting minister will always have a church-going people.

Last, but not least, cultivate and study the habit of being at peace with all your brother ministers. Beware of divisions. One thing the children of the world can always understand if they do not understand doctrine. That thing is angry quarrelling and controversy. Be at peace among yourselves.

May God bless you all.

To the many lay Churchmen whom I shall leave behind in this diocese (knowing far less of them than I should have done if I had come among them a younger man), I can only send my best wishes, and add my prayers that this diocese may have God's blessing both in temporal and spiritual prosperity. Cling to the old Church of England, my lay brethren, cling to its Bible, its

Prayer-book, and its Articles. Let no charitable institution suffer. Consider the many poor and needy. Support missionary work at home and abroad. Help the underpaid clergy. Never forget that the principles of the Protestant Reformation made this country what she is, and let nothing ever tempt you to forsake them.

In a little time we shall all meet again; many, I hope, on the King's right hand and few on the left. Till that time comes I commend you to God and the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.—I remain, your affectionate Bishop and lasting friend,

J. C. LIVERPOOL.

THE PALACE, ABERCROMBY SQUARE,
February 1st, 1900.

INTRODUCTION

TO THE THIRD EDITION.

THE volume now in the reader's hands requires a few pages of explanatory introduction.

It consists of eighteen papers, on subjects of deep interest to all Churchmen in the present day. About some of these subjects a wave of most unsatisfactory opinion is spreading over the land. About all of them there is a painful amount of ignorance and uncertainty in many minds, and myriads of Churchmen seem unable to say what they think and what they believe. On each of them this volume will be found to contain some plain and positive statements, based on Scripture and the authorized formularies of the Church of England.

Three of these eighteen papers have already appeared in a volume which I published some years ago, entitled *Knots Untied*. The papers I refer to are those on "The Church," "Worship," and "Baptism." For reintroducing them in the present volume I make no apology. They are subjects which could not be well omitted from it, without making the work incomplete as a systematic manual for Churchmen on doubtful or disputed points.

My object in sending forth this volume at the present time I will state without any hesitation. I send it forth because of the critical position in which the Established Church of England stands in consequence of her "unhappy divisions." It is my firm conviction that, notwithstanding a great outward show of zeal, and a perfect plethora of ceremonial machinery and talk, our good old Church is "in great danger." About the twofold nature of that danger I wish to speak very plainly.

I. The first and chief part of the danger of the Church of England arises from the continual existence among us of a *body of Churchmen who seem, if words and actions mean anything, determined to unprotestantize the Church of England*, to re-introduce principles and practices which our forefathers deliberately rejected three centuries ago, and, in one word, to get behind the Protestant Reformation. That there is such a body of Churchmen,—that hundreds of them from time to time have shown the tendency of their views by secession to Rome,—that for many years their proceedings have called forth remonstrances and warnings from most of our bishops,—that the eyes of all Christendom are fixed on this body, and men are watching and wondering whereunto it will grow,—that Romanists rejoice in its rise and progress, and all true-hearted Protestants in other lands grieve and mourn,—all these, I say, are great patent facts, which it is waste of time to prove, because they cannot be denied.

The zeal, earnestness, and self-denial of this body of Churchmen I do not for a moment dispute. But I cannot at all admit that they have any monopoly of these qualifications. Nor can I admit that any quantity of zeal and earnestness confers a licence to introduce "divers and strange doctrines "and practices into our parish churches, and to overstep the limits laid down in the authorized

formularies of the Church of England.

But the point to which I want to direct the special attention of my readers is this. It is an unhappy fact that the chief subject of contention between the school to which I have referred and their opponents, has been for several years the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Scores of clergymen have adopted the practice of administering the Lord's Supper with usages which have been almost entirely laid aside for 300 years,—usages to all appearance borrowed from the Church of Rome,—usages which even Archbishop Laud in the plenitude of his power never dared to enforce,—usages which, to the vast majority of thinking men, seem intended to bring back into our Church that most dangerous of all Romish doctrines, the sacrifice of the Mass.

The legality of these new usages in the administration of the Lord's Supper has been made the subject of repeated trials before the highest Law Courts of this realm. The final result has been that almost all have been pronounced distinctly illegal, and that every clergyman who persists in wearing a chasuble, or burning incense, or having lighted candles on the Communion table, or mixing water with the sacramental wine, or elevating and adoring the consecrated elements, is doing that which contravenes the doctrine of the Church of England, is putting a sense on the "Ornaments Rubric" which the highest Courts of the realm distinctly condemn, and therefore is breaking the law.

But now comes a miserable fact, which constitutes the present greatest danger of the Church of England. Some of those clergymen who have adopted these novel usages in the Lord's Supper refuse to pay the slightest attention to the judgments of the Law Courts, or to the admonitions of their bishops. In the face of the *contemporanea expositio* of three centuries, which certainly confirms the interpretation of the Ornaments Rubric given by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council,—in the face of the utter absence of anything in our Communion Office to confirm their novel views, in the face of their own solemn vow and promise to obey their bishop,—they persist in their own way of administering the Lord's Supper, and for the sake of things which they themselves must allow are *not essential* to it, they seem prepared to rend in pieces the Church of England. And in all this, worst of all, they are aided, backed, countenanced, and supported by hundreds of clergymen who never dream of breaking the law themselves, but seem to regard these law-breaking brethren as martyrs, and as excellent, worthy, and persecuted men, who ought to be let alone! If all this does not constitute a most dangerous state of things, I know not what is danger to a Church. Without some change I am convinced it will sooner or later be the ruin of the Established Church of England.

I hear so many foolish and unreasonable things said about the perilous position of matters, which I have tried to describe, that I think it my duty to offer a few remarks to all men of practical common sense, which may serve to clear the air, and be useful to some.

(a) I sometimes hear it said that the ecclesiastical lawsuits of recent times about the Lord's Supper ought never to have been instituted,—that law-breaking

clergymen might easily have been kept in order by their bishops,—and that those who instituted legal proceedings were “persecutors” and troublers of Israel. How the law *could* be ascertained without a carefully-prepared argument before competent judges I fail to see. What likelihood there was of modern law-breakers paying any attention to Episcopal admonitions I leave all calm observers to consider. But as to the hard names and bitter epithets heaped on prosecutors, I regard them with sorrow as unworthy of the lips from which they come. Englishmen, who remember that the true doctrine of the Lord’s Supper was the very point for which the Marian martyrs went to the stake, ought surely not to be surprised if many people are extremely sensitive about the least attempt to bring back the Romish Mass. I for one do not wonder. Thousands of people, I believe, would put up with many ceremonial novelties who would resist to the uttermost any innovations in the Lord’s Supper. The words of Bishop Thirlwall in his last Charge are worth remembering:—“The persons who instituted these proceedings, though to their adversaries they might appear persecutors, could not but look on themselves as simply acting on the defensive, in resistance to an unprovoked and unlawful aggression, and for the purpose of resisting what to them seemed a tremendous evil.” (Thirlwall’s Remains, vol. ii. 306.) It is easy and cheap work to call names, and revile opponents as “persecutors.” But the plain truth is, that those who break the law and refuse to obey their bishop are the real persecutors of the Church.

(b) I have heard it said frequently that the interpretation of the famous Ornaments Rubric, laid down after careful and deliberate inquiry by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, is altogether incorrect, and therefore ought not to be obeyed. I have even heard it said that their last decision (I refer to the Ridsdale case) was one “of policy, and not of justice.” I hear such sayings with considerable indifference, and call to mind the old adage, that “Defeated litigants always blame the Court in which they fail.” But broad assertions are not arguments. It is easy for some angry divines to say superciliously that leading English lawyers, of proved intellectual vigour and long experience, are incompetent to handle ecclesiastical subjects, to analyse the language of documents, and weigh the meaning of words in formularies, and that they know nothing about rubrics and Church history, and cannot grasp such matters. But who, I should like to know, will believe all this? The immense majority of thinking men in the House of Lords or the House of Commons,—in the Temple or Lincoln’s Inn, in the City or the West End,—in Oxford or Cambridge,—in Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Sheffield, Nottingham, or Bristol, will never believe it for a moment, and will think poorly of the sense of those who say such things. As for the unworthy insinuation that eminent English judges of spotless character would ever stain their judicial ermine by deciding ecclesiastical questions in a party spirit, from reasons of “policy rather than justice,” and from impure motives, I will not condescend to notice it. I pity alike the men who can make such insinuations, and the men who can believe them.

(c) I hear it said sometimes, that spiritual questions ought to be left to spiritual

men, and that a Court composed mainly of laymen, like the Judicial Committee, is incompetent to try theological cases. This at first sight appears a very plausible idea; but I do not think it will bear the test of calm consideration. No doubt the present Court of Final Appeal, like every Judicial Court composed of men, may have its faults and imperfections, and the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Courts may possibly have suggested some improvements. But if the Judicial Committee of Privy Council is to be set aside in ecclesiastical cases, and a so-called *spiritual* Court set up in its stead, I doubt extremely whether a better Court, and one which will satisfy the laity, can possibly be constructed. It is easy to find fault with an institution and pull it down, but it is not always so easy to build a better. Where are the constituent parts to come from? Who are to be the new and improved judges? I declare I look over the land from north to south, and from east to west, and I fail to discover the materials out of which your “readjusted” Court of Appeal is to be composed. There may be hidden Daniels ready to come to the judgment-seat, of whom I know nothing. But I should be glad to know who they are.

Shall we ask the State to sweep away the present Court of Appeal, and compose one of bishops only? I am afraid such a Court would never give satisfaction. If there is any one point on which the *Guardian* and the *Record*, the *Church Times*, the *Rock*, and the *English Churchman* are entirely agreed, it is the fallibility of bishops! Each of these papers would tell us that several English prelates are anything but wise and orthodox, and are not trustworthy judges of disputed questions. But if this is the case, what likelihood is there that the whole Church would be satisfied with their judicial decisions? Last, but worst of all, the private opinions of almost all English bishops are so well known that they are not fit to be judges of disputed ecclesiastical questions. Their decisions would be foregone conclusions.

Shall we turn away from the bishops, and compose the new Court of Appeal of deans, University professors, and select eminent theologians, picked out of Convocation? Again the same objection applies. He that can run his eye over the list of English deans, or the professorial staff at Oxford and Cambridge, and then talk of forming out of that list an unexceptionable tribunal, acceptable to all parties, must be a man of faith bordering on credulity. As to the “select eminent theologians,” I have yet to know who is to have the selection. The very divines whom one school of Churchmen would choose, are men whom another school would not allow to be sound “theologians” at all.

The fact is, that the favourite theory of those who would refer all ecclesiastical causes to *clerical* judges, is a theory which will never work. It sounds plausible at first, and looks well at a distance, but it is utterly unpractical. Laymen, and legal laymen, trained and accustomed to look at all sides of a question, are the only material out of which a satisfactory Court of Appeal can be formed. Ecclesiastics, as a rule, are unfit to be judges. We do not shine on the bench, whatever we may do in the pulpit. If there is one thing that bishops and presbyters rarely possess, it is the judicial mind, and the power of giving an impartial,

unbiased decision.¹

(d) I have heard it said sometimes, that the matters for which the recent objectors to decisions about the Ornaments Rubric contend are mere matters of taste. The whole question, forsooth, is one of æstheticism and ornamentation! Why wrangle and quarrel, some say, about such trifles? I wish I could believe this view. Unhappily there is strong testimony the other way. With the party of whom I am now speaking, the whole value of ceremonial consists in its significance as a visible symbol of doctrine. The evidence of leading men before the Ritual Commission, the language continually used in certain books and manuals about the Lord's Supper, all tend to show that the question in dispute is, whether in the sacrament there is a propitiatory sacrifice as well as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and whether there is a real *presence* beside that in the hearts of believers. These are not trifles, but serious doctrinal errors, and points on which I am persuaded the bulk of English Churchmen will never tolerate the least approach to the Church of Rome. To use the words of the late Bishop Thirlwall, "The real question is, whether our Communion Office is to be transformed into the closest possible resemblance to the Romish Mass." (Thirlwall's Remains, vol. ii. p. 233.)²

(e) Last, but not least, I hear it sometimes said, that obedience to rubrics ought to be enforced all round, and that it is not fair to require one clergyman to

¹ "The composition of a purely ecclesiastical tribunal to be substituted for the present 'Court of Appeal' in cases of heresy, is a problem beset with such complicated difficulties, as to render it almost hopeless that any scheme will ever be derived for its solution, which would give general satisfaction; even if there were not so many who would reject it for the very reason that it appears to recognize a principle—the mystical prerogative of the clergy—which they reject as groundless and mischievous." (Bishop Thirlwall's Remains, vol. ii. p. 135.)

"That the members of the Judicial Committee would ever consent, or be permitted, to renounce their supreme jurisdiction, and exchange their judicial functions in this behalf, for a purely ministerial agency by which they will have passively to accept, and simply to carry into effect, the decision of a clerical council,—this is something which I believe is no longer imagined to be possible, even by the most ardent and sanguine advocate of what he calls the inalienable rights of the clergy, so long as the Church remains in union with the State on the present terms of the alliance. But if they do not take up this subordinate position, the principle of the ecclesiastical prerogative in matter of doctrine, which to those who maintain it is probably more precious than any particular application of it, is abandoned and lost. The Church will, in their language, continue to groan in galling fetters, and an ignominious bondage." (Bishop Thirlwall's Remains, vol. ii. p. 137.)

² The following evidence was deliberately given by that well-known clergyman, the Rev. W. J. E. Bennett, vicar of Frome, before the Royal Commission on Ritual:—

"2606. 'Is any doctrine involved in your using the chasuble?' 'I think there is.'

"2607. 'What is that doctrine?' 'The doctrine of the sacrifice.' "2608. 'Do you consider yourself a sacrificing priest?' 'Distinctly so.'

"2611. 'Then you think you offer a propitiatory sacrifice?' 'Yes, I think I do offer a propitiatory sacrifice.'

obey the Ornaments Rubric as interpreted by the Privy Council, while another clergyman is allowed to neglect another rubric altogether. This is a favourite argument in many quarters, but I am unable to see any force in it. In matters like these there is no parallelism whatever between acts of *omission* and acts of *addition*. To place on the same level the conduct of the man who, in administering the Lord's Supper, introduces novelties of most serious doctrinal significance, and the conduct of the man who does not observe some petty obsolete direction, of no doctrinal significance at all, is to my mind contrary to common sense. But, after all, complete and perfect obedience to all the rubrics is simply impossible, and I do not suppose there is a single clergyman in England who observes all. The three first rubrics in the Communion Service are illustrations of what I mean. Moreover, the change of laws and customs, and the large liberty now allowed to a clergyman, have rendered some ancient rubrical requirements obsolete and inexpedient. A certain discretion must be allowed to a bishop in the nineteenth century in deciding what rubrics the circumstances of the Church require to be observed. If I ask one clergyman to obey the ruling of the Privy Council about the Ornaments Rubric, and to discontinue the use of the chasuble, the incense, the lighted candles, and the like, I do so because of the immense importance of maintaining Protestant views of the Lord's Supper, and the deep jealousy which prevails among the laity about the appearance of anything like the sacrifice of the Mass.—If I decline to ask another clergyman to have daily matins, and vespers, and saints' day services, in some huge, overgrown, poor parish, in a mining district, or at the north or south ends of Liverpool, where ninety-nine out of a hundred of his parishioners cannot possibly attend such services, I decline, because I think his time, in the short twelve hours of the day, might be far better employed. He can spend his day more usefully, in going from house to house among his people, than by reading prayers in an empty church. He can do far more good by doing things which were flatly forbidden 240 years ago (when our rubrics were last settled),—by non-liturgical services in unconsecrated rooms, by Cottage Lectures, by Bible Classes, by Young Men's Meetings, by Mothers' Meetings, by Temperance Meetings, by Prayer Meetings, and other well-known modern means of usefulness. And when men tell me that my balances are unjust, and that it is not fair to interfere with the one clergyman and to leave the other clergyman alone, I hear the accusation with indifference. I believe I am doing that which is best for the Church of England, and most likely to advance her interests.

I leave this weary subject here. For dwelling on it at such length, and trying to discuss it from every point of view, I make no apology. The position of the Church is so critical, and the danger so great, that a bishop has no right to hold his peace. Without some change of weather, or change in men's minds, or change in the management of the ship, I see nothing before us but disaster and damage to the Church of England.

What the end of the present distressing strife is likely to be, it is impossible to say. There is not the slightest sign of abatement in the activity of extreme

Ritualists. Every year they seem to act more boldly, and to be more insatiable in their demands. The fierce, violent, and intolerant tone of their advocates on Congress platforms,—their openly avowed desire to get behind the Elizabethan Reformation, and to restore the first prayer-book of Edward VI. to public use,—their contemptuous refusal to exhibit the slightest sympathy with the recent Luther Commemoration,—their habitual disobedience to legal decisions and Episcopal admonitions,—all these are painful symptoms which he who runs may read. They are symptoms which almost justify the suspicion that the ultimate design of extreme Ritualists is to procure the repeal of the Gorham decision, and all the Privy Council judgments which have gone against them,—to turn the evangelical clergy out of the Church of England,—to bring back and legalize Mass in our Communion,—to cancel the Act of Settlement which requires our Sovereigns to be Protestants,—and finally, to bring about reunion between the Anglican Church and the Church of Rome. That such are the latent intentions of the extreme Ritualists, is the firm conviction of not a few quiet observers of the times. Whether their suspicions are correct or not, I am not prepared to say. But I must say that it does not surprise me that such suspicions exist.¹

For my own part I do not wish to be a black prophet. I have great faith in our Church's tenacity of life. She survived the temporary suppression of Protestantism in the reign of Bloody Mary. She survived the overthrow of Episcopacy and the proscription of the Liturgy in the days of the Commonwealth. She survived the expulsion of 2000 most able clergymen in 1662 by the Act of Uniformity. She survived the secession of the nonjurors, when William III. came to the throne. She survived the loss of the Methodist body in the last century. She has survived the departure to their own place of Manning, Newman, Oakley, Faber, the two Wilberforces, and many others in our own day. If she is faithful to Protestant principles, I believe she would survive the secession of the whole "English Church Union," if they left us next year? But I cannot bring myself to believe yet that the great majority of the members of that body would actually

¹ The following extract from the Scotch *Free Church Magazine* for April 1884 is worth reading. It is a common saying that lookers-on sometimes see most of the game:—

"That Romanism is spreading in England is notorious; and to us it seems little less than treason in those who think the Mass idolatrous to consent on any terms to be silent. Says the *Church Review*:—'The thing which English Catholics have in hand at present, and are likely to have in hand, as their principal work, for at least one generation to come, is the restoration of the altar, the re-establishment of the Mass in its seat of honour, as the sun and centre of Christian worship. Till this great work has progressed much further than it has at present, it would be waste of time to emphasize too strongly doctrines of great importance indeed, but of less importance than that of the Eucharistic sacrifice. But unless the Catholic revival is to come to an untimely end—a catastrophe which there is no reason faithlessly to anticipate—the future will see in our restored public worship unmistakable marks of the belief of the Christian Church in the efficacy of the intercessions poured forth by blessed Mary and all saints at the throne of grace, and of our real communion (that is, mutual union) with them in the acts which we perform as members of the one body of Christ.'"

leave the Church of their forefathers, on account of things which they themselves must allow are not essential to the Lord's Supper. Many of them, I suspect, are utterly blind to the logical consequences of their movement. Like the followers of Absalom, they have joined it "in their simplicity, and know not anything." But while I shrink from imputing treachery and disloyalty to the leaders of extreme Ritualism, I shall never shrink from declaring my conviction that their movement endangers the life of the Established Church of England.

II. The other pressing danger of the Church of England which induces me to send forth this volume is one of a very different kind. It consists in the rise and progress of a *spirit of indifference to all doctrines and opinions in religion*.

A wave of colour-blindness about theology appears to be passing over the land. The minds of many seem utterly incapable of discerning any difference between faith and faith, creed and creed, tenet and tenet, opinion and opinion, thought and thought, however diverse, heterogeneous, contrariant, and mutually destructive they may be. Everything, forsooth, is true, and nothing is false, everything is right and nothing is wrong, everything is good and nothing is bad, if it approaches us under the garb and name of religion. You are not allowed to ask what is God's truth, but what is liberal, and generous, and kind.

(a) We may see the danger in the vastly altered tone of public feeling about Romanism which has appeared in the last forty years. There is no longer that general dislike and aversion to Popery which was once almost universal in this realm. The edge of the old British feeling about Protestantism seems blunted and dull. Some profess to be tired of all religious controversy, and are ready to sacrifice God's truth for the sake of peace.—Some look on Romanism as simply one among many English forms of religion, and neither worse nor better than others.—Some try to persuade us that Romanism is changed, and not nearly so bad as it used to be.—Some boldly point to the faults of Protestants, and loudly cry that Romanists are quite as good as ourselves.—Some think it fine and liberal to maintain that we have no right to think anyone wrong who is in earnest about his creed.—And yet the two great historical facts, (a) that ignorance, immorality, and superstition reigned supreme in England 400 years ago under Popery, (b) that the Reformation was the greatest blessing God ever gave to this land,—both these are facts which no one but a Papist ever thought of disputing fifty years ago! In the present day, alas, it is convenient and fashionable to forget them! No doubt this altered tone of public feeling has been furthered immensely by the proceedings of the extreme Ritualistic party in the Church of England. That energetic and active body has been vilifying the Reformation, and sneering at Protestantism, for many years, with only too much success. It has corrupted, leavened, blinded, and poisoned the minds of many Churchmen, by incessant misrepresentation. It has gradually familiarized people with every distinctive doctrine and practice of Romanism,—the real presence,—the mass,—auricular confession and priestly absolution,—the sacerdotal character of the ministry,—the monastic system,—and a histrionic, sensuous, showy style of public worship;—and the natural result is, that many simple people see no mighty

difference between the Church of England and the Church of Rome. Besides this, the spurious liberality of the day we live in helps on the reaction of feeling. It is fashionable now to say that all sects should be equal,—that the State should have nothing to do with religion,—that all creeds should be regarded with equal favour and respect,—and that there is a substratum of common truth at the bottom of all religions, whether Buddhism, Mohammedanism, or Christianity! The consequence is, that myriads of ignorant folks begin to think there is nothing peculiarly dangerous in the tenets of Papists any more than in the tenets of Methodists, Independents, Presbyterians, or Baptists,—and that we ought to let Romanism alone, and never expose its unscriptural character. One thing at any rate is patent and obvious to every observing eye. Whatever the cause may be, public feeling in England is strangely altered about the Church of Rome.

(b) We may see the danger again in the widely-spread disposition to make cleverness and earnestness the only tests of orthodoxy in religion. Thousands of professing Christians nowadays seem utterly unable to distinguish things that differ. If a preacher or lecturer is only clever and eloquent and earnest, they appear to think he is all right, however strange and heterogeneous his sermons or lectures may be. Popery or Protestantism, an atonement or no atonement, a personal Holy Ghost or no Holy Ghost, future punishment or no future punishment, High Church or Low Church or Broad Church, Trinitarianism, Arianism, or Unitarianism, nothing comes amiss to them,—they can swallow all, if they cannot digest it! Carried away by a fancied liberality and charity, they seem to regard doctrine as a matter of no importance, and to think everybody is going to be saved and nobody going to be lost. Their religion is made up of negatives; and the only positive thing about them is, that they dislike distinctness, and think all extreme and decided and positive views are very naughty and very wrong

These people live in a kind of mist or fog. They see nothing clearly, and do not know what they believe. They have not made up their minds about any great point in the Gospel, and seem content to be *honorary members of all schools of thought*. For their lives they could not tell you what they think is truth about forgiveness of sins, or justification, or regeneration, or sanctification, or the Lord's Supper, or baptism, or faith, or conversion, or inspiration, or the future state. They are eaten up with a morbid dread of CONTROVERSY and an ignorant dislike of PARTY SPIRIT, and yet they really cannot define what they mean by these phrases. The only point you can make out is that they admire earnestness and cleverness and charity, and cannot believe that any clever, earnest, charitable man can ever be in the wrong! And so they live on undecided, and too often undecided they drift down to the grave, without comfort in their religion, and, I am afraid, often without hope.

The explanation of this boneless, nerveless condition of soul is perhaps not difficult to find. The heart of man is naturally in the dark about religion, has no intuitive sense of truth,—and really NEEDS instruction and illumination. Besides this, the natural heart in most men hates exertion in religion, and cordially dislikes patient painstaking inquiry. Above all, the natural heart generally likes

the praise of others, shrinks from collision, and loves to be thought charitable and liberal. The whole result is that a kind of broad religious “agnosticism” just suits an immense number of people, and specially suits young persons. They are content to shovel aside all disputed points as rubbish, and if you charge them with indecision, they will tell you,—“I do not pretend to understand controversy; I decline to examine controverted points. I daresay it is all the same in the long run.”—Who does not know that such people swarm and abound everywhere? And who does not know that anyone who denounces this state of things, and insists that a clergyman should be loyal to the articles of his Church, is regarded as a narrow, party-spirited, ungenerous person, quite unsuited to the nineteenth century?

(c) We may see the danger, lastly, in the demand which many are loudly making for the adoption of a general policy of toleration and forbearance within the pale of the Church of England. Such a policy, we are gravely told, is the true remedy for “the present distress.” Every clergyman is to be allowed to hold and teach and do what he likes. No one is ever to be called to account either for his ceremonial actions at the Lord’s table or his sermons in the pulpit. Every school of thought, however extreme, is to be tolerated. No prosecutions in any Court, whether spiritual or secular, are to be permitted. The model for the Anglican Church is to be Israel in the days of the judges: “Every man is to do what is right in his own eyes” (Judg. xxi. 25).

The mere fact that such a monstrous policy as I have described finds acceptance with many Churchmen is, to my mind, one of the greatest perils of the Church of England; and, like extreme Ritualism, its adoption could only have one result. That result would ultimately be disruption, disintegration, and disestablishment. You could not possibly have two or three distinct churches within one communion. It is amazing to me that the advocates of this notable policy of universal toleration do not see that it would infallibly end in our Church being broken to pieces.

No doubt, at first sight this policy of universal toleration looks very specious. It suits the temper of the times. What more likely to provide peace and stop quarrelling than to declare the Church a kind of Noah’s ark, within which every kind of opinion and creed shall dwell safe and undisturbed, and the only terms of communion shall be willingness to come inside and let your neighbour alone? Nevertheless, I must confess my utter inability to understand how the policy could ever be carried out without throwing overboard all Articles and Creeds, without doing away with all subscriptions, in short, without altering the whole constitution of the Church of England.

Whether this state of things will ever be sanctioned and allowed I cannot tell. Nothing in these days is impossible. Nothing is too absurd to concede and allow in the present mania for complete freedom of thought, and absolute liberty of opinion. I will only ask my readers to consider carefully what the practical working of the new system would be.

What would be the position of *the laity*? At present the English lay-

churchman, wherever he lives, or moves to in England, may justly expect to find a certain degree of uniformity in the services and sermons of the Parish Church. No doubt he may find more singing and surplice-wearing and outward ceremonial in one place than another. One clergyman may give more prominence to one set of verities than another. But, on the whole, the diversity is generally within limits.—There will be an end of all this when the reign of universal toleration begins. He will be startled to hear from one pulpit that much of the Old Testament is defective and uninspired, or that there is no such person as the devil, and no future punishment. If he moves to another parish, he may be astonished to see the Lord's Supper administered with a sacrificial dress, and accompanied by incense and lighted candles in broad day, and adoration of the consecrated elements. If he dislikes all this, he must not complain! However much aggrieved, he will be told that this is the famous policy of toleration, and that he must submit! Will the laity be content and satisfied with this state of things? I doubt it extremely. There would be general grumbling all over the country. Myriads of the middle class would leave the Church, and become dissenters.

What would be the position of *the English clergy*? At present, in spite of much friction and jarring, the great majority of the three schools of thought, high, low, and broad—manage to get on pretty amicably, and respect one another. There is a common bond of union in loyal love to the Church of England, and a cordial desire to hand her down uninjured to their children. There is a common determination to abide within the limits of our creeds and formularies, and not to transgress them. There is a common dislike to the furious zealots of either extreme, who are striving by addition or subtraction to depart from the old paths. There will be an end of all this when the reign of universal toleration begins! When the mass on one side, and avowed scepticism on the other, are formally sanctioned by authority, it is vain to suppose there would not be a large secession of some conscientious clergy from our communion. Others who did not secede would draw together for protection, and crystallize and solidify their own peculiar views, and refuse to recognise any others. In short, there would be a multiplication and increase of our “unhappy divisions,” which would endanger the existence of the Church of England, and shake it to the very centre.

What, above all, would be the position of *our English Bishops*? At present they make a solemn promise, at their consecration, that they will be “ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's word, and both privately and openly to call upon and encourage others to the same.” Once let the much-praised policy of universal toleration be accepted and formally authorized, and I fail to see the slightest use in this promise. Some of a bishop's clergy will hold a Romish view of the Lord's Supper, and openly call it the Mass. Others will be content with the views of the prayer-book, and indignantly repudiate incense, chasuble, a material presence, an altar, and a sacrifice. Some of his candidates for ordination will hold doctrines which cannot, by any ingenuity, be reconciled with the Articles, and coolly write them down in their examination papers. Others, with equal

coolness, will offer sceptical statements about inspiration and the atonement. What, then, is the unhappy bishop to do? He will be able to do nothing at all. He must be an "honorary member of all schools of thought." He will be obliged to smile on all with equal complacency, and to license, institute, and ordain anybody or everybody, without asking any questions at all, or requiring any declarations, promises, vows, oaths, or subscriptions. If the Church of England long survived such a chaotic state of things, it would be a miracle indeed. When there are no laws or rules, there can be no order in any community. When there is no creed or standard of doctrine, there can be no church, but a babel.

Such are the pressing dangers which appear to me to beset the Church of England in the present day. On one side there is the danger of relapsing into Popery, and going back behind the Reformation. On the other side is the growing danger of total indifference to sound doctrine, under the specious garb of liberality, and unwillingness to think any earnest man is wrong. In short, at the rate we are going now, the end of our good old Church, unless God interferes, will be either Popery or infidelity.

In view of these two great dangers, I now send forth this volume as a humble contribution to the treasury of truth, and a protest against error. The principles it contains I have held and advocated for more than forty years, and I never felt more convinced than I do now that they are Scriptural principles, Church principles, true, trustworthy, and worthy of all acceptance.

If this volume is the means of opening the eyes of any who have been led astray, or of checking any who are wavering and disposed to leave the old path, I shall be abundantly repaid for the labour which it has cost me, amidst the many demands on a Lancashire bishop's time.

What the final result of the present state of things will be I do not pretend to predict. There is immense vitality in the Church of England, and I do not despair. But it is grievous to see how many faithful laymen are thoroughly weary and sick at heart, and ready to forsake the old ship. Some are turning from church to chapel, and becoming dissenters or Plymouth Brethren. Some are beginning to advocate disestablishment, and to ask what is the use of a church without discipline or creed. Some few are disposed to flirt with scepticism, and to doubt whether there is such a thing as "truth." I entreat such men to be patient. I ask them to believe that the true Churchman occupies an impregnable position so long as the law is unaltered, and I invite them to arm their minds with the principles which this volume contains.

J. C. LIVERPOOL

THE CHURCH'S DISTINCTIVE PRINCIPLES.

I HAVE chosen this subject for two simple and weighty reasons. Let me explain briefly what they are.

My first reason is the abounding ignorance which prevails among many Churchmen about the *real principles* of the Communion to which they belong. Myriads of people, I am afraid, attend our churches from year to year, who could not, if their lives depended on it, give orderly account of the leading doctrines of the Church of England. They have probably been baptized and confirmed, and perhaps admitted to the Lord's Supper in our pale. They attend our services and use our Prayer book. They are even zealous for the union of Church and State. But they have never read the Articles, or thoroughly investigated the Creeds! Romanists and Dissenters are generally well acquainted with the leading principles of their respective systems. The Churchman too often knows nothing of his. To lessen this ignorance, and supply a little light, is one object of this paper.

My other reason is the rise and progress in the last forty years of *much unsound teaching* under the specious name of "Church principles." That vague, misty, and indefinite phrase seems to turn many heads, and attracts adherents who use it without knowing what it means. There is a kind of fascination about it which appears to rob some people of their common sense. They go up and down the world talking incessantly of "sound Church principles" and "true Church views," without the slightest clear idea what they really are. Nay, worse than this, if you bring them to book, you find that their favourite expressions often cover a whole shoal of weak, foolish, unscriptural, and semi-Romish opinions. To expose the fallacy of these so-called "Church principles," and to exhibit in contrast the true distinctive principles of the Church of England, is the second object which I have in view in this paper.

It will clear my way at the outset, if I remind my readers that the "*Church principles*" which I am going to treat in this paper are the principles of the "Established Church of England." The "Catholic Church" is a favourite expression which is continually used in the present age. But it is one of those great, swelling, high-sounding, vague expressions which mean anything, everything, or nothing, according to the mind of him who uses them, and I shall pass it by. Doubtless there is a "Holy Catholic Church," about which I could say much; but I shall not dwell on the subject now. I shall stick to my subject. The principles I am going to consider are the principles of that Reformed Church of England, which was emancipated from Rome 300 years ago,—the Church whose foundations were cemented afresh with the blood of Hooper, Ridley, Latimer, and their martyred companions, the Church which was temporarily overthrown by the semi-Romanism of Laud,—drained of its life-blood by Charles II.'s Act of Uniformity,—revived by the noble work of Whitfield, Wesley, Romaine, and Venn in the last century, —and which, in spite of many traitors within and many Liberationists without, is still recognized by Queen, Lords, and Commons as the Established Church of this realm. *Esto perpetua!* The principles of that "Particular or National Church" I am going to exhibit and defend. (Article xxxiv.)

To the remark I have just made, in order to clear the way, I must add one more, which, I fear, will startle some Churchmen. When I speak of the "distinctive principles of the Church of England," I do not mean for a moment its

distinctive Episcopal government, or its distinctive Liturgical mode of worship. Much as I value these two things, I cannot forget that a Church may possess them, and yet be in a most corrupt and useless condition. The trumpet of ecclesiastical history gives no uncertain sound on this point. The African, and Syrian, and Asiatic Churches, whose candlestick has been long taken away, are plain proofs that you want something more than Bishops and Liturgies in order to keep a Church alive. No! The distinctive principles of the Church of England which I have in view are those mighty *doctrinal principles* which have been her strength and her stay for 300 years. I mean those distinctive principles on which her walls were rebuilt by Cranmer, and Parker, and Jewel, at the era of the blessed Reformation,—principles which, though sorely jeopardized at some periods of our history, have never been entirely suppressed, and, though cast down, have not been destroyed. To the maintenance of those principles, and not to Episcopacy or a Liturgy, I believe our Church owes any measure of power, influence, usefulness, or blessing from God, which it has enjoyed for the last three centuries. Once let those principles be forsaken and repudiated, and our Church will decay and die, like those ancient Churches which I have just named. To state as briefly as possible what those principles are, is my main object in drawing up this paper.

Now where shall we turn in order to find out these great “distinctive principles” to which I have just been referring? I answer, unhesitatingly, to the Thirty-nine Articles, which are to be found at the end of every complete and unmutated copy of the Book of Common Prayer. Those Articles, however little known and read by many, are the Church’s authorized Confession of Faith. Their very title calls them “Articles agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops of both provinces, and the whole clergy, for the avoiding of diversities of opinions, and for the establishing of consent touching true religion.” He that really wants to ascertain what are sound “Church views” and “Church principles” ought certainly to turn first to the Thirty-nine Articles.

Of course I am aware that the Articles find no favour with some, and are thought hard, and narrow, and strict, and obsolete, and ill adapted to these times. “Give me the Church’s Prayer-book,” they say, “and do not talk to me about the Articles.” But there are several awkward facts, which these people appear to forget. They forget that the Articles form a part of the Prayer-book itself, and that no copy of our Liturgy is complete which does not contain them. Furthermore, they forget that even in the days of the unhappy Charles I. a declaration was prefixed to the Articles, containing these words: “The Articles of the Church of England do contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God’s Word.” Last, and not least, they forget that the Statute Law of the land, in the shape of an Act of Parliament first passed in Elizabeth’s time, and then deliberately re-enacted in Queen Victoria’s reign, requires every clergyman, instituted to any living, at this very day, when he begins to officiate in his church, “publicly and openly, in the presence of his congregation, to read the whole Thirty-nine Articles, and immediately after reading to make the declaration of assent to them,” saying, “*I believe the doctrine of the Church of England, as therein set forth, to be agreeable to the Word of God.*” These are indisputable facts, which cannot be explained away. In the face of these facts, I maintain that no loyal Churchman has a right to complain if I turn to the Articles in order to ascertain the distinctive principles of the Church of England.¹

But I shall not leave this subject here. Short memories about everything in

religion, from the fourth commandment downward, are so sadly common, and the ingenious device of playing off the Prayer-book against the Articles, as if they were contrary one to another, is so prevalent, that I shall supply a few more facts about the Articles which are well worth remembering. They all tend to confirm, strengthen, and fortify the authority and value of the Thirty-nine Articles. Let us take the evidence of six well-known English divines, of widely different schools, who have long passed away from this world.

(1) Let us hear the evidence of “Thomas Rogers,” Chaplain to Archbishop Bancroft, who published, in 1607, the first “Exposition of the Articles” which ever appeared. This book, written within forty years of the time when the Articles were finally ratified, was dedicated to the Archbishop, and was a work of great authority at the time. In the Preface to this work he says:—

“The purpose of our Church is best known by the doctrine which she does profess: the doctrine by the Thirty-nine Articles established by Act of Parliament; the Articles by the words whereby they are expressed: and other doctrine than in the said Articles is contained, our Church neither hath nor holdeth, and other sense they cannot yield than their words do impart.”

(2) Let us next hear what great and good Bishop Hall says, in his work on “The Old Religion:”—“The Church of England, in whose motherhood we have all come to pride ourselves, hath in much wisdom and piety delivered her judgment concerning all necessary points of religion, in so complete a body of divinity as all hearts may rest in. These we read, these we subscribe, as professing not their truth only, but their sufficiency also. The voice of God our Father, in His Scriptures, and, out of them, the voice of the Church our mother, in her Articles, is that which must both guide and settle our resolutions. Whatsoever is beside these, is either private, or unnecessary, or uncertain.” (Hall’s Works, Oxford edition, vol. ix. p. 308.)

(3) Let us next hear what Bishop Stillingfleet says in his “Unreasonableness of Separation:”—“This we all say, that the doctrine of the Church of England is contained in the Thirty-nine Articles; and, whatever the opinions of private persons may be, this is the standard by which the sense of our Church is to be taken.” (London, 4to edition, p. 95. 1631.)

(4) Let us next hear what Bishop Burnet says:—“The Thirty-nine Articles are the sum of our doctrines, and the confession of our faith.” (Burnet on Articles, Pref. p. i., Oxford edition. 1831.)

Let us next hear what Bishop Beveridge says, in the Preface to his great work on the Articles:—“The Bishops and clergy of both provinces of this nation, in a Council held at London, 1562, agreed upon certain Articles of religion, to the number of thirty-nine, which to this day remain the constant and settled doctrine of our Church; which, by an Act of Parliament of the 13th of Queen Elizabeth, 1571, all that are entrusted with any ecclesiastical preferments are bound to subscribe to.” (Beveridge on Articles, vol. i. p. 9, Oxford edition. 1840.)

(6) Let us hear, lastly, what Bishop Tomline says:—“The Thirty-nine Articles are the criterion of the faith of the members of the Church of England.” (“Elements of Theol.,” vol. ii. p. 34. 1799.) And in another place he says:—“The Articles are to be subscribed in their plain and obvious sense, and assent is to be given to them simply and unequivocally. If the candidate for holy orders thinks that he sees reason to dissent from any of the doctrines asserted in them, no hope of emolument or honour, no dread of inconvenience or disappointment, should induce him to express his solemn assent to propositions which in fact he

does not believe. And let it ever be remembered that, in a business of this serious and important nature, no species whatever of evasion, or subterfuge, or reserve, is to be allowed, or can be practised, without imminent danger of incurring the wrath of God.” (“Elements of Theol.,” vol. ii. p. 567.)

It would be easy to multiply witnesses, and to overload the subject with evidence. But in these matters enough is as good as a feast. Enough, probably, has been said to satisfy any candid and impartial mind that the ground I have taken up about the Articles has not been taken up without good reason. He that desires to go more deeply into the subject would do well to consult Dean Goode’s writings about it, in a controversy which he held with the late Henry Philpotts, Bishop of Exeter. In that remarkable controversy, I am bold to say, the Dean proved himself more than a match for the Bishop. (Goode’s “Defence of Thirty-nine Articles, and Vindication of Defence.” Hatchard. 1848.)

One remark I must make, in self-defence, before leaving this branch of my subject. I particularly request that no one who reads this paper will misunderstand the grounds I have been taking up. Let no one suppose that I think lightly of the Prayer-book, because I do not regard it as the Church of England’s primary standard and test of truth. Nothing could be more erroneous than such an idea. In loyal love to the Prayer-book, and deep admiration of its contents, I give place to no man. Taken for all in all, as an uninspired work, it is an incomparable book of devotion for the use of a Christian congregation. This is a position I would defend anywhere and everywhere. But the Church of England’s Book of Common Prayer was never intended to be the Church’s standard of doctrine in the same way that the Articles were. This was not meant to be its office; this was not the purpose for which it was compiled. It is a manual of public devotion: it is not a confession of faith. Let us love it, honour it, prize it, reverence it, admire it, and faithfully use it. But let us not exalt it to the place which the Thirty-nine Articles alone can fill, and which common sense, Statute Law, and the express opinions of eminent divines unanimously agree in assigning to them. The Articles, far more than the Prayer-book, are the Church’s standard of sound doctrine, and the real test of true Churchmanship.²

And now, with the Thirty-nine Articles in my hand, let me try to point out what are the great “distinctive principles of the Church of England.” I make the attempt with unfeigned diffidence. I have a painful recollection of “our unhappy divisions.” I am well aware that, beside disloyal semi-Romish Churchmen and disloyal semi-sceptical Churchmen, there are hundreds of loyal members of our Communion who do not see things as I do. But all this is no reason why I should not give my own opinion, and exhibit the subject as it appears to me. At any rate I have a very decided opinion, and my readers shall hear what it is.

I. The first distinctive principle of the Church of England appears to me to be its *unvarying reverence for holy Scripture*. It always recognizes “the supremacy and sufficiency” of God’s Word written, as the only rule of faith and practice. (Lambeth Synod. 1878.)

Its theory is that man is required to believe nothing as necessary to salvation which is not in the Bible. It totally denies that there is any other guide for man’s soul co-equal or co-ordinate with the Bible. The supreme authority of Scripture, in short, is one of the corner-stones of the Church of England. Here, it would have its members know, is rock: all else is sand.

The Sixth Article declares that “holy Scripture contains all things necessary

to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.”

The Eighth Article says that “the three Creeds ought thoroughly to be believed and received, for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture.”

The Twentieth Article says, “It is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God’s Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another.”

The Twenty-first Article says that “things ordained by General Councils as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture.”

The Twenty-second Article condemns certain Romish doctrines and practices, “because they are grounded on no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.”

The Twenty-eighth Article condemns Transubstantiation, because it “cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture.”

The Thirty-fourth Article says that “traditions and ceremonies of the Church may be changed, so that nothing be ordained against God’s Word.”

Now I see in all this abundant proof that the Bible, and the Bible only, is the rule of faith in the Church of England, and that no doctrine is “Church doctrine” which cannot be reconciled with God’s Word. I see a complete answer to those Churchmen who tell us that we make an idol of the Bible, and that we ought to go to the Fathers, or to primitive tradition, or to the voice of the Church, or to the Prayer-book, for spiritual direction, I see that any sense placed on any part of the Prayer-book which is not reconcileable with Scripture, must be a mistake, and ought not to be received. I see, above all, that all who pour contempt on the Bible, as an imperfect, defective Book, which is not complete without “ancient interpretation,” or ought not to be believed if it contradicts “modern thought,” are taking up ground which is at variance with the Church’s own Confession of Faith. They may be devout, zealous, clever, earnest, and confident persons; but they are contradicting the Articles, and they are not thoroughly sound Churchmen.

II. The second distinctive principle of the Church of England appears to me to be *its doctrinal Evangelicalism*. I am afraid that in saying this I use a phrase which some may think offensive and controversial. I am sorry for it; but I can find no other language to convey my meaning. What I do mean is that our Church’s Confession of Faith gives an unmistakeable *prominence* to those doctrines which, rightly or wrongly, are called in this day “Evangelical.”

For the proof of this assertion I will simply refer my readers to the titles, contents, and order of the first eighteen Articles out of the thirty-nine, and then ask any unprejudiced thinking man to use his judgment and exercise his senses. What kind of subjects will he find handled in twelve out of the eighteen? Why, such great doctrinal subjects as the sufficiency of Scripture, in the sixth Article,—everlasting life through Christ offered to mankind in the Old Testament as well as in the New, in the seventh,—original sin, in the ninth,—free-will and the need of God’s grace, in the tenth, justification by faith, in the eleventh,—good works as the fruits of justification, in the twelfth,—the uselessness of works before justification, in the thirteenth,—the nullity of works of

supererogation, in the fourteenth,—Christ alone without sin, in the fifteenth,—sin after baptism, in the sixteenth,—election and its evidences, in the seventeenth,—and eternal salvation only by Christ, in the eighteenth. And in what position will he find these great subjects? Why, they are placed in the forefront of the whole Confession of the Church! They occupy the post of honour, and stand forward, as the weightiest and most important matters of the faith. And it is not till the mind of the Church has been fully declared about them, that we find anything about the visible Church, the ministry, or the sacraments. To them *the second place is most manifestly assigned.*

Now what shall we say to these things? I will answer that question by putting before my readers a hypothetical case. Let us suppose for a moment that one of the leading churches in Liverpool or Manchester is vacant by the death or promotion of the incumbent, and a new clergyman has to be appointed. Let us suppose that the bias and inclination of the patron are not known, and that no one can tell whom he will select. Let us suppose, furthermore, that the clergyman whom he finally presents is an entire stranger in Liverpool or Manchester, and that no one has the least idea what opinions he holds, and to what “school of thought” in the Church he belongs. Let us suppose, after this, that this unknown clergyman commences his duties, and for the first three months is continually preaching bold, decided, outspoken sermons, about such points as the sufficiency of Scripture, original sin, the need of grace, justification by faith, and salvation only by Christ; and, though he occasionally handles other subjects, makes the great doctrines I have just referred to the staple of his preaching. Let us just suppose all this, and then ask ourselves what conclusion the people of Liverpool or Manchester would form? Why, I will engage to say that if you picked a jury of the first twelve intelligent hearers of this clergyman, and asked them at the end of three months to what school of thought in the Church the new parson belonged, and what kind of views he held, their verdict would be decided and unanimous. They would reply with one voice, “He is thoroughly Evangelical.”

I ask any impartial man to apply this hypothetical case to the point which I am now trying to prove. I ask him to study our Church’s Confession of Faith, and to notice carefully the contents and order of the first eighteen Articles, and to observe what comes first and what comes second, in the whole thirty-nine. And then I appeal to his common sense, and ask him if it is possible to deny that one distinctive principle of the Church of England is its “doctrinal Evangelicalism”?

Before I pass on, let me venture to advise my fellow-Churchmen never to be ashamed of holding Evangelical views. Those views, I am quite aware, are not fashionable nowadays. They are ridiculed as old-fashioned, narrow, defective, and effete. Those who maintain them are regarded as illiberal, impracticable old fossils. Never mind! We have no cause to be ashamed. Evangelicalism is not dead yet. Its whole-hearted and “thorough” adherents live well and die well, and do some good in the world. And, not least, Evangelicalism is one of the distinctive principles of the Thirty-nine Articles and therefore of the Church of England.

III. The third distinctive principle of the Church of England appears to me to be its *clear and outspoken testimony against the errors of the Church of Rome.*

This is a point, I am sorry to say, about which there is a sad amount of

unsoundness among Churchmen in the present day. Some seem thoroughly ashamed of the, Reformers and the Protestant Reformation, and can talk coolly of the possibility of reunion with the Papacy. Others profess to dislike controversy about Popery, and avoid reference to it as much as possible. The plague is abroad. The old English dislike to Romanism is cooling down most painfully. The days of Queen Mary and the fires of Oxford and Smithfield seem forgotten. The gallant struggles of Parker, and Jewel, and the Elizabethan divines are lightly esteemed. But all this time what say the Articles? I assert unhesitatingly that a thoroughly Protestant spirit runs throughout them, and their testimony against Romish error is clear, ringing, and unmistakable.

What says the Nineteenth Article? “The Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith.”

What says the Twenty-second Article? “The Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration, as well of Images as of Reliques, and also invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.”

What says the Twenty-fourth Article? It forbids the Romish custom of having public prayers, and ministering the sacraments in Latin, as “repugnant to the Word of God.”

What says the Twenty-fifth Article? It declares that the five Romish sacraments of Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and extreme Unction, are not to be accounted sacraments of the Gospel.

What says the Twenty-eighth Article? It declares that “transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.” It also declares that “the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was not by Christ’s ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.”

What says the Thirtieth Article? “The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay-people.”

What says the Thirty-first Article? “The sacrifices of masses, in which it was commonly said the priest did offer Christ for the quick and dead, to have remission of pain and guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits.”

What says the Thirty-second Article? “Bishops, priests, and deacons are not commanded by God’s law to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage.”

What says the Thirty-seventh Article? “The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England.”

What shall we say to all this? *Nine times over* the Thirty-nine Articles condemn in plain and explicit language certain leading doctrines of the Church of Rome, and declare in favour of what must be called “Protestant” views. And yet men dare to tell us that it is very wrong and very uncharitable to be so hot in favour of Protestantism,—that Romanism is not such a mischievous and dangerous thing as it was once thought,—and that by making such a piece of work about Popery, and Protestantism, and Ritualism, and semi-Popery, we are only troubling the country and doing more harm than good! Well, I am content to point to the Thirty-nine Articles. There is my apology! There is my defence! I will take up no other ground at present. I will not say, as I might do, that Popery is an unscriptural system, which every free nation ought to dread, and every

Bible-reading Christian of any nation ought to oppose. I simply point to the Thirty-nine Articles? I ask any one to explain how any English clergyman can be acting consistently, if he does not oppose, denounce, expose, and resist real, unmistakable Popery in every shape, either within the Church or without. Other Christians may do as they please, and countenance Popery if they like. But so long as the Articles stand unrepealed and unaltered, "Protestantism" is a distinctive principle of the Church of England, and it is the bounden duty of every clergyman to oppose Popery. ³

IV. The fourth distinctive principle of the Church of England appears to me to be *its rejection of any sacerdotal or sacrificial character in the Christian ministry.*

I hope I need hardly remind my readers that the pretended "sacerdotalism" of ministers is one of the oldest and most mischievous errors which has ever plagued Christendom. Partly from an ignorant hankering after the priesthood of the Mosaic dispensation which passed away when Christ died,—partly from the love of power and dignity which is natural to ministers as much as to other men,—partly from the preference of unconverted men for a supposed priest and mediator whom they can see, rather than one in heaven whom they cannot see,—partly from the general ignorance of mankind before the Bible was printed and circulated,—partly from one cause, and partly from another, there has been an incessant tendency throughout the last eighteen centuries to exalt ministers to an unscriptural position, and to regard them as priests and mediators between God and man. How much the Church of Rome has erred in this direction, with its so-called "sacrifice of the mass" and its organized stem of auricular confession, and what enormous evils have resulted from these errors, I have no time to describe now. The disuse, I am sorry to say, has effected our own Church. There are scores of English churches at this moment in which the service is so conducted that you might think you were in a Popish chapel. The Lord's Supper is administered as a sacrifice far more than as a sacrament, and the clergy are practically acting as sacrificing priests. The Lord's Table is called an "altar," although it is never once so called in the Prayer-book! The consecrated elements are treated with an idolatrous reverence, as if God Himself was present under the forms of bread and wine. The habit of private sacramental confession to clergymen, as absolving priests, is encouraged and urged on the people. I speak as to wise men. Every intelligent Englishman knows that what I say is true.

Now I have not time to point out fully that there is not a word in the Acts or the Epistles to show that the Apostles ever professed to be sacrificing priests, or to make any material oblation in the Lord's Supper, or to hear private confessions, and confer judicial absolutions. But I do ask my readers to remember that there is not a sentence in the Articles to warrant the idea of a sacerdotal and sacrificial ministry.

In the Twenty-third Article we are simply told that "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard."

In the Thirty-first and Thirty-second Articles there is a marked distinction

made between the Romish priest in the Thirty-first, who is called in the Latin version of the Article, “sacerdos” (a sacrificing priest), and the English priests in the Thirty-second, who are called in the same Latin version “presbyteri or elders.” Stronger evidence that the word “priest,” in our Prayer-book, only means “presbyter,” or *elder*, it would be hard to find!

Throughout the whole latter part of the Articles, from the Nineteenth to the Thirty-ninth, there is one uniform marked absence of a single word that could justify the idea of a “sacerdotal” ministry being sanctioned in the Church of England. In fact there is a speaking silence, just as remarkable as the silence on the same subject in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus in the New Testament. That silence, I believe, was intentional. And the conclusion I draw is most decided,—that the compilers of the Articles purposely and deliberately rejected the idea of a sacerdotal and sacrificial ministry, and took care not to leave so much as a peg in the Articles to hang it upon. In short, they repudiated it as a deadly error.

If any one supposes that Evangelical Churchmen undervalue the office of the Christian minister, he is totally mistaken. We regard it as an honourable office instituted by Christ Himself, and of general necessity for carrying on the work of Christ’s Gospel. We look on ministers as preachers of God’s Word, God’s ambassadors, God’s messengers, God’s servants, God’s shepherds, God’s stewards, God’s overseers, and labourers in God’s vineyard.

But we steadily refuse to admit that Christian ministers are in any sense sacrificing priests, mediators between God and man, lords of men’s consciences, or private confessors. We refuse it, not only because we cannot see it in the Bible, but also because we have read the lessons of Church history, and seen the enormous evils to which it has given rise. We believe that sacerdotalism or priestcraft has often been the curse of Christianity, and the ruin of true religion. We say boldly that the exaltation of the ministerial office to an unscriptural place and extravagant dignity in the Church of England is likely to alienate the affections of the laity, to ruin the Church, and to be the source of every kind of error and superstition. “Sacerdotalism,” said an eminent Liberal statesman (Mr. Forster of Bradford) not long ago, “if tolerated in the Established Church, will, in my own case, turn an honest and fearless supporter of the existing system into an equally honest and determined opponent.”—“I would as little sanction a sacerdotal State Church as I would the union of the State with Romanism.”—And we say, in addition, though last, not least, that sacerdotalism has not the slightest warrant in the Thirty-nine Articles. A non-sacerdotal ministry is a distinctive principle of the Church of England.

V. The fifth and last distinctive principle of the Church of England appears to me to be *its wise, well-balanced, and moderate estimate of the sacraments*.

I need hardly tell my readers that extravagant views of the effects of baptism and the Lord’s Supper have been in every age of the Church the most fertile source of mischievous superstition. Such is the intensity of man’s natural tendency to formalism in religion, that myriads have always clung to the idea that these two sacraments confer grace, independently of faith, in those that receive them, and that they work on the soul in a kind of physical way, if I may so speak, like medicines on the body. The high-flown rhetorical language of the Fathers about them did immense harm in the early ages. The Church of Rome has stereotyped and crystallized the error, by the decree of the Council of Trent

(7 Ses. 8 Canon. Cramp's "Text-book of Popery," p. 155): "Whosoever shall affirm that grace is not conferred by these sacraments of the new law, by their own power (*ex opere operato*), but that faith in the Divine promises is all that is necessary to obtain grace: let him be accursed." Thousands of English Churchmen, wittingly or unwittingly, seem to maintain practically the same view as the Church of Rome, and to attribute to the mere outward administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper a kind of invariable influence and power, no matter how they are used.

The harm that these extravagant views do to the souls of men is simply incalculable. They help to fill "the broad way" with travellers. Multitudes live and die in the secret belief that they were "born again," and received the grace of the Spirit in baptism, though from their infancy they have known nothing of what the Church Catechism calls "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness." They are not "dead to sin," but actually live in it; and yet, forsooth, they think they are born again! Multitudes more are continually receiving the Lord's Supper under the belief that somehow or other it *must do them good*, though they are utterly destitute of the Catechism standard, and neither "repent of sin," nor "purpose to lead a new life," nor "have a lively faith in God's mercy in Christ, nor a thankful remembrance of His death, nor live in charity with all men." They seem, in short, to have imbibed the idea that the Lord's Supper can give grace to the graceless, and is a means of conversion and justification! And all this time the Scripture says expressly, "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter! whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. ii. 28, 29). And again: "Baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)" (1 Pet. iii. 21). And again: "that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drink; damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. xi. 29).

Now to these extravagant views the effect of the sacraments, I unhesitatingly assert that the Church of England gives no countenance at all. The Twenty-fifth Article declares plainly about both sacraments, that in such *only* as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves damnation." The Twenty-eighth Article says: "To such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ, and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ." The twenty-ninth Article says: "The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ: but rather to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing."

It is no answer to all this to quote the language of the Service for Infant Baptism, which says of every child baptized, "This child is regenerate." You might just as well say that every child who repeats the words of the Church Catechism is really "elect" and really "sanctified," because he says, "I believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God." The utmost you can make of the expression is, as Bishop Carleton says, that "It is the charity of the Church;" or, as Bishop Downam, Archbishop Usher, and Dean Durel say, "The judgment of charity." The dictum of Lord Chancellor Hatherley, in the Voysey judgment, must never be forgotten:—"Pious expressions of

devotion are not to be taken as binding declarations of doctrine.” “The Articles,” said the “Solicitors’ Journal,” when that judgment was delivered, “and these alone, are to be considered as the code of doctrine of the Church of England.” And I repeat my deliberate conviction, that the wise and moderate statement of the Articles, that grace is not invariably tied to either baptism or the Lord’s Supper, is the true doctrine of our Church, and one of its distinctive principles.

I hope my fellow-Churchmen in this day will stand firm on this subject. There is, I am afraid, a sad disposition to give way and recede from Protestant truth in this direction. Partly from a fear of not honouring the sacraments enough, partly from the pressure of modern ritualistic teaching, there is a strong tendency to exalt baptism and the Lord’s Supper to a place never given to them in Scripture, and especially not in the pastoral Epistles. Let us set our foot down firmly on the wise and moderate principles laid down in our Articles, and refuse to go one inch beyond. Let us honour sacraments as holy ordinances appointed by Christ Himself, and blessed means of grace. But let us steadily refuse to admit that Christ’s sacraments convey grace *ex opere operato*, and that in every case where they are administered good must of necessity be done, no matter how or by whom they are received. Let us refuse to admit that they are the principal *media* between Christ and the soul,—above faith, above preaching, above prayer, and above the Word. Let us maintain, with the judicious Hooker, that “all receive not the grace of God who receive the sacraments of His grace.” Let us ever protest against the idea that in baptism the use of water, in the name of the Trinity, is invariably and necessarily accompanied by the “new birth” of the inward man. Let us never encourage any one to suppose he will receive any benefit from the Lord’s Supper, unless he comes to it with “repentance for sin, and lively faith in Christ, and charity toward all men.” Holding these principles, no doubt men are reviled as Low Churchmen, Zwinglians, “unlearned and ignorant men,” and half Dissenters. But those who talk against them in this fashion will never satisfy a jury of impartial intelligent men that their views of the sacraments are not the wise, moderate, distinctive principles of the Church of England.

In drawing my paper to a conclusion, I may be allowed to observe that the statements I have made in it might easily be confirmed by a great cloud of witnesses. Our Church’s reverence for Scripture as the only rule of faith,—our Church’s doctrinal Evangelicalism,—our Church’s Protestantism,—our Church’s repudiation of a sacerdotal ministry,—our Church’s rejection of the *ex opere operato* theory of the sacraments,—all these points might be abundantly supported by quotations from the Liturgy, the Homilies, Bishop Jewel’s Apology, and the writings of the Reformers and Elizabethan divines. But this would occupy more room than I can afford to give in this paper, and it is possible to overload men’s minds in an age when people are sadly afflicted with intellectual dyspepsia, and cannot digest much. I have thought it better to stick to the Articles, and to draw my arguments solely and entirely from them. I only remark that those who have time to investigate the subject farther will be abundantly rewarded. Reading in Reformation theology is reading that will pay.

Of course I am aware that the whole subject of my paper is one on which, as Sir Roger de Coverley used say, “There is much to be said on both sides.” I shall be told that many loyal members of the Church of England, true-hearted and worthy men, opposed alike to popery and infidelity, spending and being spent daily for the Anglican Communion, do not see things as I do, and would

not subscribe to the account of the Church's "distinctive principles" which I have laid before you to-day.

Well, I admit all this, fully and freely. To use a familiar saying, "More's the pity!" It always has been so. It always will be so, I suppose. So long as human nature is what it is, you will never get all men to approach religious subjects from the same standpoint, or to attach precisely the same meaning to theological terms and words.⁴ To see the conflicting interpretations which two equally honest minds will sometimes put on the same language is to my mind one of the wonders of the world. So long as the early training of young English clergymen is so miserably defective as it is, I am not surprised at any amount of defective theology. Moreover, I know that our Church is largely and wisely *comprehensive*, and has always found room for more than one school in her pale. I frankly allow that many of those who disagree with the views I have expressed to-day are just as loyal to the Church of England as myself, and I have not the slightest wish to ostracize them, or drive them out of our communion. Of course, I think them mistaken and in error, and they probably think just the same about me! But I do not want to unchurch them, so long as they honestly and *ex ammo* subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles. Papists, Socinians, and infidels are in the wrong place in the Church of England, and I cannot tolerate them. Within these limits, however, I can tolerate a great deal, and cultivate hope and charity about others.

But while I admit all this, I must express my own decided conviction that the statement I have given of the distinctive principles of the Church of England is a true and correct one,—that there is no flaw in the argument,—and that no Churchmen have less cause to be ashamed of their peculiar views than those who are called "Evangelical Churchmen." Nor is this all. I am persuaded that no religious teaching at this moment is doing so much real good throughout the world, in awakening, convincing, and converting souls, as that old-fashioned, despised teaching which is called "Evangelical." Other schools, no doubt, wear smarter uniforms, blow louder trumpets, carry more sail, and make much more show before men. Ours, I humbly believe, has the most of the favour and blessing of Almighty God. If I did not think so, I would leave it to-day.

And now let me conclude all with four pieces of advice which I offer in brotherly affection to all who read this paper. Take them as coming from one who, through evil report and good report, for nearly half a century has stuck to Evangelical opinions, has marked the rise and progress of other more popular schools, and carefully studied their distinctive views, and at the end of a long life is not a bit ashamed.

(1) In the first place, I advise every one who reads this paper *to read the Thirty-nine Articles* regularly, at least once every year, and to make himself thoroughly familiar with their contents.

It is not a reading age, I fear. Newspapers, and periodicals, and shilling novels absorb the greater part of the time given to reading. I am sorry for it. If I could only reach the ear of all thinking lay Churchmen, I should like to say, "Do read your Articles." As for clergymen, if I had my own way, I would require them to read the Articles publicly in church once every year.

Ignorance, I am compelled once more to say, is one of the grand dangers of members of the Church of England in the present day. The bulk of her people neither know, nor understand, nor seem to care about, the inside of any of the great religious questions of the day. Presbyterians know their system. Baptists,

Independents, and Methodists know theirs. Papists are all trained controversialists. Churchmen alone, as a body, are too often profoundly ignorant of their own Church, and all its principles, doctrines, and history. Not one in twenty could render a good reason of his position, and tell you why he is a Churchman!

Let us cast aside this reproach. Let all Churchmen awake and rub their eyes, and begin to “read up” their own Church and its doctrines. If any man wants to know where to begin, I advise him to begin with the Thirty-nine Articles. And if any one wishes for a sound exposition of the Articles, let him read Dr. Boulton’s “Theology of the Church of England.” (Longman.)

(2) In the second place, I advise all who read this paper *to teach the Thirty-nine Articles* to all young people who are yet of an age to be taught. It is a burning shame that the Articles are not made an essential part of the system of every school connected with the Church of England, whether it be elementary or classical, whether it be for high or low, for rich or poor.

I speak from experience. It is a simple fact, that the beginning of any orderly and clear doctrinal views I have ever attained myself, was reading up the Articles at Eton, for the Newcastle Scholarship, and attending a lecture at Christ Church, Oxford, on the Articles, by a college tutor. I shall always thank God for what I learned then. Before that time I really knew nothing systematically of Christianity. I knew not what came first or what last. I had a religion in my head without order. The things which I found good for myself I commend to others. *Experto crede*. If you love young people’s souls, and would ground them, and stablsh them, and arm them against error betimes, take care that you teach them not only the Catechism, but also the Articles.

(3) In the third place, I advise all who read this paper *to test all Churchmanship* by the test of the Articles. Be not carried away by those who are always talking of “Church views,” “catholic principles,” “catholic ceremonies,” “holy, earnest, parish priests,” “hard-working clergymen,” “devoutness,” “work,” and the like. Depend on it, these vague expressions often cover over a vast quantity of unsound or defective Churchmanship?

As to “*catholic principles*,” hear what the Bishop of Manchester said about them in January 1878:—

“Year by year, out of this undefined, ill-understood, misused word ‘catholic,’ new and strange dogmas and usages are evoked. And the plea is, that to some these things are ‘a great comfort.’ The same plea might be urged for dram-drinking! Etymologically and truly, that only *comforts* which *strengthens*. And I have seen nothing to prove to me that the new school of ‘catholic teaching’ is producing men and women more imbued with the true spirit of Christianity, which is the spirit of love and of power and of a sound mind, than that old school of English Churchmanship in which I was trained, and in which I hope to die.”—*Guardian*, January 16, 1878.

As to “*devoutness*,” hear what the Bishop of Gloucester says:—

“It is utterly irrelevant to bring forward the goodness and *devoutness* of the Catholic school. Thank God, there are very many good and devoted Roman Catholics in this world; but this goodness and devotion do not make their principles a whit different from what they are, or render their doctrines in the faintest degree more reconcilable with the teachings and principles of the Reformation.”—Charge. *Guardian*, January 16, 1878.

As to *work*, I am afraid, in many *well-worked* parishes, as they are called, it means nothing more than feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving medicine to the sick, distributing alms to the poor, keeping cottages clean, visiting

schools, and administering the Sacrament to the infirm and dying. Such “work,” as it is called, is all very well in its way, makes a man look busy, takes up time, and quite satisfies many people. But is it the chief “work” for which a clergyman is ordained? Is he really meant to be little more than a relieving officer, or doctor, or sanitary inspector, or manager of schools? Is not his chief work to *preach and teach Christ’s Gospel*? Does he do so? That is the first and foremost question;—and to answer it you have a right to turn to the Bible and the Articles. Try all that clergymen preach and teach, by one simple measure,—Does it or does it not agree with the Articles? You have an undoubted right to do this, and no English clergyman has any right to object to your doing it. Say to him, if he does object, “You publicly read and subscribed to the Articles, when you accepted your cure of souls. Do you or do you not abide by your subscription?”

This is the simple ground we want to take up in the various Societies which—amidst much abuse, obloquy, and opposition—are labouring to maintain the Protestant character of the Church of England. We are not in-tolerant, whatever some may please to say. We do not want to persecute anybody for trifles, or to magnify petty differences, or to narrow the limits of our Church. We have not the slightest wish to excommunicate every one who cannot agree with us in every jot and tittle of our opinions. We would think and let think. But we do contend that there are bounds to the liberty of thought which our Church allows to her children, and that those bounds ought not to be transgressed. We object to the Popish Mass, the Popish Auricular Confession, and all the Popish practices which so many are trying to introduce among us, to the infinite disgust of the laity, and the infinite damage of the Church of England. We want to maintain the great distinctive principles of the Church of England pure, whole, and undefiled, and to hand them down as such to our children. “*Nolumus leges ecclesiæ mutari.*” And we say that any one who holds preferment in the Church of England ought to obey the laws of the Church of England, so long as those laws are unrepealed. If English rulers ever repeal the Acts of Parliament called the 13th of Elizabeth, and 28th and 29th of Victoria, and get rid of the Thirty-nine Articles, we will take up other grounds for opposing extreme Ritualism, and will concede that a Churchman may be anything or everything in opinion, and may even be a Papist! But so long as things are as they are, we say we have a right to demand that respect shall be paid to the Articles.

(4) Finally, let me advise every Churchman who values his soul *never to be ashamed of the great leading doctrines* which are so nobly set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles.

Never mind if people call you “extreme, party-spirited, going too far, puritanical, ultra-Methodist,” and the like. Ask them if they have ever read the first eighteen Articles of their own Church. Tell them, so long as you are a Churchman, you will never be ashamed of holding “Church doctrine,” and that you know what Church doctrine is, if they do not.

Remember, above all, that nothing but clear, distinct views of doctrine such views as you will find in the first eighteen Articles—will ever give you peace while you live, and comfort when you die.

“Devoutness,” and “earnestness,” and “catholic” views, and “catholic” principles, and “catholic” ceremonies are fine, specious, high-sounding terms, and very beautiful to look at and talk about, when we are well, and happy, and prosperous. But when the stern realities of life break in upon us, and we are in trouble,—when the valley of death looms in sight, and the cold river must be

crossed, in seasons like those we want something better than mere “earnestness” and “catholic principles! to support our souls. Oh no! it is cold comfort then, as our feet touch the chill waters, to be told, “Fear not! You hold catholic views, you have been baptized, you have gone to the Lord’s Supper constantly. Take comfort! All is well.”—It will never, never do “*Non tali auxilio tempts eget.*” We want then to “know and feel” that God is our God, that Christ is our Christ, that we have the Holy Spirit within us, that our sins are pardoned, that we are sprinkled with the precious blood of the Lamb, that our souls are saved, that our persons are justified, that our hearts are changed, that our faith is genuine and real. “Catholic principles” and “catholic ceremonial” alone will not be enough then. Nothing, in short, will do in that solemn hour but clear, distinct gospel doctrine, embraced by our inward man, and made our own by living faith. Doctrines such as those set forth in the Articles are the only doctrines which are life, and health, and strength, and peace. Never be ashamed of laying hold of them, maintaining them, making them your own personal property, and contending for them to the death. Be very sure those doctrines are the religion of the Bible and of the Church of England!

FOONOTE

1 The Fifth Canon of 1604 contains the following remarkable words:-"whosoever shall hereafter affirm, that any of the nine and thirty Articles agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops of both provinces, and the whole Clergy, in the Convocation holden in London, in the year of our Lord God 1562, for avoiding diversities of opinions, and for establishing consent touching true religion, are in any part superstitious or erroneous, or such as he may not with a good conscience subscribe unto, let him be excommunicated *ipso facto*, and not restored, but only by the Archbishop, after his repentance, and public recantation of such his wicked errors."

2 "Prayers, in the very nature of things, are compositions which are not so precisely framed and worded as cold, dry, dogmatic statements of doctrine. They are what the rhetorical speech of the advocate is, compared to the cautious and well-balanced decision of the judge. 'In the Prayer-book,' says Dean Goode, 'we have a collection of national formularies of devotion, written at a time when a large proportion of the people were inclined to Romanism, and at the same time compelled to attend the service of the National Churches,—and consequently carefully drawn up, so as to give as little offence as possible to Romish prejudices. Is such a book calculated to serve the purpose of a standard of faith?' In the Articles," he adds, 'on the other hand, we have a precise confession of faith on all the great points of Christian doctrine, drawn up in dogmatic propositions, as a test of doctrinal soundness for the clergy.' The Liturgy is an excellent book, beyond question. But to say that it can serve the purpose of a standard of faith so well as the Articles, is, to say the least, unreasonable." ("Knots Untied," p. 84.)

3 "Our English Communion, if she is not Protestant, has no standing-place among the Churches."—*Bishop of Rochester's Pastoral*, 1878, p. 53.

4 "It is apparently the inexorable law of the operation of the human intellect, that there must be diversities of opinion, opposed modes of thought and feeling, determined partly by original differences of mental constitution, partly by the association of education. We cannot all hope to be alike. The Church of Christ, in this respect, is no exception to other societies. From the beginning of its existence, from the days of its apostolic infancy, there have been in it 'schools of thought.'"—*Professor Ince's Inaugural Lectures at Oxford*, 1878.

II.

THE CHURCH'S COMPREHENSIVENESS.

THE title of this paper contains a word which requires a little explanation. That word is "comprehensiveness." In order to explain my meaning, I will mention a few questions about which men's minds seem curiously bewildered in these days. The questions are such as these: Was the Reformed Church of England intended to be a narrow communion in which no difference of opinion was to be allowed?—Were its members meant to be confined to a rigid uniformity of thought on every conceivable point of doctrine and practice?—Was any liberty of thinking to be allowed?—What were to be the limits of such liberty? On each of these questions I shall try to throw a little light in this paper.

(1) To be *as comprehensive as possible*, consistently with reverence for the rule of Scripture, should be the aim of every well-constituted National Church. Reason and common sense alike point this out. It should allow large liberty of thought within certain limits. Its *necessaria* should be few and well-defined. Its *non-necessaria* should be very many. It should make generous allowance for the infinite variety of men's minds, the curious sensitiveness of scrupulous consciences, and the enormous difficulty of clothing thoughts in language which will not admit of more than one meaning. A sect can afford to be narrow and exclusive; a National Church ought to be liberal, generous, and as "large-hearted" as Solomon (1 Kings iv. 29). Above all, the heads of a National Church should never forget that it is a body of which the members, from the highest minister down to the humblest layman, are all fallen and corrupt creatures, and that their mental errors, as well as their moral delinquencies, demand very tender dealing. The great Master of all Churches was one who would not "break a bruised reed or quench smoking flax" (Matt. xii. 20), and tolerated much ignorance and many mistakes in His disciples. A National Church must never be ashamed to walk in His steps. To secure the greatest happiness and wealth of the greatest number in the State is the aim of every wise politician. To comprehend and take in, by a well-devised system of Scriptural Christianity, the greatest number of Christians in the nation, ought to be the aim of every National Church.

Now comprehensiveness, such as I have described, I believe to be *a peculiar characteristic* of the National Church of England. I do not admit the truth of Chatham's famous dictum, that we have Calvinistic Articles, a Popish Liturgy, and Arminian clergy. It sounds smart, but it is not correct. No doubt we have within our pale three widely different "schools of thought,"—the old historical schools commonly called High, and Low, and Broad. They are schools which have existed for nearly three centuries, and, unless human nature greatly alters, I believe they will exist as long as the Church of England stands. But for all this I believe that there is no Church on earth which contains so large a number of educated, intelligent, independent, thoughtful, free-speaking ministers and laymen; who, while they—differ widely on some points, and each thinks himself right and others wrong, are all firmly attached to their own Communion, and would be ready, if need be, to fight for it to the very last. We all probably think we could reform and amend the Church a little, and each school has its own special nostrums and medicines, which it believes would improve the Church's health, if taken. And, like genuine Englishmen, we are all ready to grumble

because we cannot have everything our *own way*. Yet there is a curious amount of agreement among us about certain great principles. We all love our old English Bible, if we do not always interpret it alike. We like Episcopacy, if we do not equally like all our Bishops. We like the Prayer-book, if we do not put the same sense on all its phrases. We like our parochial system and our parish churches. We like our Articles, and Creeds, and mode of worship. And if any man asks how much we like these things, I advise him to try to take them away. He would soon find that he might as well try to interfere between husband and wife in a family quarrel, and that all parties would agree in telling him to mind his own business, and in shutting the door in his face.

The plain truth is that our National Church is very like our National Army, which contains several various forces, each firmly convinced of its own peculiar importance. In time of peace the Guards chaff the Line, and the Line the Guards, the Cavalry makes light of the Artillery, and the Artillery of the Cavalry, the kilted Highlanders think little of the Rifle Brigade or the Welsh Fusiliers, and the Irish regiments think themselves best of all. But let the stern realities of war once begin, and a British army be sent to a foreign shore,—let the campaign really commence, and the enemy be met on the field of battle,—let the word be given to advance across the Alma, or charge up the valley of death at Balaclava, or storm the Redan, or force the Khyber Pass,—and where will you find more real union, and brotherly feeling, and readiness to stand shoulder to shoulder, than in the army of our Queen? And so I believe it is in our National Church. There may be many traitors among us, sceptics and Romanists, who are useless and untrustworthy, and ought to go to their own place. But for all this, there is a vast amount of substantial agreement within our pale. In spite of all her apparent differences, and conflicting schools of thought, the National Church has strong elements of cohesiveness, and contrives to satisfy and keep together a very large proportion of the people of this land. This is what I call successful comprehensiveness.

In questions like these there is nothing like coming to names and facts. From the long roll of great divines to which the National Church can thankfully point, let me select a few examples of men of different schools of thought, and then let me ask any sensible Churchman whether there is one of them whom he would wish to blackball and exclude from our ranks. Let us think of Ridley and Latimer and Jewel, of Hooker and Andrews and Pearson and Hammond, of Davenant and Hall and Usher and Reynolds, of Stillingfleet and Patrick and Waterland and Bull, of Robert Nelson and George Herbert, of Romaine and Toplady and Newton and Scott and Cecil and Simeon, of Bishops Ryder and Blomfield and Baring and Waldegrave and Jeune and Thirlwall, of Archbishops Sumner and Longley and Tait and Whately, of the martyred Bishop Patteson, and the late Canon Mozley. What reading man does not know that these divines differed widely about many subjects,—about the Church, the ministry, and the sacraments—about the meaning of some words and phrases in the Prayer-book—about the relative place and proportion they assigned to some doctrines and verities of the faith? But they all agreed in loving the Church of England, in thanking God for her Reformation, in maintaining her protest against the Church of Rome (see Note A), in using her forms of worship, and in labouring for her prosperity. They could pray and praise together. In days of darkness and persecution they drew together, like Hooper and Ridley in Queen Mary's time, and found common ground. We may all have our pets and favourites in this list. We

may greatly prefer some of these men to others. We may think some of them were in error, and did not “declare all the counsel of God.” But after all, is there one of them whom we should like to have turned out of our communion? I reply, Not one! With all their shades in opinion they were “honest Churchmen,” and there was room in our pale for all. And this is what I call the practical comprehensiveness of the National Church.

(2) But are there no *limits to the comprehensiveness* of the Church of England? This is a very delicate question; but I am prepared to look it fully in the face. It is one of such vast importance, in a day of abounding liberalism, that it seems very desirable to lay down one or two leading principles on the subject.

There ought to be some limits to the comprehensiveness of every Church, for the sake of order. Once more I assert that reason and common sense point to this conclusion.

Order is Heaven’s first law. There was order in Eden before the fall. There will be perfect order on earth at the restitution of all things. A Christian Church utterly destitute of order does not deserve to be called a Church at all. A Church, like every other corporation on earth, must have definite terms of membership. It must have a creed, and certain fixed principles of doctrine and worship. Its members have a right to know what its ministers are set to teach. A Church which is a mere boneless body, like a jelly-fish, a colourless, bloodless, creedless Pantheon, in which every one is right and nobody is wrong who is *in earnest*, and in which it does not matter a jot what is preached and taught, so long as the preachers are *sincere*,—such a Church is an unpractical absurdity, and the baseless fabric of a dream. The Church which abandons all “limits,” and will not proclaim to mankind what it believes, or would have its members believe, may do very well for Cloudland or Utopia; but it will never do for a world where there are tears and crosses, troubles and sorrows, sickness and death.

The member of the National Church of England has a right to expect one general type of teaching and worship, whether he goes into a parish church in Truro or Lincoln, in Canterbury or Carlisle. Different shades of statement in the pulpit, he may find himself obliged to tolerate. But he may justly complain if the doctrine of one diocese is as utterly unlike that of another as light and darkness, black and white, acids and alkalis, oil and water. “Liberty of prophesying” and free thought, in the abstract, are excellent things. But they must have some bounds. Just as in States the extreme of liberty becomes licentiousness and tyranny, so in Churches it becomes disorder and confusion. The Church which regards Deism, Socinianism, Romanism, and Protestantism with equal favour or equal indifference, is a mere Babel, a “city of confusion,” and not a city of God.

Now, I contend that the National Church of England has set up wisely-devised “limits” to its comprehensiveness. Those limits, I believe, are to be found in the Articles, the Creeds, and the Book of Common Prayer. These well-known documents, I maintain, provide limits wide enough for all reasonable men who do not object *in toto* to liturgies and Episcopacy. They are documents, no doubt, which all do not interpret alike. As long as the world stands, and as long as language is what it is, you will never get men to place precisely the same meaning on theological phrases and words. But, however variously we may interpret the Articles, Creeds, and Prayer-book, they are unmistakeable limits, fences, and bounds within which the National Church requires its ministers to walk, and he that flatly rejects them, denies them, contradicts them,

and transgresses them, is in his wrong place inside the Church of England.

(a) If, for example, on the one hand, a man calling himself a Churchman deliberately denies the doctrine of the Trinity, or the proper deity of Christ, or the personality and work of the Holy Ghost, or the atonement and mediation of Christ, or the inspiration and divine authority of Scripture, or justification by faith, or the inseparable connection of saving faith and holiness, or the obligation of the two sacraments, I cannot understand what he is doing in our ranks. Of course, as an Englishman, he may come into our places of worship. But common sense seems to me to point out that he cannot conscientiously use our Prayer-book, and that he has certainly no right to occupy our pulpits and reading desks.

(b) If, on the other hand, a minister of the National Church maintains and teaches those distinctive doctrines of the Church of Rome which are plainly named, defined, and repudiated in the Thirty-nine Articles, and ignoring the public declaration which he made on taking a living, deliberately teaches transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the mass, purgatory, the necessity of auricular confession, and the invocation of saints, I contend that he is transgressing the liberty allowed by the Church of England. He may be zealous, sincere, earnest, and devout, but he is in the wrong place in a Protestant communion. He has stepped over the just limits of the Church's comprehensiveness, and is occupying an untenable and unwarrantable position.

Whether these documentary limits of our Church's comprehensiveness are the wisest and best that could have been devised, I will not undertake now to consider. At any rate, they are at present the law of the land. But one assertion I will venture boldly to make. Search all the Confessions of Faith in Christendom, and I defy any man to find one which combines decision and firmness in necessary things, and moderation in non-necessary things, so admirably as the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. Nor yet will you find a Church which allows such liberty and freedom of thought to its ministers, and imposes so light a yoke on their consciences. If a clergyman will only subscribe the Articles *si ammo*, and "consent to the use" of the Prayer-book in conducting public worship, he is at once a chartered freeman of our Anglican corporation. Let our rivals in other communions say what they please about our need of "liberation." The freest pulpit on earth is the pulpit of our Established Church.

Of course the things I have just said appear very narrow and illiberal to some minds. There are many nowadays who are so enamoured of liberty that they would throw down all theological "limits," fences, and restrictions, and leave the platform of our Church as bare as a common. They tell us the only way to save the Church from shipwreck is to pitch overboard Articles and Creeds as useless lumber, and to assign no bounds to her "comprehensiveness," so long as her ministers are earnest and sincere. I am utterly unable to see with the eyes of these people. I believe that it is miserable policy to try purchase unity and peace and charity at the expense of faith and hope and truth. I contend that a rejection of Deism and Socinianism on one side, and a rejection of Romanism and superstition on the other, form "just, and reasonable, and fair limits to comprehensiveness," and that our Church does well and wisely in requiring her ministers to walk within them. [See Note B.)

But I go farther than this. I contend that the maintenance of certain well-defined "limits to comprehensiveness" is absolutely essential to the welfare of a Church, and that without such limits it is vain to expect any blessing from God.

I think I could name Churches which have fallen into decay, and become lightless lighthouses, in consequence of giving up Creeds and Confessions of Faith. In the vain pursuit of liberty they have sacrificed vitality, and, casting overboard distinctive doctrine, have committed suicide. They continue to this day, and have a name and place on the earth, but, like extinct volcanoes, they have neither heat, light, nor fire. Nor yet is this all. I fail to see in ecclesiastical history a single instance of good being done to souls except by the agency of men who adhered strictly to positive doctrinal “limits,” and preached and taught positive distinctive truths. Weigh and analyze the teaching of any English divine who has shaken the earth from the time of the Reformation down to the present day. Tell me, if you can, of one who ever roused consciences, awoke the sleeping, and revived the dead, who did not hold and proclaim a well-defined and limited theology. Show me, if you can, a single “master of assemblies,” from Latimer down to the most popular mission-preacher of this day, who ever wrought deliverance on earth, and turned the world upside down by a mere colourless gospel,—a gospel without the Trinity, without the Atonement, without the blood of Christ, without the Holy Spirit, without justification, without regeneration. No! you will never find one—never, never! Grapes will not grow on thorns, nor figs on thistles. The Church which allows its ministers to teach a vague gospel of *earnestness and sincerity*, instead of distinctive Christian doctrine, may get the reputation of being very liberal and tolerant in these latter days, but it will never convert and satisfy souls. A Church must have some “limits” and bounds to its “comprehensiveness,” if it desires to do good.

And now let me conclude with an earnest appeal to my brother Churchmen, by way of application. For the sake of peace, for the sake of truth, for the sake of the Church of England, for the sake of Christ,—let us strive and pray that we may hold fast both the principles referred to in the subject of this paper—the principle of “comprehensiveness” and the principle of “limitation.”

(a) Let us be of a *comprehensive spirit*. Let us not exclude from the Church those whom the Church has not excluded, nor ostracize and excommunicate every one who cannot pronounce our shibboleths, or work exactly on our lines. I am a thoroughgoing Evangelical Churchman, and I am not a bit ashamed of it. I will never give place by subjection, and admit that any one is a better Churchman than myself. But I have no sympathy with those who advocate a rigid, unbending, cast-iron uniformity within our pale, and want all Churchmen to be, like the rails round Hyde Park in London, of one unvarying metal colour, height, shape, and thickness. If any man asks me to cast out of the Church of this day men of the type of Andrews and Sanderson and George Herbert, or of Burnet and Tillotson and Whichcote, or of Bishops Blomfield or Thirlwall, or of Bishops Wilberforce or Selwyn, I tell him plainly that I will not lift a finger to do it. No doubt I could not preach very comfortably in the pulpits of such men, nor they in mine. I could not take them as curates if I was an incumbent, nor could they take me. I prefer to support my own favourite religious Societies, and they prefer theirs. But if any Evangelical Churchman wants to thrust these men out of the Church of England, because, like Apollos, they do not seem to him to know the “way of God perfectly,” I will not help him. I will tolerate them, on my principle of “Church comprehensiveness,” and in return I expect them to tolerate me.

(b) On the other hand, let us neither be ashamed nor afraid of having *limits*

to our comprehensiveness, even the limits of our mother, the Church of England. Let us not overstrain the quality of liberalism so far as to sanction theological licentiousness. Let us be as broad as the Articles and Creeds, but not one inch broader. If any one tries to persuade me that I ought to smile and look on complacently, with folded arms, while beneficed or licensed clergymen teach Deism, Socinianism, or Romanism, I must tell him plainly that I cannot and will not do it. He may tell me that I am a “troubler of Israel,” and a bitter controversialist; but I repeat that, when truth is in danger, I cannot and will not sit still. At this rate the apostles ought to have left the world alone eighteen centuries ago! They ought to have been satisfied with the teaching of Socrates and Plato, and were fools to attack heathenism, and live and die preaching Christ crucified! At this rate the English Reformation was a huge schism and mistake, and Ridley and Latimer ought never to have resisted Rome and gone to the stake! No, indeed! I love my own Church too well to tolerate either scepticism on the one hand or Romanism on the other, and I think I am only doing my duty to my ordination vows in trying to “drive both away.”

But after all, it matters little what bishops and clergy may think or do. The question before us is rapidly getting out of clerical hands. There are handwritings on the walls, which it needs no Daniel to interpret. I think I know something of the laity, and especially in the middle classes, in this country, and I am certain they will never tolerate and support a National Church which desires to return to Rome, or has no theological “limits,” and holds no distinctive doctrines. (See Note C.) They do not want the Established Church of England to be narrow, illiberal, party-spirited, and exclusive. But in a weary, working, sorrowful world, the laity will not put up with a religion either of negations or superstitions. They want bread, and they will not be content with stones. Once let the English laity see that a reign of complete latitudinarianism has begun, that the old landmarks are thrown down, and that the National Church does not care a jot whether her ministers preach Deism or Bible Christianity, Protestantism or Popery, but gives equal favour to all,—once, I say, let the laity see this, and they will desert the National Church and leave it to perish. Give the laity the old paths of the Bible, and the well-defined limits of the Articles, Creeds, and Prayer-book, and they will stand by the Church to the last. Destroy those limits, or refuse to enforce and maintain them, and they will soon cry, “Let us depart hence;” our candlestick will be removed, and the Church will die for want of Churchmen. In short, there is no alternative. The question is one of life or death. The English National Church must either be Protestant, and have doctrinal “limits,” or cease to exist.

NOTES

NOTE A.—It is a curious and noteworthy fact, that even Archbishop Laud, with all his High-Churchism, used the following language about the Church of Rome:—

A Church may hold the fundamental points, literally, and as long as it stays there be without control, and yet err grossly, dangerously, nay, damnably, in the exposition of them; and this is the Church of Rome's case."

"There is great peril of damnable schism, heresy, and other sin, by living and dying in the Roman faith, tainted with so many superstitions as at this day it is, and this tyranny to boot."

All Protestants unanimously agree in this, that there is great peril of damnation for any man to live and die in the Roman persuasion."

(I find these quotations in a pamphlet of Dean Goode's, entitled, "Is the Reformation a Blessing?" Hatchard, 1850.)

Archbishop Sancroft, the famous nonjuror, before he ceased to be Archbishop of Canterbury, recommended the clergy "to take all opportunities of assuring and convincing the Nonconformists, that the Bishops are really and sincerely irreconcilable enemies to the errors, superstitions, idolatries, and tyrannies of the Church of Rome."

NOTE B.—"Those who, in their dread of strife and party violence, would seek to preserve union by abstaining from all mention of every doctrine that is likely to afford matter of controversy, by laying aside all formularies and confessions of faith, and by regarding with indifference all varieties of opinion among professors of Christianity, would in fact put an end to the very existence of the society itself, whose integrity and concord they would preserve. In preventing hurtful contentions, by giving up everything that is worth contending about, they would be rooting out the wheat along with the tares; and for the sake of extirpating noxious weeds, would be condemning the field to perpetual sterility. And, after all, it would be but an apparent union that would result; since the members of the same nominal Church could have but little sympathy with each other's sentiments and designs, when they know them to be essentially at variance with their own."—"We are not then to hold a society together by renouncing the objects of it; nor to part with our faith and our hope, as a means of attaining charity."—*Archbishop Whately's Bampton Lectures*, I. 44.

To this note I shall venture to add another extract from the same volume, which in an age of extreme theological violence and party spirit deserves the serious attention of all thoughtful Churchmen:—

"Party spirit is justly charged upon those who go to all lengths of bigoted partiality and narrow-minded prejudice, in matters relating to their party; who are wanting in candour and charity towards those of another party, and unfair in any contest with them; who are strangers, in short, to that 'wisdom from above, which is not only peaceable and gentle,' but also 'without partiality.' The great historian of Greece (*Thucydides*, B. iii.), who described, with such frightful vividness of colouring, the political party spirit of his own times, and who pronounced, with the prophetic power which results from wide experience, acute observation, and sound judgment, that the like would be ever liable to recur, though in various forms and degrees, has proved but too true a prophet. Much of his description may be applied, with very slight or without any alteration, to many subsequent periods, not excepting the present; and especially in what relates to that kind of party-spirit which has been last mentioned. No assurances, he says, or pledges, of either party, could gain credit with the other; the most reasonable proposals, coming from an opponent, were received, not with candour, but with suspicion; no artifice was reckoned dishonourable by which a point could be carried. All recommendation of moderate measures was reckoned a mark either of cowardice or of insincerity; he only was accounted a thoroughly safe man whose violence was blind and boundless; and those who endeavoured to steer a middle course were spared by neither side."—*Archbishop Whately's Bampton Lectures*,

pp. 57, 53.

NOTE C.—The following passage from the *Quarterly Review* for October 1878 deserves the attention of all who fancy that the English laity will ever allow the advocates of extreme ritualism to do what they please with the Church of England:—

“A startling disillusion would await these priests” (the ultra-Ritualistic clergy) “if ever the experiment of disestablishment were to be tried. They would find that the laity, once driven to protect themselves against clerical usurpations, would take good care that the Protestantism which they cherish in the Prayer-book, as in the other formularies of the Church, was enforced upon her ministers with a stringency never yet approached. The High Churchmen of the day are endeavouring to read into the Prayer-book the corruptions which it was its very object to shake off, and they attempt to explain away the Articles in accordance with this perversion of historical truth. Should the laity have the opportunity of making their voice heard, they would finally prevent, at whatever cost, any such juggle with facts. It is impossible, however, within our space, to enter into the collateral controversies thus suggested. We trust that we have sufficiently shown that the Church of England bears upon its face the most unmistakable marks of being a Protestant, no less than a Catholic, Church; and that until the rise of the un-English school of theology now so prominent, it was united, alike by its history and by the principles of its greatest divines, with Protestant interests and Protestant principles. It is conceivable that the Ritualists and their High Church allies may seduce a considerable body of the English clergy from loyalty to those principles and interests. But in proportion as they succeed, they will produce an impassable gulf between the Church of England of the Reformation and that of the present day, and a similar and a more disastrous division between the English clergy and the English people. When the clergy abjure Protestantism, they will abjure all sympathy with one of the primary movements of English life: their Church will cease to be the Church of England, and they will sink into the condition of an Ultramontane priesthood amidst a contemptuous laity.”—*Quarterly Review Article, October 1878: “Is the Church of England Protestant?”* p. 549.

III.

HOW FAR MAY CHURCHMEN DIFFER?

THE subject which lies before us has always been one of vast importance in the Church of England. Every well-informed student of history knows that it is a "burning question," which for three centuries has been the fruitful parent of strifes and divisions. But though we are poor judges of our own time, I venture to think there never was a time since the Reformation when the subject required more serious attention than it does now. Whether we Churchmen like to confess it or not, the Anglican Church is in a somewhat critical state. Upon a right solution of the subject before us hinges the mighty question, "Can the Established Church of this country hold together? Shall we live or shall we die?"

I think the simplest way of handling the subject will be to examine, first of all, two views of it which are commonly held in this day—both, in my judgment, totally incorrect and mischievous—and both, I am sorry to say, extremely popular in some quarters. Against both I shall enter my protest, and give my reasons for protesting; and I shall then attempt to point out the right answer which, in my opinion, ought to be given to the question.

I. The first view of the subject which I shall protest against is that of extreme liberalism. This is the view of those who maintain that every kind of diversity in opinion, practice, and ritual ought to be tolerated in our pale, and that no clergyman ought to be interfered with, no matter what he thinks, teaches, or does. As it was in the days of the Judges, these men say, every one is to be allowed to "do what is right in his own eyes."

This form of liberalism is represented by the position taken up by the ultra-Ritualists and the Romanizing party within our pale. What they are continually claiming is more liberty,—liberty to introduce one bit of Popery after another, liberty for the Mass, liberty for auricular confession, liberty for prayers for the dead, liberty for the doctrine of purgatory, liberty for Mary-worship, liberty for the most thorough sacerdotalism. He who opposes them is held up to public execration as a bitter, narrow-minded, bigoted persecutor. And most Englishmen, I am sorry to say, are so extremely kind and liberal when they see a great show of zeal, that a cry is soon raised, "Give the zealous, devout Ritualists liberty; they mean well: leave them alone."

The other form of extreme liberalism is to be seen in the position taken up by the ultra-Broad Churchmen of this day. These men also, from their point of view, claim liberty as much as the ultra-Ritualists. But liberty for what? Why, liberty to ignore or disregard Articles, Creeds, and Confessions of Faith; liberty to deny the inspiration of Scripture, the atonement, the personality of the Holy Ghost, the reality of future punishment, the obligation of the Lord's day. He that opposes them is sneered at as an ignorant, obsolete old fossil. And Englishmen, who dearly love to make an idol of cleverness, and liberalism so called, cry out again, "Let them alone: don't discourage free thought, the clever fellow cannot be far wrong."

Now my objections to all this morbid liberalism, which bids us tolerate every kind of opinion, lie in a nut-shell. It is utterly destructive of order in the Church of England, and substitutes complete anarchy in its place. Every Scriptural Church must have a Creed and certain fixed principles, and by them its ministers

must abide. The use of a Church is gone if its lay members are to be obliged to submit to every vagary which may enter a minister's mind. No doubt the English lay Churchman is a very patient and enduring creature, and, like Issachar, will crouch for a long time under burdens. But there is a limit to patience and toleration. If the principles of extreme liberalism are to prevail,—if the clergy are to be allowed to teach either Popery or Scepticism, and neither Bishops nor Courts of Law are ever to interfere,—if every diversity of opinion and practice is to be tolerated in our parish churches, and nothing is ever to be checked or stopped, however unscriptural and mischievous,—then I believe the Established Church will soon fall, and fall deservedly. The laity will leave her, and God will forsake her.

II. The other view of our subject which I shall protest against is that of extreme narrowness. This is the view of those who maintain that no diversity whatever of opinion, practice, or ritual ought to be tolerated within our pale, that even about the non-essentials of religion no liberty of judgment should be permitted, that a cast-iron uniformity about every jot and tittle of worship ought to be required, and that the slightest departure from one hard-and-fast line ought to be regarded with suspicion, if not visited with pains, penalties, and prosecutions.

This was the position taken up by Archbishop Whitgift, in the reign of our last Tudor sovereign, Queen Elizabeth. True toleration was unhappily not understood by men just emancipated from the bondage of Rome. The wretched attempts made at that time to compel uniformity, and to silence men like Travers Cartwright, the authors of the "Admonition," and the "Martin Marprelate" tracts, I am bold to say, laid the first foundation of English dissent.

This, again, was the position taken up by that weak zealot, Archbishop Laud. He vainly endeavoured to stamp out what he ignorantly called "Calvinism," and to silence all who were thoroughgoing Protestants. He reaped according as he sowed. He ruined the Church of England for a season, and brought himself and his king to the block.

This, again, was the position taken up by the Puritans of the Long Parliament in the Commonwealth times, when they came into power. Smarting under Laud's tyranny, they retaliated by deposing the Bishops and prohibiting the use of the Liturgy, and cramming down every throat the "Solemn League and Covenant." How true it is that "Oppression maketh a wise man mad"! The stupid intolerance of the Puritans produced its natural result. A violent reaction took place when Charles II. returned to the throne, and the Episcopal Church regained its old position. The disgraceful Act of Uniformity was passed; 2000 of the best ministers of the day were shamefully driven out of their livings, in violation of royal promises made at Breda; and the Church of England received a blow from her own hands which has injured her irretrievably.

This, finally, is the position which some Churchmen seem disposed to take up in the present day. This is a delicate point to handle, I know; but it is one which I shall not shrink from handling. It is a plain duty in these perilous times to throw aside reserve and to speak out. I say, then, that there is a growing disposition in some quarters to measure clergymen entirely by what they do or not do, think or not think, about the non-necessaries and non-essentials of religion. There is a generation of men who seem utterly unable to see any good in a clergyman, however blameless both in preaching and life, if he does not see eye to eye with themselves about externals. The man may preach the three R's—ruin,

redemption, and regeneration—as fully and faithfully as Latimer or Whitfield; yes, far better than his accusers preach themselves. He may be a most diligent, self-denying pastor, far more diligent than they are. It all goes for nothing, if certain other things are lacking! Does the man preach in a surplice? Does he have the Psalms chanted? Does he turn to the East in saying the Belief? Does he keep Saints’ days? If he does any of these things, all the preaching, working, and living go for nothing. He is an unsound man! He is not trustworthy! He is a compromiser! He is a trimmer! He is to be gibbeted in the press, and held up as a butt for slander and suspicion! He is hedging off towards Rome! He has the incipient marks of the Beast! In short, the narrowness of Whitgift, of Laud, and of the Commonwealth Puritans is not dead. It lives; and is to be seen among us in the present day.

Now, against this extreme narrowness I desire to protest as strongly as I do against extreme liberalism. I will never consent, on the one side, to tolerate all diversities of opinion and turn our Church into a Pantheon. But neither will I consent, on the other side, to tolerate no diversities at all, and to denounce every one as “unsound.” who does not agree with me about non-essentials In non-necessaries liberty is the great principle which I am determined to maintain. In things needful to salvation, I would have him “persuaded in his own mind.”

(a) Narrowness about non-essentials appears to me utterly unscriptural. I see no proof that government and worship in the early Churches were always one and the same. About meats offered to idols, St. Paul clearly allowed diversity of judgment. Read the 14th of Romans. “The kingdom of God,” he says, “is not meat and drink.” On another point he is content to close his argument with the gentle remark, “We have no such custom “(1 Cor. xi. 16).

(b) Narrowness about non-essentials appears to me eminently calculated to wound and crush tender consciences. To do this is a downright sin against Christ. A man may be very weak and silly and scrupulous in some matters, but he ought not on that account to be crushed, and pushed, and snubbed, and held up to scorn. “For meat destroy not the work of God” (Rom. xiv. 20). For wearing a surplice in the pulpit, do not dub a man a heretic. I declare I think better of a man who has a tender conscience in spite of all his mistakes, than I do of a violent, coarse partisan who has got no conscience at all.

(c) Narrowness about non-essentials is presumptuous. To speak positively about things which God has not thought fit to decide, and to lay down the law stringently about questions which the Scripture has left open, is as good as saying, “We are the men: knowledge shall die with us. We are infallible, and whoever differs from us must be wrong.” To say the least, this is not humility.

(d) Narrowness about non-essentials exhibits gross ignorance of human nature. It is utterly absurd to suppose that poor sinful creatures like Adam’s children will ever be entirely of one mind about anything which God has not clearly revealed to them. Diversities of judgment are precisely what common sense should lead us to expect in a fallen world, and to denounce them roughly is childish waste of time.

(e) Narrowness about non-essentials was certainly not approved by the first Protestant Reformers. When Hooper refused to wear the usual Episcopal dress, and went to prison rather than give way, both Peter Martyr and Bucer told him he was wrong. When Calvin gave his judgment about the English Liturgy, he said that its defects were “tolerable,” that is, such as might be borne and were not worth quarrelling about.

(f) Narrowness about non-essentials shows forgetfulness of the lessons of our own Church history. What indeed has been the true cause of almost all the dissent, and strifes, and divisions, and secessions, and persecutions which have constantly plagued English Christianity for the last three centuries? What but the incessant and persistent effort to compel people to be of one mind about things which are not needful to salvation, and the exaltation of the minor parts of religion to the neglect of the weightier matters of the gospel?

(g) Finally, narrowness about non-essentials is one of the principal things at this moment which bring Evangelical Churchmanship into contempt. At Oxford and at Cambridge, on the Bench and at the Bar, in the Army and Navy, in the City and in Parliament, the thing which men dislike most in the Evangelical school is alleged illiberality about non-essentials. When we are zealous about great leading doctrines, they very likely do not approve it much, but they do not openly condemn it. But when they see us making a violent disturbance about things indifferent, they make no secret of their disgust. And I really do not wonder. We give occasion, and needlessly increase the offence of the cross.

I will say no more about this branch of my subject; but before I leave it I must say a few words to prevent slander, misconstruction, and misunderstanding. I think all changes, needless changes, in the ceremonies and conduct of public worship a very serious error; and if the man who introduces them loses the confidence of his people and drives away many of his congregation, I consider that he has no right to be surprised. He will find they regard his outward changes in matters of worship as symptoms of inward changes of opinion, and him accordingly. All needless changes are unwilling, mischievous, and create suspicion. It was when the Galatians changed their ways, and began to "observe days and months and times and years," that St. Paul cried, "I am afraid of you" (Gal. iv. 11).

My only contention is this, that whatever our private opinion is on matters not necessary to salvation, we must not lightly condemn men who do not see them as we do. To brand clergymen as unsound and heretical, who have been always accustomed since their ordination to do things in public worship which do not do, because they do not agree with ourselves is contrary alike to Scripture, charity, and sense.

So much for extreme liberalism and extreme narrowness. Both states of mind are so painfully common that I make no apology for discussing them at full length, and trying to show that both are grossly erroneous, of mischievous tendency.

III. I shall next try to show what diversities of opinions, practice, and ritual cannot justly claim to be tolerable within the pale of the Church of England. I shall do this as briefly as possible.

I say, then, first and foremost, that nothing ought to be tolerated in the Church of England which contradicts the Bible, the Thirty-nine Articles, and the Prayer-book. If we once allow men openly to contradict the Scriptures, and the authorized formularies to which they have publicly declared their assent, I see nothing before us but chaos and confusion. If, for example, a clergyman denies the inspiration of the Bible, or the doctrine of the Trinity, or the Godhead of Christ, or the atonement, or the personality of the Holy Ghost, or the necessity of repentance and faith, and of holiness as the fruit of faith, or the judgment to come,—if he teaches justification by works, Mariolatry, the sacrifice of the

Mass, the necessity of auricular confession and priestly absolution, the “opus operatum” view of the sacraments, and purgatory,—in any such cases I hold that his parishioners cannot be justly and reasonably expected to tolerate it. It is perfectly monstrous to say that they ought to be quiet for the sake of peace, and to put up with it. Parishioners so aggrieved have a right to bring the matter before the Bishop. The Bishop has a right to call the clergyman to account, and ought so to call him. If he persists and refuses to obey the Bishop’s admonition, in spite of his oaths and declarations, the Bishop has a right to remit the matter to an Ecclesiastical Court, or in some way to call in the aid of the law. And to say, as some do, that all this is intolerance and persecution, is simply ridiculous, and a gross misapplication of language. The offending clergyman in this instance transgresses the terms on which he holds his position as an Anglican clergyman, and is guilty of a breach of contract. He has broken his promise to abide by the Thirty-nine Articles. His conduct is such as would not be tolerated in a civilian, or in the army or the navy, or the legal or the medical profession. As an Englishman he has an undoubted right to hold and teach what opinions he pleases; but as a clergyman he has certainly no right to contravene, contradict, or deny the doctrine of the Church of England within the pale of the Establishment. To talk of persecution in such a case is absurd! It is he who persecutes the Church of England, and not the Church of England which persecutes him.

I say, furthermore, that no practice or ritual ought to be tolerated in the Church of England which tends to reintroduce distinctive Romish doctrines which the Church has formally repudiated in her formularies. If, for instance, a clergyman chooses to wear a peculiar dress in administering the Lord’s Supper, as if he were offering a material sacrifice, and teaches his people that he does so because he is a sacrificing priest,—if he consecrates the elements with such gestures and postures that he appears to ordinary minds to be doing a sacrificial action,—if he treats the consecrated elements with such exaggerated reverence that he appears to believe there is an actual change in the elements, and that Christ’s body and blood are locally present under the forms of bread and wine,—in such a case I hold firmly that he exceeds the just and reasonable limits of toleration in the pale of the Church of England. His actions express a doctrine which has been distinctly, precisely, and conspicuously rejected by the Church, and notably in the Thirty-first Article,—I mean the sacrifice of the Mass. It is a doctrine which lies at the root of the whole system of the Church of Rome. It is the doctrine which, above all others, our Reformers rejected, and rather than submit to it, they died at the stake. It is a doctrine which cannot be got out of the Prayer-book by any fair and impartial interpretation. The actions, gestures, and dress which express the doctrine (in spite of that unhappy tangle, the Ornaments Rubric) have been for three centuries disused in our Church, with such rare exceptions (in some obscure parishes) that they only help to confirm the rule. I assert without hesitation, that, in a case like this, no offending clergyman has any just right to complain if the laity refuse to tolerate his ways, if the Bishop admonishes him that he is wrong, and if he finally comes under the censure of the law. To talk of all this as intolerance, I repeat, is childish and silly. Intolerance indeed! In a free country like this, a man has a perfect right to be a Roman Catholic if he pleases; but he has no right to be a Roman Catholic and at the same time to be a beneficed or licensed clergyman of the Church of England, and to receive her pay. Once admit the principle that it is legal to teach the sacrifice of the Mass in the Anglican Church, and there is nothing worth fighting for in our

controversy with Rome. Once admit the Mass, and the sooner we go down on our knees to the Pope, confess our schism, beg his pardon, and ask to be taken back into his fold, the better! We have not a leg to stand on outside the Roman communion. Never, I repeat emphatically, never, never let us tolerate the least attempt to reintroduce the Mass. For the honour of Christ and His finished work, let us resist the sacrifice of the Mass while we have breath in our bodies.

IV. So much for things which ought not to be tolerated. I will now turn to the other side of the question, and consider what diversities, on all principles of justice, fairness, and common sense, we ought to tolerate. This part of the subject, I feel deeply, is a difficult one. It is much more easy to approach the matter from the negative side than the positive one. I shall try, however, to lay down a few general principles and to supply a few illustrations, which I think deserve the attention of all Churchmen. Starting with the broad principle, that absolute and entire agreement upon all points is unattainable, let us try to find out what diversities we ought to tolerate and allow.

(a) I say, then, that we ought to tolerate diversities of opinion, practice, and ritual, about matters of which the Scriptures have either not spoken at all, or else have spoken so slightly or uncertainly that it is not clear what is the mind of the Spirit. It is a settled principle with me, that you never ought to be positive, intolerant, condemnatory, or censorious about any matter on which you cannot quote a plain text. Hold your own private opinions as tightly as you please; but do not be intolerant.

(b) I say, furthermore, that we ought to tolerate diversities in matters about which both Scripture and Prayer-book rubrics are alike silent, and which involve no question of doctrine. That there are a good many points of this kind we must all be aware. It is vain to expect all persons to see eye to eye about them as long as the world stands. Now, to condemn men as heretical, and unsound, and erring, because they do not arrive at the same conclusions as we do about these points, seems to me the height of intolerance. We may think them very much mistaken; but in the absence of Bible or Prayer-book argument, they have as much right to have an opinion as ourselves.

(c) I say, furthermore, that we ought to tolerate diversities of practice, even about the observance of rubrics, when local circumstances make a strict and literal observance useless and impossible, or even detrimental to the interest of the Church of England. This may sound odd at first hearing, but I will explain further on what I mean.

So much for general principles as to the toleration of diversities. It only remains for me now to offer a few practical illustrations in order to throw light on what I have been saying. I do this with great diffidence and a deep sense of my own fallibility. I cannot expect every one to agree with me; but I have determined to say what I think,

I say, then, that, in my judgment, loyal Churchmen ought to tolerate diversities of opinion, practice, and ritual about such points as the following:—the dress to be worn in the pulpit, whether surplice or black gown,—the quantity of singing in public worship,—the manner of administering the Lord's Supper, whether by pronouncing words to a whole rail or to each individual,—the selection of voluntary religious societies to be supported,—the books and tracts to be circulated,—the extraordinary means to be used in working parishes. As to daily services, and saints' day services, a strict observance of the rubrics in many

parishes would be perfectly useless and a misapplication of time. There are but twelve hours in the day. There are scores of useful things nowadays, which were either unknown or illegal in the days when saying matins and vespers was enjoined. As to repeating the words of administration to each individual communicant in the Lord's Supper, the number of communicants in some parishes makes strict compliance almost impossible, and lengthens the service most inconveniently, to the injury, if not the destruction, of the afternoon congregation. To all these points one common remark applies. Not one of them is a thing necessary to salvation. Most of them are things left entirely open by the Church of England, and are not expressive of any principle or doctrine. And even in the two instances where the rubric seems to be against a clergyman, it is a striking example of the old proverb, "*Summa lex summa injuria.*"

In all such cases I hold that it is our wisdom to allow diversities of opinion and practice. We ought to think and let think. Upon every point which I have mentioned I have myself a very decided opinion, and I used to act accordingly when I was an incumbent. Even now I privately think every clergyman who disagrees with me a very mistaken man! I am fully persuaded that he is wrong and I am right, and that mine is the more excellent way! But I am equally convinced that these, and many other points which I have not time to specify, are open questions, and are wisely and purposely left open by the comprehensive principles of the Church of England. Whatever I may think, they are diversities which I must tolerate, and tolerate courteously, civilly, and like a Christian gentleman. And as to condemning men as unsound, untrustworthy, heretical, disloyal Churchmen, and the like, on account of these things, I think it downright wrong. Let me cap this by saying that it is also most impolitic. Intolerance is always offensive. Nothing so disgusts and repels a man as to find himself condemned as a heretic for things not necessary to salvation. To be courteously tolerant of diversities, whatever our private opinions may be, is Scriptural charity, Scriptural policy, and Scriptural common sense.

Time would fail me if I dwelt at greater length on this branch of my subject. Perhaps I have said enough to make my meaning plain. I leave it with the broad general remark, that in the minor matters of religion there will be diversities of opinion and practice as long as the world stands, and that as long as these diversities involve no questions of principle and express no doctrine, it is wise to tolerate them and not make a disturbance. There are plenty of weighty matters requiring all our attention, affecting the very foundations of Protestantism and revealed religion. Let us reserve our strength for them, and not waste our time in squabbles about secondary matters which only make us ridiculous in the eye of the public.

And now let me conclude all with a few words of practical application. I give them as words for the times, and I ask my readers to take them for what they are worth.

(a) First and foremost, let us not be moved by the violent language used about the ecclesiastical lawsuits of the last thirty years. "Narrow, party-spirited, violent, bitter, bigoted, coarse, vulgar, persecuting," and the like; nothing is too bad to say of the promoters of these suits. It matters little. Some people always dislike sentinels, watchmen, and police. But what does it all come to when you look beneath this cloud of hard words? Men have simply desired to preserve the Protestantism of the Church of England, and defend it against the insidious attacks of the Romanizing movement of the day. They have appealed to the Law

courts, when no other remedy could be found, in order to get the best legal decisions within reach, about points which people said were doubtful. They have obtained decisions on many of these points, which even the Bishops, who disapprove the suits, are not ashamed to use, and to call "the law." And where, I should like to know, is the mighty harm of all this? Harm indeed! I believe the suits have saved the Church of England from ruin.

All lawsuits, I am aware, are most unpopular. "Horrid people! going to law." But I challenge any one to show how law can be ascertained without suits. The simple aim in recent Ecclesiastical Suits has been to establish principles. Whether the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Courts will ever be adopted by Parliament, and become the law of the land, I cannot tell. For anything I know, the "Clergy Discipline Act" and the "Public Worship Act" may be swept away. Other new tribunals may be set up. But of one thing I am very certain, there will never cease to be Ecclesiastical Suits as long as the world stands. There will be disputes, arguments, decisions, appeals, and angry, disappointed litigants, until the end of time. It is amazing, to my mind, that any one should doubt this,

After all, what saith the Scripture? People sometimes ask whether we think St. Paul would have gone to law? I reply by another question, Would St. Paul have tolerated false teachers, and not recommended discipline? Would he recommend us not to interfere with heretics? Read Galatians v. 10. What did he mean when he said of a false teacher: "He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment"? What did he mean when he said, "would they were cut off which trouble you"? Whatever some may say, that phrase, I hold with Bengel, Fergusson, Henry, Estius, Whitby, Gill, and Ellicott, means "cut off from the Church."

Some well-meaning people, I believe, would prevent all lawsuits by the notable plan of throwing open the whole question of usages in the Lord's Supper, and allowing every clergyman to administer it with any ceremonies he likes. This, I suppose, is the policy of "forbearance and toleration" for which many have petitioned, though how such a policy could be carried out in the face of the decisions of the Queen's courts, fail to see, except by a special Act of Parliament. more unwise and suicidal policy than this I cannot conceive. You would divide every diocese into two distinct and sharply-cut parties. You would divide the clergy into two separate classes—those who wore chasubles and used incense and the like, and those who did not; and of course there would be no more communion between the two classes. As to the unfortunate Bishops, they must either have no consciences, and see no differences, and be honorary members of all schools of thought, or else they must offend one party of their clergy and please the other. This is indeed a miserable prospect! "Forbearance and toleration" are fine, high-sounding words; if they mean that every clergyman is to be allowed to do what he likes, they seem to me the certain forerunner of confusion, division, anarchy, disruption, and disestablishment.

(b) My second word is this. Let us try to understand the times in which we live. They are perilous times, I am convinced, and if the balance of political parties alters, we never know what a day may bring forth. Never, I believe, was it so important for loyal Churchmen to be organized, disciplined, and got ready to meet any emergency. I entreat Evangelical Churchmen to remember that it is unwise to keep aloof from Diocesan Conferences, Church Congresses, and other machinery which is being brought into use in this age. If Disestablishment comes they will all be wanted. The Times newspaper has recently said with

much shrewdness, that the day is past when the Church could get on without corporate life and activity. That witness is true! We cannot stop these things, however little we may like them. We ought to assert our right to take part in them, to be heard in them, and to prove that we are as good Churchmen as any in our pale. I am quite certain that men like Romaine and Venn and Cecil and Simeon would have come forward and taken part in them if they had had the opportunity which we have. If we let them fall into the hands of one restless, revolutionary school, and refuse to go anywhere unless we have everything our own way, I do not think we shall be doing our duty.

(c) My third word is this. Let us try to have knowledge as well as zeal. I observe with deep regret that many Churchmen seem to know so little of English Church history, and of theological literature, that they talk and write very strange things. They appear, for example, to suppose that all High Churchmen are like the famous incumbent of St. Alban's, Holborn, and all Broad Churchmen are like Mr. Voysey! And so, if you say a single favourable word about "High" and "Broad" men, they are filled with horror, cast dust in the air, rush into print, write violent letters to the newspapers, and denounce you as a renegade and as an apostate. But would it not be well if these zealous people would remember that High Churchmen like Hooker, and Andrews, and Beveridge, and Herbert, and Pearson, were just as much opposed to Popery as themselves; and that Broad Churchmen like Burnet, and Tenison, and Patrick, and Stillingfleet, and Clagett, were in their day among the ablest writers against Romanism? Surely to lump all High and Broad Churchmen together in one common condemnation is to make a sad exhibition of our own ignorance! And would it not be well to remember that there have been in the last forty years, and some are living now, not a few Bishops and Deans who were and are as sound as any about Protestantism, and as loyal and true-hearted Churchmen, and yet could not be called members of the Evangelical body? I need hardly mention such men as Archbishop Longley, Bishop Blomfield, Dean Alford, and others whose names are known to any intelligent Churchman. Do these extremely zealous gentlemen really mean to say that we ought to turn away from these Bishops and Deans, refuse to meet them, proclaim a crusade, and try to thrust them out of the Church? And would it not be well to remember that nowadays Evangelical Churchmen have no monopoly of grace, and faith, and holiness, and self-denial, and love to Christ, the Bible, and souls; and that biographies, like some which have been published in late years, show plainly that there is some good outside the Evangelical camp? These things, I fear, are not sufficiently remembered. I wish some people read a little more than they do. Want of reading is the mother of ignorance, and ignorance is the mother of narrowness and intolerance. I like zeal; but I like it to be zeal according to knowledge.

(d) My closing word is this. Let us all cultivate more and more that blessed grace, true Scriptural charity. It is a plant which is becoming sadly scarce in England, to the great injury of religion. The modern plant is sadly weak and degenerate. Oh that, among other revivals, there was a revival of charity! Old Scriptural charity "believes all things, hopes all things, and rejoices in truth." Modern charity seems not only to believe all things, but to believe any lie, and to rejoice in spreading it, to hope nothing, and to delight in slandering, suspecting and depreciating brethren on the slightest and most insufficient evidence. I fear that the Ninth Commandment and 1 Cor. xiii. are too much neglected in the

nineteenth century. Well says the Litany, "From all uncharitableness, good Lord, deliver us."

It was a grand saying of that great man Oliver Cromwell, when certain ministers pressed him beyond measure about secondary matters in which he could not agree with them: "I do beseech you by the mercies of God to try to think it possible that you are sometimes in the wrong." Head-knowledge, and clearness of doctrine, and sound views of the Gospel, no doubt, are excellent things. But even knowledge has its attendant dangers. It is written, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth" (1 Cor. viii. 1).

IV.

CAN THERE BE MORE UNITY AMONG CHURCHMEN?

THE question which heads this paper is a very hard one to answer, and I scarcely know how to handle it without giving some offence. Scylla is on my right hand, and Charybdis on my left. On the one hand I am afraid of being too narrow, and on the other I am afraid of being too broad. In short, I feel I am entering a path where I cannot walk without treading on somebody's feet, and fingering a knot which perhaps will never be untied. If I come in collision with any cherished opinions, I ask my readers to bear with me, and give me a patient hearing.

One thing I premise at the outset, and a candid statement on the point may save trouble. I mean to stick closely to my subject. I am not going to handle the grand topic of unity among all true believers. What I have in view is more unity among zealous and pious *Churchmen* of different schools of thought.

Let it then be understood that I shall say nothing about unity with Nonconformists. That is not the question of this paper, and I purposely leave it alone today. It is unity among Churchmen—unity in our own camp. Let me add furthermore, that I shall waste no words on the idea of unity with those within our pale, who disclaim all sympathy with Protestantism, who vilify the Reformers, and openly avow their Romish proclivities. We all know that there are many such men among us. That they are often zealous religionists I willingly admit, but that they are genuine Churchmen I flatly deny. I want no unity with such men, unless they will give up their peculiar views. So long as they hold their present opinions, they are in the wrong place inside the Church of England. Our Church no doubt is very comprehensive. In our mother's house are "many mansions." But she certainly cannot accommodate at one time the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope of Rome.

Nor yet shall I waste words on the idea of unity with those unhappy men within our pale, who declare plainly that they wish to do away with all Creeds and Articles, and to make a vague "earnestness" a substitute for faith and sound doctrine. I find no place for unity with such men, however clever and amiable, simply because I know not where to find them. You cannot build on a fog or a quicksand. A house must have a foundation, and a Church must have a creed. The Church, whose peace and well-being I wish to promote today, is not a mere creedless Pantheon, but a body which has a distinct, well-defined, Scriptural theology,— a body which can point to its Articles and Liturgy and say, "*Si quorris fidem, circumspice.*" Unity purchased at the expense of creeds and doctrines is a miserable, cold, worthless unity. I, for one, want none of it.

The unity whose possibilities I desire to consider, and whose increase I want to promote, is unity among "pious and zealous Churchmen,"—Churchmen who, while they occupy different standpoints, are honestly agreed on certain common fundamental principles. They love the Church of England; they love her Articles; they love her Prayer-book. They labour for her prosperity. They do not want her to be un-Protestantized. They do not want her to give up her Confession of Faith. On these points they are at one. There are hundreds of such men, I am persuaded, at this moment in each of the four great schools of thought,—High, Broad, Evangelical, and No-Party-men,—Godly men, Christ-loving men,

converted men, holy men, gifted men, hard-working men, men who have a common belief in the Trinity, the Atonement, and the Inspiration of Scripture; men reading the same Bible and using the same Liturgy,—and yet men sadly estranged and separated from one another. And the one subject to which I propose to confine myself is this: “Can a greater degree of unity be obtained among Churchmen?” Perfect unity, I admit at once, it is vain to expect, and I do not pretend to speak of it. It is eminently an age of free and independent thought. We shall never have perfect unity till we are in heaven. But can we attain more unity than we have now, while we are on earth? I shall open the whole question with two general remarks.

The subject before us is a very *painful one*. We are brought face to face with a melancholy evidence of the fall of man, and its effect on reason and intellect, as well as on heart and will. We see the broad fact that hundreds of Christian men, speaking the same language, members of the same Church, subscribing to the same Articles, believing the same Creeds, reading the same Bible, using the same Prayer-book, are divided into at least four distinct schools of thought, and appear utterly unable to agree. Each school contains scores of learned, gifted, hard-headed, hard-working men. There is no monopoly of these things now in any quarter of the Church, whatever there may have been formerly. And yet we stand aloof from each other, disunited, suspicious, mistrustful, and apparently incapable of arriving at a common understanding. What a lamentable spectacle it is! I pity the man who does not mourn over it, and long to discover some “*irenicon*,” or means of bringing us together. The millennium has evidently not begun yet. We do not yet see eye to eye.

The subject, moreover, is a *very delicate and difficult one*. In treating it I feel like one handling Sevres china, and I dread making a slip and doing harm. Between a narrow spirit and a spirit of compromise it is very hard to avoid mistakes. An excessive zeal for pure doctrine is apt to make us illiberal and uncharitable. An excessive love of unity is apt to blunt our spiritual discernment, until we sacrifice God’s truth on the altar of peace. I hope I shall not err in either direction. Whether I shall succeed in hitting the golden mean remains to be proved.

Now the utmost I can hope to do with such a subject as this,—so painful, so important, so delicate, and so difficult,—is to offer a few suggestions for the private consideration of my readers. Some of them may appear at first sight weak, trivial, and small. Calm reflection, I trust, will show that they are not so. Great reformatations are seldom effected “*per saltum*.” The “bit by bit” reformer in the long run is the most useful man. By repeated little bites the mouse gnawed the cable through. Some of my suggestions may appear crude, visionary, and impracticable, and yet some master-hand may shape these rude materials into an excellent work. Such as they are, I will proceed to lay five suggestions before all into whose hands this volume may fall, and I will ask them, like the Speaker of the House of Commons approaching the throne at the opening of a new Parliament, to put the best construction on what I say.

I. My first suggestion is this. If we went to obtain more unity among Churchmen, *we must cultivate the habit of recognizing the grace of God and love to Christ, wherever that grace and love are to be found.*

Admission of this principle lies at the root of my whole subject. That real saving grace in the heart is perfectly compatible with much error in the head, is

a matter of fact which no well-informed Christian can ever think of denying. It is a phenomenon which it is hard to explain thoroughly. To what length of false doctrine a man may go and yet be a true child of God, and to what height of orthodoxy a man may attain and yet be inwardly unconverted, are two of the deepest practical mysteries in theology. But the proofs that a Christian may be very wrong in doctrine while thoroughly right in heart, are clear, plain, and un-mistakeable.

I need not weary my readers with evidence upon a point with which most students of the Bible are familiar. Think of the instance of the apostles before our Lord's crucifixion. Who can fail to see that their knowledge was most imperfect, and their views of Christ's atonement very obscure. Yet they were all good men.—Consider the case of Apollos in the Acts. Here was a man who was "fervent in spirit, and spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord." But he only knew the baptism of John, and needed to be taught the way of God more perfectly. Yet he was a good man. There is many an Apollos, I believe, in England.—Look at Martin Luther, and the whole company of his fellow-labourers in Germany. They all held stoutly the unscriptural doctrine of Consubstantiation. Yet they were good men.—Examine the history of our own English Reformers. How dim and indistinct were their perceptions of the Lord's Supper in the days of Henry the Eighth! Yet they were good men.—Ponder well, above all, the records of the Church of Rome. Remember the names of such men as Ferus, Jansenius, Pascal, and Quesnel. They erred on many points, no doubt; yet who will dare to say they were not good men? He that wants to see this point well worked out by a master mind, should study Hooker's first sermon.

Facts such as these demand very serious consideration. They teach a lesson which must not be overlooked. They show us that many Churchmen with whom we now disagree may be real Christians, in spite of all their errors. Their hearts may be right in the sight of God, though their heads are very wrong. However erroneous we may consider their views, we must charitably hope that they are in the way of life and travelling toward heaven, and shall be "saved by the grace of God, even as ourselves." However much we may believe they mar their own usefulness by their imperfect statement of truth, we must not rashly pronounce them godless and graceless, lest we be found condemning those whom God has received. To speak plainly, it never will do to brand people as unconverted heretics, and children of wrath, because they differ from us about the effect of the Sacraments, and the precise nature of inspiration. Firmly as we may cling to our own views of such subjects, we must carefully remember that it is possible to hold the Head and stand on the rock, under a great cloud of error.

The whole state of things may puzzle us. It may puzzle us to understand how some of our brethren can reconcile the hymns they sing with the unsatisfactory sermons they preach. It may puzzle us to understand how men can read the Bible, and pray, and love Christ, and live holy lives, and yet remain in such darkness about the truth. Above all, it may puzzle us to understand how men holding such strange and unsound views can be in the way to heaven, and stand at last at Christ's right hand. Still, for all this, we must steadily school ourselves to hold the principle that this state of things is possible, however inexplicable, and that it is part of the mysterious economy of grace.

What good will the admission of this principle do to the cause of unity? someone will ask. I answer unhesitatingly, Much every way! It will teach us the habit of *respecting* many Churchmen of other schools of thought, even while

we disagree with them. How can we refuse to respect men who are washed in the Saviour's blood, heirs of the same kingdom, travellers in the same road, servants of the same Master, though we may think them terribly mistaken? How can we refuse to respect those whom we admit we shall meet in heaven, and dwell with for evermore? Thank God, there will be no imperfect knowledge there! As good old Berridge said, "God washes all our hearts on earth, and in heaven He will also wash our brains." Surely to have arrived at this stage of feeling is an immense gain. It is not unity itself, I freely grant; but it is one step towards it. To have learned to *respect* our brethren while we differ from them, and to admit that they may be servants of Christ in spite of much obscure and unsound doctrine, is a long day's march in a right direction. In such an intricate and difficult question as this, it is a great thing to get firm hold of a right principle. And, whatever some may please to think, I maintain that the admitted hope of a common heaven at last is a uniting principle, and must insensibly tend to draw men together.

II. My second suggestion is this. If we would obtain more unity among Churchmen, we must *cultivate the habit of speaking charitably and courteously of those who disagree with us.*

I desire to touch this point gently and cautiously. It is debatable ground at any time, and I am not sure that I am a very fit person to give an opinion about it.

Some may think that I am not quite the man to be "*censor morum*" in this matter, and may remind me of the Scriptural proverb, "Physician, heal thyself." Well, I believe I have been an offender in my time, and in the heat of speaking in a controversial age, I have doubtless said sharper and hotter things than I ought to have said,—things for which in calmer moments I have been sorry. I hope, as I grow older, I grow wiser. This, at any rate, is my present deliberate conviction,—that nothing so disunites and divides Churchmen and Churchmen, as the use of uncivil and discourteous language.

Let no one mistake my meaning. To strong and plain language in condemning what we disapprove, I see no objection. It is often the truest charity to speak out, and call things, and even persons, on fit occasions, by their right descriptive names. In a dull, sleepy world, it is positively necessary sometimes to speak strongly and sharply, like the first lieutenant in a ship when a man is overboard, in order to get men's attention. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself spoke of Herod as "that fox." St. Paul told Ananias, the high priest, that he was a "whited wall;" and called Elymas the sorcerer "a child of the devil, and an enemy of all righteousness;" and applied to the Cretans the old proverb, "Always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies." It is evident, therefore, that strong language is not always wrong. But we must carefully distinguish between phraseology that is strong, and phraseology that is violent, offensive, and abusive. It is possible to speak very strongly, and yet to be dignified, courteous, and gentlemanlike. But it is surely desirable to avoid expressions which are stinging, irritating, vexatious, and opprobrious. It is written, "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword." We should never scold, nor rail, nor revile. If we want more unity, we should never forget this.

There is nothing like giving instances and examples, when handling a topic like this. When a hard name is sweepingly and ruthlessly applied to a whole school of Churchmen, which only belongs in reality to a few individuals,—

when all Evangelical Churchmen are held up to scorn as Zwinglians,—when all Ritualists are called Jesuits and liars,—when all Broad Churchmen are called Neologians,—when all who hold baptismal regeneration are called Papists, when sweeping language of this kind is indiscriminately used, without remembering St. Jude’s advice, “Of some have compassion, making a difference,”—in my judgment it does great harm. It drives many to an immense distance from our own camp, and creates breaches which perhaps are never healed.

I must plainly say that in this one point I think many of the Reformers greatly erred. They often used terribly hard words in speaking of their adversaries. In this matter let us not be their successors. Unhappily they have been too often imitated. Wesley and Toplady last century wrote positive rubbish about one another, and scolded like Billingsgate fishwomen of a day long past. Let us take care we do not let their mantle fall on us. A good cause need not be supported by violent language, and it is a sign of weakness when men resort to it. It never ought to be said that when a man becomes a decided theologian, he often forgets to be a courteous gentleman. It was one of Coleridge’s best sayings, that “the Christian ought to be the highest style of gentleman.”

I admit it is very hard to draw the right line. There must needs be controversy, and it is very difficult to conduct it in loving and courteous language. “The tongue is a world of iniquity.” Of one thing, however, I am very sure,—the more lovingly we conduct it,—the more likely are we to win opponents to our views. Of course we wish no man to be always complimentary, flattering, smooth-tongued, and carrying butter and honey everywhere in a lordly dish. But we do need to remind ourselves that the Holy Ghost says, “Grievous words stir up anger.” Few men were more faithful to Christ’s truth, and more firm in opposing error, than our honoured Fathers, Bickersteth, Haldane Stewart, and Marsh. Yet few made fewer enemies and more friends. And why? Because they were eminently men of courtesy, charity, and love. People will stand almost anything without taking offence, if they are convinced that you love them. A day is coming when a word spoken in love will outweigh folios of controversial divinity.

The words of Matthew Henry to a young minister are weighty and wise: “Be not censorious. Widen not your differences. Judge charitably of all. Praise that which is good, and make the best of what you dislike. Let us be offensive to none, but obliging to all.” (Life, p. 297.)

None feel more deeply than I do, that it is much more easy to preach all this than to practise it. The love of saying smart things, of having the last word, and of saying all that can be said, is a terrible snare to poor human nature. Well says Charles Bridges: “There is a self-pleasing sarcastic spirit, which would rather lose a friend than miss making a clever stroke.” (Bridges on Proverbs, vol. i. p. 291.) But of no principle in my paper do I feel more confident that it is true than this,—that as a general rule, courtesy in language is a great help to unity.

III. My third suggestion is this. If we would obtain more unity among Churchmen, we *must cultivate accurate acquaintance with the real opinions and phraseology of other schools.*

The point is one of no mean importance. Ignorance, I firmly believe,—pure ignorance of one another’s doctrinal sentiments,—is one great cause of the dissensions among Churchmen. Few Churchmen thoroughly comprehend any views excepting those of their own school. Their conceptions of the views of other schools are often picked up second-hand, and no more like reality than

bad caricatures. Just as Nero is said to have clothed the early Christians in the skins of beasts, and then to have baited them with dogs, so we are all apt to attribute to our opponents all manner of strange and monstrous opinions, and then to denounce them as heretics. No wonder there is so little unity among Churchmen, when they understand each other so imperfectly.

The extent of this ignorance is something marvellous and appalling. I frankly own that it is only within the last few years that I have realized its length and breadth and depth and height.

On the one hand, how many High Churchmen have the most absurd conceptions of what is held and taught by an Evangelical clergyman? They imagine he is a kind of disorderly, wild person, who alters the Prayer-book at discretion,—who dislikes baptism,—despises the Lord's Supper,—admires dirty churches,—cares for nothing but preaching,—makes light of the prayers,—prefers Dissenters to Churchmen,—hates Bishops,—disapproves of good works,—and does not see much beauty in the Church of England. Ludicrous as this picture may appear, I am afraid it is a correct account of what many High Churchmen think! I often think that they know no more about the true type of an Evangelical Churchman than a native of Timbuctoo knows about skating and ice-creams, or an Esquimaux knows about grapes, peaches, and nectarines.

On the other hand (for I wish to mete out equal justice), how many Evangelical Churchmen have the most crude and inaccurate ideas about the amount of sound doctrine held by High Churchmen! They fancy that every man who does not pronounce their shibboleths and speak their language must be a Papist. They are frightened out of their wits at the idea of any one holding "baptismal regeneration" and the "real presence," and imagine it impossible he can be a right man.—Yet they forget there are two senses of the word "regeneration" among divines, a high and a low sense, and that some good men, like Bishop Hopkins, have held that *all baptized people are ecclesiastically, though not all spiritually, regenerate*. They forget that there are two meanings attached to the phrase "real presence," and that many teach a real spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, who indignantly repudiate the idea of a corporal, local, material presence in the bread and wine. The late Archbishop Longley said, in his last charge, "The real presence in one sense is the doctrine of the Church of England;"—but he carefully added, "as to a presence elsewhere than *in the heart* of a believer the Church of England is silent." I do not, for my own part, endorse Bishop Hopkins or Dr. Longley. I dislike the expression "real presence," as inseparably connected with Popery and liable to misconstruction. I do not the least understand any "regeneration" except a moral and spiritual one, and can see no warrant for it in Scripture. I only contend that we must make fair allowance for men using the words we use in a very different sense from that in which we use them. If we want more unity, we must not make men offenders for a word.

How this vast cloud of ignorance is to be removed, I do not pretend to say. Most of it, no doubt, arises from want of reading and study. It certainly is not a reading age, except for reading newspapers and periodicals. Only one of all the schools of Churchmen can support a quarterly review. Even the monthly organs languish, and receive very scanty patronage. Many Churchmen work round and round, like a horse in a mill, talking with nobody but those who agree with them, reading nothing but the *Record*, *Rock*, *English Churchman*, *Guardian*, or *Church Times*, or reading nothing at all! In such a state of things it is no marvel if we misunderstand one another and are estranged.

I can only express my own deliberate conviction, that a little more patient study of the books and writings of other schools would open all our eyes and do us good. We should find that some of our controversies were only logomachies, or strifes about words. We should discover the wisdom of that golden maxim in all theological discussions,—“First define your terms.” We should find that, under the surface of much diverse and varying phraseology, there is more substantial agreement among many Churchmen than we suppose. In short, we should discover that accurate knowledge is one great help to more unity.

IV. My fourth suggestion is this. If we want to obtain more unity among Churchmen, we should *cultivate opportunities of meeting men of other schools on neutral ground*.

Prejudice, or unreasoning dislike of others, is probably one of the most mischievous causes of division in the present day. Nothing is more common than to find one Churchman disliking another and speaking against him, without ever having seen his face, heard his voice, or read one line of his writings! To dispel prejudices, the best plan is to get men together, and let them look at each other face to face. They say in the City, that when they want a business matter pushed they seek an interview, and that one interview will do more than a score of letters. I can quite believe it. I suspect if some of us could have a quiet walk or spend a quiet evening in company of some Churchman we now dislike, we should be surprised when we got up next morning to find what a different feeling we had about him. We should say, “I like that man, though I do not agree with him.” Great is the power of the face, the manner, the voice, and the eye. Seeing is believing.

How we are to get opportunities of meeting men of other schools on neutral ground is a point of detail on which every one must judge for himself. But I may be allowed to say that to my mind here lies one use of Congresses and Diocesan Conferences, and one reason why we should attend them. They enable men of different schools to see one another; and if they do nothing else, they help to rub off corners and lessen prejudices.

I will not dwell on this topic, because it is one on which some do not agree with me. I do not particularly like Congresses. I never expect them to do very much for the Church, or to add much to our stock of knowledge. I have attended them purely as a matter of duty. I have advised others to attend them for the same reason. But one good thing, I am convinced, they do. They help Churchmen to understand one another, and in this way they are useful.

Whether those who go to Congresses take much harm by going I do not know. Personally I am not conscious of having imbibed any poison, or caught any theological disease. But whether good is done to the cause of unity by our going, I feel no doubt at all. I believe some High Churchmen and Broad Churchmen have discovered for the first time that Evangelical Churchmen read and think, and are not always “unlearned and ignorant men.” They have discovered that they love the Church of England from their standpoint as much as any, and that they are not dissenting wolves in sheep’s clothing. They have discovered, not least, that they can talk civilly and courteously and considerately, and that they are not all unmannerly, rude, Johnsonian bears. And all this has come from meeting them face to face on neutral ground. Surely it did good.

I will not dwell further on this point. I will only repeat my firm conviction, that if Churchmen would strive to meet one another on neutral ground more

often than they do, it would be a vast help towards more unity.

V. My fifth suggestion is this. If we would obtain more unity with Churchmen of other schools of thought, *we must co-operate with them whenever we can.*

I feel here that I am about to tread on very tender ground, and to handle a question which admits of much being said on both sides. I cannot hope that what I am going to say will be satisfactory to everybody. But I must be allowed to say what I think.

I hold it then to be a plain duty to co-operate with Churchmen of other schools, whenever we are able to do so heartily and honestly. To talk of unity when you can do nothing together, seems foolish and unreasonable. Nevertheless, it is vain to conceal from ourselves that there are limits in this matter. Co-operation with those you differ from is possible up to a certain point. But there is a point at which you must stop, and co-operation seems impossible.

Co-operation for objects of a temporal or semi-temporal kind is clearly a possibility. For the relief of poverty and distress,—for general aid to sufferers from war, pestilence, or famine,—for supporting the maintenance of a Scriptural system of education against a secular system—or maintaining the union of Church and State,—for helping forward the cause of temperance and purity,—for resisting the progress of infidelity,—for promoting measures of Church reform,—for all these ends I see no reason why “zealous and pious Churchmen” of all schools should not heartily work together. I go farther. I think they *ought* to work together. It would smooth down many asperities, narrow breaches, heal wounds, and induce a kind and genial feeling between men. Nothing so unites as real work. I should be ashamed of myself if I would not help to launch a life-boat to rescue shipwrecked sailors, or to work a fire-engine when lives were in peril, because I did not like my fellow-helpers. And I should be ashamed if I refused to assist works of mercy, charity, patriotism, or philanthropy, unless on condition that all who co-operated with me were Churchmen of my own school of thought. Hitherto I can go, and I should think it a plain duty to go so far.

But co-operation for direct spiritual work, for teaching saving religion, for direct dealing with souls, appears to me a rather different matter. Here, I must honestly say, co-operation with Churchmen who differ from you seems open to some objections. It may be my dulness and stupidity that at present I am unable to see the answer to these objections. But it is my deliberate conviction that if High, Broad, and Low Churchmen are sincere, outspoken, hearty, and earnest in their several views, it is not easy for them to work smoothly and comfortably together in direct dealings with souls.

Can they often preach in one another’s pulpits with comfort and profit? That is the best and most practical way of putting the subject. A young, enthusiastic, and unreflecting mind may fancy that they can. I answer, on the contrary, that, as things are at present, they cannot continuously and for any length of time, though they may occasionally. Let us just think. What decided High Churchman would like a decided Evangelical to occupy his pulpit and pour out his soul about regeneration?—And, *vice versa*, what Evangelical clergyman would like a High Churchman to address his congregation, and say all he thought about the sacraments? And where is the preacher, in such a case, whatever might be his desire for unity, who would not feel himself chained, and fettered, and muzzled, and hampered, an unable to speak freely and fully, for fear of giving offence? It is hard enough to preach effectively at any time; but to do it with a mind clogged

and cramped is almost impossible. And where is the English congregation that would not feel perplexed and annoyed by hearing conflicting doctrines and arguments to which it was entirely unaccustomed? It is very easy for shallow thinkers, and writers in the daily press, to sneer at the divisions of the English clergy as “divisions trifles,” and to ask us why we cannot all unite in trying to “evangelize” the neglected populations of our large towns? With such men the model incumbent is the man who would have had Dean Stanley, Dean M’Neile and Dean Hook preaching in his church three Sundays successively, merely because they were all “earnest” men! With such men an eloquent sermon is an eloquent sermon, and they do not seem to think it matters one jot what doctrine it contains!—But what do such men mean when they talk of *evangelizing*? What do they suppose an evangelizer ought to say and teach? Why, here is precisely the whole question on which “schools of thought” are diametrically opposed to one another! What one calls evangelizing, another does not. What one would think wholesome milk, another would think rank poison. It is a sorrowful conclusion, but I know not how to avoid it, as things are at present. Co-operation of schools for direct spiritual work at home seems to be extremely difficult, if not impossible. It may come some time, but the Church is not ripe for it yet. Bishops may sigh for it, and newspaper writers may talk glibly of it as the easiest thing in the world; but it is not easy. If preachers of different schools, following each other in one pulpit, were to throw heart and soul into their sermons, the result would be a Babel of confusion,—a diminution, not an increase of unity,—quarrelling and not harmony,—strife and not peace. If we love unity and want more of it, I suspect that at present in direct spiritual work each school of Churchmen must be content to work on alone, and will do most good by working on alone. The acids and alkalis must be kept separate, lest there be effervescences and explosions, and a general blow up. Better days may be in store for us, but they have not come yet.

Some excellent but impractical men, I observe, are very anxious that the various “schools of thought” should co-operate in the work of Foreign Missions. “Surely,” they say, “you might all agree to work together about the poor heathen.” A beautiful theory, no doubt! A very pleasing vision! But I take leave to say that the idea is utterly chimerical and unpractical, and the thing is impossible. It looks very fair at a distance, and sounds very grand in charges and platform speeches. But when you begin to look coolly at it, you find *it will not work*.

How are missions to the heathen to be carried on unless the managing Committees are agreed about the men they ought to send out, and the doctrines those men are to preach? Where is the likelihood of a Board of Missions consisting of High, Low, and Broad Churchmen agreeing harmoniously about points like these? Is it likely that men who cannot agree about curates will agree about missionaries? Can we imagine such a Board getting over its difficulty by resolving to ask no questions of its missionaries, and to send out anybody and everybody who is an “earnest” man? The very idea is monstrous. If there is any minister who must have distinct views of doctrine, it is the missionary. The whole scheme, in my judgment, is preposterous and unworkable. The difficulties of missionary work under any conditions are immense, as all who give their attention to it know well. But I can imagine no scheme so sure to fail as the scheme of uniting all “schools of thought” in a kind of joint-stock Board to carry it on. The certain consequence would be either a helpless feebleness or a scandalous quarrelling, and the whole result a disastrous breakdown of the movement. Co-

operation in missions, whatever some may think, is, in my humble judgment, an impossibility. There is no wiser course, if we love peace, than to let each "school" work on in its own way.

The subject is a very humbling one, I grant; but it is useless to ignore facts. Facts are stubborn things; and I trust we are not so wedded to any favourite theory as to dismiss any facts that overthrow it with the sweeping remark, "So much the worse for the facts." The theory of exhibiting the unity of all zealous Churchmen by general and universal co-operation is a beautiful one, no doubt; but it is useless to struggle after impossibilities. There is a gradient beyond which no locomotive engine will work or draw a load; its wheels turn round on the rails, and the train comes to a standstill. We must remember this in our zeal for unity among Churchmen. We must strive to co-operate with one another where we can; but we must not attempt to do it when we cannot, lest we damage our cause.

My suggestions are now ended. Of course, I know not what Churchmen of other schools than my own may think of them. I can only speak from an Evangelical point of view. But it is my firm impression that attention to these five suggestions would produce a much greater amount of unity in the Church of England than there is now. It may be that my ideas are Utopian, and that I am aiming at more than it is right to expect in an evil world, "lying in the wicked one." It may be that God allows these divisions among us, in order to try our patience, make us humble, and teach us to long for Christ's second advent. The apostles Paul and Barnabas could not agree, and parted company. Luther and Zwingli could not agree about the Lord's Supper. Ridley and Hooper could not agree about vestments. Even the English refugees in Queen Mary's days on the Continent, could not agree at the time of the troubles of Frankfort. It may be that nothing will bring Churchmen nearer together except fiery persecution, just as the fire welds iron bars which will never unite when cold. It may be that God is about to break us up altogether, and to prove the failure of all creature machinery. All these things may be. In the meantime, I pray that we may all do what we can to promote more unity among Churchmen. Let us "contend earnestly for the faith," and value truth far more than peace. But let us never forget the text, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. xii. 18).

I shall now conclude my paper with two words of caution. They are, I venture to think, cautions for the times.

(1) For one thing, let us all take care that we do *not underrate the importance of unity* because of the apparent difficulty of obtaining it. This would indeed be a fatal mistake. I consider that the subject is of **PRESSING IMPORTANCE**. Want of unity is one great cause of weakness in the Church of England. It weakens our influence generally with our fellow-countrymen. Our internal disunion is the stock argument against vital unity among the masses. If we were more at one, the world would be more disposed to believe.—It weakens us in the House of Commons. Liberationists parade our divisions before the world, and talk of us as "a house divided against itself."—It weakens us in the country. Thousands of laymen who are unable to look below the surface of things, are thoroughly perplexed, and cannot understand what it all means.—It weakens us among the rising generation of young men. Scores of them are kept out of the ministry entirely by the existence of such distinct parties amongst us. They see zeal and

earnestness side by side with division, and are so puzzled and perplexed by the sight that they turn away to some other profession, instead of taking orders. And all this goes on at a period in the world's history when closed ranks and united counsels are more than ever needed in the Church of England. Popery and infidelity are combining for another violent assault on Christ's Gospel, and here we are divided and estranged from one another! Common sense points out that this is a most dangerous state of things. Our want of unity is an evil that imperatively demands attention.

I never felt more convinced than I do now, that the very existence of our Church in a few years may depend on our obtaining more unity among Churchmen. If disestablishment comes (and come it will, many say), the Church of England will infallibly go to pieces, unless the great schools of thought can get together and understand one another more than they do now. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." A self-governing Church, unchecked by the State, with free and future synodical action, divided as much as ours is now, would most certainly split into sections and perish. To avoid such a consummation as this, for the sake of the world, for the sake of our children, for the sake of our beloved country, in the interest of Christ's truth, and to prevent the triumph of Popery, Churchmen ought to strain every nerve, deny themselves much, and make every sacrifice except principle.

While we have a little breathing time and a little peace, let us see if we cannot make up our breaches, and build up some of the gaps in our walls. Why should the Assyrian come, and find us hopelessly divided among ourselves? Why should the Roman army approach our walls, and find us wasting our strength in internal contests, like the Jews at Jerusalem, when Titus besieged them? Were Churchmen more united, we might defy our worst enemies. Shoulder to shoulder, like the "thin red line" at Balaclava, which defeated the Russians,—back to back, fighting front and rear at once, like the Forty-Second at Quatre Bras,—we might hope to withstand Pope and Infidel and Liberationist, all combined, and be more than conquerors. But going on as we do now, disunited and divided, and ready to say lazily, "It cannot be helped," we are weak, and ready to fall. "*Divide et impera*" is a maxim well known to the devil. "The Romans will come and take away our place and nation" (John xi. 48).

(2) For another thing, let us take care that the want of unity among Churchmen does not *tempt us to be content with a negative creed*, under the miserable idea that we cannot tell who is right, and that we wish to belong to no party. I address this caution especially to my younger brethren in the ministry, and I do beseech them, with all my heart and soul and mind and strength, to beware of tumbling into the wretched pitfall of having no decided opinions at all. From being a tame, colourless, timid, hesitating teacher, afraid of anything positive, with no more theological backbone than a jelly-fish, may the Lord deliver you! Pray do not be party-spirited; do not shrink from holding distinct doctrinal views, from the cowardly fear of being called a "party man." Do not flatter yourself that you cannot help being undecided, and that it is not your fault if you cannot make up your mind about truth. Have you really used all appointed means? Are you sure you have read your New Testament, with special prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit about controverted things? Have you studied your Articles and Creeds, and the history of the English Reformation? Lay to heart these questions. Deal fairly and honestly with your soul.

Believe me, you will never be useful and happy unless you are decided in

your views of truth. Usefulness is impossible if you are a prey to habitual indecision. Men will not believe what you say, unless they see by matter and manner that you have made up your own mind. Happiness is equally impossible. Nothing is more miserable than to live in a constant state of mental suspense. Oh, stand not still because Churchmen are divided! For your own soul's sake, and for the good of others, dare to be decided, and make up your mind.

To each and all who read this paper, I say in conclusion, let us long for unity, pray for unity, work for unity, make many sacrifices for unity with all pious and zealous genuine Churchmen, by whatever name they may be called. But never let our thirst for unity tempt us to desert, to compromise, to hold back, to water down, to shrink from proclaiming, the distinctive doctrines of Christ's Gospel. The more faithful we are to them, the more good men of other schools will respect us, even while they disagree with our views. Trimmers and compromisers are never respected, and carry no weight with them. John Bunyan's "Mr. Anything" in the "Holy War" was kicked by both sides. Boldness and honesty are always respected, and especially when they are combined with courtesy and love. Then let us strive so to live, so to preach, so to work, and so to love, that if other Churchmen cannot see with our eyes, they may at any rate *respect* us. Above all, let us never forget to pray in the words of our Liturgy, that "all who profess and call themselves Churchmen, as well as Christians, may hold the faith in the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." Prayer for unity is prayer according to the mind of Christ.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOGMA.

THE word which forms the title of this paper requires some explanation and definition. What are we to understand by “dogma”? Before we go a step further, let us see clearly what “dogma” means.

“Dogma,” says my friend, the late Canon Garbett (Southport Conference Address, 1877), “is to be distinguished from dogmatism. Dogma is a word that simply means a definite ascertained truth, whatever the mode in which it has been ascertained, which is no longer the subject of inquiry, simply because inquiry has ended, and the result has been accepted. Wherever there is any fixed ascertained truth whatever, there must be dogma. If there be no dogma, there is no known truth.”

“Dogma,” says Dean Hook in his “Church Dictionary,” “is a word used originally to express any doctrine of religion formally stated. Dogmatic theology is the statement of positive truths in religion.”

To these definitions I shall only add one more remark, by way of caution. We must never forget that there is a wide difference between dogma in science and dogma in religion. In religion, to be dogmatical is often a positive duty; in science, it is often sheer presumption. In the study of natural science, on the one hand, we have no inspired book to guide us. We have no revelation from heaven to teach us about biology, or chemistry, or astronomy, or geology. We can only attain conclusions in these subjects by careful observation of phenomena, by patient investigation and induction of facts, or by a diligent use of such helps as the microscope and telescope afford. Even then our conclusions are often very imperfect, and we ought to be modest in our assertions, and to beware of overmuch positiveness. “The highest wisdom in many matters of science,” said Faraday, “is to keep ourselves in a state of judicious suspense.” To be always positive and dogmatical in natural science, is a mark of a shallow and conceited mind.¹—In religion, on the contrary, we start with an infallible Bible to guide us. Our only business is to ascertain the meaning of that Bible. When it speaks plainly, clearly, and unmistakably upon any point, we have a perfect right to form positive and decided conclusions, and to speak positively and decidedly. Dogmatical language in such cases is not only not presumption, but a downright duty;—and not to be positive when God has spoken positively, is a symptom of ignorance, timidity, or unbelief.

The subject I am going to take up, my readers will now understand, is the

¹ “All human knowledge is but fragmentary. All of us who call ourselves students of nature possess only portions of natural science.” (Professor Virchow on “The Freedom of Science,” p. 20.) I take occasion to recommend strongly this little book.

importance of holding distinct and systematic theological views, and of making positive statements of doctrine in teaching and dispensing God's Word. With the Bible in a minister's hands there ought to be nothing faltering, hesitating, and indefinite in his exhibition of the things necessary to salvation. He must not shrink from making strong assertions, and drawing sharply-cut and well-developed conclusions. He must not hesitate to say, "This is certainly true, and you ought to believe it: this is certainly false, and you ought to refuse it. This is right, and you ought to do it: this is wrong, and you ought not to do it." It is the duty of ministers to speak like men who have quite made up their minds, who have grappled with Pilate's question: "What is truth?" and are prepared to give the question an unhesitating answer. In short, if men mean to be faithful ministers of the New Testament, they must hold and teach "dogma." And of all Christian ministers, there are none, I am convinced, who ought to be so distinct and decided in their statement of "dogma" as the ministers of the Church of England.

The subject, I venture to think, is one of vast importance in the present day, and it needs to be pressed on the attention both of clergymen and laymen. But the subject is a very wide and deep one, and can only be touched lightly in a short paper like this. I shall therefore content myself with laying down two general propositions, and offering a few remarks upon each of them. The object of my first proposition will be to prove the peculiar importance of "dogma" in these days. The object of my second will be to show the great encouragements there are to hold and teach it.

I. My first proposition is this: *A strong dislike to all "dogma" in religion is a most conspicuous and growing sign of the times. Hence arises the peculiar importance of holding and teaching it.*

This dislike is a fact, I am bold to say, which wants realizing and recognizing. It does not receive the attention it deserves. We have been so much occupied of late years in resisting those who believe *too much*, that we have somewhat overlooked those who believe *too little*. Whether we like to hear it or not, there is a sore disease in the land, which is eating like a canker into the vitals of English religion. It is a pestilence walking in darkness, which threatens to infect a large proportion of the rising generation.

The evidences of this dislike to "dogma" are so abundant that the only difficulty lies in selection. Unless we are men who having eyes see not, and having ears hear not, we may see them on every side.

(a) I might ask any intelligent man, for example, to mark the vague tone of the great majority of English newspapers, when they touch religious subjects. He will find that while they are generally willing to praise Christian morality, they too often ignore Christian *doctrine*.—I might ask him to observe the bitterness with which School Boards frequently speak of what they are pleased to call "theology," and how ready they are to shovel it all aside under the vague name of "*sectarianism*."—I might ask him to analyze the most popular fictions

and novels of the last forty years, which profess to paint Christians, and to notice how the portrait almost invariably avoids everything like *doctrine*, and exhibits the model Christian like a cut flower at a flower show, a mere bloom without root.—I might ask him to look at the anxiety which liberal speakers (so-called) are constantly showing, in addressing popular audiences, to sweep away all “*denominational Christianity*,” and to throw aside Creeds and Confessions as old worn-out clothes, which only fetter the limbs of modern Englishmen.—In each of these cases let him note one common symptom: that is, a morbid, unreasoning desire to have the fruits of Christianity without the roots,—to have Christian morality without Christian dogma. And then let him deny, if he can, that a dislike to “dogma” is a widespread evil of our times.

(b) I will then ask any intelligent man to examine the opinions commonly expressed in the talk of private life. You have only got to bring up the subject of religion in society, and you will get further proofs still. In five houses out of six, where people have anything like real religion, you will find that they make a regular idol of “*earnestness*.” They do not pretend to know anything about controversies and disputed questions, or to have any opinion as to who is right and who is wrong. They only know that they admire “earnestness;” and they cannot think that earnest, hard-working men can be unsound in the faith. Tell them that any “earnest” clergyman whom they name does not preach the Gospel, and they are downright offended. Impossible! whatever doctrines an “earnest” man holds and teaches, they think it narrow and uncharitable and illiberal in you to distrust him. In vain you remind them that zeal and laboriousness are useless, if a minister does not teach God’s truth; and that Pharisees and Jesuits had zeal enough to “compass sea and land.” They know nothing about that; they do not profess to argue. All they know is that work is work; and that an *earnest man must be a good man*, and cannot be in the wrong, whatever he teaches. And what does it all come to? They dislike “dogma,” and will not make up their minds as to what is truth.

(c) Hitherto we have seen the evil I am considering in solution, and in its most common and diluted forms. If we want to see it in its more solid and crystallized state, we have only to turn to the preaching and writings of the *extreme Broad Churchmen* of our days. I will not weary my readers with a catalogue of the strange and loose utterances which come incessantly from that quarter, about inspiration, about the atonement, about the sacrifice and death of Christ, about the incarnation, about miracles, about Satan, about the Holy Spirit, about future punishment. I will not pain them by recounting the astounding theories sometimes propounded about “the blood of Christ.” Time would fail me if I tried to sketch the leading features of a misty system which appears to regard all religions as more or less true, and in which “tabernacles” seem to be wanted for Socrates, and Plato, and Pythagoras, and Seneca, and Confucius, and Mahomet, and Channing, and Theodore Parker, as well as for Christ, and Moses, and Elias,—all, forsooth, being true prophets, great masters, great teachers, great leaders of thought! I shall content myself with the remark, that

dislike to “dogma” is one prominent characteristic of the leaders and champions of the extreme Broad Church party. Search their sermons and books, and you find plenty of excellent negatives,—plenty of great swelling words about “the fatherhood of God, and charity, and light, and courage, and manliness, and large-heartedness, and wide views, and free thought,”—plenty of mere windbags, high-sounding abstract terms, such as “the true, and the just, and the beautiful, and the high-souled, and the genial, and the liberal,” and so forth. But, alas! there is an utter absence of distinct, solid, positive doctrine; and if you look for a clear, systematic account of the way of pardon and peace with God,—of the right medicine for a burdened conscience, and the true cure for a broken heart,—of faith and assurance, and of justification, and regeneration, and sanctification,—you look in vain. The *words* indeed you may sometimes find, but not the realities,—the words in new and strange senses, fair and good-looking outside, like rotten fruits; but, like them, empty and worthless within. But one thing, I repeat, is abundantly clear: “dogma” and positive doctrinal statements are the abomination of extreme Broad Churchmen. Their cry is continually, like that of the old Roman senator, “*Delenda est Carthago*: down with dogma, down with it, even to the ground!”

(d) I am afraid that time and space would fail me if I travelled outside our own communion, in order to find additional proof of the widespread dislike to “dogma” which we need to realize in this age. We hear of it among Nonconformists: the oldest and soundest of them complain bitterly that the plague has begun among the descendants of the Puritans, and that old orthodox views are becoming scarce.—We hear of it from Scotland: not a few Presbyterians are beginning to speak contemptuously of the Assembly’s Catechism as a yoke which ought to be thrown off.—We hear of it from Switzerland: the Churches of Zwingli and Calvin are said to be so deeply tainted with Socinianism, since they threw creeds overboard, that it might almost, to speak figuratively, make their founders turn in their graves.—We hear of it from America: when Mr. and Mrs. Pearsall Smith addressed the crowds at the famous Brighton Conference, their simple-minded and well-meaning hearers must have been puzzled to hear the often reiterated expression, “We do not want theology.” But I trust I have said enough to convince my readers, that when I speak of dislike to “dogma” as one of the largest and most formidable perils of the day, I do not use any exaggerated language, or speak without good reason.

The causes of this dislike to “dogma” we need not go far to seek. There is nothing new about it, and nothing therefore which ought to surprise us. Eighteen centuries ago St. Paul forewarned us, “the time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim. iv. 3). And the older the world gets, and the nearer to the second advent of Christ, the more clearly shall we see that prophecy fulfilled. We only see a full development of an old disease. There never have been wanting thousands of lazy, worldly Christians, who say with the poet,—

“For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”

Even in 1772, more than a hundred years ago, Archdeacon Blackburn and “The Feathers Tavern Association” got up a petition for doing away with subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles, which attracted a good deal of notice. The great Paley was weak enough to countenance it. Burke, the famous statesman, on the other hand, was wise enough to oppose it, in an able speech in the House of Commons. The plain truth is, that the root of the whole evil lies in the fallen nature of man, and his deeply-seated unbelief in God’s word. I suspect we have no idea how little faith there is on earth, and how few people entirely believe Bible statements. “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God” (Rom. viii. 7; 1 Cor. ii. 14). The natural man hates the Gospel and all its distinctive doctrines, and delights in any ostensible excuse for refusing it. One man is *proud*: he dislikes the distinctive doctrines of Christianity, because they leave him no room to boast.—Another is *lazy and indolent*: he dislikes distinctive doctrine, because it summons him to troublesome thought, and self-inquiry, and mental self-exertion.—Another is *grossly ignorant*: he fancies, like Gallio, that all distinctive doctrine is a “mere matter of words and names,” and that it does not signify a jot what we believe.—Another is *thoroughly worldly*: he shrinks from distinctive doctrine, because it condemns his darling world.—But in one form or another, I am satisfied, “original sin” is the cause of all the mischief. And the whole result is, that vast numbers of men are pleased with the seemingly new idea that “dogma” is of no great importance, and greedily swallow it down. It supplies a convenient excuse for indecision.

The consequences of this widespread dislike to “dogma” are very serious in the present day. Whether we like to allow it or not, it is an epidemic which is just now doing great harm, and specially among young people. It creates, fosters, and keeps up an immense amount of instability in religion. It produces what I must venture to call, if I may coin the phrase, a “jelly-fish” Christianity in the land: that is, a Christianity without bone, or muscle, or power. A jelly-fish, as everyone knows who has been much by the seaside, is a pretty and graceful object when it floats in the sea, contracting and expanding like a little, delicate, transparent umbrella. Yet the same jelly-fish, when cast on the shore, is a mere helpless lump, without capacity for movement, self-defence, or self-preservation. Alas! it is a vivid type of much of the religion of this day, of which the leading principle is,—“No dogma, no distinct tenets, no positive doctrine.”—We have hundreds of “jelly-fish” clergymen, who seem not to have a single bone in their body of divinity. They have no definite opinions; they belong to no school or party: they are so afraid of “extreme views” that they have no views at all.—We have thousands of “jelly-fish” sermons preached every year, sermons without an edge, or a point, or a corner, smooth as billiard balls, awakening no sinner, and edifying no saint.—We have legions of “jelly-fish” young men annually turned out from our Universities, armed

with a few scraps of second-hand philosophy, who think it a mark of cleverness and intellect to have no decided opinions about anything in religion, and to be utterly unable to make up their minds as to what is Christian truth. They live apparently in a state of suspense, like Mahomet's fabled coffin, hanging between heaven and earth. Their high souls are not satisfied with arguments which satisfied Butler, and Paley, and Chalmers, and M'Ilvaine, and Whately, and Whewell, and Mozley! Their only creed is a kind of "Nihilism." They are sure and positive about nothing.—And last, and worst of all, we have myriads of jelly-fish worshippers,—respectable churchgoing people, who have no distinct and definite views about any point in theology. They cannot discern things that differ, any more than colour-blind people can distinguish colours. They think everybody is right and nobody wrong, everything is true and nothing is false, all sermons are good and none are bad, every clergyman is sound and no clergyman unsound. They are "tossed to and fro, like children, by every wind of doctrine;" often carried away by any new excitement and sensational movement; ever ready for new things, because they have no firm grasp on the old; and utterly unable to "render a reason of the hope that is in them." All this, and much more, of which I cannot now speak particularly, is the result of the unhappy dread of "dogma" which has been so strongly developed, and has laid such hold on many Churchmen, in these latter days.

I turn from the picture I have exhibited with a sorrowful heart. I grant it is a gloomy one; but I am afraid it is only too accurate and true. Let us not deceive ourselves. "Dogma" and positive doctrine are at a discount just now. Instability and unsettled notions are the natural result, and meet us in every direction. Never was it so important for laymen to hold systematic views of truth, and for ordained ministers to "enunciate dogma" very clearly and distinctly in their teaching.

II. The second proposition I wish to lay before my readers is this: *In spite of all that is said against dogma, its advocates have no cause to be ashamed.*

I launch that statement without the slightest hesitation. The assailants of "dogma" make such boasting, and blow their trumpets so loudly, that I suspect some old Christians of late years have been rather frightened. They have thought that the ark was in danger, and that we must moderate our tone, and retire from our old lines! Let no man's heart fail at this crisis. There is no cause for alarm. It is the mark of ill-disciplined and half-savage armies to blow horns and beat drums, and cover their real weakness by noise. The true soldier holds his tongue, and reserves his breath for the actual struggle. "In quietness and confidence is our strength." In spite of all the hard words poured on "dogma,"—as effete, worn out, injurious to free thought, unsuited to the nineteenth century, and so forth,—there remains a catena of facts in support of "dogma," which I believe it is impossible to explain away. In short, there is a mass of evidence which cannot be refuted.

Into the broad general question of the value of Creeds and Confessions as

the expression of dogma, I do not propose to enter. I have not room for it, and it is not the precise subject before us. I simply remark, with all respect to the Plymouth Brethren, that clearly specified terms of membership appear to me an absolute necessity to the well-being and good order of a Church. It is not enough to say, "We believe the Bible." We must distinctly understand what the leading facts and doctrines of the Bible are; and this is exactly the point where Creeds and Confessions are useful. Those who care to study this subject will find it admirably handled in a Scotch book, entitled "Dunlop's Uses of Creeds and Confessions of Faith." Burke's speech in the House of Commons, on Archdeacon Blackburn's petition, is also well worth reading (Burke's Works, vol. x.). He truly says, "Subscription to Scripture alone is the most astonishing idea I ever heard, and will amount to no subscription at all." But I purposely pass by this question. I shall confine myself to a simple statement of certain broad facts, which ought to encourage every loyal Churchman to hold distinct doctrinal views, and not to be ashamed of "dogma."

(a) In the first place, *let us turn boldly to our Bibles*. Is "dogma" there or not? Of course I do not forget that this witness goes for little with many. They regard the Bible as nothing more than a respectable collection of old Jewish writings, of uncertain antiquity, containing many good things, but not as an infallible book, to whose dicta they must bow. Whenever it contradicts their so-called "verifying faculty, and inward consciousness, and intuitive convictions," they refuse to accept its teaching! I shall have a word for these gentlemen by and by. But I thank God that many clergymen and laymen in the Church of England are of a very different mind. There are yet left some thousands amongst us who have not forgotten their Ordination Vows, in which clergymen profess their determination to "instruct people out of Scripture," and to "teach nothing necessary to salvation but that which may be concluded and proved by Scripture." To them and thousands like them, I can confidently appeal. Do we not, then, all know and feel, as we read our New Testaments, that "dogma" meets us in every book from Matthew down to Revelation? Is not the fashionable claptrap assertion, that the chief object of the Gospels and Epistles was to teach us high moral precepts and charity rather than "dogma," so utterly contrary to the real facts of the case, which meet our eyes when we read our Bibles, that it is absurdly untrue? Are not "dogma" and doctrine so intimately woven up and intermingled with moral precepts in the New Testament, that you cannot separate them? We all know there is only one answer to such questions. As for those unhappy men who can stand in a reading-desk, and there read such books as St. John's Gospel, and the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Hebrews to a Church of England congregation, and then denounce "dogma," and cry down dogmatic theology, and sneer at Bibliolatry in the pulpit, I can only say that I do not understand them. He that gives up teaching "dogma," in my opinion, may just as well say that he gives up teaching the Bible. You cannot neglect "dogma" without ignoring Scripture.

(b) In the second place, *we can turn boldly to our Thirty-nine Articles*. Is “dogma” in them or not? Once more, I do not forget that many think very little of that admirable Confession of Faith. They coolly tell us in that offhand, conceited style which is so painfully common in this day, that “nobody really believes all the Articles!” Some tell us plainly that they regard the Thirty-nine Articles as a burdensome stone, and an incubus on men’s consciences, and that we should do far better to abolish them, throw them overboard, and be content with subscription to the Apostles’ Creed, or with no subscription at all! But all this time the law of the land, and of the Church, stands firm and unrepealed, and every incumbent on taking possession of a living is obliged to declare publicly that he will teach and preach “nothing contrary to the Thirty-nine Articles.” Yet what are these Articles but a wise compendium of dogmatical statements? With few exceptions, they are a series of doctrinal assertions, carefully drawn out of Scripture, which the Church regards as of special and primary importance. Where, I should like to know, is our honesty, if we shrink from “enunciating dogma” after pledging ourselves to the Articles? Where is plain faithfulness to our ministerial engagements if we do not teach and preach distinct, systematic doctrine? As for those clergymen who hold livings, and retain positions in our Church, while they openly contradict the Articles, or deliberately sneer at their statements of doctrine, as “narrow, and illiberal, and unsuited to the nineteenth century,” I can only say once more that I do not understand them. I can admire their zeal and cleverness; but I cannot see that they are in their right place in the pulpit of the Church of England. He that is for no “dogma,” no Articles, and no Creeds, in my judgment is no true and loyal Churchman.

(c) In the third place, *we can turn boldly to the Prayer-book*. Is “dogma” there or not? That famous book, with all its unquestionable imperfections, finds favour in the eyes of all schools of thought within our pale, and of myriads outside. You rarely meet with anyone, however broad and liberal, however inimical to Creeds and Articles, who quarrels with our time-honoured Liturgy, or would like to see it much altered. Week after week its old familiar words are read all over the globe, wherever the English flag flies and the English language is spoken. The older the world grows, the more men seem disposed to say, with George Herbert on his death-bed, “The prayers of my mother the Church of England, there are none like them!” Yet all this time it is a curious fact that an immense amount of dogmatic theology runs through the Prayer-book, and underlies its simple petitions! He that sits down and makes a list will be surprised to find what a large amount of doctrinal statements the old book contains about the Trinity, about the proper deity of Christ, about the personality of the Holy Ghost, about the sacrifice and mediation of Christ, about the work of the Spirit, and many other points. They occur again and again in sentences with which we are so familiar that we overlook their contents. Take, for a single instance, the dogma of eternal punishment. The question has been raised of late whether the Church of England says anything about it in her formularies. Yet all this time

the Prayer-book contains three singularly strong expressions on the subject. In the *Litany* almost the first petition is, "From everlasting damnation, good Lord, deliver us." In the *Burial Service* we say, by the side of the open grave, "Deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death." Even in the *Church Catechism* we teach children that in the Lord's Prayer they ask to be "kept from our ghostly enemy and everlasting death." Once more I say, he that thinks little of "dogma," and yet uses the Prayer-book of the Church of England, is very inconsistent, and is occupying, whether he knows it or not, a most untenable and unreasonable position. I assert confidently that the Prayer-book is full of dogmatic theology.

(d) And now, in the fourth place, I have a word for those numerous opponents of "dogma" who care little for the Bible, Articles, or Prayer-book. Let me come down into the plain and try conclusions with them. I say that the advocates of dogma can *turn boldly to the whole history of the progress and propagation of Christianity, from the time of the apostles down to the present day, and fearlessly appeal to its testimony.* I challenge any one to deny what I am going to say, and disprove it if he can. I affirm, unhesitatingly, that there never has been any spread of the Gospel, any conversion of nations or countries, any successful evangelistic work, excepting by the proclamation of "dogma." I invite any opponent of dogmatic theology to name a single instance of a country, or town, or people, which has ever been Christianized, moralized, or civilized by merely telling men that Christ was a great moral Teacher; that they must love one another; that they must be true, and just, and unselfish, and generous, and brotherly, and high-souled, and the like! No! no! no! Not one single victory can such teaching show us; not one trophy can such teaching exhibit. It has wrought no deliverance on the earth. The victories of Christianity, wherever they have been won, have been won by distinct doctrinal theology,—by telling men of Christ's vicarious death and sacrifice,—by showing them Christ's substitution on the cross, and His precious blood, by teaching them justification by faith, and bidding them believe on a crucified Saviour,—by preaching ruin by sin, redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Spirit; by lifting up the Brazen Serpent, by telling men to look and live,—to believe, repent, and be converted. This,—this is the only teaching which for eighteen centuries God has honoured with success, and is honouring at the present day both at home and abroad. Let the clever advocates of a broad and undogmatic theology,—the preachers of the gospel of earnestness, and sincerity, and cold morality,—show us at this day any English village, or parish, or city, or district, which has been evangelized without "dogma" by their principles. They cannot do it, and they never will. Christianity without "dogma" is a powerless thing. It may be beautiful to some minds, but it is childless and barren, cold and unfertilizing as the moon. There is no getting over facts. The good that is done in the earth may be comparatively small. Evil may abound, and ignorant impatience may murmur and cry out that Christianity has failed. But, depend on it, if we want to do good and shake the world, we must fight with the old apostolic

weapons, and stick to “dogma.” No dogma, no fruits! No positive evangelical doctrine, no evangelization!

(e) In the fifth place, we may *turn boldly to the lives of all the most eminent saints* who have adorned the Church of Christ, since its great Head left the world, and summon them as witnesses. I will not weary my readers with long lists of names, for happily they are legion. Let us examine the holiest Fathers, and School-men, and Reformers, and Puritans, and Anglicans, and Dissenters, and Churchmen of every school, and Christians generally of every name, and nation, and people, and tongue. Let us search their diaries, and analyse their biographies, and study their letters. Let us just see what manner of men they have been in every age, who, by the consent of all their contemporaries, have been really holy, and saintly, and good. Where will you find one of them who did not cling to “dogma,” who did not hold certain great distinct doctrinal views, and live in the faith of them? I am satisfied you will not find one! In their clearness of perception and degree of spiritual light, in the proportion they have assigned to particular articles of faith, they may have differed widely. In their mode of expressing their theological opinions they may not have agreed. But they have always had one common stamp and mark. They have not been content with vague ideas of “earnestness, and goodness, and sincerity, and charity.” They have had certain systematic, sharply-cut, and positive views of truth. They have known whom they believed, and what they believed, and why they believed. And so it always will be. You will never have Christian fruits without Christian roots, whatever novel-writers may say; you will never have eminent holiness without dogmatic theology.

(f) In the last place, *let us turn to the death-beds of all who die with solid comfort and good hope*, and appeal to them. There are few of us who are not called on occasionally, as we travel through life, to see people passing through the valley of the shadow of death, and drawing near to their latter end, and to those “things unseen which are eternal.” We all of us know what a vast difference there is in the manner in which such people leave the world, and the amount of comfort and hope which they seem to feel. Can any of us say that he ever saw a person die in peace who did not know distinctly what he was resting on for acceptance with God, and could only say, in reply to inquiries, that he was “earnest and sincere”? I can only give my own experience: I never saw one. Oh, no! The story of Christ’s moral teaching, and self-sacrifice, and example, and the need of being earnest and sincere and like Him, will never smooth down a dying pillow. Christ the teacher, Christ the great pattern, Christ the prophet, will not suffice. We want something more than this! We want the story of Christ dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification. We want Christ the mediator, Christ the substitute, Christ the intercessor, Christ the redeemer, in order to meet with confidence the King of terrors, and to say, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” Not a few, I believe, who have gloried all their lives in rejecting dogmatic religion, have discovered at last that their “broad theology” is a miserable comforter, and the

gospel of mere “earnestness” is no good news at all. Not a few, I firmly believe, could be named, who at the eleventh hour have cast aside their favourite, new-fashioned views, and have fled for refuge to “the precious blood of Christ,” and left the world with no other hope than the old-fashioned Evangelical doctrine of faith in a crucified Jesus. Nothing in their life’s religion has given them such peace as the simple truth grasped at the eleventh hour,—

“Just as I am: without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,—
O Lamb of God, I come.”

Surely, when this is the case, we have no need to be ashamed of dogmatic theology.

And now, as I leave the subject, let me wind up all I have said with an expression of my earnest hope that all honest, true-hearted Churchmen will walk in the steps of their forefathers, and stick to the old weapons which they wielded so well and successfully. Let no scorn of the world, let no ridicule of smart writers, let no sneers of liberal critics, let no secret desire to please and conciliate the public, tempt us for one moment to leave the old paths, and drop the old practice of enunciating dogma—clear, distinct, well-defined, and sharply-cut “dogma”—in all our utterances and teachings. Let us beware of being vague, and foggy, and hazy in our statements. Let us be specially particular about such points as original sin, the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the finished work of Christ, the complete atonement made by His death, the priestly office which He exercises at the right hand of God, the inward work of the Holy Ghost on hearts, the reality and eternity of future punishment. On all these points let our testimony be not Yea and Nay, but Yea and Amen; and let the tone of our witness be plain, ringing, and unmistakable. “If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Cor. xiv. 8). If we handle such subjects in a timid, faltering, half-hearted way, as if we were handling hot iron, and we had not made up our minds “what is truth,” it is vain to expect people who hear us to believe anything at all. It is the bold, decided, outspoken man, like our departed brethren Capel Molyneux or Hugh M’Neil, who makes a deep mark, and sets people thinking, and “turns the world upside down.” It was “dogma” in the apostolic ages which emptied the heathen temples, and shook Greece and Rome. It was “dogma” which awoke Christendom from its slumbers at the time of the Reformation, and spoiled the Pope of one-third of his subjects. It was “dogma” which, a hundred years ago, revived the Church of England in the days of Whitfield, Wesley, Venn, and Romaine, and blew up our dying Christianity into a burning flame. It is “dogma” at this moment which gives power to every successful mission, whether at home or abroad. It is doctrine—doctrine, clear ringing doctrine—which, like the rams’ horns at Jericho, casts down the opposition of the devil and sin. Let us go on clinging to “dogma” and doctrine, whatever some may please to say; and we

shall do well for ourselves, well for others, well for the Church of England, and well for Christ's cause in the world.

And now let me conclude this paper with two special words of warning. They are warnings so closely connected with my subject that I dare not keep them back. I offer them with some diffidence, for I lay no claim to infallibility. I ask my readers to take them for what they are worth. They are cautions for the times.

(a) On the one hand I desire to raise a warning voice against the *growing disposition to sacrifice dogma on the altar of so-called unity*, and to give up sound doctrine for the sake of peace and co-operation. The tide is running strongly in that direction: we must mind what we are about, and bend to our oars, "hard all!" Peace is an excellent thing; but it may be bought too dear. And it is bought too dear if we keep back any portion of gospel truth, in order to exhibit to men a hollow semblance of agreement. The divisions of the Church of England are unhappy and dangerous. They are the strength of Liberationism, and the laughing-stock of the world. They are an evil omen. God sees them, and is displeased. When children fight about the candle, they are often left in the dark. But for Christ's sake let us beware of trying to heal our breaches by lowering our standard of doctrine, and watering our statements of truth in order to avoid giving offence. To skin over a wound externally, while mischief is going on inside, is poor surgery, and not a cure. Some men cut the knot by refusing to show their faces or open their mouths except in the presence of sympathizing and congenial audiences. Be it so, if they please. I shall throw no stone at them. Others think they are more in the line of duty (if not of pleasure) when they stand up boldly in any place where they can get a fair hearing, whether on Congress platforms or in cathedral pulpits, and try to confess Christ, and to confront error by truth. But, whatever line of conduct we adopt, whether we sit at home at ease, or do battle and jeopardize our lives on high places, and face contradiction, let us never compromise sound doctrine for the sake of pleasing anyone, whether he be Bishop or Presbyter, Romanist or Infidel, Ritualist or Neologian, Church-man or Dissenter, or Plymouth brother. Let our principle be, "*amicus Socrates, amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas.*" Let us be civil and courteous to everyone, however much we may disagree with him. Let us not forget Luther's maxim: "*In quo aliquid Christi video, illum diligo.*" But never, never let us compromise and give up one jot or tittle of Evangelical dogma.

Well says Martin Luther: "Accursed is that charity which is preserved by the shipwreck of faith or truth, to which all things must give place; both charity, or an apostle, or an angel from heaven." Well says Dr. Gauden: "If either peace or truth must be dispensed with, it is peace and not truth. Better to have truth without public peace than peace without saving truth." Well says Gregory Nazianzen: "That man little consults the will and honour of God, who will expose the truth in order to obtain the repute of an easy mildness." (Morning Exercises,

vol. iv. p. 221.)

(b) On the other hand, I desire to raise a warning voice against the *growing tendency to be dogmatical about things which are not necessary to salvation*,—to be positive where the Bible is silent, to condemn and anathematize those whom God has not condemned, and to exalt things indifferent and secondary to a level with the primary verities and weightier matters of the gospel. By all means let us be bold, firm, and unbending as steel, about every jot and tittle of Evangelical dogma and Christ’s truth; but let us not cultivate the detestable habit of excommunicating every man who does not see everything, in the *adiaphora* of worship, exactly with our eyes, and pronounce Shibboleth precisely as we do. For Christ’s sake let us make allowances for slight varieties of opinion in non-essential matters. Let us not out-ritualize ritualists in over-scrupulousness and particularity. Let us not squabble about straws when the Canaanite and Perizzite are in the land, or bite and devour one another, like the wretched Jewish factions in the siege of Jerusalem, when the Romans were thundering at the gates. Never, never, I am persuaded, was the old saying of Rupertus Meldenius so worthy of daily remembrance: “*In necessities unitas,—in non necessariis libertas,—in omnibus caritas.*” [“in necessary things unity; in uncertain things freedom; in everything charity”.]

VI.

THOUGHTS ON THE CHURCH.

THERE is hardly any subject in religion which is so much misunderstood as the subject of the "Church." There is probably no misunderstanding which has done more harm to professing Christians than the misunderstanding of this subject.

The word "Church" is a word that is constantly used, and yet we cannot help observing that different people use it in different senses. The English politician in our day talks of "the Church." What does he mean? You will generally find he means the Episcopal Church established in his own country.—The Roman Catholic talks of "the Church." What does he mean? He means the Church of Rome, and tells you that there is no other Church in the world except his own.—The Dissenter talks of "the Church." What does he mean? He means the communicants of that chapel of which he is a member.—The members of the Church of England talk of "the Church." What do they mean? One means the building in which he worships on a Sunday;—another means the clergy, and when anyone is ordained, tells you that he has gone into the Church;—a third has some vague notions about what he is pleased to call apostolical succession, and hints mysteriously that the Church is made up of Christians who are governed by Bishops, and of none beside. There is no denying these things. They are all patent and notorious facts. And they all help to explain the assertion with which I started,—that there is no subject so much misunderstood as that of the "Church."

Now I believe that to have clear ideas about the Church, is of the first importance in the present day. I believe that mistakes on this point are one great cause of the religious delusions into which so many fall. I want to clear the subject of that misty vagueness by which it is surrounded in so many minds. It was a most true saying of Bishop Jewell, the reformer, "*There never was anything yet so absurd or so wicked, but it might seem easy to be covered and defended by the name of the Church.*"¹ (Jewell's Apol. sec. xx.)

I. Let me then show, first of all, *what is that one true Church, out of which no man can be saved.*

II. Let me show, in the second place, *what is the position and value of all branches of the visible or professing Church of Christ.*

III. And let me, in the third place, draw from the subject *some practical counsels and cautions for the times in which we live.*

I. First of all, let me show the readers of this paper *that one true Church, out*

¹ "The adversaries of the truth defend many a false error under the name of the holy Church."

"Beware of deceit, when thou hearest the name of the Church. The verity is then assaulted. They call the Church of the devil the Holy Church many times."—*Bishop Hooper*. 1547. *Parker Edit.* pp. 83, 84.

of which no man can be saved.

There is a Church, outside of which there is no salvation,—a Church to which a man must belong, or be lost eternally. I lay this down without hesitation or reserve. I say it as strongly and as confidently as the strongest advocate of the Church of Rome. But what is this Church? Where is this Church? What are the marks by which this Church may be known? This is the grand question.

The one true Church is well described in the Communion Service of the Church of England, as “the mystical body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people.” It is composed of all believers in the Lord Jesus. It is made up of all God’s elect, of all converted men and women, of all true Christians. In whomsoever we can discern the election of God the Father, the sprinkling of the blood of God the Son, the sanctifying work of God the Spirit, in that person we see a member of Christ’s true Church.¹

It is a Church of which all the members have the same marks. They are all born again of the Spirit. They all possess “repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,” and holiness of life and conversation. They all hate sin, and they all love Christ. They worship differently, and after various fashions: some worship with a form of prayer, and some with none; some worship kneeling, and some standing: but they all worship with one heart. They are all led by one Spirit; they all build upon one foundation; they all draw their religion from one single book; they are all joined to one great Head and centre, that is, Jesus Christ. They all, even now, can say with one heart, “Hallelujah;” and they all can respond with one heart and voice, “Amen and amen.”

¹ “The Church is the body of Christ. It is the whole number and society of the faithful, whom God through Christ hath before the beginning of time appointed to everlasting life.”—*Dean Nowell’s Catechism, sanctioned by Convocation.* 1572.

“That Church which is Christ’s body, and of which Christ is the head, standeth only of living stones, and true Christians, not only outwardly in name and title, but inwardly in heart and in truth.”—*Bishop Ridley.* 1556. *Parker Edit.* p. 126.

“Unto this Church pertain so many as from the beginning of the world until this time have unfeignedly believed in Christ, or shall believe unto the very end of the world. Against this Church the gates of hell shall not prevail.”—*Thomas Becon, Chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer.* 1550. *Parker Edit.* vol. i. p. 294.

“The holy Catholic Church is nothing else but a company of saints. To this Church pertain all they that since the beginning of the world have been saved, and that shall be saved unto the end thereof.”—*Bishop Coverdale.* 1550. *Parker Edit.* p. 461.

“The Catholic Church, which is called the body of Christ, consists of such as are truly sanctified, and united to Christ by an internal alliance, so that no wicked person, or unbeliever, is a member of this body, solely by the external profession of faith and participation of sacraments.”—*Bishop Davenant on Colos. i.* p. 18. 1627.

“They who are indeed holy and obedient to Christ’s laws of faith and manners, these are truly and perfectly the Church. These are the Church of God in the eyes and heart of God. For the Church of God is the body of Christ. But the mere profession of Christianity makes no man a member of Christ, nothing but a new creature, nothing but a faith working by love, and keeping the commandments of God.”—*Bishop Jeremy Taylor’s Dissuasive from Popery,* Part ii. b. 1, sec. 1. 1660.

“That Church which is Christ’s mystical body consisteth of none but only true Israelites, true sons of Abraham, true servants and saints of God.”—*Hooker, Eccles. Polity,* b. 3, i. 1600.

It is a Church which is dependent upon no ministers upon earth, however much it values those who preach the Gospel to its members. The life of its members does not hang on Church-membership and baptism and the Lord's Supper, although they highly value both the Sacraments when they are to be had. But it has only one Great Head, one Shepherd, one chief Bishop, and that is Jesus Christ. He alone, by His Spirit, admits the members of this Church, though ministers may show the door. Till He opens the door, no man on earth can open it, neither Bishops, nor presbyters, nor Convocations, nor Synods. Once let a man repent and believe the gospel, and that moment he becomes a member of this Church. Like the penitent thief, he may have no opportunity of being baptized; but he has that which is far better than any water-baptism—the baptism of the Spirit. He may not be able to receive the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper; but he eats Christ's body and drinks Christ's blood by faith every day he lives, and no minister on earth can prevent him. He may be excommunicated by ordained men, and cut off from the outward ordinances of the professing Church; but all the ordained men in the world cannot shut him out of the true Church.¹

It is a Church whose existence does not depend on forms, ceremonies, cathedrals, churches, chapels, pulpits, fonts, vestments, organs, endowments, money, kings, governments, magistrates, or any act or favour whatsoever from the hand of man. It has often lived on and continued, when all these things have been taken from it. It has often been driven into the wilderness, or into dens and caves of the earth, by those who ought to have been its friends. But its existence depends on nothing but the presence of Christ and His Spirit, and so long as they are with it, the Church cannot die.

(a) This is the Church to which *the titles* of present honour and privilege, and the promise of future glory especially belong.² This is the body of Christ.

¹ "A man may be a true and visible member of the Holy Catholic Church, and yet be no actual member of any visible Church.

"Many there be, or may be in most ages, which are no members of the visible Church, and yet better members of the true Church than the members of the Church visible for the present are."—*Jackson on the Church*. 1670.

² "Whatsoever we read in Scripture concerning the endless love and saving mercy which God showeth towards His Church, the only proper subject thereof is this Church, which we properly term the mystical body of Christ."—Hooker, *Eccles. Pol.* b. 3, i. 1600.

"If any will agree to call the universality of professors by the title of the Church, they may if they will. Any word by consent may signify anything. But if by a Church we mean that society which is really joined to Christ, which hath received the Holy Ghost, which is heir of the promises and of the good things of God, which is the body of which Christ is the head, then the invisible part of the visible Church, that is, the true servants of Christ, only are the Church."—*Bishop Jeremy Taylor's Dissuasive from Popery*. 1660.

"The Catholic Church in the prime sense consists only of such men as are actual and indissoluble members of Christ's mystical body, or of such as have the Catholic faith not only sown in their brains and understandings, but thoroughly rooted in their hearts. All the glorious prerogatives, titles, or promises, annexed to the Church in Scripture, are in the first place and principally meant of Christ's live mystical body."—*Jackson on the Church*. 1670.

"What is meant in the Creed by the Catholic Church? That whole universal company of the elect, that ever were, are, or shall be, gathered together in one body, knit together in one faith, under one head, Jesus Christ."—*Archbishop Usher*. 1650.

"In the Creed, we do believe in the Church, but not in this or that Church, but the Catholic

This is the Bride. This is the Lamb's Wife. This is the flock of Christ. This is the household of faith and the family of God. This is God's building, God's foundation, and the temple of the Holy Ghost. This is the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. This is the royal priesthood, the chosen generation, the peculiar people, the purchased possession, the habitation of God, the light of the world, the salt and the wheat of the earth. This is the "holy catholic Church" of the Apostles' Creed. This is the "one catholic and Apostolic Church" of the Nicene Creed. This is that Church to which the Lord Jesus promises,—“the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” and to which He says, “I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” (Matt. xvi. 18, xxviii. 20.)

(b) This is the only Church which possesses true *unity*. Its members are entirely agreed on all the weightier matters of religion, for they are all taught by one Spirit. About God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and sin, and their own hearts, and faith, and repentance, and the necessity of holiness, and the value of the Bible, and the importance of prayer, and the resurrection, and judgment to come, about all these points they see eye to eye. Take three or four of them, strangers to one another, from the remotest corners of the earth; examine them separately on these points: you will find them all of one mind.¹

(c) This is the only Church which possesses true *sanctity*. Its members are all holy. They are not merely holy by profession, holy in name, and holy in the judgment of charity; they are all holy in act, and deed, and reality, and life, and truth. They are all more or less conformed to the image of Jesus Christ; they are all more or less like their great Head. No unholy man belongs to this Church.²

(d) This is the only Church which is truly *catholic*. It is not the Church of any one nation or people; its members are to be found in every part of the world where the gospel is received and believed. It is not confined within the limits of any one country, nor pent up within the pale of any particular forms or outward government. In it there is no difference between Jew and Greek, black man and white, Episcopalian and Presbyterian,—but faith in Christ is all. Its members will be gathered from north, and south, and east, and west, in the last day, and

Church, which is no particular assembly of men, much less the Roman synagogue, tied to any one place, but the body of the elect which hath existed from the beginning of the world, and shall exist unto the end.”—*Whitaker's Disputations*. 1610. Parker Edit. vol. i. p. 299.

“The Holy Catholic Church, a number that serve God here, and enjoy Him in eternity. Universal, diffused through the various ages, places, and nations of the world. Holy, washed in the blood of Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit.”—*Archbishop Leighton on the Creed*. 1680.

¹ “To the mystical and invisible Church belongs peculiarly that unity which is often attributed unto the Church.” “This is the society of those for whom Christ did pray that they might be one.”—*Barrow on the Unity of the Church*. 1670.

² “To this Holy Catholic Church, which forms the mystical body of Christ, we deny that the ungodly, hypocrites, or any, belong, who are not partakers of spiritual life, and are void of inward faith, charity, and holiness. The most learned Augustine has denied it as well, giving it as his opinion that all such should be ranked among the members of Antichrist.”—*Bishop Davenant's Determinations*. 1634. Vol. ii. p. 475.

will be of every name, and denomination, and kindred, and people and tongue,—but all one in Christ Jesus.

(e) This is the only Church which is truly *apostolic*. It is built on the foundation laid by the apostles, and holds the doctrines which they preached. The two grand objects at which its members aim, are apostolic faith and apostolic practice. The man who talks of “following the apostles” without possessing these two things, is no better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.¹

(f) This is the only Church which is *certain to endure* unto the end. Nothing can altogether overthrow and destroy it. Its members may be persecuted, oppressed, imprisoned, beaten, beheaded, burned. But the true Church is never altogether extinguished: it rises again from its afflictions; it lives on through fire and water. When crushed in one land, it springs up in another. The Pharaohs, the Herods, the Neros, the Julians, the Diocletians, the Bloody Marys, the Charles the Ninths, have laboured in vain to put down this Church. They slay their thousands, and then pass away and go to their own place. The true Church outlives them all, and sees them buried each in his turn. It is an anvil that has broken many a hammer in this world, and will break many a hammer still. It is a bush which is often burning, and yet is not consumed.²

(g) This is the only Church of which *no member can perish*. Once enrolled in the lists of this Church, sinners are safe for eternity; they are never cast away. The election of God the Father,—the continual intercession of God the Son, the daily renewing and sanctifying power of God the Holy Ghost, surround and fence them in like “a garden enclosed.” Not one bone of Christ’s mystical body shall ever be broken. Not one lamb of Christ’s flock shall ever be plucked out of His hand.³

(h) This is the Church which *does the work of Christ* upon earth. Its members are a little flock, and few in number compared with the children of the world: one or two here and two or three there,—a few in this parish, and a few in that. But these are they who shake the universe. These are they who change the fortunes of kingdoms by their prayers. These are they who are the active workers for spreading the knowledge of pure religion and undefiled. These are the life-blood of a country,—the shield, the defence, the stay, and the support of any nation to which they belong.

(i) This is the Church which great divines often call “*invisible*,” because its

¹ “They are the successors of the apostles, that succeed in virtue, holiness, truth, and so forth; not they that sit upon the same stool.”—*Bishop Babington*. 1615. Folio edition, p. 307.

² “The Holy Catholic Church is built upon a rock, so that not even the gates of hell can prevail against it. This is the privilege of the elect and believers. All the ungodly and hypocrites are built upon the sand, are overcome by Satan, and are sunk at last into hell. How then can they form a part of the mystical body of Christ, which admits not condemned members?”—*Bishop Davenant’s Determinations*. 1634. Vol. ii. p. 478.

“The preservation of the Church is a continuing miracle. It resembles Daniel’s safety among the hungry lions, but prolonged from one age to another. The ship wherein Christ is, may be weather-beaten, but shall not *perish*.”—*Archbishop Leighton on the Creed*. 1680.

³ “Of all such as are effectually called, or authentically admitted into this society, none will revolt again to the synagogue of Satan, or to the world.”—*Jackson on the Church*. 1670.

distinguishing marks are not outward but inward, even the graces of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of its members, which the world can neither see nor understand (John xiv. 17). But while this is true, the word “invisible” must be carefully guarded against misconstruction. There is a sense in which the true Church is eminently visible to those who have eyes to see it. Its members, like their Master, cannot be hid. Their holy lives and characters will always show whose they are, and whom they serve on earth, and where they are going when they die. In the best visible Church, says the Twenty-sixth Article, “the evil is ever mingled with the good.” In the true Church, on the contrary, all the members are holy and good, and there is no mixture at all. In this sense, we must remember, the true Church is always visible.

(j) This is the Church which *shall be truly glorious* at the end. When all earthly glory has passed away, then shall this Church be presented without spot before God the Father’s throne. Thrones, principalities, and powers upon earth shall come to nothing. Dignities, and offices, and endowments shall all pass away; but the Church of the first-born shall shine as the stars at the last, and be presented with joy before the Father’s throne, in the day of Christ’s appearing. When the Lord’s jewels are made up, and the “manifestation of the sons of God” takes place, Episcopacy, and Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism will not be mentioned. One Church only will be named, and that is the Church of the elect.

(k) This is the Church for which a *true minister of the Lord Jesus Christ’s gospel chiefly labours*. What is it to a true minister to fill the building in which he preaches? What is it to him to see the communicants come up more and more to his table? What is it to him to see his party grow? It is all nothing, unless he can see men and women “born again,”—unless he can see souls converted and brought to Christ,—unless he can see here one, and there another, “coming out from the world,” “taking up the cross and following Christ,” and thus increasing the numbers of the one true Church.

(l) This is the Church to which a man *must belong*, if he would be saved. Till you belong to this, you are nothing better than a lost soul. You may have the form, the husk, the skin, and the shell of religion, but you have not got the substance and the life. Yes: you may have countless outward privileges,—you may enjoy great light, and knowledge, and opportunities;—but if you do not belong to the body of Christ, your light, and knowledge, and privileges, and opportunities will not save your soul. Alas, for the ignorance that prevails on this point! Men fancy, if they join this Church or that Church, and become communicants, and go through certain forms, that all must be right with their souls. It is an utter delusion; it is a gross mistake. All were not Israel who were called Israel; and all are not members of Christ’s body who profess themselves Christians. Take notice, you may be a staunch Episcopalian, or Presbyterian, or Independent, or Baptist, or Wesleyan, or Plymouth Brother,—and yet not belong to the true

Church. And if you do not, it will be better at last if you had never been born.¹

II. Let me pass on now to the second point I proposed to speak of. Let me explain the *position and value of all branches of the visible or professing Church of Christ*.

What do we mean when we use the expression “A *visible* Church”? I answer that question in the words of the Nineteenth Article of the Church of England. It is there described as “a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ’s ordinance.” I take the meaning of this definition to be, that where there is a body of men professing one common faith in Christ and the doctrine of His gospel, with a ministry of the word, and a right administration of the sacraments, there is a visible Church.

A Church, therefore, is called *visible*, because its marks or characteristics can be seen and known of men. Its confession of faith, its ministry, its worship, and its sacraments are its distinguishing marks and signs. Through them it is *visible*. Where these marks are, there is what the Thirty-fourth Article calls a “particular or national Church.” Such a Church, no doubt, may be small, weak, schismatical, defective—even corrupt. But it would be hard to prove that it is not a branch of the great visible Church of Christ, like the erring Churches of Alexandria and Antioch.

Now what does Scripture teach us about professing visible Churches? What it teaches about the one true Church which some call “invisible,” we have seen. Let us now see what the same Scripture teaches about Churches which the Article of the Church of England calls “visible.”

Every careful reader of the Bible knows that separate professing Churches are frequently mentioned in the New Testament. At Corinth, at Ephesus, at Thessalonica, at Antioch, at Smyrna, at Sardis, at Laodicea, and several other places,—at each we find a distinct body of professing Christians,—a body of people baptized in Christ’s name, and professing the faith of Christ’s gospel. And these bodies of people we find spoken of as the “Churches” of the places which are named. Thus St. Paul says to the Corinthians, “But we have no such custom, neither the Churches of Christ” (1 Cor. xi. 16). So also we read of the Churches of Judæa, the Churches of Syria, the Churches of Galatia, the Churches of Asia, the Churches of Macedonia. In each case the expression means the bodies of baptized Christians in the countries mentioned.

Now, we have but little information given us in the New Testament about these Churches;—but that little is very clear and plain, so far as it goes.

We know, for one thing, that these Churches were all mixed bodies. As the

¹ “We insist that Christians do certainly become members of particular Churches,—such as the Roman, Anglican, or Gallican,—by outward profession; yet do not become true members of the Holy Catholic Church, which we believe, unless they are sanctified by the inward gift of grace, and are united to Christ, the Head, by the bond of the Spirit.” —*Bishop Davenant’s Determinations*. 1634. Vol. ii. p. 474.

Article of the Church of England truly says, “the evil are ever mingled with the good.” Not one was perfect and free from dead branches. They consisted not only of converted persons, but of many unconverted persons also. They contained not only believers, but members who fell into gross errors and mistakes, both of faith and practice. Good fish and bad were in the same net; wheat and tares were in the same field. This is clear from the account we have of the Churches at Corinth, at Ephesus, and at Sardis. Of Sardis the Lord Jesus Himself says, that there were “a few,” a few only, in it, who had not “defiled their garments” (Rev. iii. 4).

We know, moreover, that, even in the apostles’ times, Churches received plain warnings, that they might perish and pass away altogether. To the Romans the threat was held out that they should be “cut off;” to the Ephesians, that their “candlestick should be taken away;” to the Laodiceans, that they “should be utterly rejected” (Rom. xi. 22; Rev. ii. 5, iii. 16).

We know, moreover, that all these Churches had certain common visible marks or characteristics, which the heathen world around them could see. In all there was public worship, preaching, reading of the Scriptures, prayer, praise, discipline, order, government, the ministry, and the sacraments. What kind of government some Churches had it is impossible to say positively. We read of officers who were called angels, of bishops, of deacons, of elders, of pastors, of teachers, of evangelists, of prophets, of helps, of governments (1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii.; Rev. i. 20). All these are mentioned. But the particulars about most of these offices are kept from us by the Spirit of God. As to the standard of doctrine and practice in the Churches we have the fullest and most distinct information. On these points the language of the New Testament is clear and unmistakable. But as to government and outward ceremonies, the information given to us is strikingly small. The contrast between the Church of the Old Testament and the Churches of the New, in this respect, is very great. In the one we find little about doctrine, but much about forms and ordinances; in the other we have much about doctrine, and little about forms. In the Old Testament Church the minutest directions were given for the performance of every part of the ceremonies of religion. In the New Testament Church we find the ceremonies expressly abolished, as no longer needed after Christ’s death, and nothing hardly except a few general principles supplying their place. The New Testament Churches have got no book of Leviticus. Their two chief principles seem to be, “Let all things be done decently and in order,—let all things be done unto edification” (1 Cor. xiv. 26, 40). But as to the application of these general principles, it seems to have been left to each particular Church to decide.¹

¹ “I find no one certain and perfect kind of government prescribed or commended in the Scriptures to the Church of Christ.”

“I do deny that the Scriptures do express particularly everything that is to be done in the Church, or that it doth put down any one sort of form and kind of government of the Church to

We know, finally, that the work begun by the missionary preaching of the apostles was carried on through the instrumentality of the professing Churches. It was through their public assemblies that God converted sinners and built up saints. Mixed and imperfect as these Churches plainly were, within their pale were to be found nearly all the existing believers and members of the body of Christ. Everything in the New Testament leads us to suppose that there could have been few believers, if any, who were not members of some one or other of the professing Churches scattered up and down the world.

Such is about the whole of the information the New Testament gives us concerning visible Churches in the apostolic times. How shall we use this information? What shall we say of all the visible Churches in our own time? We live in days when there are many Churches:—the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Church of Ireland, the Church of Rome, the Greek Church, the Syrian Church, the Armenian Church, the Lutheran Church, the Genevan Church, and many others. We have Episcopalians; we have Presbyterian Churches; we have Independent Churches. In what manner shall we speak of them? Let me put down a few general principles.¹

(a) For one thing, no visible Church on earth has a right to say, “We are the true Church, and except men belong to our communion they cannot be saved.” No Church whatever has a right to say that,—whether it be the Church of Rome, the Church of Scotland, or the Church of England; whether it be an Episcopalian Church, a Presbyterian, or an Independent. Where is the text in the Bible that ties admission into the kingdom of God to the membership of any one particular visible Church upon earth! I say confidently, Not one!

(b) Furthermore, no visible Church has a right to say, “We alone have the true form of worship; we alone have the true Church government, the true way of administering the sacraments, and the true manner of offering up united prayer; and all others are completely wrong.” No Church, I repeat, has a right to say anything of the kind. Where can such assertions be proved by Scripture? What one plain, positive word of revelation can men bring forward in proof of any such affirmations? I say confidently, Not one. There is not a text in the Bible which expressly commands Churches to have one special form of government, and expressly forbids any other. If there is, let men point it out. There is not a text which expressly confines Christians to the use of a liturgy, or expressly enjoins them only to have extempore prayer. If there is, let it be shown. And yet

be perpetual for all times, persons, and places, without alteration.”—*Archbishop Whitgift*. 1574. Folio edition, p. 84.

“I for my part do confess that in revolving the Scriptures, I could never find but that God hath left the like liberty to the Church government, as He hath done to the Civil government;—to be varied according to time, place, and accidents. So likewise in Church matters, the substance of doctrine is immutable, and so are the general rules of government. But for rites, and ceremonies, and the particular hierarchies, policies, and discipline of the Churches, they be left at large.”—*Lord Bacon’s Works*, vol. vii. p. 68.

¹ For convenience sake these Churches collectively are often spoken of as “The Church,” in contradiction to the heathen and Mahometan part of mankind. Only let us remember that this is a very mixed Church, and one to which no special promises belong.

for hundreds of years Episcopalians and Presbyterians and Independents have contended with each other, as if these things had been settled as minutely as the Levitical ceremonies, and as if everybody who did not see with their eyes was almost guilty of a deadly sin! It seems wonderful that in a matter like this men should not be satisfied with the full persuasion that they themselves are right, but must also go on to condemn everybody who disagrees with them, as utterly wrong. And yet this groundless theory,—that God has laid down one particular form of Church government and ceremonies,—has often divided men who ought to have known better. It has caused even good men to speak and write very unadvisedly; it has been made a fountain of incessant strife, intolerance, and bigotry by men of all parties,—even among Protestants, from the times of Cartwright, Travers, and Laud, down to the present day. No wonder that the “judicious” Hooker witnessed and protested against it.

(c) Furthermore, no visible Church on earth has a right to say, “We shall never fall away: we shall last for ever.” There is no promise in the Bible to warrant the continuance of any one professing Church upon earth. Many have fallen completely; many have perished already. Where are the Churches of Africa, in which Augustine and Cyprian used once to preach? Where are the Churches of Asia Minor, of many of which we read in the New Testament? They are gone: they have passed away, and left hardly a wreck behind. Other existing Churches are so corrupt that it is a plain duty to leave them, lest we become partakers of their sins, and share in their plagues.

(d) Furthermore, no visible Church is in a sound and healthy state, which has not the marks we see in all the New Testament Churches. A Church in which the Bible is not the standard of faith and practice,—a Church in which repentance, faith, and holiness are not prominently put forward as essential to salvation,—a Church in which forms and ceremonies and ordinances, not commanded in the Bible, are the chief things urged upon the attention of the members,—such a Church is in a very diseased and unsatisfactory state. It may not formally deny any article of the Christian faith,—it may have been founded originally by the apostles,—it may boast that it is Catholic; but if the apostles were to rise from the dead, and visit such a Church, I believe they would command it to repent, and have no communion with it till it did.

(e) Furthermore, no mere membership of any visible Church will avail a man anything “in the hour of death and in the day of judgment.” No communion with a visible Church will stand in the place of direct personal communion with Jesus; no attendance whatever on its ordinances is a substitute for personal faith and conversion. It will be no consolation, when we lay our heads upon a dying pillow, if we can say no more than this,—that we have belonged to a pure Church. It will be no answer in the last great day, when the secrets of all hearts are revealed, if we can only say that we worshipped in the Church in which we were baptized, and attended upon its forms.

But let me pass away from negatives and come to positive assertions. What

is the great use and purpose for which God has raised up and maintained visible Churches upon earth? They are useful as witnesses, keepers, and librarians of Holy Scripture. They are useful as maintainers of a regular succession of ministers to preach the Gospel. They are useful as preservers of order among professing Christians. But their great and principal use is to train up, to rear, to nurse, to keep together members of that one true Church, which is the body of Jesus Christ. They are intended to “edify the body of Christ” (Eph. iv. 12).

Which is the best visible Church upon earth? That is the best which adds most members to the one true Church, which most promotes “repentance towards God, faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ,” and good works among its members. These are the true tests and tokens of a really good and flourishing Church. Give me that Church which has evidence of this kind to show!

Which is the worst visible Church on earth? That is the worst which has the fewest members of the one true Church to show in its ranks. Such a Church may possess excellent forms, pure orders, venerable customs, ancient institutions; but if it cannot point to faith, repentance, and holiness of heart and life in its members, it is a poor Church indeed. “By their fruits” the Churches upon earth must be judged, as well as individual Christians.¹

I advise all readers of this paper to seek to understand these things. Try, on the one side, to understand that a visible professing Church is a scriptural institution, warranted by the word of God. It is not, as some would tell us in these days, a mere human device, a thing which God does not speak of in the word. It is amazing to my mind that anyone can read the New Testament, and then say that visible Churches are not authorized in the Bible!—Try, on the other side, to understand that something more is needed than merely belonging to this Church, or that Church, in order to take a man to heaven. Are you born again? Have you repented of your sins? Have you laid hold of Christ by faith? Are you a man holy in life and conversation? These are the grand points that a man must seek to ascertain. Without these things, the highest, the strictest, and the most regular member of a visible Church will be a lost Churchman in the last great day.

Look upon visible Churches with their outward forms and ordinances, as being to the one true Church what the husk is to the kernel of the nut. Both grow together, both husk and kernel; yet one is far more precious than the other. Just so the true Church is far more precious than the outward and visible.—The husk is useful to the kernel; it preserves it from many injuries, and enables it to grow. Just so the outward Church is useful to the body of Christ; it is within the pale of its ordinances that believers are generally born again, and grow up

¹ “That which makes every visible Church to be more or less the true Church of God, is the greater or less efficacy or conformity of its public doctrines and discipline for enacting or fashioning the visible members of it, that they may become live members of the Holy Catholic Church, or living stones of the new Jerusalem. Every true visible Church is an inferior free school or nursery for training up scholars, that they may be fit to be admitted into the celestial academy.”—*Jackson on the Church*. 1670.

in faith, hope, and charity.—The husk is utterly worthless without the kernel. Just so the outward Church is utterly worthless except it guards and covers over the inward and the true.—The husk will die, but the kernel has a principle of life in it. Just so the forms and ordinances of the outward Church will all pass away, but that which lives and lasts for ever is the true Church within.—To expect the kernel without the husk is expecting that which is contrary to the common order of the laws of nature. To expect to find the true Church, and members of the true Church, without having an orderly and well-governed visible Church, is expecting that which God, in the ordinary course of things, does not grant in this world.¹

I charge every reader of this paper to seek a right understanding upon these points. To give to the visible Church the names, attributes, promises, and privileges which belong to the one true Church,—the body of Christ; to confound the two things, the visible and the inward Church,—the Church professing and the Church of the elect,—is an immense delusion. It is a trap into which only too many fall. It is a great rock, on which many in these days unhappily make shipwreck.

Once confound the body of Christ with the outward professing Church, and there is no amount of error into which you may not at last fall. Nearly all pervers to Romanism begin with getting wrong here.²

Once accept the idea that Church government is of more importance than sound doctrine, and that a Church *with bishops* teaching falsehood is better than a Church *without bishops* teaching truth, and none can say what you may come to in religion.

III. Let me now pass on to the third and last thing I proposed to do. Let me draw from the subject some practical counsels and cautions for the times in which we live.

I feel deeply that I should neglect a duty if I did not do this. The errors and mistakes connected with the subject of the Church are so many and so serious, that they need to be plainly denounced, and men need to be plainly put upon their guard against them. You have read the general principles laid down about the one true Church, and about the visible professing Churches. Now let me go on to make some particular application of these general principles to the times in which we live.

1. First of all, *do not suppose, because I have said that mere outward membership of a visible Church cannot save a soul, that it does not signify to what visible Church a man belongs.* It does signify to what visible Church a man belongs; and it signifies very much. There are Churches in which the Bible is

¹ “The invisible Church is ordinarily and regularly part of the visible, but yet that only part that is the true one.”—*Bishop Jeremy Taylor*. 1670.

² “For lack of diligently observing the difference first between the Church of God, mystical and visible,—then between the visible sound and the visible corrupted,—the oversights are neither few nor light that have been committed.”—Hooker, *Eccles.. Pol.* 3. 1600.

practically lost sight of altogether. There are Churches in which Jesus Christ's Gospel is buried, and lies completely hidden. There are Churches in which a man may hear God's service performed in an unknown tongue, and hardly hear of "repentance towards God, faith towards Christ," and the work of the Holy Ghost, from one end of the year to the other. Such are some of the Armenian and Greek Churches, and such, above all others in error, is the Church of Rome. To belong to such Churches brings serious peril upon any soul. They do not help men to the one true Church. They are far more likely to keep men out, and put barriers in their way for ever. Beware of ever being tempted to belong to these Churches yourself, or ever thinking lightly of the conduct of those who join those Churches, as if they had only committed a little sin.¹

2. In the next place, *do not be moved by the argument of the Roman Catholic, when he says, "There is only one true Church, and that one true Church is the Church of Rome, and you must join us if you mean to be saved."* A more preposterous and unwarrantable assertion was never made, if the question is simply tried by the Bible. It is a wonderful proof of the fallen condition of man's understanding, that so many people are taken in by it. Tell the man who uses this argument that there is indeed only one true Church, but it is not the Church of Rome, or the Church of England, or any other country upon earth. Defy him boldly to show a single text which says that the Church of Rome is that one true Church to which men must belong. Tell him that to quote texts of Scripture which merely speak of "the Church," is no proof on his side at all, and that such texts might just as well refer to the Church of Jerusalem, or the Church of Antioch, as to Rome. Point out to him the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which foretells Romish arrogance, and Romish presumption, and the possibility of Rome itself being "cut off." Tell him that his Church's claim to be the one true Church is a baseless assumption,—a house built upon sand, which has not a tittle of Scripture to rest upon. Alas, how awful it is to think that many in this day of light and knowledge should be completely carried away by that most illogical argument: "There must be one true Church; that one true Church must be a visible, professing Church; the Church of Rome is that one true Church: therefore join it, or you will not be saved!"

3. In the next place, *do not be shaken by those persons who talk of "the voice of the Church," and the "Catholic Church," when you disagree with them, as*

¹ "If it be possible to be there where the true Church is not, then is it at Rome. "*—Church of England Homily for Whitsunday.*

"We have forsaken a Church in which we could neither hear the pure word of God, nor administer the sacraments, nor invoke the name of God as we ought,—and in which there was nothing to retain a prudent man who thought seriously of his salvation."*—Bishop Jewel's Apology.*

"Such adherence to the visible or representative Church of Rome, as the Jesuits and others now challenge, doth induce a separation from the Holy Catholic Church, and is more deadly to the soul than to be bedfellow to one sick of the pestilence is to the body."*—Jackson on the Catholic Church. 1670.*

if the very mention of these words ought to silence you. There are many in these days of theological warfare, whose favourite weapon, when the Bible is appealed to, is this: “The Church says it; the Church has always so ruled it; the voice of the Church has always so pronounced it.” I warn you never to be put down by arguments of this kind. Ask men what they mean when they talk in this vague way about “the Church.” If they mean the whole professing Church throughout the world, call upon them to show when and where the whole Church has met in order to decide the matter about which they speak.—Or ask them if the Church had met, what right its decision would have to be listened to, except it could be shown to be founded upon the word of God?—Or, if they mean by “the voice of the Church,” the voice of the Church of England, ask them to show you in the Thirty-nine Articles the doctrine which they want you to receive, and are pressing upon you. Point out to them that the Church of England says in those Articles, that “nothing is to be required of men, as necessary for salvation, except it can be read in, or proved by, the Holy Scriptures.” Point out to them that it says furthermore, that although “the Church has power to decree rites and ceremonies, and has authority in controversies of faith,” yet “it is not lawful for the visible Church to ordain anything contrary to God’s word written, or so to expound one place of Scripture as to make it repugnant to another.” Show them also what the Church of England says when it speaks of the three creeds,—the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. It does not say they are to be received and believed, because the primitive Church put them forth, but because “they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture” (Art. vi. xx. viii.).

Tell men, when they talk mysteriously to you about “hearing the Church,” that our Lord was not speaking of matters of faith at all, when he said, “hear the Church,” but only about private quarrels between man and man (Matt. xviii. 17). Tell them that your rule of faith and practice is the Bible only, and that if they will show you their views in the Bible, you will receive them, but not otherwise. Tell them that their favourite arguments, “the voice of the Church,” and the “Catholic Church,” are nothing but high-sounding phrases, and meaningless terms. They are “great swelling words” which make a noise in the distance, but in reality have neither substance nor power.

Alas, that it should be needful to say all this! But I fear there are only too many to whom “the voice of the Church” has been like the fabled Medusa’s head: it seems to have petrified their common sense.¹

¹ The only case in which an appeal to the testimony of the Church seems allowable is where it is made in order to establish an historical fact. For instance, the Sixth Article of the Church of England says, that of the “Authority of the Canonical Books of the New Testament, there never was any doubt in the Church,”—that is, in the whole body of professing Churches. Only let it be remembered that receiving the testimony of the Church to a fact does not for a moment imply that the Church has any authoritative power to interpret doctrine infallibly. A man maybe a very competent witness to the fact that a book has been faithfully printed, and yet know little or nothing about the meaning of its contents.

4. In the next place, *let me warn members of the Church of England never to take up ground on behalf of their Church, which cannot be defended from the Holy Scriptures.* I love the Church of which I am a minister, and I delight to take up high ground on its behalf. But I do not call that ground really high which is not also Scripturally safe. I think it foolish and wrong to take up ground from which we are sure to be driven when we begin to argue closely with those who differ from us.

Now there are many in this day who would have us tell all Presbyterians and Independents that the only true Church is always an Episcopal Church; that to this belong the promises of Christ, and to no other kind of Church at all; that to separate from an Episcopal Church is to leave the “Catholic Church,” to be guilty of an act of schism, and fearfully to peril the soul. This is the argument made use of by many. Beware, I beseech you, of ever taking up such ground. It cannot be maintained: it cannot be shown to be tenable by plain, unmistakable texts of Scripture.

When the Scripture says, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,”—when the Scripture says, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,”—when the Scripture says, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,”—when the Scripture says, “He that believeth not on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be damned,”—when the Scripture so speaks, such doctrines cannot be proclaimed too plainly by us. But never anywhere does Scripture say, from Matthew down to Revelation, “Except a man belong to a Church governed by bishops, he cannot be saved.” There is not a text in Scripture which says anything of the kind, from first to last. It is in vain for us to argue as if Scripture had spoken in this way. Once begin to require things in religion which are not required of men in the Bible, and where are we to stop?¹

Let no one misunderstand my meaning in saying this. I am deeply convinced of the excellency of my own Church,—I would even say, if it were not a proud boast, its superiority over any other Church upon earth. I see more for Episcopacy in the Bible than I do for any other form of Church government. I consider the historical fact that there were bishops in most of the professing Churches at the beginning of Christianity, deserves much weight. I believe it is far wiser to

¹ “You shall not find in all the Scripture this your essential point of succession of bishops.”—*John Bradford, Reformer and Martyr, Chaplain to Bishop Ridley.* 1550.

“I conceive that the power of ordination was restrained to bishops rather by apostolical practice, and the perpetual custom and Canons of the Church, than by an absolute precept that either Christ or His apostles gave concerning it. Nor can I yet meet with any convincing argument to set it upon a more high and divine institution.”—*Bishop Cosin.* 1660.

“We have found neither any express commandment, nor any example, which prescribes as universal and unchangeable one particular system for the regulation of the Church and its ministers. Our argument consists only of inferences. The conclusion in favour of Episcopacy from the New Testament, are intimations rather than proofs. We can produce no single text so clear as to compel us to conclude that the apostles deemed any one peculiar form of government to be indispensable and unalterable in the Church.”—*Discourses by Rev. C. Benson, Master of the Temple.*

have a regular, settled liturgy, for the use of congregations, than to make a congregation dependent upon its minister's frames and feelings for the tone of its regular prayers. I think that endowments settled and established by law are a way of paying ministers far preferable to the voluntary system. I am satisfied that, *well administered*, the Church of England is more calculated to help souls to heaven than any Church on earth. But I never can take up the ground that some men do in this day, who say that the Episcopal Church is the only true Church in Great Britain, and that all outside that Church are guilty schismatics. I cannot do it, because I am sure such ground as this can never be maintained.

I am quite aware that the opinions I am expressing on this point are utterly opposed to those which many members of the Church of England hold in the present day. Such men will say, I am no sound Churchman; I am ignorant of true Church principles; and so forth. Such charges weigh very little with me. I have found that those who talk loudest about the Church are not always its most faithful friends, and often end with leaving it altogether. I should like men who tell me my views are not "Church" views, to consider calmly what authority they have for such an assertion. I appeal confidently to the authorized formularies of the Church of England, and I defy them to meet me on that ground. What do those formularies say of the visible Church? Hear the Nineteenth Article: "It is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered."—What do they say of the ministry? Hear the Twenty-third Article: "We ought to judge those lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard."—What do they say of ceremonies? Hear the Thirty-fourth Article: "They may be changed, according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word."—What do they say of bishops, priests, and deacons? Hear the preface to the Ordination Service: "It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scriptures and ancient authors, that from the apostles' times there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's Church: bishops, priests, and deacons."—What do they say of ministers ordained according to this service? Hear the Thirty-sixth article: "We decree all such to be rightly, orderly, and lawfully consecrated and ordered."

Now to all this I heartily and cordially subscribe. The Church of England calmly asserts that its own ministers are scripturally ordained. But this is a very different thing from saying that those who are not ordained in like manner are not ordained at all. It calmly asserts that there always have been bishops, priests, and deacons. But this is very different from saying that where these orders are not, there is no true Church. It calmly asserts that a man must be lawfully called and sent, in order to be a minister. But it nowhere says that none but bishops

have power to call.¹

I believe the Church of England has been graciously led to adopt the language of true scriptural moderation. It is a moderation strikingly in contrast with the bold, decided language which it uses when speaking in the doctrinal Articles about things essential to salvation. But it is the only true ground which can ever be maintained: it is the only ground on which we ought to stand. Let us be satisfied that our own communion is scriptural; but let us never pretend to unchurch all other communions beside our own. For my own part, I abhor the idea of saying that men like Carey, and Rhenius, and Williams, and Campbell, the missionaries, were not real ministers of Jesus Christ. I loathe the idea of handing over the communions to which such men as Matthew Henry, and Doddridge, and Robert Hall, and M`Cheyne, and Chalmers belonged, to the uncovenanted mercies of God, or saying such men as these were not really and truly ordained. Hard language is sometimes used about them: people dare to talk of their not belonging to the Catholic Church, and of their being guilty of schism. I cannot for a moment hold such views; I deeply lament that anyone should hold them. I would to God that we had many Episcopalians like the men I have named. People may shut them out from what they call the Catholic Church, but I am firmly persuaded they will not shut them out from the kingdom of God. Surely those whom God hath not excluded, we should take care not to exclude.

5. In the next place, *let me warn you not to set down men as no Christians, because they do not agree with you in your manner of worshipping God.* In saying this, I would have it distinctly understood that I am not speaking of those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, and the sufficiency of Scripture to make men wise unto salvation. I speak with especial reference to the great body of Protestant Dissenters in England, who hold the leading doctrines of the Gospel as set forth at the time of the Reformation. I wish every member of the Church of England to take broad, charitable, and Scriptural views of such persons, and to dismiss from his mind the narrow-minded, bigoted prejudices which are so unhappily common on the subject. Are they members of the one true Church? Do they love the Lord Jesus Christ? Are they born again of God's Spirit? Are they penitent, believing, holy people? If they are, they will get to heaven, I firmly believe, as certainly as any Episcopalian on earth. Men must tolerate them,—if such a word may be used,—men must tolerate them, see them, and love them too, in heaven and the glorious kingdom of Christ. Surely, if we expect to meet men of different denominations from our own at the right hand

¹ "It might have been expected that the defenders of the English Hierarchy against the first Puritans should take the highest ground, and challenge for the bishops the same unreserved submission on the same plea of exclusive apostolical prerogative, which their adversaries feared not to insist on for their elders and deacons. It is notorious, however, that such was not in general the line preferred by Jewel, Whitgift, Bishop Cooper, and others, to whom the management of that controversy was entrusted during the early part of Elizabeth's reign. It is enough with them to show that the government by archbishops and bishops is ancient and allowable. They never venture to urge its exclusive claims, or to connect the succession with the validity of the sacraments."—*Keble's Preface to Hooker's Works*, p. 59.

of the Lord Jesus, and to spend eternity in their company, we ought not to look coldly on them upon earth. Surely it were far better to begin something like union and co-operation with them, and to cultivate a spirit of love and kind feeling towards them while we can.

We may think our Dissenting brethren mistaken in many of their views. We may believe they miss privileges and lose advantages by being separated from our own Church. We may be fully satisfied that Episcopacy is that form of government which is most agreeable to God's word, and most in harmony with what we read of in the history of the early Church. We may feel persuaded that, taking human nature as it is, it is far better, both for ministers and hearers, to have a liturgy or settled form of prayer, and endowments guaranteed by the State and not dependent on pew rents or offertories. We may feel persuaded, from observation of the working of the voluntary system and of the state of religion among Dissenters generally, that the way of the Church of England is the more excellent way. But, after all, we must not speak positively where the Bible does not speak positively. Where, in all the compass of Scripture, can we point out that text which says that Episcopacy and a liturgy are things *absolutely needful to salvation*? I say, without fear of contradiction, nowhere at all.

We may regret the divisions among professing Christians in our own country. We may feel that they weaken the holy cause of Christ's Gospel. We may feel that people have often, and do often, become Dissenters in England from very insufficient reasons, and from motives by no means of the highest order. But, after all, we must not forget by whom the greater part of these divisions were primarily occasioned. Who obliged the bulk of English Nonconformists to secede? Who drove them out of the fold of the Church of England? We of the Church of England did it ourselves, by not properly providing for their souls' wants! Who in reality built the Dissenting Chapels, the Bethels, the Bethesdas, which so often offend the eyes of many members of the Church of England in these days? We did ourselves: we did it by gross neglect of the people's souls,—by the grossly unscriptural kind of preaching which prevailed in the pulpits of our churches a century ago. I believe the plain truth is, that the vast majority of Dissenters in England did not leave the Church of England, *at first*, from any abstract dislike to the principles of Episcopacy, or liturgies, or establishments; but they did dislike the moral essays and inconsistent lives of the clergy; and we must confess, with shame, that they had only too much reason. Some may think it strange that they did not see the beauties of our Prayer-book and Episcopacy more clearly; but there was one thing they saw more clearly,—and that was, that men wholly taken up with field-sports and the world, and never preaching Christ, were not likely to teach them the way to be saved. Surely when these things are so, we have no right to speak harshly about Dissenters, we have no right to wonder at secessions and separations. If sheep are not fed, who can wonder if they stray? If men found out that the Gospel was not preached by the clergy of the Church of England, who can blame them

if they cared more for the Gospel than for the clergy, and went to hear that Gospel wherever it could be heard?

I know well that such opinions as these are very distasteful to many people. Many will think I am taking very low ground in speaking as I have done about Dissenters. It is easy to think so, and to fancy higher ground might be found. It is not quite so easy to point out higher ground in Scripture, or to justify the language frequently used in speaking of English Dissenters, upon any principles whatever. We must consider calmly the conduct of the Church of England for the last two hundred years; we must not forget that “he is the schismatic who causes the schism;” we must confess that the Church of England caused most of the dissent that has taken place. However much we may regret divisions, we must take the greater part of the blame to ourselves. Surely we ought to feel very tenderly towards our separating brethren. We should not forget that many Non-conformist bodies hold the essence of Jesus Christ’s gospel. Justice and fairness demand that we should treat them with kindness. Whatever their mistakes may be, the Church of England made the vast majority of them what they are at the present day. Granting for a moment that they are wrong, we are not the men who can, with any face, tell them so.

6. Let me pass on now to another warning of a different kind: let me warn my readers *not to fancy that divisions and schisms are unimportant things*. This also is a great delusion, and one into which many fall, when they find there is no visible Church which can be called the only true Church on earth. So weak are our understandings, that if we do not fall over upon the one side, we are disposed at once to fall over on the other. Settle it down then in your mind that all divisions among Christians are an immense evil,—all divisions strengthen the hands of infidels,—all divisions help the devil. The great maxim of Satan is, “divide and conquer.” If he can set professing Christians by the ears, and make them spend their strength in contending one with another, our spiritual enemy has gained a great point. You may be very sure that union is strength, and you may be no less sure that discipline and uniformity are one great aid to union. Order is a vast help to efficient working in Christ’s cause as well as in other things, and “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all Churches of the saints” (1 Cor. xiv. 33).

I would not be misunderstood in saying this. I fully admit that separation is justifiable under some circumstances, beyond a question. But it is absurd to say on that account that there is no such thing as schism. I for one cannot say so. Men ought to tolerate much, and put up with much, before they think of separating and dividing, and leaving one Church for another. It is a step which nothing but the deliberate teaching of false doctrine can really justify. It is a step that should never be taken without much consideration, much waiting, and much prayer. It is a step that seems to me more than questionable, except it can be clearly proved that the salvation of the soul is really at stake. It is a step that in England is often taken far too lightly, and with an evident want of thought

as to its serious nature and tendency. It is a common opinion of ignorant people, "It is no matter where we go. It is no matter if we first join one denomination and then join another,—first worship with this people and then with that. It is all the same where we go, if we do but go to some place of worship." I say this common opinion is an enormous evil, and ought to be denounced by all true-hearted Christians. This Athenian kind of spirit, which ever wants something new,—which must have something different in religion from what it had a little time ago,—is a spirit which I cannot praise. I believe it to be the mark of a very diseased and unhealthy state of soul.

7. In the next place, let me warn you *not to be shaken by those who say that all visible Churches are necessarily corrupt, and that no man can belong to them without peril to his soul*. There never have been wanting men of this kind, men who have forgotten that everything must be imperfect which is carried on by human agency, and have spent their lives in a vain search after a perfectly pure Church. Members of all Churches must be prepared to meet such men, and especially members of the Church of England. It should never be forgotten that fault-finding is the easiest of all tasks. There never was a system upon earth, in which man had anything to do, in which faults, and many faults too, might not soon be found. You must expect to find imperfections in every visible Church upon earth: there always were such in the New Testament Churches; there always will be such now. There is only one Church without spot or blemish: that is the one true Church, the body of Christ, which Christ shall present to His Father in the last great day.

With regard to the Church of England, I will only remark, that men ought not to confound the bad working of a system with the system itself. It may be quite true that many of its ministers are not what they ought to be, and that some of its revenues are misapplied, and not properly spent. This does not prove that the whole machinery of the Church of England is rotten and corrupt, or that the whole Church is an institution which ought to be cast down. Surely there is many a good machine on earth at this moment which works badly, simply because it is in hands that know not in what way it ought to be worked.

I will only ask those who advise men to leave the Church of England, what they have got better to show us? Where is the visible Church,—where is the denomination of Christians upon earth which is perfect,—without spot, and without blemish? None: I say confidently, none are to be found at all! Many people of scrupulous conscience, I firmly believe, have found this to their cost already. They left the Church of England because of alleged imperfections: they thought they could better their condition. What do they think now? If the truth were really told, I believe they would confess that in getting rid of one kind of imperfection they have met with another, and that in healing one sore they have opened two more far worse than the first.

If any reader of this paper is a member of the Church of England, let me simply advise him not to leave that Church lightly, and without good reason.

Numerous forms and ceremonies may be attended with evil consequences, but there are also evils in the absence of them. Episcopacy may have its disadvantages, but Presbyterianism and Congregationalism have their disadvantages too. A liturgy may possibly cramp and confine some highly gifted ministers, but the want of one sadly cramps and confines the public devotion of many congregations. The Church of England Prayer-book may not be perfect, and may be capable of many improvements: it would be strange if this was not the case, when we remember that its compilers were not inspired men. Still, after all, the Prayer-book's imperfections are few, compared to its excellences. The testimony of Robert Hall, the famous Baptist, on this subject is very striking. He says, "The evangelical purity of its sentiments, the chastened fervour of its devotion, and the majestic simplicity of its language, have combined to place it in the very first rank of uninspired compositions."

8. In the last place, let me advise every reader of this paper *to try to understand thoroughly the principles and constitution of the Church of England*. I say that advisedly. I say it to Churchmen and Dissenters alike. I feel that the ignorance which prevails in our country about the Church of England is very painful. There are thousands of members of that Church who never studied the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion,—who hardly know of their existence,—and who have often found fault with the very doctrines that these Articles contain, and especially the seventeenth. Yet those Articles are the Church's Confession of faith; they show what is the Church's view of doctrine. No man, I say, is a true member of the Church of England who does not thoroughly agree, in heart and in truth, with the Thirty-nine Articles of his own Church.

So also there are thousands who have never read the Homilies which the Church of England has provided. Many have never heard of them, much less read them. Yet those Homilies are declared by the Thirty-fifth Article to "contain godly and wholesome doctrine," and they condemn thousands of so-called Churchmen in this day.

So also are there hundreds of thousands who do not know that the laity might prevent any improper minister from being ordained in the Established Church. No man can be ordained a deacon in the Church of England without notice being read in the parish church to which he belongs, and without people being invited to tell the bishop if they know of any just cause or impediment why he should not be ordained. But the laity hardly ever raise any impediment against the ordination of a young man. When this is the case, if men utterly unfit for the ministerial office get into the ministry of the Church of England, the blame ought not to be borne only by the bishops who ordain them, but to be shared by the laity who never objected to their being ordained.

I ask all Churchmen who read this paper to wipe off this reproach. Try to understand your own Church. Study the Articles of Religion regularly: make yourself master of them. Read the Homilies with care, and see in them what the Reformers taught as true. Surely, I may well come round to the point with which I started. I may well say that ignorance covers the whole subject as with

a cloud. As to the true Church,—as to the visible professing Churches,—as to the real doctrines and constitution of the Established Church of England,—as to all these subjects it is painful to see the ignorance which prevails. It ought not to be so.

And now let me conclude by saying a few words of practical application to the conscience of everyone who reads this paper.

(a) First of all, let me ask you solemnly and seriously *whether you belong to that one true Church of Christ* which I began by describing.

I do not now ask whether you go to a place of worship on the Sunday. I do not ask whether you call yourself a Churchman, or whether you are a Dissenter. I only ask whether you belong to the Church which is made up of true believers,—whether you have been brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ,—whether you have laid aside the world and sin, and come out from it, and fled to Christ by faith? If you have not, take warning this day that you are in a most dangerous and unsatisfactory state of soul. You have got hold of nothing worth calling religion: you have got the husk of Christianity, but not the kernel. You have nothing to rest upon, nothing to comfort you in the day of trial,—nothing to satisfy you in an empty world,—and nothing, above all things, to save you in the last day. The hopes of all men shall be put upon their trial sooner or later. Except you belong to the one true Church, your end will be a Churchman or Dissenter lost,—a Churchman or Dissenter eternally cast away, and shut out from heaven—without hope, and without comfort,—and that forever.

Oh that men would but see that salvation turns upon this question! Oh that men would but see that it shall profit nothing to say, “I have always gone to my church,” or “always gone to meeting,” if they have not gone to Christ by faith, and been born again, and been made one with Christ, and Christ with them! Oh that men would understand that the kingdom of God is “not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;” that true religion does not turn on Episcopacy, or Presbyterianism,—on churches or chapels,—on liturgies or extempore prayer; but on justification and sanctification, on saving faith and new hearts!¹ Oh that men would set their minds more upon these points, and leave off their miserable squabbling about unprofitable controversies, and settle down to this one great question: “Have I come to Christ, and laid hold of Him, and been born again?”

(b) In the next place, if you do not belong to the one true Church, let me ask you, in all brotherly affection, to *come and join that one true Church this day*.

I call upon you, and invite you to come and be a Churchman in the highest

¹ “I cannot be so narrow in my principles of Church communion as many are, that are so much for a liturgy, or so much against it,—so much for ceremonies, or so much against them, that they can hold communion with no Church that is not of their mind and way.

“I cannot be of their mind who think God will not accept him that prayeth by the Common Prayer-book; and that such forms are a self-invented worship which God rejecteth; nor yet can I be of their mind that say the like of extempore prayers.”—*Baxter, in Orme’s Life*, p. 385.

and best sense. Come and be a member of that one Church of which Jesus is the Head,—Jesus, the High Priest,—Jesus, the Mediator. Come and join that Church in which Jesus is the Saviour,—that Church into which Jesus stands ready to admit you, saying, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Come to Christ this day, if you have never come before. This is the end for which I desire to write and preach; and it is of little use or value to write and preach for anything else. Come, I say once more: come to Christ this day. Call upon Him: say to Him, “O Lord, save me, or I perish. Lord, let me not be lost in the midst of light and privileges. Let me not only have knowledge in the head, but grace in the heart. Let me not only be a member of a professing Church on earth, but a living member of Thy body, and a sharer in Thy glory!”

(c) Last of all, if you can say that you belong to the one true Church, *then you may rejoice*. Your Church shall never fall: your Church shall never come to an end. The world and all its greatness will pass away. The works of statesmen shall vanish and come to nothing. The cathedrals and churches of man’s erecting shall all crumble into dust: but the one true Church shall never perish. It is built upon a rock. It shall stand forever. It shall wax brighter and brighter to the end, and never be so bright as when the wicked shall be separated from it, and it shall stand alone.

If you belong to the true Church, do not waste your time in controversies about outward things. Say to them all, “Get ye behind me.” Care for nothing so much as the heart and marrow of Christianity. Let the grand point to which you give your attention be the essence of true religion,—the foundation of the one true Church.

If you belong to the true Church, see that you love all its members. Let your principle be, “Grace be with all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity” (Eph. vi. 24). Wherever you find a man that has grace and faith, hold out your right hand to him. Do not stop to ask him where he was baptized, and what place of worship he attends. Has he been with Jesus? Is he born again? Then say to yourself, “This is a brother. I am to be with him in heaven by and by forever: let me love him upon earth. If we are to be in the same home, let us love each other even now upon the road.”¹

Finally, if you belong to the true Church, try to increase the number of members of that Church. Do not work merely for a party: do not labour merely to get proselytes to your own professing visible Church. Let your first care be to pluck brands from the fire,—to awaken sleeping souls,—to rouse those who are in darkness and ignorance, and to make them acquainted with Him who is “the light of the world,” and “whom to know is life eternal.” Never forget that he who has helped to turn one sinner from his sins and make him a temple of the Holy Ghost, has done a far more glorious and lasting work than if he had built York Minster or St. Peter’s at Rome.

¹ “Wherever my Lord has a true believer, I have a brother.”—*Bishop M’Ilvaine*.

I commend these things solemnly to the attention of every one who reads this paper. That you may know them by experience is my heart's desire. That the knowledge of them may spread more and more is my daily prayer.

VII

THOUGHTS ON THE MINISTRY.

THERE are few subjects on which error has been so frequent in the Churches of Christ as the subject of the Christian ministry. There are few errors which have done so much harm to the cause of pure religion. I propose in this paper to offer a few brief thoughts on the whole subject, which may help to clear the minds of some of my readers, and dispel the fog by which it is too often surrounded. He that really knows what he believes in these days about the Church, the Ministry, and the Sacraments, and can give Scriptural reasons for his belief, is an uncommon man.

I. First and foremost, let me show my readers *what warrant and authority we have for the minister's office*.

I meet that inquiry without hesitation. The office of a minister is a Scriptural institution, ordained, appointed, taught, and commanded, both directly and indirectly, in the New Testament. From the very first an order of men was set apart for the service of religion, for the conduct of public worship, for keeping up prayer and praise, for administering the sacraments, for teaching the ignorant, for building up the saints, and for ordaining others to carry on God's work in the world. In short, wherever the Apostles founded Churches, they appointed pastors to feed the flocks they had gathered together.

The proof of this assertion stands out so plainly before my eyes in the Acts and Epistles, that I am unable to understand how anyone who takes the Bible for his rule of faith can get over it. The two Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy, and the one to Titus, appear to me to settle the question. If these three inspired letters do not sanction the Christian ministry, there appears to my mind no meaning in words. Beside them stand the broad facts, that St. Paul "ordained elders in every Church" (Acts xiv. 23),—that "elders" of the Church are mentioned six times in the Acts and in the Epistles of James and Peter,—that the Epistle to the Ephesians gives a list of officers set in the Church by God, and the Epistle to the Philippians begins by naming with the saints at Philippi "the bishops and deacons." All these facts, I say, make a mass of evidence which I cannot get over. I do not maintain that they prove the divine right of Episcopacy as the only Scriptural form of Church government, a theory which, with Bishop Lightfoot, I entirely repudiate. But I do maintain that in face of these facts I am justified in asserting with confidence that the ministerial office is a Scriptural institution. Its warrant, in short, is the written Word of God. Take a jury of the first twelve intelligent, honest, disinterested, unprejudiced men you can find, and set them down with a New Testament to examine this question by themselves: "Is the ministry a Scriptural thing or not?" I have no doubt what their verdict would be.

I ask my readers to remember this point, and to let it sink down into their minds. Let us beware in these days that we do not rush into the extreme of

undervaluing the office which the minister of Christ holds. There is some danger in this direction. Let us grasp firmly certain fixed principles about the Christian ministry, and, however strong our dislike of priestcraft and aversion to Romanism, let nothing tempt us to let these principles slip out of our hands. Surely there is solid middle ground between a grovelling idolatry of sacerdotalism on one hand, and a disorderly anarchy on the other. Surely it does not follow, because we will not be Papists in this matter of the ministry, that we must needs be Quakers or Plymouth Brethren. This, at any rate, does not seem to have been the mind of St. Paul.

As for myself, so far from undervaluing the office of the ministry, I am disposed to magnify its importance. It would be easy to multiply reasons for saying this. But two shall suffice.

(a) For one thing, the ministerial office is *a most wise and useful provision of God*. It secures the regular maintenance of all Christ's ordinances and means of grace. It provides an undying machinery for promoting the awakening of sinners and the edification of saints. All experience proves that everybody's business soon becomes nobody's business; and if this is true in other matters, it is no less true in the matter of religion. Our God is a God of order, and a God who works by means, and we have no right to expect His cause to be kept up by constant miraculous interpositions, while His servants stand idle. For the uninterrupted preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments, no better plan can be devised than the appointment of a regular order of men who shall give themselves wholly to Christ's business.

(b) For another thing, let us settle it firmly in our minds that the ministerial office is an *honourable privilege*. It is an honour to be the Ambassador of a King: the very PERSON of such an officer of State is respected, and called legally sacred. It is an honour to bear the tidings of a victory such as Trafalgar and Waterloo: before the invention of telegraphs it was a highly coveted distinction. But how much greater honour is it to be the ambassador of the King of kings, and to proclaim the good news of the conquest achieved on Calvary! To serve directly such a Master, to carry such a message, to know that the results of our work, if God shall bless it, are eternal, this is indeed a privilege. Other labourers may work for a corruptible crown, but the minister of Christ for an incorruptible. Never is a land in worse condition than when the ministers of religion have caused their office to be ridiculed and despised. It is a tremendous word in Malachi: "I have made you contemptible and base before all the people according as ye have not kept my ways" (Malachi ii. 9). But, whether men will hear or forbear, the office of a faithful ambassador is honourable. It was a fine saying of an old missionary on his death-bed, who died at the age of ninety-six: "The very best thing that a man can do is to preach the Gospel."

Let me leave this branch of my subject with an earnest request that all who pray will never forget to make supplications and prayers and intercession for the ministers of Christ, that there never may be wanting a due supply of them at home and in the mission field, that they may be kept sound in the faith and holy

in their lives, and that they may take heed to *themselves* as well as to the *doctrine* (1 Tim. iv. 16).

Let it be remembered that while our office is honourable, useful, and Scriptural, it is also one of deep and painful responsibility! We watch for souls “as those who must give account” at the judgment day (Heb. xiii. 17). If souls are lost through our unfaithfulness, their blood will be required at our hands. If we had only to read services and administer sacraments, to wear a peculiar dress and go through a round of ceremonies, bodily exercise, gestures, and postures, our position would be comparatively light. But this is not all. We have got to deliver our Master’s message,—to keep back nothing that is profitable,—to declare all the counsel of God. If we tell our congregations *less* than the truth or *more* than the truth, we may ruin for ever immortal souls. Life and death are in the power of the preacher’s tongue. “Woe is unto us if we preach not the Gospel!” (1 Cor. ix. 16).

Once more I say to all readers of this paper, Pray for ministers. No wonder St. Paul asks, “Who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Cor. ii. 16). Remember the old saying of the Fathers: “None are in more spiritual danger than ministers.” It is easy to criticise and find fault with us. We have a treasure in earthen vessels. We are men of like passions with others, and not infallible. Pray for us in these trying, tempting, controversial days, that our Church may never lack bishops, priests, and deacons who are sound in the faith, bold as lions, wise as serpents, and yet harmless as doves. The very man who said, “Grace is given me to preach,” is the same man who said, in another place, “Pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith” (2 Thess. iii. 1, 2).

II. In the second place, I think it necessary to *fence the ministerial office with cautions*.

I can find no words to express my strong feeling about the importance of holding right views of the ministerial office. Error on this point has been the plague of the Church of Christ for at least sixteen centuries, and the fruitful source of innumerable evils. I wish, therefore, to place my readers on their guard, and to point out what the minister of the New Testament is not, and was never meant to be.

(a) First and foremost, the Christian minister is *not a mediator* between God and men. This is an office which belongs to Christ alone, and He has never deputed it to anyone. Christianity is not a vicarious religion. I mean by this that a man cannot put his soul in his minister’s hands as he puts his money in the hands of a banker, or his legal affairs in the hands of a lawyer, and then assume that of course he will go to heaven. This is a complete delusion. Every one of us must have personal dealings for himself with Christ, by his own faith, his own prayer, and his own actions, and no one else can act for him. We must seek for ourselves if we want to find and know for ourselves, if we want the

door of mercy to be opened. A true minister will show the Mediator; but he cannot be the mediator himself

(b) In the next place, the Christian minister *cannot give grace*. He cannot give it at the font, when he reads the baptismal service and receives an infant into the Church. He cannot give it at the communion table, when he consecrates the bread and wine, and gives them to the communicants. He cannot give it in the pulpit, however faithfully he preaches the gospel. He cannot give it at the bedside of the dying man, however faithfully and lovingly he pleads with him. Oh no! To give life is the peculiar prerogative of God. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth" (John vi. 63). The cleverest philosophers cannot create natural life, and the greatest ministers cannot give spiritual life. We may teach the value and need of grace, but we cannot give it. We may say, "Repent, be converted, behold the Lamb." But we can go no further. What we say, the Holy Ghost must apply to the soul.

(c) In the next place, the Christian minister was not meant to be a *confessor*. It is supposed by some Christians that one chief duty of a minister of religion is to hear private confessions of sin from the people committed to his charge, and after hearing to grant absolution. The idea is utterly without warrant of Scripture. There is neither precept nor example to justify it. The practice is dishonouring to the priestly office of Christ, and has been proved by experience to do far more harm than good. It puts two sinners in a thoroughly wrong position. It exalts the confessor far too high. It places those who confess far too low. It gives the confessor a place which it is not safe for any child of Adam to occupy. It imposes on those who confess a bondage to which it is not safe for any child of Adam to submit. It sinks one poor sinner into the degrading attitude of a serf. It raises another poor sinner into a dangerous mastery over his brother's soul. It makes the confessor little less than a God. It makes those who confess little better than slaves. If my readers love the Church of England, and wish the ministerial office to be held in honour, I charge them never to countenance the idea that clergymen ought to be confessors, or to tolerate any attempt to reintroduce auricular confession.

(d) In the next place, the Christian minister is *not infallible*. The vulgar notion that a clergyman is not likely to hold or teach erroneous doctrines, and that we seldom need to doubt the truth of anything he tells us in the pulpit, is one of the most mischievous errors which has been bequeathed to England by the Church of Rome. It is a complete delusion. Ordination confers no immunity from error. Clergymen, like Churches, may err both in living and matters of faith. The Apostle Peter erred greatly at Antioch, where Paul withstood him to the face. Many of the Fathers and Reformers and Puritans made great mistakes. The teaching of all ministers ought to be constantly compared with the Scriptures, and when it contradicts the Scriptures it ought not to be believed. However high a clergyman's office may be, and however learned and devout he may appear, he is still only an uninspired man, and can make mistakes. His opinion must never be set above the Word.

(e) Last, but not least, the Christian minister is *not a sacrificing priest*, and does not offer any sacrifice in the Lord's Supper. This is a point which it is of the utmost importance to understand. A flood of erroneous teaching is coming over the Church of England on the subject, and it becomes every loyal Churchman to be on his guard. That a clergyman is repeatedly called a "priest" in the rubrics of the Prayer-book no one thinks of denying. But that the word "priest" in these rubrics means anything more than "presbyter" or "elder" can never be proved. It certainly does not mean a person who offers up a sacrifice. The plain truth is, that *there can be no priest without a sacrifice*; and for any sacrifice in the Lord's Supper, except that of praise and thanksgiving, which all Christians can offer up, there is no place under the Gospel, or in the standards of the Church of England. To use the words of the Thirty-first Article, "The offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone." It cannot be added to or repeated in the Lord's Supper. There is not a tittle of proof that this blessed Sacrament was regarded as a *sacrifice* by our Lord or His Apostles. Not once is it called a sacrifice in the Acts or Epistles of God's Word written, not once in the Articles of our Church, not once in the Communion Service of the Prayer-book, not once in the Church Catechism! In the face of such crushing facts as these, they are not to be heard who say that clergymen are *sacrificing priests*. A man cannot be literally a priest when he has no sacrifice to offer. Let us take our stand firmly on this principle, the principle alike of the Bible, the Thirty-nine Articles, and the Book of Common Prayer.

I leave the negative side of my subject here. In what I have said by way of caution, to show what the Christian minister is not, I trust my readers will not misunderstand my meaning. If anyone supposes that I think lightly of the office of a Christian minister, he is totally mistaken. I regard it as an honourable office, instituted by Christ Himself, and of general necessity for carrying on the work of Christ's Gospel. I look on ministers as preachers and teachers of God's Word, God's ambassadors, God's messengers, God's servants, God's shepherds, God's stewards, God's overseers, God's witnesses, as labourers in God's vineyard and trumpeters in God's army,—offices of great labour, great dignity, and great responsibility. But I cannot give them names and official titles for which I find no authority in Scripture, or in the formularies of my own Church.

III. The third thing which I propose to do in this paper is to show my readers what is *the chief work for which the ministers of Christ's Church are ordained*. That work, I say without hesitation, is to preach God's Word.

That the Christian minister is intended to lead the worship of God in the congregation, to read the Scriptures to the people, to administer the Sacrament, to visit the sick and dying, to carry the gospel from house to house, to look carefully after the young, to maintain godly discipline, to instruct the ignorant, to warn the unruly, to comfort the feeble-minded, to reprove, to rebuke, to exhort, to sympathise, as occasion requires,—all this is undoubtedly true. The

clergyman who neglects such work is not doing his duty. But after all, the main, principal, and foremost business of a minister in the Church of England is to be a preacher of the Word.

The plain truth is that, in the great battle which Christ's Church has to fight, the minister is to be the trumpeter. This, we read in the prophet Ezekiel, was peculiarly the office which God commanded the Old Testament prophets to discharge. And the New Testament is not contrary to the Old. A little reflection and examination will soon show us that a better illustration of the position and duty of the Christian minister than that of a trumpeter, could hardly be found (Ezek. xxxiii. 1-7).

Does the trumpet sound the alarm and awaken the soldier to meet danger? In time of war, "Saul blew the trumpet, saying, Let the Hebrews hear" (1 Sam. xiii. 3). So must the minister endeavour continually to arouse, to awaken, and to stir careless souls.

Does the trumpeter sound a peculiar note to show the soldier the duty required? It was in this way that the tribes in the wilderness were directed (Num. x. 1-6). So must the minister try to guide souls, and show them the way they must go.

Does the trumpeter sound the recall when the troops are going in a wrong direction, and need to be halted? (2 Sam. ii. 28). So must the minister try to stop souls when they are going astray.

Does the trumpeter sound a rousing blast when the soldier is ordered to charge? It was thus that Gideon stirred his little band against the Midianites, when he told them to blow their trumpets and cry, "The sword of the Lord and Gideon" (Judges vii. 20). So must the minister try to cheer and encourage souls, and say, "Fear not: quit you like men, be strong."

Does the trumpeter sound a gathering note, to call the soldiers together and unite them in one band? It was thus that Nehemiah acted when the feeble Jews were building the wall of Jerusalem: "In what place ye hear the sound of the trumpet, there resort ye to us" (Neh. iv. 20). So must the minister try to unite Christians, and make them one body, and helpful to one another.

Last, but not least, does the trumpeter stand by the commanding officer, and take his orders from him? So it was with Nehemiah: "He that sounded the trumpet was by me" (Neh. iv. 18). So it should be with the minister. He must always keep close to the Captain, Jesus Christ, and act and teach entirely at His command.

In short, the office of the trumpeter is an important and honourable one, and the figure is one of which the Christian minister has no cause to be ashamed. To preach the Word of God, to proclaim the everlasting Gospel, to teach continually in the pulpit, and from house to house, the noble lesson which Christ has given us,—all this may seem contemptible to some. The men of Jericho, no doubt, despised the blowing of trumpets around their city. But when the seventh day arrived and their walls fell down flat, they found, to their cost, that the things which they had despised were "mighty to pull down strongholds."

Let me take occasion to urge on all who read this paper, the immense importance of maintaining right and sound views of the subject of *preaching*. Let us distinctly understand, firmly hold, and constantly tell others that the first, foremost, and principal work of the minister is to be a preacher of God's Word, and let us beware of the growing disposition to depreciate sermons, and to exaggerate the Lord's Supper and the reading of liturgical services. The communion table and the reading desk are being exalted to such a position that they are comparatively overshadowing the pulpit. Hundreds of sincere, devoted, earnest, hard-working clergymen give such an extravagant amount of time to the public reading of prayers, and the administration of the Lord's Supper, that they leave themselves no leisure for pulpit preparation, and are obliged to content their congregations with short, shallow, hastily-composed sermons, devoid alike of matter, power, fire, or effectiveness. In saying this, I know that I tread on delicate ground. But I must speak what I think. In right and due reverence for the Lord's Supper, I trust I yield to none. But I plead for Scriptural proportion in our estimate of means of grace; and when sacraments and liturgical prayers are made everything in public worship, and preaching the Word is made little of, or thrust into a corner, I assert that Scriptural proportion is disregarded.

What warrant have we in the Bible for making the Lord's Supper the first, foremost, principal, and most important thing in public worship, and making comparatively little of preaching? There are at most but five books in the whole canon of the New Testament in which the Lord's Supper is even mentioned. About grace, faith, and redemption,—about the work of Christ, the work of the Spirit, and the love of the Father,—about man's ruin, weakness, and spiritual poverty,—about justification, sanctification, and holy living,—about all these mighty subjects we find the inspired writers giving us line upon line, and precept upon precept. About the Lord's Supper, on the contrary, we may observe in the great bulk of the New Testament a speaking silence. Even the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, containing much instruction about a minister's duties, do not contain a word about it. This fact alone surely speaks volumes! To thrust the Lord's Supper forward, till it towers over and overrides everything else in religion, is giving it a position for which there is no authority in God's Word.

What, on the other hand, is the witness of the New Testament about the value of preaching? I find that our Lord Jesus during the whole period of His earthly ministry was continually and everywhere a preacher. I find that His last command to the Apostles was to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15). I find that the whole company of His Apostles and Disciples were continually teaching and preaching the Word. I can find no record of Church assemblies in the New Testament in which preaching, or teaching orally, does not occupy a most prominent position. It appears to me to be the chief instrument by which the Holy Ghost not only awakens sinners, but also leads on and establishes saints. I observe that in the very last words that St. Paul wrote to Timothy, as a young minister, he especially enjoins on him to

“preach the Word” (2 Tim. iv. 2). I cannot therefore believe that any system of worship in which the sermon is made little of, or thrust into a corner, can be a Scriptural system, or one likely to have the blessing of God. I hold firmly with Bishop Latimer that it is one of Satan’s great aims to exalt ceremonies and put down preaching. The first thing which the Church of England commissions her ministers to do is to preach. In the Ordination service, the bishop says to every priest, “Take thou authority to preach the Word of God.” “Ye shall call on this child to hear sermons,” is the first charge which our baptismal service gives to god-fathers and god-mothers. There is a deep meaning in the words, “Despise not prophesyings” (1 Thess. v. 20). A contempt for sermons is a sure mark of a decline in spiritual religion.

What may we learn from Church history in every age about the importance of preaching? It is certain that the brightest days of the Primitive Church were the days when men like Chrysostom and Augustine were constantly expounding God’s Word, and swaying multitudes by their sermons. It is equally certain that the darkest era in the annals of Christendom was the time before the Reformation, when the pulpit was silent, and Christianity seemed nothing more than a huge mass of forms and ceremonies. It was the preaching of men like Luther and Zwingli on the Continent, and Latimer and Hooper in our own land, which opened the eyes of the laity and broke the chains of Rome. It was the preaching of Whitfield, and the Wesleys, and Grimshaw, and Berridge, and Romaine, and Venn in the last century, which awoke our sleeping forefathers, saved the Church of England from ruin, and delivered this kingdom from a worse than French revolution.

I charge my readers to remember these facts and consider them well. Stand fast on old principles. Do not forsake the old paths. Let nothing tempt you to believe that multiplication of forms and ceremonies, constant reading of liturgical services, or frequent communions, will ever do so much good to souls as the powerful, fiery, fervent preaching of God’s Word. Daily services without sermons may gratify and edify a few handfuls of believers, but they will never reach, draw, attract, or arrest the great mass of mankind. If men want to do good to the multitude, if they want to reach their hearts and consciences, they must walk in the steps of Whitfield, Latimer, Luther, Chrysostom, and St. Paul; they must attack them through their ears. They must blow the trumpet of the everlasting gospel loud and long. They must “preach the Word.”

IV. The last thing which I propose to do in this paper, is to show my readers *how the chief work of a minister is to be done*. I say, then, without hesitation, that a preacher will do no good if he does not “declare all the counsel of God.” In his sermons he must “keep back nothing that is profitable.” He must boldly, confidently, and fully proclaim God’s message, as if he thoroughly believed it. He must never forget that he is a trumpeter in the army of Christ, and take heed that his trumpet “gives no uncertain sound.”

In military matters, common sense points out that the trumpeter of a

regiment is perfectly useless if he does not know how to use the instrument which is placed in his hands. He may be duly entered on the muster roll, and occupy a conspicuous position, and wear a splendid uniform; but if he does not know how to carry out the orders of his commanding officer, if he can neither give the sound to advance or retreat, to charge, to halt, or to retire, he is more likely to do harm than good. In fact, he is likely, in the day of battle, to throw the whole force into confusion.

Now, in the great campaign of the Church of Christ, it is just the same with the ministers of the everlasting gospel. A man may be duly ordained and commissioned by those who have authority, and placed in charge of a congregation; but if he does not know what to preach, so as to do good to souls, if his message is so uncertain, confused, and indistinct, that his hearers cannot understand what he wishes them to believe, to be, or to do, it is absurd to suppose that he will help anyone to heaven. In spite of orders, licence, and commission, such a minister is as useless as the ignorant regimental trumpeter. The blessing of the Holy Ghost is not promised to any and every kind of sermon, but to sermons which contain distinct Scriptural truth.

I say with sorrow, but I feel obliged to say it, that the absence of “a certain sound,” the want of sharply-cut, well-defined doctrine in sermons is one of the worst and most dangerous symptoms of the present day. It is a growing evil, I am afraid, and one that requires looking in the face. I hear on all sides that old and experienced Christians complain that a vast quantity of modern preaching is so foggy, and hazy, and dim, and indistinct, and hesitating, and timid, and cautious, and fenced with doubts, that the preacher does not seem to know what he believes himself. Of course, his hearers cannot be expected to believe anything at all! I do not hear so often that men preach honest, outspoken Romanism or Scepticism, as that they ingeniously fill up their pulpit half-hour with colourless, pointless homilies, containing *nothing at all*. And I do hear it constantly said, that throughout the land there is a deplorable scarcity of a “certain sound” from the lips of Christian ministers.

What excuse any English clergyman can allege for undecided and indistinct teaching, and an “uncertain sound” in his pulpit, I am utterly at a loss to discover. He is a minister of a Church which has declared her mind about doctrine most distinctly in that noble confession of faith, the Thirty-nine Articles. I ask any impartial man to read those Articles, and to mark the strong and decided language which they use in speaking of *things which are essential to salvation*. I say, without hesitation, that, concerning the nature of God and the Holy Trinity,—concerning the sufficiency and authority of Scripture,—concerning the sinfulness and helplessness of natural man,—concerning justification by faith alone,—concerning the place and value of good works,—concerning salvation only by the name of Christ,—concerning all these grand foundations of the Christian religion, and about the errors of the Church of Rome, it is hard to conceive language more decided, clear, distinct, ringing, and trumpet-toned than that of the Thirty-nine Articles.

But this is not all. The Church of England requires every person who is ordained to declare his assent to the Thirty-nine Articles at the very beginning of his ministry. And, as if to make assurance doubly sure, the Church requires every clergyman, instituted to any living, at this very day, when he begins to officiate in his Church, “publicly and openly, in the presence of his congregation, to read the whole Thirty-nine Articles, and immediately after reading to make the declaration of assent to them,” saying, “*I believe the doctrine of the Church of England, as therein set forth, to be agreeable to the Word of God.*” These are indisputable facts, which cannot be explained away. In the face of these facts, I cannot understand how any clergyman can be content to preach such indistinct and uncertain sermons that no man can possibly learn from them what he must do to be saved.

I speak strongly because I feel deeply. The condition of the Church of England demands “great plainness of speech.” When the ship is among breakers, the officer of the watch cannot afford to polish his language and use circumlocution. The ship of the Church of England is in danger, and all her sons must do their duty. Let me therefore mention a few leading points about which a distinct, certain sound is much wanted just now in all our pulpits.

(a) We want a more certain sound about the *inspiration, sufficiency, and supremacy of Holy Scripture*. There is a growing inclination to depreciate the blessed volume, as a respectable old book and nothing more, containing a great deal of truth, but truth mixed up with error and fables. There is a hasty readiness to assume that whenever the conclusions of so-called science conflict with the Bible, the Bible must be wrong and science right, it being coolly forgotten that perhaps we do not rightly interpret the Book. Away with all this! Let us boldly place the Bible on the pedestal where our forefathers placed it, and maintain, like them, that, however imperfectly we may understand it, the old Book is perfect, and is an infallible rule of faith and practice.

(b) We want a more certain sound about the *sinfulness, guilt, and corruption of human nature*. There is a widespread disposition to speak of man as a pitiable creature, but not as deserving of God’s wrath and condemnation,—as one who is weak and unstable, but not as one who has no power to turn himself, do good, and continue right before God. Let us return to the old paths, and unhesitatingly declare man’s utter vileness and danger, and his pressing need of a new birth, and an entire change of heart. Whether men know it or not, I believe there is a vast amount of Pelagianism around us.

(c) We want a more certain sound about the work and offices of our *Lord Jesus Christ*. Men nowadays will dwell exclusively on His prophetic office, the beauty of His personal character, the splendid example of His kindness, patience, condescension, purity, and self-denial. All this, however true, is only half the truth, and by far the least important half too. The main thing about Christ, of which this age never hears enough, is the atonement He made by His death, His vicarious sacrifice on the Cross, the redemption He obtained for man by His blood, His victory over the grave by His resurrection, His active life of

intercession at God's right hand, the absolute necessity of simple faith in Him. These blessed truths are seldom made enough of in this day. They are either judiciously dropped as offensive, or coolly left in the background, as old fossils unsuited to the nineteenth century. If there is not a vast amount of veiled Socinianism around us, I am greatly mistaken.

(d) We want a more certain sound about *the work of the Holy Ghost*. There is a great quantity of teaching, I am afraid, in which there is no place left for the Third Person of the Trinity. His presence in the hearts of professing Christians is taken for granted. They have Him as a matter of course, because they are baptized, or because they belong to the Church, or because they are communicants! In short, many congregations might say, like one of old, "We have not so much as heard whether there is any Holy Ghost." But surely this is not Apostolic teaching. People need to be told now as much as they were told eighteen centuries ago, that the fruits of the Spirit are the only evidence of having the Spirit, and that those fruits must be seen,—that we must be born of the Spirit, led by the Spirit, sanctified by the Spirit, and feel the operations of the Spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9). There is far more of the Macedonian heresy existing in the nineteenth century than most people suppose.

(e) We want a more certain sound about *personal holiness*. I fear the standard of daily life is lower just now than it has been for many years. People seem unable to realize that there is anything inconsistent with baptismal vows, in ball-going, theatre-going, gambling, card-playing, excessive dressing, novel-reading, Sabbath-breaking, and an incessant round of gaiety and amusements. The border-line between the Church and the world seems completely effaced and forgotten. A crucified life of self-denial and close walk with God, a life of real devotedness and zeal to do good, is hardly ever to be seen! Yet surely our Lord meant something when He spoke of "taking up the cross," and St. Paul meant something when he said, "Come out and be separate."—"Be not conformed to this world." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (2 Cor. vi. 17; Rom. xii. 2; Heb. xii. 14). If Christ returns the second time in this generation, we shall find His words about the days of Noah and Lot fully verified. Those days are upon us.

(f) We want a more certain sound about *the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper*. Thousands of people seem to live and die in the secret belief that they were "born again," and received the grace of the Spirit, in baptism, though from their infancy they have known nothing of what the Church Catechism calls "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness." They are not "dead to sin," but actually live in it; and yet, forsooth, they think they are born again!—Multitudes more are continually receiving the Lord's Supper under the belief that somehow or other it *must do them good*, though they are utterly destitute of the Catechism standard, and neither "repent of sin, nor purpose to lead a new life, nor have a lively faith in God's mercy in Christ, nor a thankful remembrance of His death, nor live in charity with all men." They seem, in

short, to have imbibed the idea that the Lord's Supper can give grace to the graceless, and is a means of conversion and justification! And all this time the Scripture says expressly, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. ii. 29). And again: "Baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)" (1 Pet. iii. 21). And again: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. xi. 29).

Now to these extravagant views of the effect of the sacraments I unhesitatingly assert that the Church of England gives no countenance at all, and her clergy ought to give a "certain sound" about them. The Twenty-fifth Article declares plainly about both sacraments, that "in such *only* as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily purchase to themselves damnation." The Twenty-eighth Article says: "To such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ, and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ." The Twenty-ninth Article says: "The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ; but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing."

(g) Last, but not least, we want everywhere a more certain sound about the *state after death*. There is a growing disposition in this day to give up the old doctrine of the judgment of the wicked, and the eternal misery of all who die impenitent and unbelieving. Men are gradually being indoctrinated with the notion that there is *hope for all* beyond the grave, and that at any rate there is nothing to fear, and no punishment after death, no matter how we live or die. I regard such teaching as most mischievous and likely to promote carelessness and immorality. Yet in hundreds of pulpits I suspect the subject is either carefully avoided, or else handled in a most unsatisfactory manner. Let us beware of being wise above that which is written, and of ignoring, shirking, or strangling plain texts of Scripture. I cannot feel surprised when I am told that abandoned women in the streets of London have been heard to say, "Come along: who's afraid? Some of the parsons say there is no hell."

Such are the seven points about which I declare my belief that a "certain sound" is greatly wanted among Christian ministers in this day. I commend them to the thought, and reflection, and prayers of all who read this paper. I lay no claim to infallibility. I may be greatly mistaken. But it is my deliberate conviction that the parishes in which these seven points are most distinctly preached in the pulpit, and afterwards boldly and lovingly taught from house to house, are precisely those parishes in which the congregations are largest, the communicants most numerous, and the power of godliness in daily life

most conspicuous among the worshippers. I assert boldly, that if there was more “certain sound” in the pulpit on those seven points, there would soon be far more vital religion in the land, and a very different census of religious worship. Oh that we could pray more constantly, “Lord, send forth more labourers into Thy harvest! Raise up many more faithful ministers in Thy Church! Revive Thy work in England! Give us more trumpeters of the Gospel!”

VIII.

THOUGHTS ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

THE title of this paper touches a subject of great importance in the present day. We live in times when there is a vast quantity of public worship. Most people who have any respect for appearances go to some church or chapel on Sundays. But we all know that quantity is of little value without quality. It is not enough that men worship sometimes. There remains behind a mighty question to be answered,—“How do they worship?”

Not all religious worship is right in the sight of God. This is as clear as the sun at noon-day to any honest reader of the Bible. The Bible speaks of worship which is “in vain,” as well as worship which is true,—and of “will-worship,” as well as spiritual worship (Matt. xv. 9; Col. ii. 23). To suppose, as some thoughtless persons do, that it signifies nothing where we go on Sundays, and matters nothing how the thing is done, provided it is done, is mere childish folly. Merchants and tradesmen do not carry on their business in this fashion. They look at the way their work is done, and are not content with work done anyhow. Let us not be deceived. God is not mocked. The question before our eyes is a very serious one,—“How do we worship?”

I propose to lay down some Scriptural principles about the subject of worship. In a day of profound ignorance in some quarters, and of systematic false teaching in others, I hold it to be of primary importance to have clear ideas about all disputed points in religion. I fear that thousands of English men and women can render no reason of their faith and practice. They do not know why they believe, or what they believe, or why they do what they do. Like children, they are “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine,” and are liable to be led astray by the first clever heretic who meets them (Eph. iv. 14). In a day like this let me try to set before my readers some distinct notions about Christian worship.

- I. I will show the general importance of public worship.
- II. I will show the leading principles of public worship.
- III. I will show the essential parts of complete public worship.
- IV. I will show the things to be avoided in public worship.
- V. I will show the tests by which our public worship should be tried.

Let it be remembered that I purposely confine my attention to public worship. I purposely pass over all private religious habits, such as praying, Bible-reading, self-examination, and meditation. No doubt they lie at the very root of personal Christianity, and without them all public religion is utterly in vain. But they are not the subject I want to handle in this paper. It is a good rule to mind one thing at a time. If I can make anyone see the five points about public worship, which

I have laid down, clearly and distinctly, I venture to think I shall have done his soul an immense service.

I. I have first *to show the general importance of public worship.*

I need not dwell long on this part of my subject. This paper is not likely to fall into the hands of any who do not at least call themselves Christians. There are few, except downright infidels, who will dare to say that we ought not to make some public profession of religion. Most people, whatever their own practice may be, will admit that we ought to meet other Christians at stated times and in stated places, and unitedly and together to worship God.¹

Public worship, I am bold to say, has always been one mark of God's servants. Man, as a general rule, is a social being, and does not like to live separate from his fellows. In every age God has made use of that mighty principle, and has taught His people to worship Him publicly as well as privately, together as well as alone. I believe the last day will show that wherever God has had a people He has always had a congregation. His people, however few in number, have always assembled themselves together, and approached their heavenly Father in company. They have been taught to do it for many wise reasons, partly to bear a public testimony to the world,—partly to strengthen, cheer, help, encourage, and comfort one another,—and, above all, to train and prepare them for the general assembly in heaven. “As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend” (Prov. xxvii. 17). That man can know little of human nature who does not know, that to see others doing and professing the same things that we do in religion, is an immense help and encouragement to our souls.

From the beginning of the Bible down to the end, you may trace out a line of public worship in the history of all God's saints. You see it in the very first family that lived on earth. The familiar story of Cain and Abel hinges entirely on acts of public worship.—You see it in the history of Noah. The very first thing recorded about Noah and his family, when they came forth from the ark,

¹ “To deny God a worship is as great a folly as to deny His being. He that renounceth all homage to his Creator, envies Him the being of which he cannot deprive Him. The natural inclination to worship is as universal as the notion of a God; else idolatry had never gained a footing in the world. The existence of God was never owned in any nation without a worship of God being appointed; and many people who have turned their backs upon some other parts of the law of nature, have paid a continual homage to some superior and invisible Being. The Jews gave a reason why man was created in the evening of the Sabbath, because he should begin his being with the worship of his Maker. As soon as ever he found himself to be a creature, his first solemn act should be a particular respect to his Creator. To fear God and keep His commandments is the whole of man (Eccles. xii. 13), or is “whole man;” he is not a man, but a beast, without observance of God. Religion is as requisite as reason to complete a man. He were not reasonable if he were not religious, because by neglecting religion he neglects the chiefest dictate of reason.”—*Charnock's Works*. Nichol's Edition, vol. i. p. 182.

was a solemn act of public worship.—You see it in the history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Wherever the patriarchs had a tent they always had an altar (Gen. xii. 7; xiii. 4). They not only prayed in private, but worshipped in public.—You see it throughout the whole Mosaic economy, from Sinai downward, till our Lord appeared. The Jew who was not a public worshipper in the tabernacle or the temple, would have been cut off from the congregation of Israel.—You see it throughout the whole New Testament. The Lord Jesus Himself gives a special promise of His presence wherever two or three are assembled in His name. The Apostles, in every Church they founded, made the duty of assembling together a first principle in their list of duties. Their universal rule was, “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together” (Heb. x. 25). These things are ancient things, I know; but it is well to be reminded of them. Just as you may lay it down, as a certainty, that where there is no private prayer there is no grace in a man’s heart, so you may lay it down, as the highest probability, that where there is no public worship there is no Church of God, and no profession of Christianity.¹

Turn now from the Word of God to the pages of Church history, and what will you find? You will find that from the days of the Apostles down to this hour, public worship has always been one of God’s great instruments in doing good to souls. Where is it that sleeping souls are generally awakened, dark souls enlightened, dead souls quickened, doubting souls brought to decision, mourning souls cheered, heavy-laden souls relieved? Where, as a general rule, but in the public assembly of Christian worshippers, and during the preaching of God’s Word? Take away public worship from a land, shut up the churches and chapels, forbid people to meet together for religious services, prohibit any kind of religion except that which is private,—do this, and see what the result would be. You would inflict the greatest spiritual injury on the country which was so treated. You could do nothing so likely to help the devil and stop the progress of Christ’s cause, except the taking away of the Bible. Next to the Word of God there is nothing which does so much good to mankind as public worship. “Faith cometh by hearing” (Rom. x. 17). There is a special presence of Christ in religious assemblies (Matt. xviii. 20).

I grant freely that public worship may become a mere act of formality. Thousands of so-called Christians, no doubt, are continually going to churches and chapels, and getting no benefit from their attendance. Like Pharaoh’s lean kine, they are nothing bettered, but rather worse, more impenitent and more hardened. No wonder that the ignorant Sabbath-breaker defends himself by saying,—“for anything I can see, those who go nowhere on Sundays are just as good people as church-goers and chapel-goers.” But we must never forget that

¹ The reader will of course understand that I fully admit the impossibility of public worship being kept up in time of persecution. When the Roman Emperors persecuted the early Church, and all Christians were proscribed, there could of necessity have been no public worship. But these are evidently exceptional cases.

the misuse of a good thing is no argument against the use of it. Once begin to refuse everything that is misused in this sinful world, and there is hardly anything left for you that is good. Take a broader view of the question before you. Look at any district you like in England, and divide people into two great parties,—worshippers and non-worshippers. I will engage you will find that there is far more good among those that worship than among those that do not. It does make a difference, whatever men may say. It is not true that worshippers and non-worshippers are all alike.

Once more I ask every reader to remember the solemn words of St. Paul: “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhort one another “(Heb. x. 25). Act upon that exhortation, as long as you live, and through evil report and good report continue a regular attendant at public worship. Care not for the bad example of many around you who rob God of His day, and never go up to His house from one end of the year to the other. Go on, go on worshipping in spite of every discouragement, and doubt not that in the long run of life it does you good. Prove your own meetness for heaven by your feelings toward the earthly assemblies of God’s people. Happy is that man who can say with David, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.” “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness “(Ps. cxxii. 1; lxxxiv. 10).

II. I proceed, in the second place, to show *the leading principles of public worship*.

These leading principles are so plain and obvious to any thoughtful reader of the Bible, that I need not dwell on them at any length. But for the sake of some who may not hitherto have given much attention to the subject, I feel it best to state them in order.

(a) For one thing, true public worship must be *directed to the right object*. It is written plainly, both in the Old and New Testament: “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve” (Deut. vi. 13; Matt. iv. 10). All adoration and prayers addressed to the Virgin Mary, the saints and angels, are utterly useless, and unwarranted by Scripture. It is worship that is mere waste of time. There is not the slightest proof that the departed saints or the angels can hear our worship, or that, if they did hear it, they could do anything for us. It is worship that is most offensive to God. He is a jealous God, and has declared that He will not give His glory to another. Of all His Ten Commandments there is none more stringent and sweeping than the second. It forbids us not only to worship, but even to “bow down” to anything beside God.

(b) For another thing, true public worship must be directed to God *through the mediation of Christ*. It is written plainly: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John xiv. 6). It is written of Christians, that they are a people who “come unto God by Christ “(Heb. vii. 25). The mighty Being with whom we have to do, without controversy, is a God of infinite love, kindness, mercy, and compassion. “God is love.” But it is

no less true that He is a Being of infinite justice, purity, and holiness, that He has an infinite hatred of sin, and cannot bear that which is evil. He is the same God that cast down the angels from heaven, drowned the world with a flood, and burned up Sodom and Gomorrah. He who carelessly presumes to draw near to Him without an atonement and a mediator, or by any other mediator than the one Mediator whom He has appointed, will find that He worships in vain. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29).

(c) For another thing, true public worship must be either directly *Scriptural*, or deducible from Scripture, or in harmony with Scripture. It is written plainly concerning the Jews of our Lord's time: "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. xv. 9). No doubt there is a conspicuous absence of particular injunctions about New Testament worship. No doubt there is a reasonable liberty allowed to Churches and congregations in their arrangements about worship. But still the rule must never be forgotten: "Nothing must be required of men contrary to God's Word." Well says the twentieth Article of the Church of England: "The Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith. And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written." Well says the thirty-fourth Article: "Ceremonies at all times have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word." I say therefore that any man who tells me that there are seven sacraments, when the Bible only mentions two,—or that any manmade ordinance is as binding on our consciences and as needful to salvation as an ordinance appointed by Christ, is telling me what he has no right to tell. We must not listen to him. He is committing not only a mistake, but a sin. All such worship St. Paul calls "will-worship," and declares to be of no value (Col. ii. 23).

(d) For another thing, true public worship must be an *intelligent* worship. I mean by that expression that worshippers must know what they are doing. It is written plainly as a charge against the Samaritans: "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship" (John iv. 22). It is written of the heathen Athenians, that they ignorantly worshipped an "unknown god." It is utterly false that ignorance is the mother of devotion. The poor Italian Papists, unable to read, and not knowing a chapter in the Bible, may appear extremely devout and sincere, as they kneel in crowds before the image of the Virgin Mary, or hear Latin prayers which they do not understand. But it is utterly preposterous to suppose that their worship is acceptable. He who made man at the beginning made him an intelligent being, with mind as well as body. A worship in which the mind takes no part is useless and unprofitable. It might suit a beast as well as a man.

(e) For another thing, true public worship must be the worship *of the heart*. I mean by this, that the affections must be employed as well as our intellect, and our inward man must serve God as well as our body. It is written plainly

in the Old Testament, and the saying is quoted by Jesus Christ Himself: “This people draweth nigh to Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain do they worship Me.” (Isa. xxix. 13; Matt. xv. 8). It is written of the Jews in Ezekiel’s time: “They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness” (Ezek. xxxiii. 31). The heart is the principal thing that God asks man to bring in all his approaches to Him, whether public or private. A church may be full of worshippers who may give God an immense amount of bodily service. There may be abundance of gestures, and postures, and turnings to the East, and bowings, and crossings, and prostrations, and grave countenances, and upturned eyes, and yet the hearts of the worshippers may be at the end of the earth,—one thinking only of coming or past pleasures, another of coming or past business, and another of coming or past sins. Such worship, we may be very sure, is utterly worthless in God’s sight. It is even worse than worthless: it is abominable hypocrisy. God is a Spirit, and He cares nothing for man’s bodily service without man’s heart. Bodily service profiteth little. “Man looketh on the outward appearance; but the Lord looketh on the heart.” The broken and contrite heart is the true sacrifice, the sacrifice which God will not despise (1 Sam. xvi. 7; Ps. li. 7).¹

(f) In the last place, true public worship must be a *reverent* worship. It is written: “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil” (Eccles. v. 1). It is recorded that our Lord Jesus Christ began and ended His ministry with two practical protests against irreverent worship. On two distinct occasions He cast out of the temple the buyers and sellers who were profaning its courts by their traffic, and justified His act by the weighty words: “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of

¹ “Men may attend on worship all their days, with a juiceless heart and unquickened frame, and think to compensate the neglect of the manner, with the abundance of the matter of the service. Outward expressions are only the badges and liveries of services, not the service itself. As the strength of sin lies in the inward frame of the heart, so the strength of worship lies in the inward complexion and temper of the soul. What do a thousand services avail, without cutting the throat of carnal affections? What are loud prayers, but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, without divine charity? A pharisaical diligence in outward forms had no better title vouchsafed by our Saviour than that of hypocrisy. God desires not sacrifices, nor delights in burnt-offerings. Shadows are not to be offered instead of substance. God required the heart of man for itself, but commanded outward ceremonies, as subservient to inward worship, and goads and spurs unto it. They were never appointed as the substance of religion, but as auxiliaries to it.

“Could the Israelites have been called worshippers of God according to His order, if they had brought Him a thousand lambs that had died in a ditch or been killed at home? They were to be brought to the altar living, and the blood shed at the foot of it. A thousand sacrifices killed without, had not been so valuable as one brought alive to the place of offering.”—*Charnock*, vol. i. 323.

thieves” (Matt. xxi. 13). People who call themselves Christians and go to churches and chapels to stare about, whisper, fidget, yawn, or sleep, but not to pray, or praise, or listen, are not a whit better than the wicked Jews. They do not consider that God detests profaneness and carelessness in His presence, and that to behave before God as they would not dare to behave before a king, is a very grave offence indeed. We must beware that we do not rush from one extreme into another. It does not follow, because bodily service alone is useless, that it does not matter how we behave ourselves in the congregation. Surely even nature, reason, and common sense should teach men that there is a manner and demeanour suitable to mortal man, when he draws nigh to his Almighty Maker. It is not for nothing that it is written: “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him” (Ps. lxxxix. 7). If it is worthwhile to attend public worship at all, it is worthwhile to do it carefully and well. God is in heaven, and we are on earth. Let us not be rash and hasty. Let us mind what we are about. “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. xii. 28, 29).

I ask the special attention of my readers to the six leading principles which I have just laid down. I fear they strike at the root of the worship of myriads in our own land, to say nothing of Papists, Mahometans, and heathens abroad. Myriads of English people, I fear, are regularly spending their Sundays in a worship which is utterly useless. It is a worship without Scripture, without Christ, without the Holy Spirit, without knowledge, without heart, and without the slightest benefit to the worshippers. For any good they get from it, they might just as well be sitting at home, and not worship at all. Take heed that this is not your condition. Remember, as long as you live, that it is not quantity of worship, but quality that God regards. The inward and spiritual character of the congregation is of far more importance in His sight, than the number of the worshippers, or the outward and visible signs of devotion which they exhibit. Children and fools, who admire poppies more than corn, may think all is right when there is a great external show of religion. But it is not so with God. His all-seeing eye looks at the inner man.

III. I proceed, in the third place, to show the *essential parts of Christian public worship*.

I will suppose the case of a man who has never given the subject of religion any sincere attention, and has never gone regularly to any place of worship at all. I will suppose such a man to be awakened to a sense of the value of his soul, and to be desirous of information about things in religion. He is puzzled by finding that all Christians do not worship God in the same way, and that one neighbour worships God in one fashion, and another in another. He hears one man saying that there is no road to heaven excepting through his church, and another replying that all will be lost who do not join his chapel. Now what is he to think? Are there not certain things which are essential parts of Christian worship? I answer without hesitation that there are. It shall be my next business to

exhibit them in order.

I freely grant that there is little said on the nature of public worship in the New Testament. There is a wide difference in this respect between the law of Moses and the law of Christ. The Jew's religion was full of strict and minute directions about worship: the Christian's contains very few directions, and those of the simplest and most general description.—The Jew's religion was full of types, emblems, and figures: the Christian's only contains two, viz.: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.—The Jew's religion approached the worshipper chiefly through the eye: the New Testament religion appeals directly to the heart and conscience.—The Jew's religion was confined to one particular nation: the Christian's was meant for the whole world.—The Jew could turn to the writings of Moses and see at a glance every ceremonial item of his worship: the Christian can only point to a few isolated texts and passages, which are to be applied by every Church according to circumstances.—In a word, there is nothing answering to Exodus or Leviticus in the New Testament Scriptures. Yet a careful reader can hardly fail to pick out of them the essential parts of Christian worship. Where these essential parts are present, there is Christian worship. Where they are absent, the worship is, to say the least, defective, imperfect, and incomplete.

(a) In complete public worship *the Sabbath* should always be honoured. That blessed day was appointed for this very purpose, among others, to give men an opportunity of meeting together in God's service. A Sabbath was given to man even in Paradise. The observance of a Sabbath was made part of the Ten Commandments. The worship of God on the Sabbath was observed by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. To meet together on one day in the week at least, was a practice of the early Christians, though they met on the first day instead of the seventh (Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2). To assemble in God's house on the Christian Sabbath has been the custom of all professing Christians for eighteen hundred years. The best and holiest of God's saints have always pressed on others most strongly the value of Sabbath worship, and borne witness to its usefulness. It sounds very fine and spiritual, no doubt, to say that every day should be a Sabbath to a Christian, and that one day should not be kept more holy than another.

But facts are stronger than theories. Experience proves that human nature requires such helps as fixed days and hours and seasons, for carrying on spiritual business, and that public worship never prospers unless we observe God's order. "The Sabbath was made for man" by Him who made man at the beginning, and knew what flesh and blood is. As a general rule, it will always be found that where there is no Sabbath there is no public worship.

(b) In complete public worship there should *be a ministry*. I do not for a moment say that it must be an Episcopal ministry. I am not so narrow and uncharitable as to deny the validity of Presbyterian orders. I only maintain that it is the mind of God that ministers of some kind should conduct the worship of Christian congregations, and be responsible for its decent and orderly conduct in approaching God. I am at a loss to understand how anyone can read the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles to the Corinthians, Ephesians, Timothy and

Titus, and deny that the ministry is an appointment of God. Reason itself might tell us that business which is left to nobody in particular to attend to, is a business which is soon entirely neglected. Order is said to be heaven's first law. Once let a people begin with no Sabbath and no ministry, and they must never be surprised if they end with no public worship, no religion, and no God.

(c) In complete public worship there should be the *preaching of God's Word*. I can find no record of Church assemblies in the New Testament, in which preaching and teaching orally does not occupy a most prominent position. It appears to me to be the chief instrument by which the Holy Ghost not only awakens sinners, but also leads on and establishes saints. I observe that in the very last words that St. Paul wrote to Timothy, as a young minister, he especially enjoins on him to "preach the Word" (2 Tim. iv. 2). I cannot therefore believe that any system of worship in which the sermon is made little of, or thrust into a corner, can be a Scriptural system, or one likely to have the blessing of God. I have no faith in the general utility of services composed entirely of prayer-reading, hymn-singing, sacrament-receiving, and walking in processions, without any sermon. I hold firmly with Bishop Latimer, that it is one of Satan's great aims to exalt ceremonies and put down preaching. There is a deep meaning in the words, "Despise not prophesyings" (1 Thess. v. 20). A contempt for sermons is a pretty sure mark of a decline in spiritual religion.

(d) In complete public worship there should be united *public prayer*. I can find no account of religious assemblies in the New Testament in which prayer and supplication do not form a principal business. I find St. Paul telling Timothy: "I exhort, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Tim. ii. 1). Such prayers should be plain and intelligible, that all the worshippers may know what is going on, and be able to go along with him who prays. They should as far as possible be the joint act of all the assembly, and not the act of one man's mind alone. A congregation of professing Christians which only meets to hear a grand sermon, and takes no part or interest in the prayers, seems to me to fall far short of the standard of the New Testament. Public worship does not consist only of hearing.¹

¹ The reader is requested to observe that I purposely abstain from saying anything about the vexed question whether public prayers in the congregation should be liturgical and pre-composed, or extemporaneous. I say nothing, because nothing is said about it in Scripture. Neither liturgies nor extemporaneous prayer are expressly sanctioned, or expressly prohibited, in God's Word. A large liberty is mercifully given to the Churches. I think the Christian (so called) who anathematizes and abuses his brother because he uses a liturgy, is an ignorant, narrow-minded bigot on one side. I think the Christian (so called) who anathematizes and excommunicates his brother because he does not use a liturgy, is a narrow-minded, ignorant bigot on the other side. Both are wrong.

My own mind has been long made up. If all ministers prayed extempore always as some ministers pray sometimes, I should be against a liturgy. But considering what human nature is, I decidedly think it better both for minister and people, in the regular, habitual, and stated assemblies of the Church, to have a liturgy. With all its imperfections, I am very thankful for the Book of Common Prayer. It may have defects, because it was not compiled by inspiration. But

(e) In complete public worship there should be the public *reading of the Holy Scriptures*. This was evidently a part of the service of the Jewish synagogue, as we may learn from what happened at Nazareth, and at Antioch in Pisidia (Luke iv. 16; Acts xiii. 15). We cannot doubt that the Christian Church was intended to honour the Bible as much as the Jewish. To my eye, St. Paul points to this when he says to Timothy, “Till I come give attention to reading” (1 Tim. iv. 13). Reason and common sense alike teach the usefulness of the practice. A visible Church will always contain many professing members who either cannot read, or have no will or time to read at home. What safer plan can be devised for the instruction of such people than the regular reading of God’s Word? A congregation which hears but little of the Bible is always in danger of becoming entirely dependent on its minister. God should always speak in the assembly of His people as well as man.

(f) In complete public worship there should be united *public praise*. That this was the custom among the first Christians, is evident from St. Paul’s words to the Ephesians and Colossians in which he commended the use of “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” That it was a custom so widely prevalent as to be a mark of the earliest Christians, is simple matter of history. No one indeed can read the Old Testament and not discover the extremely prominent place which praise occupied in the temple service. What man in his senses can doubt that the service of song was meant to be highly esteemed under the New Testament? Praise has been truly called the flower of all devotion. It is the only part of our worship which will never die. Preaching and praying and reading shall one day be no longer needed. But praise shall go on forever. A congregation which takes no part in praise, or leaves it all to be done by deputy through a choir, can be hardly thought in a satisfactory state.

(g) Finally, in complete public worship there should be the *regular use of the two sacraments* which Christ appointed in His Church. By baptism new members should be continually added to the congregation, and publicly enrolled in the list of professing Christians. By the Lord’s Supper believers should be continually offered an opportunity of confessing their Master, and continually strengthened and refreshed, and put in remembrance of His sacrifice on the cross. I believe that no one who neglected these two sacraments would have been regarded as a Christian by St. Paul and St. Peter, St. James and St. John. No doubt, like every other good thing, they may be painfully misused and profaned by some, and superstitiously idolized by others. But after all there is no getting over the fact that Baptism and the Lord’s Supper were ordained by Christ Himself as means of grace, and we cannot doubt He meant them to be reverently and duly used. A man who preferred to worship God for many years without

for all that, it is an admirable and matchless manual of public devotion. I would not impose the use of it on a brother’s conscience for a thousand worlds. But I claim the right to use it myself undisturbed.

ever receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is a man, I am firmly persuaded, who would not have been thought in a right state in the days of the Apostles.

I commend these seven points to the serious attention of all who read this paper, and invite them to consider them well. I can easily believe that I may have said things about them with which some Christians may not agree. I am not their judge. To their own Master they must stand or fall. I can only tell them, as an honest man, what appears to me the teaching of Holy Scripture. I do not for a moment say that no man will be saved who does not see public worship precisely with my eyes. I say nothing of the kind. But I do say that any regular system of public worship which does not give a place to the Sabbath, the ministry, preaching, prayer, Scripture-reading, praise, and the two sacraments, appears to me deficient and incomplete. If you attend a place of worship where any of these seven points is neglected, I think you suffer loss and damage. You may be doing well; but I think you might be doing better. To my mind, these seven parts of public worship appear to stand out plainly on the face of the New Testament; and I plainly say so.

IV. I proceed, in the fourth place, to show *some things which ought to be avoided in public worship*.

I am well aware that there is no perfection in this world. There is no visible Church, I am sure, in whose public worship it would not be easy to show faults, defects, and shortcomings. The best service in the best visible Church on earth will always be infinitely below the standard of the glorified Church in heaven. I admit with sorrow and humiliation, that the faith, and hope, and life, and worship of God's people, are all alike full of imperfections. To be continually separating and seceding from Churches, because we detect blemishes in their administration, is not the act of a wise man. It is to forget the parable of the wheat and tares.

But I cannot forget, for all this, that we have fallen on dangerous times in the matter of worship. There are things going on in many English churches and chapels in the present day so highly objectionable, that I feel it a plain duty to offer some cautions about them. Plain speaking about them is imperatively demanded at a minister's hands. If watchmen hold their peace, how shall the city take alarm? "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?" (1 Cor. xiv. 8).

There are three great and growing evils in public worship, which require special watching in the present day. I feel it a positive duty to direct men's attention to them. I know not into whose hands this paper may have fallen, or where you worship; but I warn you plainly to stand on your guard about these evils, and to take heed that they do not infect and damage your soul.

(a) Beware, for one thing, of any worship in which a *disproportionate honour* is given to any one ordinance of Christ, to the neglect of another. There are Churches at this moment, in which Baptism and the Lord's Supper, like

Aaron's rod, swallow up everything else in religion. Nothing besides receives much attention. The honour done to the font and the Lord's table meets you at every turn. All else, in comparison, is jostled out of its place, overshadowed, dwarfed, and driven into a corner. Worship of this sort, I hesitate not to say, is useless to man's soul. Once alter the proportions of a doctor's prescription, and you may turn his medicine into a poison. Once bury the whole of Christianity under Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the real idea of Christian worship is completely destroyed.

(b) Beware, for another thing, of any worship in which an *excessive quantity of decoration* and ornament is used. There are many Churches at this moment, in which Divine service is carried on with such an amount of gaudy dressing, candle-lighting, and theatrical ceremonial, that it defeats the very purpose of worship. Simplicity should be the grand characteristic of New Testament worship. Ornament at any time should be employed with a very sparing hand. Neither in the Gospels nor in the Epistles shall we find the slightest warrant for a gorgeous and decorated ceremonial, or for any symbols except water, bread, and wine. Above all, the inherent wickedness of human nature is such that our minds are only too ready to turn away from spiritual things to visible things. Whether men like it or not, what the heart of man needs teaching, is the uselessness of outward ornaments without inward grace.¹

(c) Beware, above all things, of any worship in which ministers wear the dress, or act in the manner, of *sacrificing priests*. There are hundreds of Churches at this moment, in which the Lord's Supper is administered as a sacrifice and not as a Sacrament, and the clergy are practically acting as mediators

¹ "Pompous rites have been the great engine whereby the devil hath deceived the souls of men, and wrought them to a nauseating simplicity of divine worship, as if unworthy the majesty and excellency of God (2 Cor. xi. 3). But the Jews would not understand the glory of the second temple in the presence of the Messiah, because it had not the pompous grandeur of the temple erected by Solomon.

"Hence in all ages men have been forward to disfigure God's models and to dress up a brat of their own; as though God had been defective in providing for His own honour in His institutions without the assistance of His creature. This hath always been in the world; the old world had their imaginations, and the new world hath continued them. The Israelites in the midst of miracles and under the memory of a famous deliverance, would erect a calf. The Pharisees who sat in Moses' chair, would coin new traditions and enjoin them to be as current as the law of God. Papists will be blending Christian appointments with Pagan ceremonies to please the carnal fancies of the common people.

"How often hath the practice of the Primitive Church, the custom wherein we are bred, the sentiments of our ancestors, been owned as a more authentic rule in matters of worship, than the mind of God delivered in His Word! It is natural by creation to worship God; and it is as natural by corruption for man to worship Him in a human way, and not in a divine. Is not this to impose laws upon God? to reckon ourselves wiser than He? To think Him negligent of His own services, and that our feeble brains can find out ways to accommodate His honour better than Himself hath done? "—*Charnock*, vol. i. p. 222.

between God and man. The real corporal presence of our Lord's body and blood under the form of bread and wine, is openly taught. The Lord's table is called an altar. The consecrated elements are treated with an idolatrous reverence, as if God Himself was in them. The habit of private confession to clergymen is encouraged and urged on the people. I find it impossible to believe that such worship as this can be anything but offensive to God. He is a jealous God, and will not give His honour to another. The sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross once offered, can in no sense or way ever be repeated. His mediatorial and priestly office He has never deputed to any man, or any order of men. There is not a word in the Acts or Epistles to show that the Apostles ever pretended to be sacrificing priests, or to make any oblation in the Lord's Supper, or to hear private confessions, and confer judicial absolutions. Surely that simple fact ought to make men think. Beware of sacrificialism! Beware of the Mass!

Against the three evils of which I have just been speaking, I desire to lift up a warning voice. Take heed, and beware that you are not spoiled by them. Take heed of supposing that such worship is acceptable in God's sight. It may be pressed upon you most plausibly by clever men. It may be very attractive to the eye and ear, and the sensual part of our nature. But it has one fatal defect about it: it cannot be defended and maintained by plain texts of Scripture. Sacramentalism, Ceremonialism, Sacrificialism, will never be found in Bibles fairly read and honestly interpreted.

Search the pages of English history, if nothing else will open your eyes, and see what those pages tell you. Of worship in which Sacraments, Ceremonies, Sacerdotalism, and the Mass made the principal part,—of such worship England has surely had enough. Such worship was tried by the Church of Rome in the days of our forefathers, for centuries before the Protestant Reformation, and utterly failed. It filled the land with superstition, ignorance, formalism, and immorality. It comforted no one, sanctified no one, elevated no one, helped no one toward heaven. It made the priests overbearing tyrants, and the people cringing slaves. And shall we go back to it? God forbid! Shall we once more be content with services in which Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the power of the priesthood, the real corporal presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the necessity of symbolical decorations, the value of processions, banners, pictures, altar lights, are incessantly pressed on our minds? Once more I say, God forbid! Let everyone that loves his soul come out from such worship and be separate. Let him avoid it and turn away from it, as he would from poison.

V. I proceed, in the last place, to show *some tests by which our public worship should be tried*.

This is a point of vast importance, and one which every professing Christian should look fairly in the face. Too many are apt to cut the knot of all difficulties about the subject before us, by referring to their own feelings. They will tell you that they are not theologians, that they do not pretend to understand the difference between one school of divinity and another. But they do know that the

worship in which they take part makes them *feel* so much better, that they cannot doubt it is all right.

I am not disposed to let such people turn away from the subject of this paper quite so easily. I cannot forget that religious feelings are very deceitful things. There is a sort of gentle animal excitement produced in some minds by hearing religious music and seeing religious spectacles, which is not true devotion at all. While it lasts, such excitement is very strong and very contagious; but it soon comes and soon goes, and leaves no permanent impression behind it. It is a mere sensuous animal influence, which even the most ignorant Romanist may feel at seasons, and yet remain a Romanist both in doctrine and practice.

(a) True spiritual worship will affect a man's *heart and conscience*. It will make him feel more keenly the sinfulness of sin, and his own particular personal corruption. It will deepen his humility. It will render him more jealously careful over his inward life. False public worship, like dram-drinking and opium-eating, will every year produce weaker impressions. True spiritual worship, like wholesome food, will strengthen him who uses it, and make him grow inwardly every year.

(b) True spiritual worship will draw a man into closer *communion with Jesus Christ* Himself. It will lift him far above Churches, and ordinances, and ministers. It will make him hunger and thirst after a sight of the King. The more he hears, and reads, and prays, and praises, the more he will feel that nothing but Christ Himself will feed the life of his soul, and that heart communion with Him is "meat indeed and drink indeed." The false worshipper, in the time of need, will turn to external helps, to ministers, ordinances, and Sacraments. The true worshipper will turn instinctively to Christ by simple faith, just as the compass needle turns to the pole.

(c) True spiritual worship will continually extend a man's *spiritual knowledge*. It will annually give bone and sinew and muscle and firmness to his religion. A true worshipper will every year know more of self, and God, and heaven, and duty, and doctrine, and practice, and experience. His religion is a living thing, and will grow. A false worshipper will never get beyond the old carnal principles and elements of his theology. He will annually go round and round like a horse in a mill, and, though labouring much, will never get forward. His religion is a dead thing, and cannot increase and multiply.

(d) True spiritual worship will continually increase the *holiness* of a man's life. It will make him every year more watchful over tongue, and temper, and time, and behaviour, in every relation of life. The true worshipper's conscience becomes annually more tender. The false worshipper's becomes annually more seared and more hard.

Give me the worship that will stand the test of our Lord's great principle, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Give me the worship that sanctifies the life,—that makes a man walk with God and delight in God's law,—that lifts him above the fear of the world and the love of the world,—that enables him to

exhibit something of God's image and God's likeness before his fellow-men,—that makes him just, loving, patient, humble, unselfish, temperate. This is the worship that comes down from heaven, and has the stamp and seal and super-scription of God.

Whatever men may please to say, the grand test of the value of any kind of worship is the effect it produces on the lives of the worshippers. A man may tell me that what is called Ritualism nowadays is the best and most perfect mode of worshipping God. He may despise the simple and unadorned ceremonial of Evangelical congregations. He may exalt to the skies the excellence of ornament, decoration, and pageantry, in our service of God. But I take leave to tell him that I shall try his favourite system by its results. So long as I find that ultra-Ritualistic worshippers can turn from matins and early communions to races and operas, can oscillate between the confessional and the ball-room, and take no interest in missions at home or abroad, so long I shall think little of the value of ultra-Ritualistic worship.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. The best public worship is that which produces the best private Christianity. The best Church Services for the congregation are those which make its individual members most holy at home and alone. If you want to know whether your own public worship is doing you good, try it by these tests. Does it quicken your conscience? Does it send you to Christ? Does it add to your knowledge? Does it sanctify your life? If it does, depend on it, it is worship of which you have no cause to be ashamed.

My paper is finished and my work is done. It only remains for me to wind up all by a few words of friendly application.

1. I ask every reader to accept a word of inquiry. *Do you worship God in public at all?*

I ask that question because there are many in this day who never go within the walls of a church or chapel. They are not professedly infidels, but they give no outward sign of belief. They are not open enemies of God's Sabbath, and have no wish to see it made a day of work; but they have no idea of keeping it holy, and making it God's day. There are many people in this state. Are you one of them?

If any reader of this paper never worships God in public, I only ask you to remember that at present you are unfit to die, unfit to meet God, unfit to go to heaven. What would the eternal presence of God, the eternal company of saints and angels, the eternal song of praise, the eternal Sabbath of holiness, what would it all be to you but downright misery? You are not in the state of mind to value it, so long as you do not care for public worship on earth. Oh, awake and repent! awake and be converted; awake and become a new man in Christ Jesus this very day! It is never too late to begin. It is never a hopeless thing to seek Christ. You are one of those whom He came to save, and whom He invites to come to Him. Awake, repent, and be converted this very day. Of sin and

carelessness and unbelief you may well be ashamed. But you never need be ashamed of worshipping God.

2. If any reader of this paper is a worshipper of God, accept a *word of caution*. Examine yourself this day in the light of this paper, and consider whether you are a true worshipper. In one word,—How do you worship?

Take care that you do not go down to the pit from under the pulpit. Take care that you do not make shipwreck of your soul in the very midst of public prayers, public praise, and public means of grace. Remember every Sunday that you live, that God reads your heart, and sees what is going on within you. Remember that to fill your place in the congregation with decency and regularity, may be quite enough to satisfy man, but that it takes a great deal more than this to be a Christian in the sight of God. Remember that a day is coming, and will soon be here, when we shall have to stand before the bar of God, and shall be judged not by parishes and congregations, but each by ourselves, each individually, and each alone. Look forward to that day. Think of it every Sunday. Prepare every Sunday to meet your God.

Oh! worshipper, into whose hands this paper has fallen, I know not who and what you are, but I say to you, in God's name, take heed how you worship. Mind that you know something of the roots and fruits of Christianity, as well as of the outward form. Mind that you are experimentally acquainted with repentance towards God, faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, a new heart and a new life. Take heed that you come to Christ, as well as come to church or chapel. Take heed that you sit at Christ's feet by faith, as well as sit bodily in His house. Take heed that you hear Christ's voice and follow Him, as well as hear your minister's sermons. Take heed that you know what it is to be born again, as well as to be baptized, and to eat Christ's body and drink Christ's blood by faith, as well as to go to the table of the Lord. I give you these cautions in love. I ask you to take them in good part. I only know that if you are not found at length a true worshipper, you had better never have been born.

3. If any reader of this paper knows anything of true worship, *accept a word of encouragement*. Look upward, onward, and forward, and be of good cheer.

The day is coming when there shall be a congregation that shall never break up, and a Sabbath that shall never end, a song of praise that shall never cease, and an assembly that shall never be dispersed. In that assembly shall be found all who have worshipped God in spirit upon earth. If you are one, you shall be there.

Here, I have no doubt, you worship God with a deep sense of weakness, corruption, and infirmity. There, at last, you shall be able, with a renewed body, to serve Him without weariness, and to attend on Him without distraction.

Here, at your very best, you see through a glass darkly, and know the Lord Jesus Christ most imperfectly. It is your grief that you do not know Him better and love Him more. There, freed from all the dross and defilement of indwelling

sin, you shall “see Jesus” as you have been seen, and know as you have been known. Surely, if faith has been sweet and peace-giving, sight will be far better.

Here you have often found it hard to worship God joyfully, by reason of the sorrows and cares of this world. Tears over the graves of those you loved have often made it hard to sing praise. Crushed hopes and family sorrows have sometimes made you hang your harp on the willows. There every tear shall be dried, every saint who has fallen asleep in Christ shall meet us once more, and every hard thing in our life-journey shall be made clear and plain as the sun at noon-day.

Here you have often felt that you stand comparatively alone, and that even in God’s house the real spiritual worshippers are comparatively few. There you shall at length see a multitude of brethren and sisters that no man can number, all of one heart and one mind, all free from blemishes, weaknesses, and infirmities, all rejoicing in one Saviour, and all prepared to spend an eternity in His praise. You shall have worshipping companions enough in heaven.

I charge my believing readers to lift up their hearts and look forward! The time is very short. The night is far spent. The day is at hand. Worship on. Pray on. Praise on. Read on. Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Resist manfully every effort to spoil Scriptural worship. Strive earnestly to hand down the light of Gospel worship to our children’s children. Yet a little time, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Blessed in that day will be those, and those only, who are found true worshippers, worshippers in spirit and truth!

IX.

THOUGHTS ON THE PRAYER-BOOK.

THERE is probably no book in existence, next to the Bible, which is so well known, and yet so little appreciated, as the English "Book of Common Prayer." Out of the myriads who hold the book in their hands on Sundays, I suspect few have ever considered the immense value of a liturgical form, and fewer still have ever realized the peculiar excellencies and principles of the Church of England liturgy. On these three subjects I propose to say a few words in this paper, which I think may prove useful to many readers.

I. First and foremost, I propose to say something about the *general usefulness of forms of prayer in public worship*. I frankly admit that on this point Christians are not entirely of one mind. How does the matter stand? In what respect do the visible Churches of Christ differ? Let me answer these questions.

Some Churches hold, that no prepared form of prayer ought ever to be used. They leave this part of worship entirely in the hands of the minister, and trust to the Spirit guiding him aright. They say that the prayers ought to be unwritten or extempore prayers. This is the opinion held by the Scotch Presbyterians, and by the greater part of the English dissenters in our own land.

Other Churches hold that it is best to have a form of prayer prepared, and to require the minister to use it. They leave the minister no discretion in the matter. They supply him with a book of prayers, and direct him to read out of this book, whenever the congregation assembles for public worship. This is the opinion held by the Church of England, by the Irish Church, by the Episcopal Church of America, and by a few other denominations.

Now, which of these two plans of public worship is the best? Which is wisest? Which is most edifying? Which is most profitable? I want to say something about these questions, and I invite the reader's serious attention. My own opinion is decided and unhesitating. I am by conscientious choice a minister of the Church of England. I think it is far better to have a form of public prayers than to have extempore prayer. I will now give some reasons why I think so.

Before I say a word about the question, let me remind the reader that the matter is not one which is necessary to salvation. I do not for a moment say that there can be no acceptable public Christian worship without a Prayer-book. I am only saying what appears to me the *most useful* manner of worship. The point I am considering is not one of those on which mistakes may ruin souls. Beside this, let me remind the reader that I am not about to make a special defence of the Prayer-book of the Church of England. I am quite ready to do that before I conclude this paper. The immediate question before us is not whether a certain liturgy is a good one, but whether it is good to have any liturgy at all. All that I wish to do at present is to give some general reasons why forms of public prayer appear to me very preferable to extempore prayer.

(a) In the first place, extempore prayer makes the congregation entirely dependent on the minister's health or circumstances, or what are commonly called his frames and feelings. He may be sick and ill when he is leading their devotions. He may be depressed in spirit by family trials or private affliction. Whenever this is the case, his people are sure to suffer. A minister is only a man. If he prays extempore, his "frames and feelings" must necessarily give a tone and colour and bias to his prayers. But this could not be the case, if he prayed from a book.

(b) In the second place, extempore prayer makes the congregation entirely dependent on the minister's memory. He may forget many things which he ought to pray for, and meant to pray for, before he entered the Church. He may omit to mention many things before God which he had privately intended to make subjects of prayer. He is only a man, and his memory is liable to error. But this could not happen if he prayed from a book.

(c) In the third place, extempore prayer makes the congregation entirely dependent on the minister's soundness in doctrine. He may be gradually falling away from the faith, and slipping into Romanism, or Socinianism, or Scepticism. He may be, almost insensibly to himself, little by little, departing from the truth, adding to or taking away from the Gospel of Christ. His people, in this case, are sure to suffer. His inward unsoundness will almost always appear in his prayers. But this could not happen if he prayed from a book.

(d) In the fourth place, extempore prayer makes it almost impossible for the congregation to join in public worship. They cannot possibly know what the minister is going to pray for. They must keep their minds continually on the stretch while he is praying, and may sometimes lose the thread of his prayer. They may even not understand him sometimes on account of his language, just as they do not always understand his preaching. But this could not happen if he prayed from a book.

(e) In the last place, extempore prayer, in course of time, becomes as much a form to most congregations as any form of prayer that ever was composed. The thoughts of ministers, after a few years, are found to run pretty much in the same groove, and upon the same rails. Their hearers, after a few years, know perfectly well their phrases, their modes of expression, and the order of their petitions. They can even make a shrewd guess how long the prayer will last, and when it is drawing near to a close. When this is the case,—and all who have worshipped in the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland know well that it is so, it really becomes just as formal an act to pray extempore as to pray from a book!

I lay these things before the attention of my readers, and commend them to their serious consideration. I commend them especially to Churchmen. I ask them not to be shaken in mind by the common charges which are made against our manner of worshipping God in the Church of England. It is easy for ignorant or thoughtless persons to say that to use a Prayer-book is "Popish," "legal," "formal," "bondage," and the like. It is easy to say that extempore prayer is a more "spiritual" mode of worship. It is far more easy to say such things than to

prove them. People too often catch these sayings from one another, and repeat them without calm and sober thinking. If some of the enemies of the Church of England would read and consider a little more than they do, they would perhaps not talk so foolishly as they sometimes do.

Let me make a few general remarks before I pass away from this branch of my subject.

1. Salvation does not depend on being a member of a Church which has a Prayer-book, or of a Church which permits nothing but extempore prayer. We must each individually be born again, repent of sin, believe on Christ, become new creatures, and live holy lives. Without this it will matter nothing at the last day what we thought about extempore prayer.

2. Extempore prayer may sometimes be extremely solemn, spiritual, soul-exalting, and heart-edifying. I have sometimes heard clergymen of the Church of England pray extempore in public, so beautifully that I could desire nothing better. If all men prayed always, as some men do sometimes, there would be nothing better than extempore prayer. But all ministers are not highly gifted. The question to be considered is, what mode of worship is most likely to be carried on effectively and profitably to a congregation, from week to week, and month to month, and year to year, by the average run of ministers? Taking a broad view of ministers, if I must choose, I would far rather that most ministers prayed from a book.

3. Prayer from a book may often be spoilt by the bad reading of the minister. He may read so rapidly, or so low, or so irreverently, as to do no good to the congregation. He may even weary and disgust his congregation. But forms of prayer are not to be judged by the reading of careless and unconverted ministers. Let a man hear a Prayer-book read reverently, carefully, audibly, and emphatically, with all the congregation joining, before he finds fault with "formal prayers." Forms may be read spiritually quite as easily as extempore prayers may be used formally.

4. Finally, let all Churchmen who hanker after extempore prayer, and profess to be weary of the Prayer-book, spend a few months in Scotland, and attend no other worship but that of the Presbyterians. They will hear many good prayers, I have no doubt. They will sometimes be much edified and pleased. The Church of Chalmers and M'Cheyne contains ministers who would adorn any Church on earth. But at the end of a few months, unless I am greatly mistaken, most sensible Churchmen will return home convinced that, in the long run, there is nothing so useful for a congregation as a good form of prayer.

The Church that has good, sound, Scriptural, fervent extempore prayers, in my judgment, does well. But the Church that has a well-composed, well-arranged Scriptural liturgy, in my judgment, does far better. The way of "forms" "in public worship is better than the way of "extempore "prayer.

II. From the general usefulness of forms of prayer, I pass on to speak of the *special excellencies of the English Prayer-book*.

The times in which we live make the subject of special importance. The Prayer-book is constantly assailed by enemies of every description. Even Churchmen are too ready to see the alleged blemishes of the book, and to forget its merits. In times like these it may be well to arm the friends of the Liturgy with a few simple arguments in its behalf.

It may clear our way to remind the reader once more that the question I am now considering is not the comparative merit of extempore or of pre-composed prayer in public worship. That question has been already fully considered in the former part of this paper. The one single point to which our attention will be directed is the special value of the Liturgy of the Church of England. Granting that a man is convinced that a form of prayer is best, let me try to show him that we have many reasons to be thankful for the form provided for worshippers in the Church of England.

Furthermore, it may clear our way to remind the reader that I do not for a moment maintain that the Prayer-book is free from defects. It was not given by inspiration, like the Bible. It was drawn up by uninspired men, who had their failings and infirmities; and, like everything else that comes from the hands of unassisted man, it is imperfect. I claim no infallibility for the Prayer-book. I fairly admit that there are things in it which might have been done better. But I am bold to say that its merits far outstrip its defects; its blemishes are few and far between; its excellencies are very many and very great. The chaff of the Liturgy is little compared to the wheat, and the dross trifling compared to the gold.

Let me now set down in order some of the leading merits of the Church of England Prayer-book. Before we give ear to the charges which some Dissenters and some Scotch Presbyterians sometimes make against our venerable Liturgy, let us consider calmly its many claims to our confidence.

(1) The first merit of the Prayer-book is the *large quantity of God's Word which it contains*. A very considerable portion of the volume is neither more nor less than extracts from the Bible. To say nothing of other parts, the Psalms, the Epistles, and the Gospels make no small part of the whole book. The man who pours indiscriminate abuse on the Liturgy, would do well to remember this. Let him consider that more than one-half of a Churchman's form of worship consists of selected passages of Holy Scripture.

(2) The second merit of the Prayer-book is the *sound doctrine* that runs through the daily prayers and petitions, which it puts in the mouth of those who use it. The sinfulness of man, the holiness of God, the redemption of sinners by our Lord Jesus Christ, the daily need in which we all stand of the Holy Spirit, the importance of godly living, the sinfulness and guilt of sin, the weakness of human nature, the personality of the devil, the reality and eternity of hell and heaven, the full supply of mercy and grace which is laid up for us in Christ,—all these things appear again and again in the prayers of the Liturgy. Expressions

no doubt may be pointed out in the Services for Baptism, Burial, and the Visitation of the Sick, which admit of misconstruction, and are often sadly misconstrued; but these expressions after all are few in number. No impartial judge can deny that the general tone of Prayer-book prayers is Scriptural, Evangelical, and sound.

(3) The third merit of the Prayer-book is the *wide variety of subjects* which its petitions embrace. It fairly sweeps the whole circle of man's wants, necessities, and relations. Our bodies and our souls, our temporal and our eternal interests, our position as subjects and members of families, our sorrows and our joys, our sickness and our health, our poverty and our riches, our journeys by land or water,—all are remembered in the Liturgy. Nothing seems to be forgotten or left out. A man's circumstances must be very peculiar indeed if he does not find his case mentioned in the daily prayers of the English Liturgy. It is not too much to say that no Church on earth brings so many matters before God in its public worship as the Church of England.

(4) The fourth merit of the Prayer-book is the *congregational character of the worship* which it invites those who use it to offer up. It does not give the office of praying entirely to the minister, and leave the people to sit by in silence and listen. It frequently directs "the people" in its rubrics. It assigns to every member of the congregation a place in the worship. It invites all to join audibly in the confession of sin and declaration of faith. It requires all to read a portion of the service together with the minister. It calls on all to say "amen" after every prayer which the minister reads. Of all foolish sayings against the Church of England there is none so foolish as the saying that it is a "Popish" and "priest-ridden" Church! No Church on earth makes so much of the laity in public worship as the Church of England.

(5) The fifth merit of the Prayer-book is its *wonderful suitableness to the wants of the poor and unlearned*. The bulk of all congregations will probably be ignorant, as long as the world stands. Long, argumentative, doctrinal prayers, however clever and gifted they may seem, are utterly unfitted to most men's minds. Now here is exactly the point at which the English Liturgy is most excellent. It is full of little short collects, containing much in few words, and easily understood. It is consequently full of little breaks and pauses, which to an ignorant worshipper are of great importance. They give him time to take breath. They enable him to begin again, if he has lost the thread of the last petition. They help to keep his slumbering mind awake, by the constant change of voice, and repeated "amens," which he cannot help hearing. The Litany alone is a simple but eminently comprehensive collection of petitions, which even a child, if attentive, can hardly fail to understand.

(6) The last, but not the least, merit of the English Prayer-book is the *immense proportion of intercession* which it contains. It calls on those who use it to remember others before God as well as themselves. It encourages habits of sympathy and fellow-feeling with all mankind. It keeps up a constant testimony against the selfishness to which we are all naturally prone. It invites us to speak

to God for others as well as for ourselves. In no Church on earth perhaps is the command to “pray for one another” so faithfully remembered, in theory at least, if not in practice, as in the Church of England.

Such are the six leading excellencies of the English Prayer-book. Each one of these six is a text, on which much more might be said, if space permitted. Each contains a seed of thought, which Churchmen would do well to lay up in their minds and remember.

The practical conclusions which may be drawn from what has been said deserve serious consideration. They ought to be pondered well by all who call themselves members of the Church of England.

For one thing,—if the English Prayer-book contain so many excellencies, we ought not to esteem it lightly, or think it of no consequence whether we hear it used on Sunday or not. Salvation, no doubt, does not depend on going to Church. It is not necessary to use a Prayer-book in order to get to heaven. A personal interest in Christ is the one thing needful. Experimental acquaintance with the grace of the Holy Ghost is far more important than acquaintance with the English Liturgy. But still, though all this is true, there is no denying that our edification in public worship depends greatly on the kind of prayers that are prayed. Let the Churchman know that he ought to be more thankful for his Prayer-book. He may often perhaps hear better preaching in chapel than in Church. But he may depend upon it he will not often hear better prayers.

For another thing,—if the English Prayer-book contain so many excellencies, the members of the Church of England ought not to be ashamed of defending it, and maintaining its cause. Let them speak out boldly when they hear men assailing the Prayer-book and saying evil things about it. Let them ask the assailants whether they know anything about the subject of which they are speaking. Let them challenge them fearlessly to point out any better worship than that which the Church of England provides. It is easy to say that the Prayer-book is imperfect, faulty, and defective. It is not quite so easy to show us the extempore prayers that are better. Of its ministers, the Church of England may well be ashamed sometimes. But it never need be ashamed of its Liturgy.

Finally,—if the English Prayer-book contains so many excellencies, let English Churchmen study the book more, and be more acquainted with its contents. Few, alas! know much about it. Ignorance is the great danger of many who consider themselves excellent members of the Church of England. They are little acquainted either with the Articles or Liturgy of their own Communion. They can hardly tell you what their Church asks them to believe, or how their Church bids them worship. One of the great wants of the day, next to more praying, is more thinking and more reading.

III. The last thing I propose to do is to offer to all my readers a broad general caution about the English Prayer-book. That caution is simply this. Take care that you clearly understand the *great leading principle on which the Prayer-book was at first compiled*, and on which it was always meant to be interpreted.

It is a principle which runs throughout the book from end to end. The mischief which has arisen, and the false teaching which has flowed from gross ignorance or neglect of this principle, are simply incalculable.

The principle of the Prayer-book is, to suppose all members of the Church to be in *reality* what they are in *profession*, to be true believers in Christ, to be sanctified by the Holy Ghost. The Prayer-book takes the highest standard of what a Christian ought to be, and all through its prayers is worded accordingly. The minister addresses those who assemble together for public worship *as believers*. The people who use the words the liturgy puts into their mouths, are supposed to be *believers*. But those who drew up the Prayer-book never meant to assert that all who were members of the Church of England were actually and really true Christians. On the contrary, they tell us expressly in the Articles, that “in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good.” But they held that if forms of devotion were drawn up at all, they must be drawn up on the supposition that those who used them were real Christians, and not false ones. And in so doing I think they were quite right. A liturgy for unbelievers and unconverted men would be unreasonable, and practically useless. The part of the congregation for whom it was meant would care little or nothing for any liturgy at all. The holy and believing part of the congregation would find its language entirely unsuited to them.

(a) This general principle of the Prayer-book, is the principle on which *the baptismal service* is drawn up. It supposes those who bring their children to be baptized, to bring them *as believers*. As the seed of godly parents and children of believers their infants are baptized. As believers, the sponsors and parents are exhorted to pray that the child may be born again, and encouraged to lay hold on the promises. And *as the child of believers* the infant when baptized is pronounced “regenerate,” and thanks are given for it. But the Prayer-book does not teach the invariable regeneration of all who are baptized.

(b) This principle is that on which the *Communion Office and Confirmation Service* are evidently framed. I suppose that no intelligent person would seriously maintain that all the communicants who say, “the remembrance of our sins is grievous and the burden of them is intolerable,” do really feel and mean what they say! You have only to search their characters and lives, and you soon find that many of them feel nothing of the kind.—So also I presume no one of common sense really believes that all the young persons, who are confirmed, do really think that they are “bound to believe and do” what they profess, when they say in reply to the Bishop’s question, “I do.” Too many, it may be feared, never think at all. But in both cases the Prayer-book puts in the mouths of those who are confirmed or come to the table, the language they ought to use, on the great ruling principle of charitable supposition. But it does not in the least follow that all is right because the language is used.

(c) This is the only principle on which many of the *collects* can be reasonably explained. The collect for the Epiphany says, “Grant that we who know Thee now by faith may after this life have the fruition of Thy glorious

Godhead.” Will anyone tell us that the compilers of the Prayer-book meant to teach, that all who use the Prayer-book do know God by faith? Surely not.—The collect for Sexagesima Sunday says, “O Lord God, who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do,” etc. Will any dare to say that these words could ever be literally true of all members of the Church of England? Are they not manifestly a charitable supposition?—The collect for the Third Sunday after Trinity says, “We to whom Thou hast given a hearty desire to pray,” etc. Who can have a doubt that this is a form of words, which is used by many of whom it could not strictly and truly be said for one minute?—Who can fail to see in all these instances one uniform principle, the principle of charitably assuming that members of a Church are what they profess to be? The Church puts in the mouth of her worshipping people the sentiments and language they ought to use, and if they do not come up to her high standard the fault is theirs, not hers. But to say that by adopting such expressions she stamps and accredits all her members as real and true Christians in the sight of God! would be manifestly unreasonable.

(d) This is the only principle on which *the service for the churching of women* can be interpreted. Every woman for whom that service is used, is spoken of as “the Lord’s servant,” and is required to answer that she “puts her trust in the Lord.” Yet who in his senses can doubt that such words are utterly inapplicable in the case of a great proportion of the women who come to be churchied? They are not “servants of the Lord.” They do not in any sense “put their trust” in Him. And who would dare to argue that the compilers of the liturgy considered that all women who were churchied did really trust in the Lord, merely because they used this language? The simple explanation is, that they drew up the service on the same great principle which runs through the whole Prayer-book, the principle of charitable supposition.

(e) This is the only principle on which *the service of baptism for grown-up people* can be interpreted. In that service the minister first prays that the person about to be baptized may have the Holy Spirit given to him, and be born again. The Church cannot take upon herself to pronounce decidedly that he is born again, until he has witnessed a good confession, and shown his readiness to receive the seal of baptism. Then, after that prayer, he is called upon openly to profess repentance and faith before the minister and congregation, and, that being done, he is baptized. Then, and not till then, comes the declaration that the person baptized is “regenerate,” and is born again and made an heir of everlasting salvation. But can these words be strictly and literally true, if the person baptized is a hypocrite, and has all along professed that which he does not feel? Are not the words manifestly used on the charitable supposition that he has repented and does believe, and in no other sense at all? And is it not plain to everyone, that in the absence of this repentance and faith, the words used are a mere form, used because the Church cannot draw up two forms, but not for a moment implying that inward and spiritual grace necessarily accompanies the outward sign, or that a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness is

necessarily conveyed to the soul? In short, the person baptized is pronounced “regenerate” upon the broad principle of the Prayer-book, that, in the Church services, people are charitably supposed to be what they profess to be.

(f) This is the only intelligible principle on which *the burial service* can be interpreted. In that service the person buried is spoken of as a dear brother or sister. It is said that it hath pleased God of His great mercy to take to Himself his soul. It is said, “We give Thee hearty thanks that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world.” It is said that “our hope is this our brother rests in Christ.” Now what does all this mean? Did the compilers of the Prayer-book wish us to believe that all this was strictly and literally applicable to every individual member of the Church over whose body these words were read? Will anyone look the Service honestly in the face and dare to say so? I cannot think it. The simple explanation of the service is, that it was drawn up, like the rest, on the presumption that all members of a Church were what they professed to be. The key to the interpretation of it is the same great principle, the principle of charitable supposition.

(g) This is the only principle on which *the Catechism* can be interpreted. In it every child is taught to say, “In baptism I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven;” and a little further on, “I learn to believe in God the Holy Ghost who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God.” Now what does this mean? Did the Prayer-book writers intend to lay it down as an abstract principle that all baptized children are sanctified and all elect? Will anyone in the present day stand forth and tell us that all the children in his parish are actually sanctified by the Holy Ghost? If he can, I can only say that his parish is an exception, or else Bible words have no meaning. But I cannot yet believe that anyone would say so. I believe there is but one explanation of all these expressions in the Catechism. They are the words of charitable supposition, and in no other sense can they be taken.

How anyone can fail to see this principle running through the Prayer-book services, is one of those things which I fail to understand. It is quite certain that St. Paul wrote his epistles in the New Testament to the Churches upon this principle. He constantly addresses their members as “saints” and elect, and as having grace, and faith, and hope, and love, though it is evident that some of them had no grace at all! I am firmly convinced that the compilers of our Prayer-book drew up its services upon the same lines, the lines of charitable supposition; and it is on this principle alone that the book can be interpreted.

With this caution I close this paper on the English Liturgy. No one can value the book more than I do, and the longer I live the more I value it. But I warn my readers never to forget that one principle runs through it all. That principle is the principle that worshippers really are what they profess to be. On that principle the book is incomparable as a manual of public worship. And without that principle people are apt to draw from it mischievous lessons, which it was never meant to teach.

X.
THOUGHTS ON BAPTISM.

BAPTISM is one of the two only sacraments which “Christ has ordained in His Church.” It is declared by our Church Catechism to be “generally necessary to salvation.” The same Catechism . teaches us that there are two parts in a Sacrament, — the outward visible sign and the inward spiritual grace. In baptism the outward visible sign is said to be “water,” and the inward and spiritual grace, “a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness.”

I offer the following pages to Churchmen, in the hope that they may assist those who read them to form some clear views about the sacrament of baptism. Unhappily, there is perhaps no subject in Christianity about which such difference of opinion exists. The very name recalls to one’s mind an endless list of strifes, disputes, heart burnings, controversies, and divisions.

I propose in this paper to offer a few remarks on this disputed subject. I am not bold enough to suppose that I can throw any light on a controversy which so many great and good men have handled in vain. But I know that every additional witness is useful in a disputed case. I want to strengthen the hands of those I agree with, and to show them that we have no reason to be ashamed of our opinions. I want to suggest a few things for the consideration of those I do not agree with, and to show them that the Scriptural argument in this matter is not, as some suppose, all on one side.

I. THE NATURE OF BAPTISM, — WHAT IS IT?

(1) Baptism is an ordinance appointed by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the continual admission of fresh members into His visible Church. In the army every new soldier is formally added to the muster-roll of his regiment. In a school every new scholar is formally entered on the books of the school. And every Christian begins his Church-membership by being baptized. By baptism he is undoubtedly introduced into a state of great religious privilege. He is entitled to a place in the Christian congregation, to the use of means of grace, to the care and instruction of Christian ministers while he lives, and to be buried with Christian burial when he dies.

(2) Baptism is an ordinance of great simplicity. The outward part or sign is water, administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, or in the name of Christ alone. The inward part, or thing signified, is that “death unto sin and new birth unto righteousness,” — that washing in the blood of Christ, and inward cleansing of the heart by the Holy Ghost, — without which no one can be saved. It is this death unto sin and new birth we must always remember, and not the baptismal water, which makes us children of grace. The word “hereby” in the Church catechism, about the inward part of baptism, is generally quite misunderstood. The 27th Article of the Church of England says rightly, — “Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it

is also a sign of regeneration or new birth.”

(3) Baptism is an ordinance on which we may confidently expect the highest blessings, when it is rightly used. It is unreasonable to suppose that the Great Head of the Church would solemnly appoint an ordinance which was to be as useless to the soul as a mere human enrolment or an act of civil registration. The sacrament we are considering is not a mere man-made appointment, but an institution appointed by the King of kings. When faith and prayer accompany baptism, and a diligent use of Scriptural means follows it, we are justified in looking for much spiritual blessing. Without faith and prayer baptism becomes a mere form.

(4) Baptism is an ordinance which is expressly named in the New Testament about eighty times. Almost the last words of our Lord Jesus Christ were a command to baptize : “Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Matt, xxvii. 19.) We find Peter saying on the day of Pentecost, — “Repent and be baptized every one of you;” and in the house of Cornelius, — “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?” (Acts ii. 38, x. 47.) We find St. Paul was not only baptized himself, but baptized disciples wherever he went. To say, as some do, in the face of these texts, that baptism is an institution of no importance, is to pour contempt on the Bible. To say, as others do, that baptism is only a thing of the heart, and not an outward ordinance at all, is to say that which it seems hard to reconcile with the Bible.

(5) Baptism is an ordinance which, according to Scripture, a man may receive, and yet get no good from it. Can any one doubt that Judas Iscariot, Simon Magus, Ananias and Sapphira, Demas, Hymenseus, Philetus, and Nicolas, were all baptized people? Yet what benefit did they receive from baptism? Clearly, for anything that we can see, none at all ! Their hearts were “not right in the sight of God.” (Acts viii. 21.) They remained “dead in trespasses and sins,” and “dead while they lived.” (Eph. ii. 1 ; 1 Tim. v. 6.)

(6) Baptism is an ordinance which in Apostolic times went together with the first beginnings of a man’s religion. In the very day that many of the early Christians repented and believed, in that very day they were baptized. Baptism was the expression of their new born faith, and the starting-point in their Christianity. No wonder that in such cases it was regarded as the vehicle of all spiritual blessings. The Scriptural expressions, “buried with Christ in baptism” — “putting on Christ in baptism” — “baptism doth also save us” — would be full of deep meaning to such persons. (Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12; Gal. iii. 27 ; 1 Pet. iii. 21.) They would exactly tally with their experience. But to apply such expressions indiscriminately to the baptism of infants in our own day is, in my judgment, unreasonable and unfair. It is an application of Scripture which, I believe, was never intended.

(7) Baptism is an ordinance which a man may never receive, and yet be a true Christian, and be saved. The case of the penitent thief is sufficient to prove this. Here was a man who repented, believed, was converted, and gave evidence

of true grace, if any one ever did. We read of no one else to whom such marvellous words were addressed as the famous sentence, — “To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” (Luke xxiii. 43.) And yet there is not the slightest proof that this man was ever baptized at all ! Without baptism and the Lord’s Supper he received the highest spiritual blessings while he lived, and was with Christ in paradise when he died. To assert, in the face of such a case, that baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation is something monstrous. To say that baptism is the only means of regeneration, and that all who die unbaptized are lost for ever, is to say that which cannot be proved by Scripture, and is revolting to common sense.

(8) Baptism is an ordinance which ought to be followed up in the case of infants when they come to years of discretion, by public reception into the congregation. Such reception is provided by the Church of England in the excellent and useful rite of Confirmation. Young persons who were baptized at an age when they were passive and unconscious, should be carefully taught “what a solemn promise” was made for them in baptism, and urged to come forward and take that promise on themselves. Confirmation, no doubt, is not a sacrament, and was not ordained by Christ, and cannot be called “necessary to salvation.” But confirmation rightly used, and preceded by sound Scriptural instruction, is a most valuable ordinance, and has been most wisely adopted in the Church of England.

I leave this part of my subject here. I commend the eight propositions which I have laid down to the serious consideration of all who wish to attain clear views about baptism. In considering the two Sacraments of the Christian religion I hold it to be of primary importance to put away from us the vagueness and mysteriousness with which too many surround them. After all, let us be careful that we believe neither more nor less about them than we can prove by plain texts of Scripture.

II. IN WHAT WAY OUGHT BAPTISM TO BE ADMINISTERED ?

This is a point on which a wide difference of opinion prevails. Some Christians maintain strongly that complete immersion in water is absolutely necessary and essential, in order to make a valid baptism. They hold that no person is really baptized unless he is entirely “dipped,” and covered over with water. Others, on the contrary, maintain with equal firmness that immersion is not necessary at all, and that sprinkling or pouring a small quantity of water on the person baptized fulfils all the requirements of Christ.

My own opinion is distinct and decided that Scripture leaves the point an open question. I can find nothing in the Bible to warrant the assertion that either dipping or sprinkling is essential to baptism. — I believe it would be impossible to prove that either way of baptizing is exclusively right, or that either is downright wrong. So long as water is used in the name of the Trinity, or in the name of Christ, the precise mode of administering the ordinance is left an open question.

This is the view adopted by the Church of England. The baptismal service expressly sanctions “dipping” in the most plain terms.¹ To say, as many Baptists do, that the Church of England is opposed to baptism by immersion is a melancholy proof of the ignorance in which many dissenters live ! Thousands, I am afraid, find fault with the Prayer-book without having ever examined its contents. If any one wishes to be baptized by “dipping” in the Church of England, let him understand that the parish clergyman is just as ready to dip him as the Baptist minister, and that “immersion” may be had in Church as well as in Chapel.

There is a large body of Christians, however, who are not satisfied with this moderate view of the question. They will have it that baptism by dipping or immersion is the only Scriptural baptism. They say that all the persons whose baptism we read of in the Bible were “dipped.” They hold, in short, that where there is no immersion there is no baptism.

I fear it is almost waste of time to attempt to say anything on this much-disputed question. So much has been written on both sides without effect during the last two hundred years, that I cannot hope to throw any new light on the subject. The utmost that I shall try to do is to suggest a few considerations to any whose minds are in doubt. I only ask them to remember that I do not say that baptism by “dipping” is positively wrong. All I say is, that it is not absolutely necessary, and is not absolutely commanded in Scripture.

(a) I ask, then, any doubting mind to consider whether it is in the least probable that all the cases of baptism described in Scripture were cases of complete immersion ? The three thousand baptized in one day at the feast of Pentecost (Acts ii. 41), — the jailor at Philippi suddenly baptized at midnight in prison (Acts xvi. 33) — is it at all likely or probable that they were all “dipped” ? To my own mind, trying to take an impartial view, it seems in the highest degree improbable. Let those believe it who can.

(b) I ask any one to consider, furthermore, whether it is at all probable that a mode of baptism would have been enjoined as necessary, which in some climates is impracticable ? At the north and south poles, for example, the temperature, for many months, is many degrees below freezing-point. In Tropical countries, on the other hand, water is often so extremely scarce, that it is almost impossible to find enough for common drinking purposes. Now will any maintain that in such climates there can be no baptism without immersion ? Will any one tell us that in such climates it is really necessary that every candidate for baptism should be completely “dipped” ? Let those believe it who can.

(c) I ask any one to consider, further, whether it is at all probable that a mode of baptism would have been enjoined which, in some conditions of health, is simply impossible. There are thousands of persons whose lungs and general

¹ The rubric of the Prayer-book service for the public baptism of infants says, — “If the godfather and godmother shall certify to the priest that the child may well endure it, he shall dip it in the water discreetly and warily.”

constitution are in so delicate a state that total immersion in water would be death to them. Now will any maintain that such persons ought to be debarred from baptism unless they are “dipped” ? Let those believe it who can.

(d) I ask any one to consider, further, whether it is probable that a mode of baptizing would be enjoined which in many countries would practically exclude women from baptism. The sensitiveness and strictness of Eastern nations about the treatment of their wives and daughters are notorious facts. There are many parts of the world in which women are so completely separated and secluded from the other sex that there is the greatest difficulty in even speaking to them about religion. To talk of such an ordinance as baptizing them by “immersion” would, in hundreds of cases, be perfectly useless. The feelings of fathers, husbands, and brothers, however personally disposed to receive Christian teaching, would be revolted by the mention of it. And will any one maintain that such women are to be left unbaptized altogether because they cannot be dipped ? Let those believe it who can.

I believe I might well leave the subject of the mode of baptism at this point. But there are two favourite arguments which the advocates of immersion are constantly bringing forward, about which I think it right to say something.

One of these favourite arguments is based on the meaning of the Greek word in the New Testament, which we translate “to baptize.” It is constantly asserted that this word can mean nothing else but dipping or complete “immersion.” The reply to this argument is short and simple. The assertion is utterly destitute of foundation. Those who are best acquainted with New Testament Greek are decidedly of opinion that to baptize means “to wash or cleanse with water,” but whether by immersion or not must be entirely decided by the context. We read in St. Luke (xi. 38), that when our Lord dined with a certain Pharisee, “the Pharisee marvelled that He had not first washed before dinner.” It may surprise some readers, perhaps, to hear that these words would have been rendered more literally, “that He had not first been baptized before dinner.” Yet it is evident to common sense that the Pharisee could not have expected our Lord to immerse or dip Himself over head in water before dining ! It simply means that he expected Him to perform some ablution, or to pour water over His hands before the meal. But if this is so, what becomes of the argument that to baptize always means complete “immersion“ ? It is cut from under the feet of the advocate of “dipping,” and to reason further about it is mere waste of time.

Another favourite argument in favour of baptism by immersion is drawn from the expression “buried with Christ in baptism,” which St. Paul uses on two occasions. (Rom. vi. 4 ; Col. ii. 12.) It is asserted that going down into the water of baptism, and being completely “dipped” under it, is an exact figure of Christ’s burial and coming up out of the grave, and represents our union with Christ, and participation in all the benefits of His death and resurrection. But, unfortunately for this argument, there is no proof whatever that Christ’s burial was a going down into a hole dug in the ground, On the contrary, it is far more

probable that His grave was a cave cut out of the side of a rock, like that of Lazarus, and on a level with the surrounding ground. Such, at least, was the common mode of burying round Jerusalem. At this rate there is no resemblance whatever between going down into a bath, or baptistry, and the burial of our Lord. The actions are not like one another. That by profession of a lively faith in Christ at baptism a believer declares his union with Christ, both in His death and resurrection, is undoubtedly true. But to say that in “going down into the water” he is burying his body just as His Master’s body was buried in the grave, is to say what cannot be proved.

In saying all this I should be very sorry to be mis taken. God forbid that I should wound the feelings of any brother who has conscientious scruples on this subject, and prefers baptism by dipping to baptism by sprinkling. I condemn him not. To his own Master he stands or falls. He that conscientiously prefers dipping may be dipped in the Church of England, and have all his children dipped if he pleases. What I contend for is liberty. I find no certain law laid down as to the mode in which baptism is to be administered, so long as water is used in the name of the Trinity. Let every man be persuaded in his own mind. He that sprinkles in baptism has no right to excommunicate him that dips, — and he that dips has no right to excommunicate him that sprinkles. Neither of them can possibly prove that the other is entirely wrong.

I leave this part of my subject here. Whatever some may think, I am content to regard the precise mode of baptizing as a thing indifferent, as a thing on which every one may use his liberty. I firmly believe that this liberty was intended of God. It is in keeping with many other things in the Christian dispensation. I find nothing precise laid down in the New Testament about ceremonies, or vestments, or liturgies, or Church music, or the shape of Churches, or the hours of service, or the quality of bread and wine to be used at the Lord’s Supper. On all these points I see a liberal discretion allowed to the Church of Christ. So long as things are “done to edifying,” the principle of the New Testament is to allow a wide liberty.

I hold firmly myself that the validity and benefit of baptism do not depend on the quantity of water employed, but on the state of heart in which the sacrament is used. Those who insist on every grown-up person being plunged over head in a baptistry, and those who insist on pouring an immense handful of water in the face of every tender infant they receive into the Church at the font, are both alike, in my judgment, greatly mistaken. Both are attaching far more importance to the quantity of water used than I can find warranted in Scripture. It has been well said by a great divine, — “A little drop of water may serve to seal the fulness of Divine grace in baptizing, as well as a small piece of bread and the least tasting of wine in the Holy Supper.” (Witsius, *Econ. Fed.* 1. 4, ch. xvi. 30.) To that opinion I entirely subscribe.

III. TO WHOM OUGHT BAPTISM TO BE ADMINISTERED ?

It is impossible to handle this branch of the subject without coming into direct collision with the opinions of others. But I hope it is possible to handle it in a kindly and temperate spirit. At any rate it is no use to avoid discussion for fear of offending Baptists. Disputed points in theology are never likely to be settled unless men on both sides will say out plainly what they think, and give their reasons for their opinions. To avoid the subject because it is a controversial one, is neither honest nor wise. A clergyman has no right to complain that his parishioners become Baptists, if he never instructs them about infant baptism.

I begin by laying it down as a point almost undisputed, that all grown-up converts at Missionary stations among the heathen ought to be baptized. As soon as they embrace the Gospel and make a credible profession of repentance and faith in Christ, they ought at once to receive baptism. This is the doctrine and practice of Episcopal, Presbyterian, Wesleyan, and Independent Missionaries, just as much as it is the doctrine of Baptists. Let there be no mistake on this point. To talk, as some Baptists do, of “believer’s baptism,” as if it was a kind of baptism peculiar to their own body is simply nonsense. “Believer’s baptism” is known and practised in every successful Protestant Mission throughout the world.

But I now go a step further. I lay it down as a Christian truth, that the children of all professing Christians have a right to baptism, if their parents require it, as well as their parents. Of course the children of professed unbelievers and heathen have no title to baptism, so long as they are under the charge of their parents. But the children of professing Christians are in an entirely different position. If their fathers and mothers offer them to be baptized, the Church ought to receive them in baptism, and has no right to refuse them.

It is precisely at this point that the grave division of opinion exists between the body of Christians called Baptists and the greater part of Christians throughout the world. The Baptist asserts that no one ought to be baptized who does not make a personal profession of repentance and faith, and that as children cannot do this they ought not to be baptized. I think that this assertion is not borne out by Scripture, and I shall proceed to give the reasons why I think so. I believe it can be shown that the children of professing Christians have a right to baptism, and that it is a complete mistake not to baptize them.

Let me remind the reader at the outset, that the question under consideration is not the Baptismal Service of the Church of England. Whether that Service is right or wrong, — whether it is useful to have godfathers and godmothers, are not the points in dispute. It is mere waste of time to say anything about them.¹ The question before us is simply whether infant baptism is right in principle. That it is right is held by Presbyterians, Independents, and Methodists, who use no Prayer-book, just as stoutly as it is by Churchmen. To the consideration of

¹ Readers who wish to examine the true meaning of the Baptismal Service are requested to read a tract of mine, called “A Guide to Church men about Baptism and Regeneration.”

this one question I shall strictly confine myself. There is not the slightest necessary connection between the Liturgy and infant baptism. I heartily wish that some people would remember this. To insist on dragging in the Liturgy, and mixing it up with the abstract question of infant baptism, is neither good logic, nor fairness, nor common sense.

Let me clear the way furthermore, by observing that I will not be drawn away from the real point at issue by the ludicrous descriptions which some people give of the abuse of infant baptism. No doubt it is easy for popular writers and preachers to draw a vivid picture of an ignorant, prayerless, couple of peasants, bringing an unconscious infant to be sprinkled at the font by a careless sporting parson ! It is easy to finish off the picture by saying, "What good can infant baptism do ?" — Such pictures are very amusing perhaps, but they are no argument against the principle of infant baptism. The abuse of a thing is no proof that it ought to be disused and is wrong. Moreover, those who live in glass houses had better not throw stones. Strange pictures might be drawn of what happens sometimes in Baptist Chapels at adult baptisms ! But I forbear. I want the reader to look not at pictures but at Scriptural principles.

Let me now supply a few simple reasons why I hold, in common with all Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Independents throughout the world, that infant baptism is a right thing, and that in denying baptism to children the Baptists are mistaken. The reasons are as follows.

(a) Children were admitted into the Old Testament Church by a formal ordinance, from the time of Abraham downwards. That ordinance was circumcision. It was an ordinance which God Himself appointed, and the neglect of which was denounced as a great sin. (Gen. xvii. 13, 14.) It was an ordinance about which the highest language is used in the New Testament. St. Paul calls it "a seal of the righteousness of faith." (Rom. ii. 4.) Now, if children were considered to be capable of admission into the Church by an ordinance in the Old Testament, it is difficult to see why they cannot be admitted in the New. The general tendency of the Gospel is to increase men's spiritual privileges, and not to diminish them. Nothing, I believe, would astonish a Jewish convert so much as to tell him his children could not be baptized ! "If they are fit to receive circumcision," he would reply, "why are they not fit to receive baptism ?" And my own firm conviction has long been that no Baptist could give him an answer. In fact I never saw an argument against infant baptism that might not have been equally directed against infant circumcision. No man, however, in his sober senses, would presume to say that infant circumcision was wrong.

(b) The baptism of children is nowhere forbidden in the New Testament. There is not a single text from Matthew to Revelation, which either directly or indirectly hints that infants should not be baptized. Some, perhaps, may see little in this silence. To my mind it is a silence full of meaning and instruction. The first Christians, be it remembered, were many of them by birth Jews. They had been accustomed in the Jewish Church, before their conversion, to have

their children admitted into church- membership by a solemn ordinance, as a matter of course. Without a distinct prohibition from our Lord Jesus Christ, they would naturally go on with the same system of proceeding, and bring their children to be baptized. But we find no such prohibition ! That absence of a prohibition, to my mind, speaks volumes. It satisfies me that no change was intended by Christ about children. If He had intended a change, He would have said some thing to teach it. But He says not a word ! That very silence is, to my mind, a most powerful and convincing argument. As God commanded Old Testament children to be circumcised, so God intends New Testament children to be baptized.

(c) The baptism of households is specially mentioned in the New Testament. We read in the Acts that Lydia was baptized “and her household,” and that the jailor of Philippi “was baptized, he and all his.” (Acts xvi. 1 5, 33.) Now what meaning would any one attach to these expressions if he had no theory to maintain, and could view them dispassionately ? Would he not explain the “household” to include the young as well as old, — children as well as grown-up people ? Who doubts when he reads the words of Joseph in Genesis, — “take food for the famine of your households” (Gen. xlii. 33) ; or, — “take your father and your households and come unto me” (Gen. xlv. 18), that children are included? Who can possibly deny that when God said to Noah, “Come thou and all thy house into the ark,” He meant Noah’s sons ? (Gen. vii. 1.) For my own part, I cannot see how these questions can be answered without establishing the principle of infant baptism. Admitting most fully that it is not directly said that St. Paul baptized little children, it seems to my mind the highest probability that the “households” he baptized comprised children as well as grown-up people.

(d) The behaviour of our Lord Jesus Christ to little children, as recorded in the Gospels, is very peculiar and full of meaning. The well-known passage in St. Mark is an instance of what I mean. “They brought young children to Him, that He should touch them : and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.” (Mark x. 13-16.)

Now I do not pretend for a moment to say that this passage is a direct proof of infant baptism. It is nothing of the kind. But I do say that it supplies a curious answer to some of the arguments in common use among those who object to infant baptism. That infants are capable, of receiving some benefit from our Lord, — that the conduct of those who would have kept them from Him was wrong in our Lord’s eyes, — that He was ready and willing to bless them, even when they were too young to understand what He said or did, — all these things stand out as clearly as if written with a sun beam ! A direct argument in favour of infant baptism the passage certainly is not. But a stronger indirect testimony

it seems to me impossible to conceive.

I might easily add to these arguments. I might strengthen the position I have taken up by several considerations which seem to me to deserve very serious attention.

I might show, from the writings of old Dr. Lightfoot, a master of Jewish literature in the 17th century, that the baptism of little children was a practice with which the Jews were perfectly familiar. When Gentile proselytes were received into the Jewish Church by baptism, before our Lord Jesus Christ came, their infants were received, and baptized with them as a matter of course.

I might show that infant baptism was uniformly practised by all the early Christians. Every Christian writer of any repute during the first 1500 years after Christ, with the single exception perhaps of Tertullian, speaks of infant baptism as a custom which the Church has always sanctioned.

I might show that the vast majority of eminent Christians, from the period of the Protestant Reformation down to the present day, have maintained the right of infants to be baptized. Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, and all the Continental Reformers, — Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and all the English Reformers, — the great body of all the English Puritans, — the whole of the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Independent, and Methodist Churches of the present day, — are all of one mind on this point. They all hold infant baptism.

But I will not weary the reader by going over this ground. I will proceed to notice two arguments which are commonly used against infant baptism, and are thought by some to be unanswerable. Whether they really are so I will leave the reader to judge.

(1) The first favourite argument against infant baptism is the entire absence of any direct text or precept in its favour in the New Testament. “Show me a plain text,” says many a Baptist, “commanding me to baptize little children. Without a plain text the thing ought not to be done.”

I reply, for one thing, that the absence of any text about infant baptism is, to my mind, one of the strongest evidences in its favour. That infants were formerly admitted into the Church by an outward ordinance, for 1800 years before Christ came, is a fact that cannot be denied. Now if He had meant to change the practice, and exclude infants from baptism, I should expect to find some plain text about it. But I find none, and therefore I conclude that there was to be no alteration and no change. The very absence of any direct command, on which the Baptists lay such stress, is, in reality, one of the strongest arguments against their view of baptism.

But I reply, for another thing, that the absence of some plain text or command is not a sufficient argument against infant baptism. There are not a few things which can be proved and inferred from Scripture, though they are not plainly and directly taught. Let the Baptist show us a single plain text which directly warrants the admission of women to the Lord’s Supper. — Let him show us one which directly teaches the keeping of the Sabbath on the first day

of the week instead of the seventh. — Let him show us one which directly forbids gambling. — Any well-instructed Baptist knows that it cannot be done. But surely, if this is the case, there is an end of this famous argument against infant baptism ! It falls to the ground.

(2) The second favourite argument against infant baptism is the inability of infants to repent and believe. “What can be more monstrous,” says many a Baptist, “than to administer an ordinance to an unconscious babe ? It cannot possibly know anything of repentance and faith, and therefore it ought not to be baptized.” The Scripture says, — “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;” and, “Repent, and be baptized.” (Mark xvi. 16; Acts ii. 38.)

In reply to this argument, I ask to be shown a single text which says that nobody ought to be baptized until he repents and believes. I shall ask in vain. The texts just quoted prove conclusively that grown-up people who repent and believe when Missionaries preach the Gospel to them, ought at once to be baptized. But they do not prove that their children ought not to be baptized together with them, even though they are too young to believe. The plain truth is, that the often-quoted texts, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” — and, “Repent ye, and be baptized,” will never carry the weight that Baptists lay upon them. To assert that they forbid any one to be baptized unless he repents and believes, is to put a meaning on the words which they were never meant to bear. They leave the whole question of infants entirely out of sight. The text, “Nobody shall be baptized except he repents and believes,” would, no doubt, have been a very conclusive one. But such a text cannot be found !

After all, will any one tell us that an intelligent profession of repentance and faith is absolutely necessary to salvation ? Would even the most rigid Baptist say that because infants cannot believe, all infants must be damned ? Yet our Lord said plainly, — “He that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark xvi. 16.) — Will any man pretend to say that infants cannot receive grace and the Holy Ghost ? John the Baptist, we know, was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb. (Luke i. 15.) — Will any one dare to tell us that infants cannot be elect, — cannot be in the covenant, — cannot be members of Christ, — cannot be children of God, — cannot have new hearts, — cannot be born again, — cannot go to heaven when they die ? — These are solemn and serious questions. I cannot believe that any well-informed Baptist would give them any but one answer. Yet surely those who may be members of the glorious Church above, may be admitted to the Church below ! Those who are washed with the blood of Christ may surely be washed with the water of baptism ! Those who are capable of being baptized with the Holy Ghost, may surely be baptized with water ! Let these things be calmly weighed. I have seen many arguments against infant baptism, which, traced to their logical conclusion, are the arguments against infant salvation, and condemn all infants to eternal ruin !

I leave this part of my subject here. I am almost ashamed of having said so much about it. But the times in which we live are my plea and justification. I do not write so much to convince Baptists, as to establish and confirm

Churchmen. I have often been surprised to see how ignorant some Churchmen are of the grounds on which infant baptism may be defended. If I have done anything to show Churchmen the strength of their own position, I feel that I shall not have written in vain.

IV. WHAT POSITION BAPTISM OUGHT TO HOLD IN OUR RELIGION.

This is a point of great importance. In matters of opinion, man is ever liable to go into extremes. In nothing does this tendency appear so strongly as in the matter of religion. In no part of religion is man in so much danger of erring, either on the right hand or the left, tut about the Sacraments. In order to arrive at a settled judgment about baptism, we must beware both of the error of defect, and of the error of excess.

(a) We must beware, for one tiling, of despising baptism, This is the error of defect. Many in the present day seem to regard it with perfect indifference. They pass it by, and give it no place, or position in their religion. Because, in many cases, it seems to confer no benefit, they appear to jump to the conclusion that it can confer none. They care nothing if baptism is never named in the sermon. They dislike to have it publicly administered in the congregation. In short, they seem to regard the whole subject of baptism as a trouble- Home, question, which they are determined to hit alone.

Now, I only ask such persons to consider gravely whether their attitude of mind is justified by Scripture. Let them remember our Lord's distinct and precise command to "baptize," when He left His disciples alone in the world. Let thorn remember the invariable practice of the. Apostles, wherever they went preaching the Gospel. Let them mark the language used about baptism in several places in the Epistles. Now is it likely, — is it probable, — is it agreeable to reason and common sense-, that baptism can be safely regarded as a dropped subject, and quietly laid on the shelf? Surely, I think these questions can only receive one answer.

It is utterly unreasonable to suppose that the Great Head of the Church would burden His people in all ages with an empty, powerless, unprofitable institution. It is ridiculous to suppose His Apostles would speak as they do about baptism, if in no case, and under no circumstances, could it be of any use or help to a man's soul. Let these things he calmly weighed. Let us take hood, lest in fleeing from blind superstition, wo are found equally blind in another way, and pour contempt upon an appointment of Christ.

(b) Wo must beware, for another thing, of making an idol of baptism. This is the error of excess. Many in the present day exalt baptism to a position which nothing in Scripture can possibly justify. If they hold infant baptism, they will tell you that the grace of the Holy Ghost invariably accompanies the administration of the ordinance, — that in every case a seed of Divine life is implanted in the heart, to which all subsequent religious movement must be traced, — and that all baptized children are as a matter of course born again, and made partakers of the Holy Ghost! — If they do not hold infant baptism,

they will tell you that to go down into the water with a profession of faith and repentance is the very turning- point in a man's religion, — that until we have gone down into the water we are nothing, — and that when we have gone down into the water, we have taken the first step toward heaven ! It is notorious that many High Churchmen and Baptists hold these opinions, though not all. And I say that, although they may not mean it, they are practically making an idol of baptism.

I ask all persons who hold these exceedingly high and lofty views of baptism, to consider seriously what warrant they have in the Bible for their opinions. To quote texts in which the greatest privileges and blessings are corner, ted with baptism, is not enough. What we want are plain texts which show that those blessings and privileges are always and invariably conferred. The question to be settled is not whether a child may be born again and receive grace in baptism, but whether all children are born again, and receive grace when they are baptized, — The question is not whether an adult may "put on Christ" when he goes down into the water, but whether all do as a matter of course. Surely these things demand grave and calm consideration ! — It is positively wearisome to read the sweeping and illogical assertions which are often made upon the subject. To tell us, for example, that our Lord's famous words to Nicodemus (John iii. 5) teach anything more than the general necessity of being "born of water and the Spirit" is an insult to common sense. Whether all persons baptized are "born of water and the Spirit" is another question altogether, and one which the text never touches at all ! To assert that it is taught in the text is just as illogical as the common assertion of the Baptist, when he tells you, that because Jesus said, — "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," — therefore nobody ought to be baptized until he believes !

The right position of baptism can only be decided by a careful observation of the language of Scripture about it. Let a man read the New Testament honestly and impartially for himself. Let him come to the reading of it with an unprejudiced, fair, and unbiassed mind. Let him not bring with him preconceived opinions and a blind reverence for the judgment of any uninspired writing of any man, or of any set of men. Let him simply ask the question, — "What does Scripture teach about baptism, and its place in Christian theology ?" — and I have little doubt as to the conclusion he will come to. He will neither trample baptism under his feet, nor exalt it over his head.

(a) He will find that baptism is frequently mentioned, and yet not so frequently as to lead us to think that it is the very first, chief, and foremost thing in Christianity. In fourteen out of twenty-one Epistles, baptism is not even named. In five out of the remaining seven, it is only mentioned once. In one out of the remaining two, it is only mentioned twice. In the two pastoral Epistles to Timothy, it is not mentioned at all. There is, in short, only one Epistle, viz., the First to the Corinthians, in which baptism is even named on more than two occasions. And singularly enough, this is the very Epistle in which St. Paul

says, — “I thank God that I baptized none of you,” — and “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.” (1 Cor. i. 14, 17.)

(b) He will find that baptism is spoken of with deep reverence, and in close connection with the highest privileges and blessings. Baptized people are said to be “buried with Christ,” — to have “put on Christ,” — to “have risen again,” — and even (by straining a doubtful text) to have the “washing of regeneration.” But he will also find that Judas Iscariot, Ananias and Sapphira, Simon Magus, and others, were baptized, and yet gave no evidence of having been born again. He will also see that in the First Epistle of John, people “born of God” are said to have certain marks and characteristics which myriads of baptized persons never possess at any period of their lives. (1 John ii. 29, iii. 9, v. 1, 4, 18.) And not least, he will find St. Peter declaring that the baptism which “saves” is “not the putting away the filth of the flesh” that is, not the mere washing of the body, but the “answer of a good conscience.” (1 Pet. iii. 21.)

(c) Finally, he will discover that while baptism is frequently spoken of in the New Testament, there are other subjects which are spoken of much more frequently. Faith, hope, charity, God’s grace, Christ’s offices, the work of the Holy Ghost, redemption, justification, the nature of Christian living — all these are points about which he will find far more than about baptism. Above all, he will find, if he marks the language of Scripture about the Old Testament sacrament of circumcision, that the value of God’s ordinances depends entirely on the spirit in which they are received, and the heart of the receiver. “In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love, — or a new creature” (Gal. v. 6; vi. 15). “He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. ii. 28, 29).

It only remains for me now to say a few words by way of practical conclusion to the whole paper. The nature, manner, subjects, and position of baptism have been severally considered. Let me now show the reader the special lessons to which I think attention ought to be directed.

(1) For one thing, I wish to urge on all who study the much-disputed subject of baptism, the importance of aiming at simple views of this sacrament. The dim, hazy, swelling words, which are often used by writers about baptism, have been fruitful sources of strange and unscriptural views of the ordinance. Poets, and hymn- composers, and Romish theologians, have flooded the world with so much high-flown and rhapsodical language on the point, that the minds of many have been thoroughly bewitched, dizzied, drugged, swamped, and confounded. Thousands have imbibed notions about baptism from poetry, without knowing it, for which they can show no warrant in God’s Word. Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is the sole parent of many a current view of Satan’s agency ; and uninspired poetry is the sole parent of many a man’s views of baptism in the

present day.

Once for all, let me entreat every reader of this tract to hold no doctrine about baptism which is not plainly taught in God's "Word. Let him beware of maintaining any theory, however plausible, which cannot be supported by Scripture. In religion, it matters nothing who says a thing, or how beautifully he says it. The only question we ought to ask is this, "Is it written in the Bible ? What saith the Lord ?"

(2) For another thing, I wish to urge on many of my fellow-churchmen the dangerous tendency of extravagantly high views of the efficacy of baptism. I have no wish to conceal my meaning. I refer to those Churchmen who maintain that grace invariably accompanies baptism, and that all baptized infants are in baptism "born again." I ask such persons, in all courtesy and brotherly kindness, to consider seriously the dangerous tendency of their views, and the consequences which logically result from them.

They seem to me, and to many others, to degrade a holy ordinance appointed by Christ into a mere charm, which is to act mechanically, like a medicine acting on the body, without any movement of a man's heart or soul. Surely this is dangerous !

They encourage the notion that it matters nothing in what manner or spirit people bring their children to be baptized. It signifies nothing whether they come with faith, and prayer, and solemn feelings, or whether they come careless, prayerless, godless, and ignorant as heathens ? The effect, we are told, is always the same in all cases ! In all cases, we are told, the infant is "born again" the moment it is baptized, although it has no right to baptism at all, except as the child of Christian parents. Surely this is dangerous !

They help forward the perilous and soul-ruining delusion that a man may have grace in his heart, which never can be seen in his life. Multitudes of our worshippers have not a spark of religious life or grace about them. And yet we are told that they must all be addressed as regenerate, or possessors of grace, because they have been baptized ! Surely this is dangerous !

Now I firmly believe that hundreds of excellent Churchmen have never fully considered the points which I have just brought forward. I ask them to do so. For the honour of the Holy Ghost, for the honour of Christ's holy sacraments, I invite them to consider seriously the tendency of their views. Sure am I that there is only one safe ground to take up in stating the effects of baptism, and that is the old ground stated by our Lord : "Every tree is known by his own fruit" (Luke vi. 44). When baptism is used profanely and carelessly, we have no right to expect a blessing to follow it, any more than we expect it for a careless recipient of the Lord's Supper. When no grace can be seen in a man's life, we have no right to say that he is "regenerate," and has received grace in baptism.

(3) In the last place, I wish to urge on all Christians the immense importance of giving to each part of Christianity its proper proportion and value, but nothing more. Let us beware of wresting things from their right places, and putting

that which is second first, and that which is first second. Let us give all due honour to baptism and the Lord's Supper, as sacraments ordained by Christ Himself. But let us never forget that, like every outward ordinance, their benefit depends entirely on the manner in which they are received.¹ Above all, let us never forget that while a man may be baptized, like Judas, and yet never be saved, so also a man may never be baptized, like the penitent thief, and yet may be saved. The things needful to salvation are an interest in Christ's atoning blood, and the presence of the Holy Ghost in the heart and life. He that is wrong on these two points will get no benefit from his baptism, whether he is baptized as an infant or grown up. He will find at the last day that he is wrong for evermore.

It only remains for me now to wind up all I have said with a few words of solemn appeal to every one into whose hands this tract may happen to fall.

I say "solemn appeal," and I say it advisedly. I feel strongly the immense importance of sound and Scriptural views of the whole question I have been considering. I feel it especially as respects that part of it which touches the doctrine of the Church of England. Men sometimes say it makes no difference whether we think all baptized persons are regenerate or not. They tell us it all comes to the same thing in the long run. I cannot say so. To my humble apprehension it seems to make an immense difference. If I tell a man that he has grace in his heart, and only needs to "stir up a gift" already within him, it is one thing. If I tell him that he is dead in sins, and must be born again, it is quite another. The moral effect of the two messages must, on the very face of it, be widely different. The one, I contend, is calculated, by God's blessing, to awaken the sinner. The other, I contend, is calculated to lull him to sleep. — The one, I maintain, is likely to feed sloth, check self-examination, and encourage an easy self-satisfied state of soul. He has got some grace within him whenever he likes to use it ; why should he be in a hurry, why be afraid ? The other, I maintain, is likely to rouse convictions, drive him to self-inquiry, and frighten him out of his dangerous security. He has nothing within him to rest upon, — he must find a refuge and remedy, — he is lost and perishing ; what must he do to be saved ? — The one message, I affirm, is likely to keep men natural men, the other to make them spiritual men ; the one to have no effect upon the conscience, the other to lead to Christ. — Let men say what they will, I for one dare not say I think it all comes to the same thing.

I see fresh reason continually for dreading the doctrine that all baptized persons are regenerate. I hear of lay men who once did run well, losing their first love, and appearing to make shipwreck of their faith. I hear of ministers, who once bade fair to be pillars in the Church, stumbling at this stumbling-stone, and marring all their usefulness. I see the doctrine leavening and spoiling the

¹ "In such only as worthily receive the sacraments they have a whole- some effect or operation." — 25th Article of the Church of England.

religion of many private Christians, and insensibly paving the way for a long train of unscriptural notions. I see it interfering with every leading doctrine of the Gospel. It encourages men to believe that election, adoption, justification, and the indwelling of the Spirit are all conferred on them in baptism ; and then, to avoid the difficulties which such a system entails, the fulness of all these mighty truths is pared down, mutilated, and explained away, or else the minds of congregations are bewildered with contradictory and inconsistent statements. I see it ultimately producing in some minds a mere sacramental Christianity, — a Christianity in which there is much said about union with Christ ; but it is a union begun only by baptism, and kept up only by the Lord's Supper, — a Christianity in which the leading doctrines that the Apostle Paul dwells on in almost all his epistles, have nothing but a subordinate position, — a Christianity in which Christ has not His rightful office, and faith has not its rightful place. I see all this, and mourn over it unfeignedly. I cannot think that the subject I am urging on the reader's attention is one of secondary importance. And once more I say, I cannot leave him without a solemn appeal to his conscience, whoever he may be, into whose hands this tract may fall.

I appeal, then, to all men who love the Bible, and make it their standard of truth and error ; and in saying this, I address myself especially to all members of the Church of England. I ask you to observe the manner of living of multitudes of baptized persons on every side of you ; I ask you to observe how their hearts are entirely set on this world, and buried in its concerns. And I then ask you, Are they born of God ? If you say Yes ! I answer, How can that be, when your Bible expressly says, "He that is born of God doeth righteousness, and doth not commit sin!" (1 John ii. 29 ; iii. 9). Are they children of God ? If you say Yes ! I answer, How can that be, when the Bible says expressly, "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (1 John iii. 10). Are they sons of God? If you say Yes ! I answer, How can that be, when the Bible says expressly, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14). What will you say to these things ? Surely you will not turn your back upon the Bible.

I appeal next to all who love the good old rule of the Bible, "Every tree is known by his own fruit" (Luke vi. 44). I ask you to try the great bulk of professing Christians by the fruits they bring forth, and to say what kind of fruits they are. Is it not perfectly true that many baptized persons know little or nothing of the fruits of the Spirit, and much, only too much, of the works of the flesh ? Is it not certain that they are destitute of those marks of being born of God which the Bible describes ? What will you say to these things ? Surely if you abide by your old principle you will hardly say that all baptized people have within them the Holy Spirit.

I appeal next to all who love the Church Catechism, and profess to be guided by its statements about the sacraments. You are aware that the inward and spiritual grace of baptism is there said to be "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness." I ask you, as in the sight of God, to say whether any evidence

whatever of this grace can be seen in the lives of many baptized persons. Where is there deadness to sin ? They live in it. It is their element. Where is their new birth unto righteousness ? They are habitual “servants of sin, and free from righteousness” (Rom. vi. 20). Sin reigns and rules in their mortal bodies. They are enemies of all righteousness. What will you say to these things ? Surely you will not tell us, that the outward and visible sign is always attended by the inward and spiritual grace. If so, grace and no grace are the same thing.

I appeal, lastly, to all who dread antinomianism and licentious doctrine. You have heard of those wretched persons who profess to glory in Christ and free grace, and yet think it no shame to live immoral lives, and continue in wilful sin. You think such conduct horrible, an insult to the Lord Jesus, and a disgrace to Christianity. And you are right to think so. But what will you say to the doctrine, that a man may have the Holy Spirit, and yet not bring forth the fruits of the Spirit ; — may have grace in his heart, and yet show no sign of it in his life ? What will you say to these things ? Surely, if you are consistent, you will recoil from the idea of dishonouring the Third Person of the blessed Trinity, no less than you do from dishonouring the Lord Himself. Surely you will shrink from saying that all baptized persons have the Holy Ghost.

And now I leave this subject in the hands of my readers, and I heartily pray God to guide them by His Spirit to a right understanding of it. I ask you to compare what I have said with the Bible, and I invite you to give the whole question your calm consideration and your earnest prayers. If in the course of this paper I have said anything that hurts your feelings, I am sorry for it. If I have said anything contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus, I hope the Lord will make me see it. But I think I can say with a good conscience, that I have stated nothing about baptism which I do not honestly believe to be the doctrine of the Bible, and the doctrine of the Church of England.

NOTES.

The following quotations bearing on the subject discussed in this paper are drawn from writers, of whom some are the greatest and most learned divines the world has ever seen. They are specially commended to the attention of members of the Church of England.

“In baptism those that come feignedly, and those that come un- feignedly, both be washed with the sacramental water, but both be not washed with the Holy Ghost, and clothed with Christ.”

“All that be washed with water be not washed with the Holy Spirit.” — Archbishop Cranmer. 1553.

“Good and evil, clean and unclean, holy and profane, must needs pass by the sacrament of baptism, except you will indeed, in more ample and large measure, tie the grace of God unto it than ever did the Papists, and say that all be baptized be also saved.” — Archbishop Whitgift. 1583.

“Are all they that are partakers of the outward washing of baptism, partakers also of the inward washing of the Spirit ? Doth this sacrament seal up their spiritual ingrafting into Christ to all who externally receive it ? Surely no ! Though God hath ordained these outward means for the conveyance of grace to our souls, yet there is no necessity that we should tie the working of God’s Spirit to the sacraments more than to the word.” —Archbishop Usher. 1624.

“In baptism, as the one part of that holy mystery is Christ’s blood, so is the other part, the material water. Neither are these parts joined together in place, but in mystery ; and therefore they be oftentimes severed, and the one is received without the other.” — Bishop Jewell. 1559.

“Christ said, ‘Except a man be born again from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Ye must have a regeneration : and what is this regeneration ? It is not to be christened in water as these firebrands (the Roman Catholics) expound it, and nothing else.” — Bishop Latimer. 1540

“All receive not the grace of God which receive the sacraments of His grace.” — Richard Hooker. 1597.

“Not all are regenerated who are washed with the baptismal water.” — Dr. Whittaker, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. 1590.

“What is the advantage or benefit of baptism to the common Christian ? The same as was the benefit of circumcision to the Jew outward (Rom. ii. 28). There is a general grace of baptism which all the baptized partake of as a common

favour ; and that is their admission into the visible body of the Church ; their matriculation and outward incorporation into the number of the worshippers of God by external communion. And so as circumcision was not only a seal of the righteousness which is by faith, but as an overplus, God appointed it to be a wall of separation between Jew and Gentile : so is baptism a badge of an outward member of the Church, a distinction from the common sort of the brethren. And God thereby seals a right upon the party baptized to His ordinances, that He may use them as His privileges, and wait for an inward blessing by them. Yet this is but the porch, the shell, and outside. All that are outwardly received into the visible Church are not spiritually ingrafted into the mystical body of Christ. Baptism is attended upon always by that general grace, but not always by that special.” — Archbishop Usher. 1624.

“All that receive baptism are called children of God, regenerate, justified : for to us they must be taken for such in charity, until they show themselves other. But Bishop Montague (a friend of Archbishop Laud) affirmeth that this is not left to men’s charity, as you, saith he, do inform the world, because we are taught in the service-book of our Church earnestly to believe that Christ hath favourably received these infants that are baptized, that He hath embraced them with the arms of His mercy, that He hath given them the blessing of everlasting life ; and out of that belief and persuasion we are to give thanks faithfully and devoutly for it. All this we receive and make no doubt of it ; but when we have said all we must come to this, that all this is the charity of the Church, and what more can you make of it ?” — George Carleton, Bishop of Chichester. 1619.

“The office for baptizing infants carries on the supposition of an internal regeneration.” — Bishop Burnet. 1689.

“There is justification for that prayer in our public liturgy, when the congregation gives thanks to God for the child baptized, that it hath pleased Him to regenerate this infant by His Holy Spirit, etc. For it cannot be denied but that the holy ordinance of baptism, the seal of our sanctification, doth take effect many times immediately in the infusion of present grace into the infant’s soul, though many times also it hath not its effect till many years after. But seeing it is questionably true in many, we may and must charitably suppose it in every one, for when we come to particulars whom dare we exclude ? And this we may do without tying the grace of regeneration necessarily to baptism, as some complain that we do.” — William Pemble, Magdalen Hall, Oxford. 1635.

“The Apostles always, when they descend to particular men or Churches, PRESUME every Christian to be elect, sanctified, justified, and in the way of being glorified, until he himself shall have proved himself to be wicked, or an apostate.” — Bishop Davenant. 1627.

“As to what he says, that no one can be a minister of the Church of England, who is not certainly persuaded of the regeneration of every infant baptized, neither also is that true. The minister truly gives God thanks after each infant has been baptized, that it has pleased God to regenerate him with His Holy Spirit. But it does not then follow that he ought to be certain of the regeneration of every infant baptized. For it is sufficient, if he is persuaded of the regeneration of some only — for instance, of elect infants, or, if you like, even of some only of their number — that on that account he may be able, nay ought, to give God thanks for each and all baptized. Since who is elect he knows not : and it is but just that he should by the judgment of charity presume that as many as he baptizes are elect, and if any are regenerated, in baptism (which none but a Socinian or other Catabaptist will deny) regenerated.” — Dr. Durel, Dean of Windsor t and Chaplain to the King. 1677.

THOUGHTS ON THE SUPPER OF THE LORD.

“THE Supper of the Lord!” This is the simple name which the Church Catechism gives to the solemn ordinance which the Lord Jesus Christ appointed on the evening before He was crucified. The child is asked the question, “How many sacraments has Christ ordained in His Church?” And the answer the child is taught to give is this,—“Two only, as generally necessary to salvation, that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord.”

I propose in this little paper to say something about the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

I know no part of the Christian religion which is so thoroughly misunderstood as the Lord’s Supper. On no point have there been so many disputes, strifes, and controversies for more than 1800 years. On no point have mistakes done so much harm as mistakes about this Sacrament. Even at this very day the battle is still raging, and Christians seem hopelessly divided. The very ordinance which was meant for our peace and profit has become the cause of discord and the occasion of sin. These things ought not so to be!

In examining the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, I shall content myself with asking four questions, and offering answers to them.

I. WHY WAS THE LORD’S SUPPER ORDAINED?

I answer that question in the words of the Church Catechism. I am sure I cannot mend them. It was ordained “for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.” The bread which is broken, given, and eaten in the Lord’s Supper is meant to remind us of Christ’s body given on the cross for our sins. The wine which is poured out and received is meant to remind us of Christ’s blood shed on the cross for our sins. He that eats that bread and drinks that wine is reminded, in the most striking and forcible manner, of the benefits Christ has obtained for his soul, and of the death of Christ as the hinge and turning-point on which all those benefits depend.

Now, is the view here stated the doctrine of the New Testament? If it is not, for ever let it be rejected, cast aside, and refused by men. If it is, let us never be ashamed to hold it fast, to profess our belief in it, to pin our faith on it, and steadfastly refuse to hold any other view, no matter by whom it is taught. In subjects like this we must call no man master. It signifies little what great Bishops and learned divines have thought fit to put forth about the Lord’s Supper. If they teach more or less than the Word of God contains, they are not to be believed.

I take down my Bible and turn to the New Testament. There I find no less than four separate accounts of the first appointment of the Lord’s Supper. St.

Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. Paul, all four describe it: all four agree in telling us what our Lord did on this memorable occasion. Two only tell us the reason which our Lord assigned why His disciples were to eat the bread and drink the cup: St. Paul and St. Luke both record the remarkable words, "Do this in remembrance of Me." St. Paul adds his own inspired comment: "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show (or declare or proclaim) the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). When Scripture speaks so plainly, why cannot men be content with it? Why should we mystify and confuse a subject which in the New Testament is so simple? The "continual remembrance of Christ's death" was the one grand object for which the Lord's Supper was ordained. He that goes further than this is adding to God's Word, and does so to the great peril of his soul.

Now, is it reasonable to suppose that our Lord would appoint an ordinance for so simple a purpose as the keeping His death in remembrance? Most certainly it is. Of all the facts in His earthly ministry none are equal in importance to that of His death. It was the great satisfaction for man's sin, which had been appointed in God's everlasting covenant from the foundation of the world. It was the great atonement of almighty power, to which every sacrifice of animals, from the fall of man, continually pointed. It was the grand end and purpose for which Messiah came into the world. It was the corner-stone and foundation of all man's hopes of pardon and peace with God. In short, Christ would have lived, and taught, and preached, and prophesied, and wrought miracles in vain, if He had not crowned all by dying for our sins! His death was our life. His death was the payment of our debt to God. Without His death we should have been of all creatures most miserable. No wonder that an ordinance was specially appointed to remind us of our Saviour's death. It is that very one thing of which poor, weak, sinful man needs to be continually reminded.

Does the New Testament warrant men in saying that the Lord's Supper was ordained to be a *sacrifice*, and that in it Christ's body and blood are materially present under the forms of bread and wine? Most certainly not. When the Lord Jesus said to the disciples, "This is my Body, and this is my Blood," He evidently meant, "This bread in my hand is an emblem of my Body, and this cup of wine in my hand contains an emblem of my Blood." The disciples were accustomed to hear Him use such language. They remembered Him saying, "The field *is* the world," "The good seed *are* the children of the kingdom" (Matt. xiii. 38). It never entered into their minds that He meant to say He was holding His own body and His own blood in His hands, and literally giving them His own literal body and blood to eat and drink. Not one of the writers of the New Testament ever speaks of the sacrament as a "sacrifice," or calls the Lord's table an "altar," or even hints that a Christian minister is a sacrificing priest. The universal doctrine of the New Testament is, that after the one

offering of Christ there remains no more need of sacrifice.¹ (Heb. x. 12-18).

Does the English Prayer-book warrant any Churchman in saying that the Lord's Supper was meant to be a sacrifice, and that Christ's body and blood are present under the forms of bread and wine? Once more I reply, Most certainly not. Not once is the word *altar* to be found in the Prayer-book: not once is the Lord's Supper called a *sacrifice*. Throughout the Communion Service the one idea of the ordinance continually pressed on our attention is that of a "remembrance" "of Christ's death. As to any *presence* of Christ's natural body and blood under the forms of bread and wine, the rubric at the end of the Service gives the most flat and distinct contradiction to the idea. That rubric expressly asserts that "the natural body and blood of Christ are in heaven, and not here." Those many Churchmen, who delight in talking of the "altar," the "sacrifice," the "priest," and the "real presence" in the Lord's Supper, would do well to remember that they are using language which is entirely unused by the Church of England. The only presence which our Church recognises is a spiritual one.

The point before us is one of vast importance. I charge every reader of this paper to lay hold upon it firmly, and never let it go. It is the very point on which our Reformers had their sharpest controversy with the Romanists, and went to the stake rather than give way. Sooner than admit that the Lord's Supper was a *sacrifice*, they cheerfully laid down their lives. The Thirty-first Article of our Church expressly declares that "the sacrifices of the Masses were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits." To bring back the doctrine of the *real presence*, and to turn the good old English communion into the Romish Mass, is to pour contempt on our Martyrs, and upset the first principles of the Protestant Reformation. Nay, rather, it is to ignore the plain teaching of God's Word, and do dishonour to the priestly office of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches expressly that the Lord's Supper was ordained to be a "remembrance" of Christ's body and blood, and not an offering. The Bible teaches that Christ's vicarious death on the cross was the one perfect sacrifice for sin, which never needs to be repeated. Stand fast in these two great principles of the Christian faith. A clear view of the intention of the Lord's Supper is one of the soul's best safeguards against the delusions of these latter days.

II. WHAT IS THE RIGHTFUL POSITION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IN THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION?

Like the ark of God in the Old Testament, this blessed Sacrament has a proper position and rank among Christian ordinances, and, like the ark of God, it may easily be put in the wrong one. The history of that ark will readily recur to our minds. Put in the place of God, and treated like an idol, it did the Israelites

¹ If any one fancies that St. Paul's words to the Hebrews, "We have an altar," are a proof that the Lord's Table is an altar, I advise him to read what Waterland, no mean theologian, says on the subject:—"Christians have an altar whereof they partake. That Altar is Christ our Lord, who is Altar, Priest, and Sacrifice, all in *One*."—*Waterland's Works*, vol. v. 268. Oxford edition.

no good at all. In the days of Eli, it could not save them out of the hand of the Philistine. Their armies were defeated, and the ark itself was taken.—Defiled and dishonoured by being placed in an idol's temple, it was the cause of God's wrath falling on a whole nation, till the Philistines said with one voice, "Send it away."—Treated with carelessness and levity, it brought down God's judgment on the men of Bethshemesh and on Uzza.—Treated with reverence and respect, it brought a blessing on Obed-edom and all his house. It is even so with the Lord's Supper. Placed in its right position, it is an ordinance full of blessing. The great question to be settled is, What is that position?

(1) The Lord's Supper is not in its right place *when it is made the first, foremost, principal, and most important thing* in Christian worship. That it is so in many quarters, we all must know. The well-known "masses" of the Romish Church, the increasing importance attached to "Holy Communion," as it is called, by many in our own Church, are plain evidence of what I mean. The sermon, the mode of conducting prayer, the reading of "holy Scripture," in many Churches are made second to this one thing,—the administration of the Lord's Supper. We may well ask, "What warrant of Scripture is there for this extravagant honour?" but we shall get no answer. There are at most but five books in the whole canon of the New Testament in which the Lord's Supper is even mentioned. About grace, faith, and redemption; about the work of Christ, the work of the Spirit, and the love of the Father; about man's ruin, weakness, and spiritual poverty; about justification, sanctification, and holy living;—about all these mighty subjects we find the inspired writers giving us line upon line, and precept upon precept. About the Lord's Supper, on the contrary, we may observe in the great bulk of the New Testament a speaking silence. Even the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, containing much instruction about a minister's duties, do not contain a word about it. This fact alone surely speaks volumes! To thrust the Lord's Supper forward, till it towers over and overrides everything else in religion, is giving it a position for which there is no authority in God's Word.

(2) Again, the Lord's Supper is not in its right place *when it is administered with an extravagant degree of outward ceremony and veneration*. In saying this I should be sorry to be misunderstood. God forbid that I should countenance anything like carelessness or irreverence in the use of any ordinance of Christ. By all means let us give honour where honour is due. But I ask all who read this paper, whether there is not something painfully suspicious about the enormous amount of pomp and bodily reverence with which the Lord's Supper is now administered in many of our Churches? The ostentatious treatment of the Communion table as an altar,—the lights, ornaments, flowers, millinery, gestures, postures, bowings, crossings, incensing, processions, which are connected with the so-called altar,—the mysterious and obsequious veneration with which the bread and wine are consecrated, given, taken, and received,—

what does it all mean?¹ Where is there in all this the simplicity of the first institution, as we find it recorded in the Bible? Where is the simplicity which our Protestant Reformers both preached and practised? Where is the simplicity which any plain reader of the English Prayer-book might justly expect? We may well ask—Where? The true Lord’s Supper is no longer there. The whole thing savours of Romanism. A plain man can only see in it an attempt to introduce into our worship the doctrine of sacrifice, the “blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit” of the mass, the Popish real presence, and transubstantiation. It is impossible to avoid feeling that a deadly heresy underlies this pompous ceremonial, and that we have not to do merely with a childish love of show and form, but with a deep-laid design to bring back Popery into the Church of England, and to subvert the Gospel of Christ. One thing at any rate is very plain to my mind: the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, administered as it is now in many places, is not in its rightful position. It is so disguised, and painted, and daubed, and overlaid, and bloated, and swollen, and changed by this new treatment, that I can hardly see in it any Lord’s Supper at all.

(3) Again, the Lord’s Supper is not in its right place *when it is pressed on all worshippers indiscriminately*, as a means of grace, which all as a matter of course ought to use. Once more I ask that no one will misunderstand me. I feel as strongly as anyone, that to go to a Church as a worshipper, and yet not be a communicant, is to be a most inconsistent Christian, and that to be unfit for the Lord’s Table is to be unfit to die. But it is one thing to teach this, and quite another to urge all men to receive the Sacrament as a matter of course, whether they are qualified to receive it or not. I should be sorry to raise a false accusation. I do not for a moment suppose that any High Church clergyman recommends, in naked language, wicked people to come to the Lord’s Supper that they may be made good. But I cannot forget that from many pulpits people are constantly taught that they are born again, and have grace, by virtue of their baptism; and that if they want to stir up the grace within them, and get more religion, they must use all means of grace, and specially the Lord’s Supper! And I cannot help fearing that thousands in the present day are practically substituting attendance at the Lord’s Supper for repentance, faith, and vital union with Christ, and flattering themselves that the more often they receive the Sacrament, the more they are justified, and the more fit they are to die. My own

¹ It is truly lamentable to observe how many young men and women of whom better things might have been expected, fall away into semi-Romanism in the present day, under the attraction of a highly ornamental and sensuous ceremonial. Flowers, crucifixes, processions, banners, incense, gorgeous vestments, and the like, never fail to draw such young persons together, just as honey attracts flies. I will not insult the common sense of those who find these things attractive, by asking them whether they really believe they get any food from them for heart, and conscience, and soul. But I should like them to consider seriously what these things mean. Do they really know that the doctrines of the mass and transubstantiation are the root of the whole system? Are they prepared to swallow these awful heresies? I suspect many are playing with Ritualism in these times without the least idea what unscriptural errors it covers over.

firm conviction is that the Lord's Supper should on no account be placed before Christ, and that men should always be taught to come to Christ by faith *before* they draw near to the Lord's Table. I believe that this order can never be inverted without bringing in gross superstition, and doing immense harm to men's souls. Those parts of Christendom where "the mass" is made everything, and the Word of God hardly ever preached, are precisely those parts where there is the most entire absence of vital Christianity. I wish I could say there was no fear of our coming to this state of things in our own land. But when we hear of hundreds crowding the Lord's Table on Sundays, and then plunging into every dissipation on week-days, there is grave reason for suspecting that the Lord's Supper is pressed on many congregations in a manner utterly unwarranted by Scripture.

Does anyone ask now what is the rightful position of the Lord's Supper? I answer that question without any hesitation. I believe its rightful position, like that of holiness, is between grace and glory, between justification and heaven, between faith and paradise, between conversion and the final rest, between the wicket-gate and the celestial city. It is not Christ; it is not conversion; it is not a passport to heaven. It is for the strengthening and refreshing of those who have come to Christ already, who know something of conversion, who are already in the narrow way, and have fled from the city of destruction.

III. WHO OUGHT TO BE COMMUNICANTS?

It will clear the ground if I first show who ought not to be partakers of the Lord's Supper. The ignorance which prevails on this, as well as on every part of the subject, is vast, lamentable, and appalling. If I can contribute anything that may throw light upon it, I shall feel very thankful. The giants whom John Bunyan describes, in *Pilgrim's Progress*, as dangerous to Christian pilgrims, were only two—Pope and Pagan. If the good old Puritan had foreseen the times we live in, he would have said something about the giant Ignorance.

(a) Not all baptized persons ought to be urged to become communicants as a matter of course. There is such a thing as fitness and preparedness for the Sacrament. It does not work like a medicine, independently of the state of mind of those who receive it. The Twenty-fifth Article of our Church declares, that "in such only as worthily receive the Sacraments they have a wholesome operation." The teaching of those who press all their congregation to come to the Lord's Table, as if the coming *must* necessarily do every one good, is entirely without warrant of Scripture. Nay, rather, it is teaching which is calculated to do immense harm to men's souls, and to turn the reception of the Sacrament into a mere form. Ignorance can never be the mother of acceptable worship, and an ignorant communicant who comes to the Lord's Table without knowing why he comes is altogether in the wrong place. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." "To discern the Lord's body,"—that is, to understand what the elements of bread and wine represent,

and why they are appointed, and what is the particular use of remembering Christ's death,—is an essential qualification of a true communicant (1 Cor. xi. 28, 29). God commands all men everywhere to repent and believe the Gospel; but He does not in the same way, or in the same manner, command everybody to come to the Lord's Table. No; this thing is not to be taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly, or carelessly! It is a solemn ordinance, and solemnly it ought to be used.

(b) But this is not all. *Sinners living in open sin*, and not determined to give it up, ought on no account to come to the Lord's Table. To do so is a positive insult to Christ, and to pour contempt on His Gospel. It is nonsense to profess we desire to remember Christ's death, while we cling to the accursed thing which made it needful for Christ to die. The mere fact that a man is continuing in sin is plain evidence that he does not care for Christ, and feels no gratitude for redemption. The ignorant Romanist who goes to the priest's confessional and receives absolution may think he is fit to go to the Mass, and after Mass may return to his sins. He never reads the Bible, and knows no better. But the English Churchman who habitually breaks any of God's commandments, and yet goes to the Sacrament, as if it would do him good, is very guilty indeed. So long as he chooses to continue his wicked habits, he cannot receive the slightest benefit from Christ's ordinances, and is only adding sin to sin. To carry unrepented sin up to the communion rail, and there receive the bread and wine, knowing in our own hearts that we and wickedness are yet friends, is one of the worst things a man can do, and one of the most hardening to conscience. If a man must have his sins, and cannot give them up, let him by all means stay away from the Lord's Supper. There is such a thing as "eating and drinking unworthily," and to our own "condemnation." To no one do these words apply so thoroughly as to an open sinner.

(c) But one thing more remains. *Self-righteous people*, who think that they are to be saved by their own works, have no business to come to the Lord's Table. Strange as it may sound at first, these persons are the least qualified of all to receive the Sacrament. They may be outwardly correct, moral, and respectable in their lives; but so long as they trust in their own goodness for salvation, they are entirely in the wrong place at the Lord's Supper. For what do we declare at the Lord's Supper? We publicly profess that we have no goodness, righteousness, or worthiness of our own, and that all our hope is in Christ. We publicly profess that we are guilty, sinful, and corrupt, and naturally deserve God's wrath and condemnation. We publicly profess that Christ's merit and not ours, Christ's righteousness and not ours, is the alone cause why we look for acceptance with God. Now what has a self-righteous man to do with an ordinance like this? Clearly nothing at all. One thing, at any rate, is very plain: a self-righteous man has no business to receive the Sacrament in the Church of England. The Communion Service of the Church bids all communicants declare that "they do not presume to come to the table trusting in their own righteousness, but in God's manifold and great mercies." It tells them to say, "We

are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table,”—“the remembrance of our sins is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable.” How any self-righteous Churchman can ever go to the Lord’s Table and take these words into his mouth passes my understanding! It only shows that many professing Christians use excellent forms of worship without taking the trouble to consider what they mean.

The plain truth is, that the Lord’s Supper was not meant for dead souls, but for living ones. The careless, the ignorant, the wilfully wicked, the self-righteous, are no more fit to come to the Communion rail than a dead corpse is fit to sit down at a king’s feast. To enjoy a spiritual feast we must have a spiritual heart, and taste, and appetite. To suppose that Christ’s ordinances can do good to an unspiritual man is as foolish as to put bread and wine into the mouth of a dead person! The careless, the ignorant, and the wilfully wicked, so long as they continue in that state, are utterly unfit to be communicants. To urge them to attend is not to do them good, but harm.

But after all, the ground having been cleared of error, the question still remains to be answered, Who are the sort of persons who ought to be communicants? I answer that question, once more, in the words of the Church Catechism. I there find the inquiry made, “What is required of them who come to the Lord’s Supper?” In reply I find it taught that people should “examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; whether they have a lively faith in God’s mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death; and whether they are in charity with all men.” In a word, I find that a worthy communicant is one who possesses three simple marks and qualifications,—repentance, faith, and charity. Does a man truly repent of sin and hate it? Does a man put his trust in Jesus Christ as his only hope of salvation? Does a man live in charity towards others? He that can truly, and with a good conscience, reply to each of these questions, “I do,” he is a man that is scripturally qualified for the Lord’s Supper. Let him come boldly. Let no barrier be put in his way. He comes up to the Bible standard of communicants. He may draw near with confidence, and feel assured that the great Master of the banquet is not displeased.

Such a man’s repentance may be very imperfect. Never mind! Is it real? Does he truly repent at all? His faith in Christ may be very weak. Never mind! Is it real? A penny is as truly the current coin of the realm, and as really stamped with the Queen’s image, as a sovereign. His charity may be very defective in quantity and degree. Never mind! Is it genuine? The grand test of a man’s Christianity is not the quantity of grace he has got, but whether he has any grace at all. The first communicants, when Christ Himself gave the bread and wine, were weak indeed,—weak in knowledge, weak in faith, weak in courage, weak in patience, weak in love! But they had that about them which outweighed all defects: they were real, genuine, sincere, and true.

For ever let this great principle be rooted in your mind,—the only worthy communicant is the one who is experimentally acquainted with repentance

toward God, faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and practical love toward others. Are you that one? Then you may draw near to the table, and take the Sacrament to your comfort. Lower than this I dare not pitch my standard of a communicant. I will never help to crowd a communion rail with careless, ignorant, self-righteous attendants. Higher than this I will not pitch my standard. I will never tell anyone to keep away till he is perfect, and to wait till his heart is as unruffled as an angel's. I will not do so, because I believe that neither my Master nor His Apostles would have done so. Show me one that really feels his sins, really leans on Christ, really struggles to be holy, and I will bid him welcome in my Master's name. He may feel weak, erring, empty, feeble, doubting, wretched, and poor. What matter St. Paul, I believe, would have received him as a right communicant, and I will do likewise.

IV. WHAT MAY COMMUNICANTS EXPECT FROM THE LORD'S SUPPER?

This is a point of grave importance, and one on which vast mistakes abound. On no point, perhaps, connected with this ordinance are the views of Christians so vague and misty and undefined.

One common idea among men is, that "taking the Sacrament must do them good." Why, they cannot explain. What good, they cannot exactly say. But they have a loose general notion that it is the right thing to be a communicant, and that somehow or other it is of service to their souls! This is, of course, nothing better than ignorance. It is unreasonable to suppose that such communicants can please Christ, or receive any real benefit from what they do. If there is any principle clearly laid down in the Bible about any act of religious worship, it is this,—that it must be *intelligent*. The worshipper must at least understand something about what he is doing. Mere bodily worship, unaccompanied by mind or heart, is utterly worthless. The man who walks up to a communion rail, and eats the bread and drinks the wine as a mere matter of form, because his minister tells him to come there, without any clear idea of what it all means, derives no benefit. He might just as well stay at home.

Another common idea among men is that "taking the Sacrament will help them to heaven, and take away their sins." To this delusive idea you may trace up the habit in some parishes of going to the Sacrament once a year, in order, as an old farmer once said, "to wipe off the year's sins." To this idea, again, you may trace the sadly common practice of sending for a minister in time of sickness, in order to receive the Sacrament before death. Alas, how many take comfort about their relatives, after they have lived a most ungodly life, for no better reason than this,—that *they took the Sacrament* when they were dying! Whether they repented and believed and had new hearts, they neither seem to know nor care. All they know is that "they took the Sacrament before they died!" My heart sinks within me when I hear people resting on such evidence as this.

Ideas like these are mournful proofs of the ignorance that fills the minds of men about the Lord's Supper. They are ideas for which there is not the slightest warrant either in Scripture or the Prayer-book. The sooner they are cast aside and given up, the better for the Church and the world.

Let us settle it firmly in our minds that the Lord's Supper was not given to be a means either of justification or of conversion. It was never meant to give grace where there is no grace already, or to provide pardon when pardon is not already enjoyed. It cannot possibly supply the absence of repentance to God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an ordinance for the penitent, not for the impenitent,—for the believing, not for the unbelieving,—for the converted, not for the unconverted. The unconverted man, who fancies that he can find a short-cut road to heaven by taking the Sacrament, without treading the well-worn steps of repentance and faith, will find to his cost one day that he is totally deceived. The Lord's Supper was meant to increase and help the grace that a man has, but not to impart grace that he has not. It was certainly never intended to make our peace with God, to justify, or to convert.

The simplest statement of the benefit which a true-hearted communicant may expect to receive from the Lord's Supper is that which is supplied by the Church Catechism,—“The strengthening and refreshing of our souls.” Clearer views of Christ and His atonement, clearer views of all the offices which Christ fills as our Mediator and Advocate, clearer views of the complete redemption Christ has obtained for us by His vicarious death on the cross, clearer views of our full and perfect acceptance in Christ before God, fresh reasons for deep repentance for sin, fresh reasons for lively faith, fresh reasons for living a holy, consecrated, Christ-like life,—these are among the leading returns which a believer may confidently expect to get from his attendance at the Lord's Table. He that eats the bread and drinks the wine in a right spirit will find himself drawn into closer communion with Christ, and will feel to know Him more, and understand Him better. Well says the Communion Office of our Prayer-book, “The benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that Holy Sacrament; for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood; then we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us.”

(a) Right reception of the Lord's Supper has a *humbling* effect on the soul. The sight of the emblems of Christ's body and blood, reminds us how sinful sin must be, if nothing less than the death of God's own Son could make satisfaction for it, or redeem us from its guilt. Never, surely, ought we to be so “clothed with humility,” as when we kneel at the Communion rail.

(b) Right reception of the Lord's Supper has a *cheering* effect on the soul. The sight of the bread broken, and the wine poured out, reminds us how full, perfect, and complete is our salvation. Those lively emblems remind us what an enormous price has been paid for our redemption. They press on us the mighty truth that, believing on Christ, we have nothing to fear, because a

sufficient payment has been made for our debt. The “precious blood of Christ” answers every charge that can be brought against us. God can be a just God, and yet the justifier of every one that believeth on Him.

(c) Right reception of the Lord’s Supper has a *sanctifying* effect on the soul. The bread and wine remind us how great is our debt of gratitude to our Lord, and how thoroughly we are bound to live for Him who died for our sins. They seem to say to us, “Remember what Christ has done for you, and ask yourself whether there is anything too great to do for Him.”

(d) Right reception of the Lord’s Supper has a *restraining* effect on the soul. Every time a believer goes up to the Communion rail he is reminded what a serious thing it is to be a Christian, and what an obligation is laid on him to lead a consistent life. Bought with such a price as that bread and wine call to his recollection, ought he not to glorify Christ in body and spirit, which are His? The man that goes regularly and intelligently to the Lord’s Table finds it increasingly hard to yield to sin and conform to the world.

Such is a brief account of the benefits which a right-hearted communicant may expect to receive from the Lord’s Supper. In eating that bread and drinking that cup, such a one will have his repentance deepened, his faith increased, his knowledge enlarged, his habit of holy living strengthened. He will realise more of the “real presence” of Christ in his heart. Eating that bread by faith, he will feel closer communion with the body of Christ. Drinking that wine by faith, he will feel closer communion with the blood of Christ. He will see more clearly what Christ is to him, and what he is to Christ. He will understand more thoroughly what it is to be “one with Christ, and Christ one with him.” He will feel the roots of his soul’s spiritual life watered, and the work of grace in his heart established, built up, and carried forward. All these things may seem and sound foolishness to a natural man; but to a true Christian these things are light, and health, and life, and peace. No wonder that a true Christian finds the Lord’s Supper a source of blessing!

Remember, I do not pretend to say that all Christians experience the full blessing of the Lord’s Supper, which I have just attempted to describe. Nor yet do I say that the same believer will always find his soul in the same spiritual frame, and always receive the same amount of benefit from the Sacrament. But this I will boldly say,—you will rarely find a true believer who will not say that he reckons the Lord’s Supper one of his best helps and highest privileges. He will tell you that if he were deprived of the Lord’s Supper he should find the loss of it a great drawback to his soul. There are some things of which we never know the value till they are taken from us. So I believe it is with the Lord’s Supper. The weakest and humblest of God’s children gets a blessing from this Sacrament, to an extent of which he is not aware.

V. WHY DO MANY SO-CALLED CHRISTIANS NEVER ATTEND THE LORD’S SUPPER?

It is a simple matter of fact that myriads of baptized persons never come to

the Table of the Lord. They would not endure to be told that they deny the faith, and are practically not in communion with Christ. When they worship, they attend a place of Christian worship; when they hear religious teaching, it is the teaching of Christianity; when they are married, they use a Christian service; when their children are baptized, they ask for the Sacrament of Baptism. Yet all this time they never come to the Lord's Supper! They live on in this state of mind for many years, and to all appearance are not ashamed. They often die in this condition without ever having received the Sacrament, and yet profess to feel hope at the last, and their friends express a hope about them. And yet they live and die in open disobedience to a plain command of Christ! These are simple facts. Let anyone look around him, and deny them if he can. I challenge anyone to deny that the non-communicants in almost all English congregations form the large majority, and the communicants the small minority of the worshippers.

Now how is this? What account can we give of it? Our Lord Jesus Christ's last injunctions to His disciples are clear, plain, and unmistakable. He says to all, "Eat, drink! do this in remembrance of Me." Did He leave it to our discretion whether we would attend to His injunction or not? Did He mean that it did not signify whether His disciples did or did not keep up the ordinance He had just established? Certainly not. The very idea is absurd, and one which was certainly never dreamed of in apostolic times. St. Paul evidently takes it for granted that every Christian was a communicant. A class of Christian worshippers who never came to the Table was a class whose existence was unknown to him. What, then, are we to say of that large multitude of non-communicants which walks out of our churches every Sacrament Sunday, unabashed, unhumiliated, not afraid, not the least ashamed? Why is it? How is it? What does it all mean? Let us look these questions fairly in the face, and endeavour to give an answer to them.

(1) For one thing, many are not communicants because they are utterly careless and thoughtless about religion, and ignorant of the very first principles of Christianity. They go to church as a matter of form, because other people go; but they neither know nor care anything about what is done at church! The faith of Christ has no place either in their hearts, or heads, or consciences, or wills, or understandings. It is a mere affair of "words and names," about which they know no more than Festus or Gallio, of whom we read in the Acts. There were very few such Christians in St. Paul's times, if indeed there were any. There are far too many in these last days of the world, when everything seems to be wearing out and running to seed. They are the dead-weight of the Churches, and the scandal of Christianity. What such people need is light, knowledge, grace, a renewed conscience, a changed heart. In their present state they have no part or lot in Christ; and dying in this state they are unfit for heaven. Do I wish them to come to the Lord's Supper? Certainly not, till they are converted. "Except a man be converted, and become as a little child, he will never enter the kingdom

of heaven.” (Matt. xviii. 3).

(2) For another thing, many are not communicants because they know they are living in the habitual practice of some sin, or in the habitual neglect of some Christian duty. Their conscience tells them that so long as they live in this state, and do not break off from their sins, they are unfit to come to the Table of the Lord. Well, they are so far quite right! I wish no man to be a communicant if he cannot give up his sins. But I warn these people not to forget that if they are unfit for the Lord’s Supper they are *unfit to die*, and that if they die in their present condition they will be lost eternally. The same sins which disqualify them for the Sacrament, most certainly disqualify them for heaven. Do I want them to come to the Lord’s Supper as they are? Certainly not! But I do want them to repent and be converted, to cease to do evil, and to break off from their sins. For ever let it be remembered that the man who is unfit for the Lord’s Supper is unfit to die.

(3) For another thing, some are not communicants because they fancy it will add to their responsibility. They are not, as many, ignorant and careless about religion. They even attend regularly on the means of grace, and like the preaching of the Gospel. But they say they dread coming forward and making a profession. They fear that they might afterwards fall away, and bring scandal on the cause of Christianity. They think it wisest to be on the safe side, and not commit themselves at all. Such people would do well to remember that if they avoid responsibility of one kind by not coming to the Lord’s Table, they incur responsibility of another kind, quite as grave, and quite as injurious to the soul. They are responsible for open disobedience to a command of Christ. They are shrinking from doing that which their Master continually enjoins on His disciples,—from confessing Him before men. No doubt it is a serious step to come forward and receive the Sacrament. It is a step that none should take lightly and without self-examination. But it is no less a serious step to walk away and refuse the ordinance, when we remember Who invites us to receive it, and for what purpose it was appointed. I warn the people I am now dealing with to take heed what they are doing. Let them not flatter themselves that it can ever be a wise, a prudent, a safe line of conduct to neglect a plain command of Christ. They may find at length, to their cost, that they have only increased their guilt and forsaken their own mercies.

(4) For another thing, some are not communicants because they fancy they are not yet worthy. They wait and stand still, under the mistaken notion that no one is qualified for the Lord’s Supper unless he feels within him something like perfection. They pitch their idea of a communicant so high that they despair of attaining to it. Waiting for inward perfection they live, and waiting for it too often they die. Now such persons would do well to understand that they are completely mistaken in their estimate of what “worthiness” really is. They are

forgetting that the Lord's Supper was not intended for unsinning angels, but for men and women compassed with infirmity, dwelling in a world full of temptations, and needing mercy and grace every day they live. A sense of our own utter unworthiness is the best worthiness we can bring to the Communion rail. A deep feeling of our own entire indebtedness to Christ for all we have and hope for, is the best feeling we can bring with us. The people I now have in view ought to consider seriously whether the ground they have taken up is tenable, and whether they are not standing in their own light. If they are waiting till they feel in themselves perfect hearts, perfect motives, perfect feelings, perfect repentance, perfect love, perfect faith, they will wait for ever. There never were such communicants in any age,—certainly not in the days of our Lord and of the Apostles; there never will be as long as the world stands. Nay, rather, the very thought that we feel literally worthy, is a symptom of secret self-righteousness, and proves us unfit for Communion in God's sight. Sinners we are when we first come to the throne of grace,—sinners we shall be till we die; converted, changed, renewed, sanctified, but sinners still. In short, no man is a really worthy communicant who does not deeply feel that he is a “miserable sinner.”

(5) In the last place, some object to be communicants because they see others coming to the Lord's Table who are not worthy, and not in a right state of mind. Because others eat and drink unworthily, they refuse to eat and drink at all. Of all the grounds taken up by non-communicants to justify their own neglect of Christ's ordinance, I must plainly say, I know none which seems to me so foolish, so weak, so unreasonable, and so unscriptural as this. It is as good as saying that we will never receive the Lord's Supper at all! When shall we ever find a body of communicants on earth of which all the members are converted? It is setting up ourselves in the most unhealthy attitude of judging others. “Who art thou that judgest another?” “What is that to thee? Follow thou me.” It is depriving ourselves of a great privilege merely because others profane it and make a bad use of it. It is pretending to be wiser than our Master Himself. If the words of St. Luke mean anything, Judas Iscariot was present at the first Communion, and received the bread and wine among others. It is taking up ground for which there is no warrant in Scripture. St. Paul rebukes the Corinthians sharply for the irreverent behaviour of some of the communicants; but I cannot find him giving a single hint that when some came to the Table unworthily, others ought to walk off or stay away. Let me advise the non-communicants I have now in view to beware of being wise above that which is written. Let them study the parable of the wheat and tares, and mark how both were to “grow together till the harvest.” Perfect Churches, perfect congregations, perfect bodies of communicants, are all unattainable in this world of confusion and sin. Let us covet the best gifts, and do all we can to check sin in others; but let us not starve our own selves because others are ignorant sinners, and turn their meat into poison. If others are foolish enough to “eat and drink unworthily,” let

us not turn our backs on Christ's ordinance, and refuse to eat and drink at all.

Such are the five common excuses why myriads in the present day, though professing themselves Christians, never come to the Lord's Supper. One common remark may be made about them: there is not a single reason among the five which deserves to be called "good," and which does not condemn the man who gives it. I challenge anyone to deny this. I have said repeatedly that I want no one to be a communicant who is not properly qualified. But I ask those who stay away never to forget that the very reasons they assign for their conduct are their condemnation. I tell them that they stand convicted before God of either being very ignorant of what a communicant is, and what the Lord's Supper is; or else of being persons who are not living rightly, and are unfit to die. In short, to say "I am a non-communicant," is as good as saying one of three things:—"I am living in sin, and cannot come; I know Christ commands me, but I will not obey Him; I am an ignorant man, and do not understand what the Lord's Supper means."

I know not in what state of mind the reader of this paper may be, or what his opinions may be about the Lord's Supper. But I will conclude the whole subject by offering

SOME WARNINGS,

which I venture to think are peculiarly required by the times.

(1) In the first place, *do not neglect* the Lord's Supper. The man who coolly and deliberately refuses to use an ordinance which the Lord Jesus Christ appointed for his profit, may be very sure that his soul is in a very wrong state. There is a judgment yet to come; there is an account to be rendered of all our conduct on earth. How anyone can look forward to that day, and expect to meet Christ with comfort and in peace, if he has refused all his life to meet Christ in His own ordinance, is a thing that I cannot understand. Reader, does this come home to you? Mind what you are doing.

(2) In the second place, *do not receive the Lord's Supper carelessly*, irreverently, and as a matter of form. The man who walks up to the Communion rail, and eats the bread and drinks the wine, while his heart is far away, is committing a great sin, and robbing himself of a great blessing. In this, as in every other means of grace, everything depends on the state of mind in which the ordinance is used. He that draws near without repentance, faith, and love, and with a heart full of sin and the world, will certainly be nothing better, but rather worse. Reader, does this come home to you? Mind what you are about.

(3) In the third place, *do not make an idol* of the Lord's Supper. The man who tells you that it is the first, foremost, chief, and principal ordinance in

Christianity, is telling you that which he will find it hard to prove. In the great majority of the books of the New Testament the Lord's Supper is not even named. In the letter to Timothy and Titus, about a minister's duties, the subject is not even mentioned. To repent and be converted, to believe and be holy, to be born again and have grace in our hearts,—all these things are of far more importance than to be a communicant. Without them we cannot be saved. Without the Lord's Supper we can. The penitent thief was not a communicant, and Judas Iscariot was. Reader, are you tempted to make the Lord's Supper override and overshadow everything in Christianity, and place it above prayer and preaching? Take care. Mind what you are about.

(4) In the fourth place, *do not use the Lord's Supper irregularly*. Never be absent when this ordinance is administered. Make every sacrifice to be in your place. Regular habits are essential to the maintenance of the health of our bodies. Regular use of every means of grace is essential to the prosperity of our souls. The man who finds it a weariness to attend on every occasion when the Lord's Table is spread, may well doubt whether all is right within him, and whether he is ready for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. If Thomas had not been absent when the Lord appeared the first time to the assembled disciples, he would not have said the foolish things he did. Absence made him miss a blessing (John xx. 19-29). Reader, does this come home to you? Mind what you are about.

(5) In the fifth place, *do not do anything to bring discredit* on your profession as a communicant. The man who after attending the Lord's Table runs into sin, does more harm perhaps than any sinner. He is a walking sermon on behalf of the devil. He gives occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. He helps to keep people away from Christ. Lying, drinking, adulterous, dishonest, passionate communicants are the helpers of the devil, and the worst enemies of the Gospel. Reader, does this come home to you? Mind what you are about.

(6) In the last place, *do not despond* and be cast down, if, with all your desires, you do not feel to get great good from the Lord's Supper. Very likely you are expecting too much. Very likely you are a poor judge of your own state. Your soul's roots may be strengthening and growing, while you think you are not getting on. Very likely you are forgetting that earth is not heaven, and that here we walk by faith and not by sight, and must expect nothing perfect. Lay these things to heart. Do not write bitter things against yourself without cause.

To any reader into whose hands this book may fall, I commend the whole subject of it as deserving of serious and solemn consideration. I am nothing better than a weak fallible man myself. But if I have made up my mind on any point it is this,—that there is no truth which demands such plain speaking as truth about the Lord's Supper.

I pause here. I trust I have said enough to make clear the views I hold of the true intention and rightful position of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. If, in expounding these views, I have said anything that grates on the feelings of any reader, I can assure him that I am unfeignedly sorry. Nothing could be further from my desire than to hurt the feelings of a brother.

But it is my firm conviction that the state of the Church of England requires great plainness of speech and distinctness of statement about the Sacraments. There is nothing, I am persuaded, which the times so imperatively demand of Evangelical Churchmen, as a bold, manly and explicit assertion of the great principles held by our forefathers, and specially about Baptism and the Lord's Supper. If we would strengthen the things that remain which are ready to die, we must resolutely go back to the old paths, and maintain old truths in the old way. We must give up the vain idea that we can ever make the cross of Christ acceptable by polishing, and varnishing, and painting, and gilding it, and sawing off its corners. We must cease to suppose that we can ever lure men into being Evangelical by a trimming, temporizing, half and half, milk and water mode of exhibiting the doctrines of the Gospel; or by wearing borrowed plumes, and dabbling with High-Churchism; or by loudly proclaiming that we are not "party men;" or by laying aside plain Scriptural phrases, and praising up "earnestness;" or by adroitly keeping back truths that are likely to give offence. The plan is an utter delusion. It wins no enemy. It disgusts many a true friend. It makes the worldly bystander sneer, and fills him with scorn. We may rest assured that the right line and the wisest course for the Evangelical body to pursue, is to adhere steadily to the old plan of maintaining the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus, and specially the truth about the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Let us be courteous, amiable, charitable, affable, considerate for the feelings of others by all means, but let no consideration make us keep back any part of God's truth.

XII.

REAL CHURCH WORK.

Churchmen are spending all their time and strength on Church music, Church decorations, Church ceremonials, and an incessant round of Church services. Others are equally absorbed in such subjects as temperance, social purity, cookery for the poor, improved dwellings for the working-classes. Others are incessantly getting up popular concerts, penny readings, secular lectures, and evening recreations, and proclaiming everywhere that the way to do good is to amuse people. Others are always occupied with guilds, and societies, and associations, and think you very wrong and heathenish if you do not join them. Myriads of Churchmen are restlessly busy about such things from one end of the land to the other ; and superficial observers are often saying, "What a great deal of Church-work there is in these days!"

Now I would not for a moment be supposed to mean that the things I have just mentioned are wrong and wicked. Nothing could be further from my intention in drawing up this paper. But I doubt whether the present state of things is altogether healthy. I doubt whether the work of the Holy Ghost on hearts and consciences is not insensibly being left out in the cold and neglected. Amidst the incessant bustle and stir about matters of entirely secondary importance, I doubt whether the sort of direct spiritual work to which the Apostles wholly gave themselves, receives as much attention as it ought. It is quite certain that musical services, and Church decoration, and concerts, and penny readings, and bazaars, and improved cookery, and the like, will not save souls. It is equally certain that, without repentance, and faith, and holy living, and practical, self-denying, kindly charity, no one is meet for heaven. Do these simple, old-fashioned graces fill the place which they ought to do in the daily proceedings of many so-called Church-workers in this day ? I confess I doubt it exceedingly. I certainly see on every side a vast increase of what people call "Church- work." But I own to a strong suspicion that there is little or no increase of true religion. There is more show, undoubtedly. But I doubt extremely whether there is more reality, and more growth of practical godliness and zeal to save souls.

I propose to bring the matter to a point in this paper, by expounding the famous parable of the good Samaritan. I shall try to show my readers what our Lord Jesus Christ considers the test of real vital religion. Whether the great Head of the Church attaches much value to much of the "Church-work" of these days, — our bazaars, our concerts, our penny readings, our musical services, our church decorations, — is to my mind a very serious question. Whether He thinks the immense quantity of time and money which they absorb, well spent, is another very serious question which I find it difficult to answer. But I do know that He loves to see Christians walking in the practical lines laid down for us in the parable of the good Samaritan. He that would

know the highest style of "Church-work," the work that Christ would have us attend to, let him mark the lessons contained in this most practical parable.

I say "practical" with a purpose and meaning. What ever some ignorant persons may say, Christianity is eminently a practical religion. Its great end and aim is not only to show the way of peace with God, but the way of holiness of life. That salvation is only by grace, — that justification is by faith without the deeds of the law, — both these are foundation verities, cardinal truths of the Gospel. But it is no less true that saving faith will always be known by its fruits, and that the "grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus ii. 12). He is a poor sort of Christian to whom Christ is not made sanctification as well as righteousness !

The man who does not see these things has hitherto read his New Testament to very little purpose. He should study the latter chapters of nearly all St. Paul's Epistles. He should mark the high standard of living which the Lord Jesus continually sets before His disciples in the Gospels. And, to come to the subject of this paper, where shall we find more heart-searching words about duty to our neighbour than in the parable of the good Samaritan ? That well-known parable concludes with the searching injunction, "Go, and do thou like wise." Reader, wouldst thou be found a true Christian at the last day ? Wouldst thou not be condemned as nothing better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal ? Then make the Samaritan thy pattern. Be not content with mere thinking, feeling, talking, and intending. "Go, and do."

Three lessons appear to me to stand out on the face of this parable. Let me try to show what they are, and then draw from the whole subject some practical lessons.

I. See, first of all, what misery sin has brought into the world.

"A certain man," says our Lord, "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves. They stripped him of his raiment, robbed him, beat him, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead." Lying helpless by the wayside, — exposed naked to the burning rays of an Oriental sun, — liable to be torn by vultures ever looking out for a carcase, or devoured by jackals when the sun went down, — in all probability, without speedy aid, this poor traveller would soon have died. Here was covetousness, violence, cruelty, robbery, murder, lawless disregard of life and property, all combined. Such are the consequences which the fall has brought into the world. Such is the heartless, hateful conduct of which fallen man is capable.

But does conduct like this stand alone ? Alas, no ! In the present day human nature is still the same. Selfishness, oppression, cruelty, robbery, and even murder, are still to be found more or less in every quarter of the globe. The slave trade of Africa, which goes on even now on the east coast, and in the Soudan, — the massacres of the Indian Mutiny, and recently in Egypt, — the treatment of women, children, the sick, and the poor in almost every heathen

country, — the social disorders which disgrace some parts of Christendom, — the robberies, murders, and deeds of violence which our own newspapers record from time to time in our own beloved Christian land, — all these things cry aloud to heaven, and prove that the case of the traveller from Jerusalem to Jericho does not stand alone.

The plain truth is, that the suffering and the down trodden, the victims of oppression and robbery and violence, are everywhere. They are to be found more or less in every climate, and in every country under the sun. They live in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, and in America. They dwell by the banks of the Seine as well as the banks of the Thames, — by the banks of the Mississippi and Amazon as well as the banks of the Niger or Ganges. They abound under republics as well as under monarchies, — under liberal governments as well as under despotism. Everywhere you will find trouble, care, sorrow, selfishness, bloodshed, and covetousness. We see comparatively very little of it, thank God ! in our own happy land. But even we see and hear far too much. We have but a faint idea of the enormities which go on in heathen countries, where the restraining influence of Christianity is unknown.

Now how shall we explain this ? What is the cause of the state of things which I have just tried to describe ? Did God create men at the beginning to bite and devour one another ? Most certainly not. Are human governments to blame because robbery and violence abound ? Not altogether. The fault lies far too deep to be reached by human laws. I pity those well-meaning people who imagine that any legislation can ever drive evil out of the world. There is a deep-seated cause of human misery which baffles all their schemes : **THAT CAUSE IS SIN.** Sin is the universal disease which infects the whole earth. Sin brought in thorns and thistles at the beginning, and obliged man to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Sin is the reason why the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, and the foundations of the earth are out of course. Sin is the cause of all the burdens which now press down mankind. Most men know it not, and weary themselves in vain to explain the state of things around them. But I boldly affirm that original sin and the fall of Adam are the great root and foundation of all sorrow, hatred and wrong-doing, whatever proud man may think. Social Science Congresses, Sanitary Congresses, Trade Union Congresses, British Association Meetings, the organization of schemes for popular amusement and recreation, are all very well in their way. But they are often “labour in vain,” because they ignore the fall of Adam, and original sin, — great stubborn facts, which disturb all their calculations, and without acknowledging which the great problems of human nature can never be solved.

How much we ought to hate sin, and to make the checking of sin the first object in our efforts to do good ! How much we ought to long and strive to promote the progress of the Gospel of Christ ! This, after all, is the true reformer and civilizer of mankind. Just in proportion as men are brought under the influence of the despised old Gospel will be the increase of “peace on earth and goodwill” among men. The more Christ is known and loved, and the more

the Bible is read, the more will the inhabitants of the earth love one another. The more grace reigns over hearts and lives, the less hatred and violence will there be in the world. If pure and undefiled religion prevailed everywhere, such plagues and pests and nuisances as quarrelling, robbing, murder, drunkenness, fornication, swindling, gambling, idleness, lying, and cheating would be comparatively unknown. Half the prisons and workhouses would soon be shut up. Magistrates and policemen would have little to do. Half the poor-rates would be saved. He is the truest friend to human happiness who does the most to spread the knowledge of Christ and evangelize the world. Men may laugh and mock at missions if they will. But the despised Evangelical Missionary, at home and abroad, the preacher of Christ and justification by faith, the preacher of the Holy Ghost and sanctification, is the best friend of mankind.

II. Let me turn now to another lesson which stands out on the face of this parable. See how much religious profession there may be without accompanying religious practice.

Our Lord mentions two simple facts, which I will give in His own words : “By chance there came down a certain priest that way : and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.” There is a deep mine of suggestive truth in those two verses, — truth which, in every age of the world, has deserved attention, but truth which never required proclaiming so loudly as it does now.

The Jewish priests and Levites, we must remember, were the official leaders and representatives of the Jewish religion. They were, in a certain sense, mediators between God and the people until Messiah came. As such they were under special obligations to exhibit better knowledge of God’s mind and holier practice than other children of Abraham. Their lips were to keep and teach knowledge. They were the authorized expounders of the law. They were the acknowledged models, patterns, and standards of godliness in life.

Yet here our Lord shows us two high professors of religion so utterly destitute of mercy, pity, and kind feeling, that they could see a fellow-man lying by the roadside stripped, wounded, and half dead, and yet pass on their way without lifting a finger to help him. Never was there a clearer proof that a man may have the form, and even the official dress of religion, and yet at the same time know nothing of its power !

The teaching of Scripture on this point is very distinct and explicit. Barren formality will save no man’s soul however high his office, if his heart is not right in the sight of God. Hophni and Phinehas, Annas and Caiaphas, were all in the direct line of succession from Aaron, but, for anything we can see, they perished miserably in their sins. Barren formality in worshipping deprives the holiest ordinances of value, and turns them into dead forms. What says the book of Isaiah ? “Bring no more vain oblations. — Your appointed feasts my soul hateth” (Isa. i. 13, 14). What says our Lord Himself ? “I will have mercy

and not sacrifice" (Matt. ix. 13). What says St. Paul ? "Circumcision is nothing. Circumcision profiteth not, — unless it is joined with faith working by love, — a new creature, — and keeping the commandments of God" (Gal. v. 6, vi. 15 ; 1 Cor. vii. 19). "He that eateth and drinketh 'the Lord's Supper' unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself" (1 Cor. xi. 29).

Of all the sins which our blessed Lord denounced on earth, none drew down such severe reproof from His lips as hypocrisy, part-acting, and mere external religion. Eight times over in one single chapter we read the solemn words, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites" (Matt, xxiii. 13-29). The higher a man's outward profession, the more offensive does he seem to be to Christ, if he has no inward grace in his heart. It was the awful saying of our Lord of the formal scribes and Pharisees, "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you" (Matt. ii. 31).

Our lot is cast in an age when this subject demands the serious thought of all professing Christians. Perhaps there never was a period in the history of England when the externals of religion received such an amount of attention as they do now. It is an age of Church building, Church restoring, and Church decoration. It is an age of multiplied services and celebrations of the Lord's Supper. It is an age of dresses, and processions, and banners, and gestures, and postures, and bowings, and turnings, and sensuous religion. — Do I say that these things are in themselves downright wicked, like robbery and murder ? I say nothing of the kind. Many of them are only "pernicious trifles," though suspicious symptoms of inward disease. — Do I say that all who love these things are wicked persons ? Once more I say nothing of the kind. But I do say that there is great danger of forgetting that these things do not constitute saving Christianity, and that the one principal thing God looks at in worshippers is the state of the heart. An English Christian may be as outwardly correct as a priest and Levite in the days of our Lord ; but if, like them, he has no inward love, he will not be saved. A barren formalism, which knows nothing of experimental repentance, faith, charity, and self-denying kindness, may please the eye, and pass muster among men; but we may depend it is worthless in the sight of God.

We hear continually, in this day, of enormous sums of money being spent on Church decoration, on ferns and costly flowers at the great festivals, on incessant daily services and holy communions, on a multiplied staff of clergy to keep up a round of ceremonial, on music and singing of the choicest description. On all these objects the annual expenditure in England at this time is simply prodigious. But I should like much to know whether the congregations which enjoy this kind of public external religion, and give such large offerings to maintain it, contribute anything worth mentioning, by comparison, to the cause of Missions to the heathen, or to Home Missions, or, to speak briefly, to any evangelistic or Samaritan work in a sinful dying world. I am sadly afraid that the results of inquiry would prove extremely unsatisfactory, and that we should discover some most unhealthy symptoms in our Church's

condition. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" (1 Sam. xv. 22). Does God care for ferns and flowers and fine musical services, when Christ's work, and active aggressive evangelism, and personal dealing with souls, and true brotherly Samaritan conduct, are neglected? Never, never let us forget, that while "man looketh at the outward appearance, the Lord looketh at the heart" (1 Sam. xvi. 7). All public religion is worthless which does not bear the fruit of active, Christ-like love. The congregation which pleases God most in this day is not necessarily that in which there is the finest music and the most ornamental ceremonial. The congregation which He approves is that in which, however plain the service, there are most good Samaritans, most temples of the Holy Ghost, and most direct personal effort to convert sinners and save souls. This is real Church work.

III. Let me now turn, in the last place, to the grand lesson about true Christian work and labour of love which our Lord sets before us in this parable. I cannot do better than show it to you in His own matchless words. I read, "A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee."

What a striking portrait of the queen of all the graces you have in these words! Here was ready, unexpected kindness. The Samaritan saw a case needing help, and at once felt and acted. He required no begging, canvassing, or importunity. His eye saw, his heart was touched, and his hand helped altogether. — Here was kindness unaffectedly example. He might easily have said, The Jewish priest and Levite did nothing for this traveller, and why should I do anything at all? He showed a noble independence of judgment. Whatever others did, he cared not. He knew his own duty, and was resolved to do it, even though he did it alone. — Once more, here was kindness requiring self-denial, trouble, time, and self-sacrifice. Money, patient care, his own ease and convenience, were all bestowed without grudging on a stranger. He did as he would be done by.

Now, what a solemn fact it is that the parable ends with the searching words, "Go, and do thou likewise"! If ever there was a time when conduct like the Samaritan's was rare, it is the time in which we live. Selfish indifference to the wants of others is a painful characteristic of the age. Search the land in which we live, from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland, and name, if you can, a single county or town in which the givers to really good healthy Church works are not a small minority, and in which philanthropic and religious agencies are not kept going, only and entirely, by painful begging and constant importunity. Go

where you will, the report is always the same. Hospitals, Missions at home and abroad, evangelistic and educational agencies, Churches, Chapels, and Mission Halls, all are incessantly checked and hindered by want of support. Where are the Samaritans, we may well ask, in this land of Bibles and Testaments ? Where are the men who love their neighbours, and will help to provide for dying bodies and souls ? Where are the people always ready and willing to give unasked, and without asking how much others have given ? Millions are annually spent on deer-forests, and moors, and hunting, and yachting, and racing, and gambling, and balls, and theatres, and dressing, and pictures, and furniture, and recreation. Little, comparatively, ridiculously little, is given or done for the cause of Christ. A miserable guinea subscription too often is the whole sum bestowed by some Croesus on the bodies and souls of his fellow-men. Dives “fares sumptuously every day,” while Lazarus starves and languishes within a quarter of a mile of his door. The very first principles of giving seem lost and forgotten in many quarters. People must be bribed and tempted to contribute by bazaars, as children in badly-managed families are bribed and tempted to be good by sugar-plums. They must not be expected to give unless they get some thing in return ! And all this goes on in a country where people call themselves Christians, and go to Church and glory in our ritual, and talk of the vast amount of “Church-work” going on, and profess to believe the parable of the good Samaritan ! I fear there will be a sad waking up at the last day.

Where, after all, to come to the root of the matter, where is that brotherly love which used to be the distinguishing mark of the primitive Christians ? Where, amidst the din of controversy and furious strife of parties, where is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the primary mark of spiritual regeneration ? Where is that charity without which we are no better than “sounding brass and tinkling cymbals” ? Where is the charity which is “the bond of perfectness” ? Where is that love by which our Lord declared all men should know His disciples, and which St. John said was the distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil ? Where is it indeed ? — Read in the newspapers the frightfully violent language of opposing politicians. Mark the hideous bitterness of controversial theologians, both in the press and on the platform. Observe the fiendish delight with which anonymous letter-writers endeavour to wound the feelings of opponents, and then to pour vitriol into the wound. Look at all this ghastly spectacle which any observing eye may see any day in England. And then remember that this is the country in which men are reading the New Testament, and professing to follow Christ. Can anything more grossly inconsistent be conceived ? Can anything be imagined more offensive to God ? Truly, it is astonishing that such myriads should be so keen about Christian profession and external worship, and talk so loudly about Church work, and yet be so utterly careless about the simplest elements of Christian practice. Where there is no love there is no spiritual life. Without love, although baptized and communicants, men are dead in trespasses and sins.

It is no pleasure to me to write these things, and I can truly say that I have handled them with pain. But I am thoroughly convinced that the times demand very plain testimony on the subject. The rise and progress of immense zeal about the externals of religion, without any corresponding increase in brotherly feeling, neighbourly conduct, Christian charity, and real Scriptural effort to convert and save souls, I regard as one of the most dangerous symptoms of the Church in this day. It is high time to awake out of sleep, and amend our ways, lest we be given over to judicial blindness, and be forsaken of God. A Church in which Pharisees and formalists are many, and good Samaritans are few, is in a most unhealthy condition. God grant we may “strengthen the things that remain,” before it is too late, lest our candlestick be taken away !

(a) And now, before I conclude this paper, let me ask if any reader of its pages really wishes to walk in the steps of the good Samaritan ? Listen to me for a few moments, and I will give you some advice.

You will never be the man commended in the parable unless you begin at the right end. A truly loving heart will only spring from inward grace and experimental union with Christ. Cut flowers do not make a garden. A little spasmodic philanthropy, and giving your goods to feed the poor, will never make a Samaritan. Oh, no ! you must have within you the deep hidden roots of conviction of sin, of lively faith in Christ and sense of obligation to Him, of real communion with God. Once know something of these things and you will never be content with a selfish, formal Christianity. You will long, and strive, and burn to be like your Master, and will be always trying to do good, and to leave the world a better world than it was when you were born.

Brother or sister, either you have a soul or you have not. You will surely never deny that you have. Then if you have a soul, seek that soul’s salvation. Of all gambling in the world, there is none so reckless as that of the man who lives unprepared to meet God, and yet puts off repentance. — Either you have sins or you have none. If you have (and who will dare to deny it ?), break off from those sins, cast away your transgressions, and turn away from them without delay. — Either you need a Saviour or you do not. If you do, flee to the only Saviour this very day, and cry mightily to Him to save your soul. Apply to Christ at once. Seek Him by faith. Commit your soul into His keeping. Cry mightily to Him for pardon and peace with God. Ask Him to pour down the Holy Spirit upon you and make you a thorough Christian. He will hear you. No matter what you have been, He will not refuse your prayer. He has said, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John vi. 37).

Beware, every one into whose hands this paper may fall, beware of a vague and indefinite Christianity. Be not content with a general hope that all is right, because you belong to the old Church of England, and that all will be well at last because God is merciful. Rest not, rest not, without personal union with Christ Himself. Rest not, rest not till you have the witness of the Spirit in your heart, that you are washed and sanctified, and justified, and one with Christ,

and Christ in you. Rest not till you can say with the apostle, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day” (2 Tim. i. 12). Then, and then only, will you feel something of the spirit of the Samaritan. True charity and love to our neighbour will never be really learned except in the school of Christ.

(b) Once more, does any reader of this paper want motives to keep him up to the Samaritan standard, and does he shrink from the idea of doing more than others ? Let such an one listen to me for a few brief moments, and I have somewhat to say to him.

Brother or sister, have you forgotten your debt to Christ ? Think what that blessed Saviour did for you. Surely there is nothing too great to do for Him. Much forgiven, you ought to love much. — Have you forgotten the example of Christ ? He was ever going about doing good. His earthly career was one long life of kind and charitable actions. With what face will you meet Him if you never try to imitate Him ? — Have you forgotten the solemn account you have to render in the judgment of the last day ? It is not open sin that was charged on those on the left hand, in the parable of the sheep and goats. It was simply omission of duty, and want of active love to others. They were condemned because they had done nothing at all. Alas, for myriads of professing Christians ! Weighed in the balance of the end of the 25th chapter of Matthew, their prospects are miserable indeed. Reader, think of these motives, and inwardly digest them. What good are you doing in the world ? What gap will it make when you are taken away ? Oh, awake, awake, awake to a sense of responsibility. Men and women who live and die in ignorance of the Samaritan’s character in this parable will find one day that they had better never have been born. Look round the world, look round the neighbourhood in which you dwell. Ask yourself whether there is nothing you can do to check immorality, vice, and sin, — nothing to promote temperance, soberness, and chastity, — nothing to lessen sorrow and increase happiness, — nothing to promote the cause of Christ, — nothing to fill heaven, — nothing to empty hell. What, nothing, nothing, nothing! I never will believe it. There is always some work of mercy which the least and humblest can do. If you have but a grain of influence, throw it boldly into the scale of good. Only do not sit still. Time is flying. Up and be doing. Beware of living the life of a sloth, lest you end by dying the death of a dog. Remember your Lord’s words, “Go, and do like” the Samaritan.

Reader, let these truths sink down deeply into your heart. It is a melancholy fact that there are few Christian duties so little practised as that of active practical love. It is sad to see how much bitterness, unmercifulness, spite, hardness, and selfishness there is among men. Yet there are few duties so strongly enforced in the New Testament Scriptures as this duty is, and few of which the neglect so clearly shuts a man out of the kingdom of God.

Would you give proof that you are at peace with God, washed in Christ’s blood, born of the Spirit, and made God’s child by adoption and grace ? Then

remember the parable of the good Samaritan, and act upon it. This is real Church work. Like your Father in heaven, be actively kind, loving, and charitable. Has any man injured you, as the Jews injured the Samaritans ? This day forgive him, and try to do him good. As an old divine says, “We ought to forgive ourselves little, and others much.”

Would you do good to the world ? Would you have any influence on others, and make them see the beauty of true religion ? Then remember the parable of the Samaritan, and act upon it. This is real Church work. Men who care not for doctrines can understand a loving temper and charitable deeds.

Would you grow in grace yourself, and become more holy in all your ways, words, and works ? Then remember the parable of the good Samaritan, and act upon it. Nothing so grieves the Holy Spirit, and brings spiritual darkness over the soul, as giving way to a selfish, ill-natured, and unkind temper (Eph. iv. 30—32).

Would you pass through life with comfort, and see good days ? Then remember the parable of the good Samaritan and act upon it. This is real Church work. Implacable and uncharitable tempers are one great cause of the unhappiness which abounds in this world. Resolve to be one of those who will forgive “seventy times seven,” and do good, looking for nothing again, and you will never have cause to regret it. In the long run of life the man of peace and love is never a loser. Remember the words of St. Paul: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath : for it is written, Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. xii. 19-21).

Last of all, would you like to leave good evidences behind you when you die ? Would you like to be one whose Christian character no one can deny, after you are buried ? Then remember the parable of the good Samaritan, and act upon it. Under every provocation, and in all circumstances, be a forgiving man, a kind man, a man who is always trying to do good. This is real Church work. This is the best and most infallible proof that a professed member of Christ is what he professes. No Christian is so like Christ as the Christian who is a great forgiver, and “goes about doing good.” No one is so like the devil as the uncharitable man. Reader, remember the words of St. Paul: “Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col. iii. 13). “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us” (Eph. v. 2).

XIII.

CHURCH AND DISSENT.

DISSENT from the Established Church of England is a great fact. However much men may disagree about its cause or its cure, the good it does or the harm, one thing is perfectly certain, dissent is a huge standing fact. The intelligent foreigner who visits England with his eyes open, cannot fail to see hundreds of places of worship which are not parish churches, and upon inquiring he hears that their attendants do not belong to the Church of England. The collector of statistics, who makes notes about everything, will tell you that there are scores of religious denominations in England beside the Episcopal, and that their members may be numbered by millions. In short, English Protestant Dissent is a great fact, and it is useless to deny its existence. I propose in this paper to say a few plain words about it.

Let me clear the way by explaining why I myself prefer Church to Dissent. I will answer that question as briefly as possible, by giving some practical reasons why I am, and always have been, a Churchman. I am quite aware that these reasons are not what some would give. I have not any sympathy with persons who maintain that there can be no church without a bishop, and no acceptable worship without a liturgy. But for all that, I have reasons for my Churchmanship which entirely satisfy my conscience, and I will tell my readers what they are.

(1) I prefer the Church's *standard of ministerial soundness* to that of the Chapel. Our standard is that admirable confession of faith, the Thirty-nine Articles. Every Churchman has a *legal* right to demand that his clergyman shall preach and teach nothing contrary to these Articles. I know no human standard better. What is the Chapel's standard? That, in many cases, would be found a very difficult question to answer. In no case could a better standard be found than the Articles.

(2) I prefer the Church's *form of government* to that of the Chapel. Episcopacy, no doubt, is very badly exhibited at present in our huge overgrown dioceses, and needs a complete reform. But Episcopacy, in my judgment, is infinitely better than Presbyterianism, or Congregationalism, or the anarchy of Plymouth Brethrenism. I might add that I see far more for it in Scripture.

(3) I prefer the Church's *mode of worship* to that of the Chapel. The Prayer-book, no doubt, is not a perfect book, and has some blemishes. But I infinitely prefer Prayer-book prayers to extempore prayers. Above all, I prefer the large quantity of Scripture regularly read in our services to one or two arbitrarily-selected chapters.

(4) I prefer the Church's *system of fixed, settled, and independent endowments* to the voluntary system of the Chapel. Pew-rents in many cases, I dare say, produce very large incomes, and in new districts they may be a necessary evil. But after forty years' observation of Dissent in rural districts, I am satisfied

that the very worst mode of paying the ministry is the voluntary system of the Chapel.

(5) I prefer *the territorial system* of the English Church to the congregational system of the Chapel. No other system ensures the supervision of every soul in a district of England, but that which assigns to every minister a territory.

(6) I prefer the Church's *system of admission* to full Church membership, to that of the Chapel. The Church, in the main, throws people on their own responsibility, and bids them "examine themselves" whether they repent and believe. Most other religious bodies appear to require a public profession, satisfactory to, and endorsed by, the existing members. I have seen enough, and too much, of the working of this latter system to like it, or to believe it does good.

Such are the six reasons why I think it much *better* to be a Churchman than a Dissenter. I could enlarge on every one of them at great length. But time and space make it impossible. They are reasons which may not satisfy all my readers. Be it so. I only say that in the long run of years they will be found worth attention. The man who hears a good sermon at Chapel some Sunday, and then tests the comparative merits of Church and Dissent by the excited feelings of a single day, or a few weeks, will doubtless say, "I see no difference between Church and Chapel." The thoughtful man, who carefully notices the *working of systems*, in a series of years, is the man to whose verdict I appeal.

Once more I request my readers not to misapprehend or misrepresent me. Let them remember I do not say that it is wicked to be a Dissenter, or that no Dissenters can be saved. I do not deny that many Dissenters are better than many Churchmen, and that it is better to go to an orthodox Dissenting Chapel than to a Parish Church where the clergyman is a Papist or a sceptic. I only say that, when the Gospel can be heard both in Chapel and Church, I greatly prefer Church to Chapel.

I respect many Dissenting ministers extremely. I admire their gifts, their graces, and their zeal. I have no doubt that they do a great deal of good and save many souls. I never forget that English Dissent was mainly created by the abominable bigotry or shameful neglect of English bishops and clergymen. I always steadily refuse to unchurch Dissenters, to deny the validity of their orders, to ignore their sacraments, or to hand them over to the "uncovenanted mercies" of God. I am always glad to meet them on common ground, and to co-operate with them whenever I can. But I never say that it is *just as good* for an Englishman to be a Dissenter as to be a Churchman, because, as an honest man, a Bible reader, and a close observer of human nature, I do not believe it.

But some one may like to know how I account for the large quantity of Dissent which undoubtedly exists. Why, if the Church of England possesses so many good points and excellences, why are so many English people nonconformists? Is there anything radically unsound or unscriptural in our Articles, Creeds, or formularies? I answer boldly, Nothing at all. Our great confession of faith, the Thirty-nine Articles, may safely challenge comparison with any confession in the world. Our Prayer-book, with all its imperfections, is a matchless

manual of public worship, and is growing rather than declining in favour with mankind. Is there any abstract dislike to bishops and liturgies and surplices in the British mind? I believe next to none at all. Give the average Briton the pure Gospel of Christ in the pulpit, a holy, conscientious minister to preach it, a hearty, lively service to accompany it, diligent week-day pastoral work to follow it, and the vast majority of Englishmen are content, and want no more. We must go further than this to discover the cause of Dissent.

My own solution of the problem is short and simple. I believe that the first seeds of Dissent were sown by the narrow intolerance of the Church in the days of the Stuarts. The wretched attempt to produce uniformity by fines and penalties and imprisonment “drove wise men almost mad,” and made them say, “Can any good thing come out of a Church which sanctions such things?”—I believe, secondly, that the utter deadness and apathy of the Church in the last century did even more to drive men and women out of our pale than the intolerance of the Stuarts. Bishops who scandalously neglected their dioceses, and were everything that bishops ought not to be,—parochial clergymen who did nothing for souls, preached no Gospel, and lived terribly worldly lives,—these unhappy representatives of our Church filled the country. These were the real founders of Dissent, and caused half the chapels to be built in the land. I declare my own firm conviction, that if the bishops and clergy of the last century had done their duty, and understood their times as well as many do now, an immense proportion of English nonconformity would never have existed, and John Wesley and his companions would never have seceded from the Church of England. We reap what our forefathers sowed, and it is no use to complain. In short, English Church apathy has created English nonconformity, and to speak angrily and contemptuously of those whom we ourselves have made Dissenters is, to say the least, most unjust. That old saying is too much forgotten, “*Schismaticus est qui separationem causat, non qui separate.*”

The precise amount of good or harm which English Dissent has done, or is doing, is a wide and difficult question, and much may be said on both sides. I shall only say a few words in order to strike the balance.

On the one hand, I have not the slightest sympathy with those who regard Dissent as always evil, and only evil, and would hand nonconformists over to the “uncovenanted mercies” of God. I believe this to be an entirely untenable position. I shall never hesitate to declare my conviction that in thousands of parishes Dissenters have done an immense amount of spiritual good. They have supplied the Church’s “lack of service.” They have brought to Christ myriads who were perishing in ignorance and sin. They have taught the elements of Christianity to multitudes who would otherwise have died without God and without hope. These are facts which it is impossible to deny. I may be excused for regretting that the good work they have done has not been done within our own pale, and by our own soldiers. But the work has been done; and I hold with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, “If Christ is preached I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice” (Phil. i. 18). Above all, I cannot forget that remarkable passage in the

Gospel, when John said to our great Master, "We saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followed not with us: and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part." (Mark ix. 38, 39, 40.) In short, when I look at the mass of infidelity, heathenism, and immorality which exists in the world, I must and will thank God for the work done by Trinitarian Dissenters. The enemy is coming in upon us like a flood. I welcome any volunteer who fights on our side, however strange and rough his uniform may be. Human nature is like a wreck on a sandbank. I welcome any oarsman who will help to launch the life-boat, and rescue souls from a watery grave.

On the other hand, it is vain to deny that the inconveniences, not to say the evils, arising from English Dissent, are very many and very great. The divisions of Christians are always an immense source of weakness to the whole cause of Christ in the world. An enormous amount of time, money, and energy is wasted on separate machinery and organization, which would be saved if we were one united body. We supply the infidel with an argument which it is extremely difficult to refute. "When you can agree among yourselves," he says, "it will be time enough for me to believe." Collisions are continually arising between Church and Chapel, and especially in small parishes, where either party thinks its interests are in danger. The common cause of Christian education takes damage all over the country from the morbid fear of many that distinct religious teaching will injure their own particular denomination. Above all, the senseless bitter crusade of Liberationists against the Establishment, which, if successful, would almost paganize some of the rural districts, and do its promoters no good, is rapidly creating a breach between Episcopalians and their rivals, which will never be healed. All these, I say, are evils, grievous evils, and I pity the man who has not eyes to see them, or seeing them does not long to devise means by which they may be lessened or removed.

This brings me at last to a very serious point in the whole subject. Can nothing be done to improve the relations of Church and Dissent in England? The present state of things is painfully unsatisfactory. The divisions of Christians who hold such an immense amount of truth in common about the Bible, the Trinity, the Atonement, the work of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit,—about repentance, and conversion, and faith, and holiness, and heaven, and hell, and resurrection, and judgment,—these divisions, I say, are scandalous and deplorable. They are enough to make an angel weep. They exist and stare us in the face, while Romanism and infidelity abound on every side and ignore both Church and Chapel. Englishmen who profess to believe and read the same Bible are wrangling about modes of worship, while myriads around them seem to think there is no God to worship. Can nothing be done to ameliorate the existing condition of things, and bring us closer together? I will offer a few plain suggestions from the standpoint of a Churchman.

1. For one thing, we should always remember that we must draw *a broad line of distinction between Dissenters and Dissenters*. If we suppose, for example, because some wild men are incessantly telling the public “that the Established Church is a Babylon which ought to be destroyed,—or that all the Prayer-books ought to be burned,—or that the union of Church and State is an adulterous connection,—or that all clergymen ought to be stripped of their endowments and turned into the streets,—or that Anglican ministers are mere serfs and slaves who are paid out of the taxes,”—if, I say, we suppose, because *some* Dissenters talk in this way, that *all* Dissenters agree with them, we are quite mistaken. I believe, on the contrary, that the vast majority of serious God-fearing nonconformists have no sympathy with this kind of language, and thoroughly dislike it. Although attached to their own chapels, they have no wish to quarrel with the Church, and are willing to “think and let think.” The empty tubs always make most noise. We must not condemn all Dissenters on account of the extravagant words of a rabid minority.

2. For another thing, we should *cultivate the habit of treating Dissenters with kindness, courtesy, and consideration*. Let us not deal with them as the Jews did with the Samaritans. I am firmly convinced, after studying Dissent carefully for about forty years, that many Dissenters are what they are from downright ignorance of the real nature of the Church of England. Cradled and nursed in the midst of nonconformity, taught from their earliest years to see all religion through the spectacles of the Chapel, trained from their youth to read nothing but non-episcopalian literature, accustomed every Sunday to hear nothing but a Methodist, or Baptist, or Independent sermon, they often know nothing whatever of the Church of England, its worship, its history, its theology, or its claims to attention. In short, they are almost entirely ignorant of the communion from which they keep aloof. And when you add to all this the painful fact that perhaps the only parochial incumbent whom they have known, has sometimes not adorned his profession, and has seemed to be a man determined to know everything except “Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” we really must not be surprised at the prejudices of Dissenters, and must make great allowances. In short, we must deal gently with them, and not forget the circumstances under which their position was first taken up.

3. For another thing, we must not waste time and energy on the pleasant but quixotic idea that we can ever bring about a *wholesale reunion of Church and Dissent*. I am sorry to throw cold water on the charitable plans of some of my brethren. I freely admit that nothing is impossible. But of all improbable and unlikely things, I see none more improbable and unlikely than a fusion and amalgamation of Methodists, Independents, and Baptists with the Church of England. Whatever may happen in isolated cases, it is not reason to suppose that trained and educated Dissenting ministers, as a rule, will ignore their own orders, and seek to be re-ordained. Nor is it reason to suppose that their

congregations would follow them. And unhappily this is not all. Our own internal divisions place an insuperable barrier in the way of reunion. We do not approach the subject with clean hands. So long as our own beloved Church of England is infected with semi-Romanism on the extreme right, and semi-unbelief on the extreme left, and cannot cure or expel these diseases, so long, we may depend on it, our Nonconformist brethren will never embark in our ship. So long as the principles of the Reformation appear in peril, so long the disciples of Owen, and Doddridge, and Gill, and Dr. Coke, and Robert Hall, and Angell James will never re-enter our pale.

4. For another thing, if we would improve the relations of Church and Dissent, *we ought to co-operate with Dissenters whenever we can*. It is vain to deny that there is much common ground on which we can work together without the slightest compromise of principle; and I contend that we ought to be always ready to occupy that ground in a brotherly spirit, and not to stand aloof, and turn the cold shoulder on possible allies. The great controversy with infidelity,—the cause of Scriptural education,—the maintenance of a holy Sunday,—the improvement of the dwellings of the poor,—the grand temperance movement,—the translation and circulation of the Bible,—all these are points about which I advise every Churchman to work with Dissenters whenever he can. I, for one, rejoiced heartily in the constitution of the Committee for the revision of the authorized version of the Scriptures. That Committee, we should remember, contained not a few Dissenters as well as Churchmen. I thank God for it. It was a step in the right direction. If men can unite for revising the translation of God's Word written, why should they not unite for distributing it? I myself never expected very much from this Revision Committee. I never thought it would do either so much good or so much harm as many expect; though I have no doubt it will make the meaning of some texts of Scripture more plain. But if it does nothing else, it has proved one thing. It has proved most assuredly that Churchmen and Dissenters can work together, and respect one another. I grant that this is not union, but it is a long step towards it.

I bring my suggestions to a close here. I have touched them briefly, though they admit of expansion, and I only give them as seeds for thought. Some may perhaps think them small, and trivial, and useless. Be it so. The oil which is dropped on the machinery is a small thing, but without it the mighty steam-engine would never work. The water which trickles on the saw of the marble-cutter is a small thing, but without it the great block would never be cut through. We should never despise "little things." Load after load of earth, tipped over the end of the railway embankment, gradually brings the sides of the valley together. Attention to the suggestions I have made would, in my opinion, do much to improve the relations of Church and Dissent.

My general advice to all Churchmen, as to the best mode of dealing with Dissenters, is short and simple. Be kind and charitable and courteous to them. Remember they have been, as a rule, called into existence, and made what they

are, by the neglect and sin of our own Church, and do not be in a hurry to condemn them. Do not quarrel with them. Avoid all controversy with them about their peculiar opinions. It does no good. It never wins them. It gives them an advantage. They live in a free country, and have as much right to have an opinion as ourselves. If they do real spiritual good, if they preach Christ, if they save souls, thank God for it, and do not pretend to ignore it. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "Forbid him not:—he that is not against us is on our part" (Mark ix. 39). But never for a moment admit that, as a system, Dissent is *as good* as the Church of England, and that it is *all the same* whether a man is a Churchman or a Dissenter. If you do so, you seem to me to make a great mistake.

My general advice to Churchmen who are tempted to become Dissenters is equally short and simple. Do not be in a hurry to leave the Church of England! You may live, perhaps, in a parish where your position is very difficult. But do not be in a hurry. Stand firm. Stick to your own Church. Use your common sense. Distinguish between faults of administration and faults of principle. Your old house may have faults, but do not quit it hastily. You may go further and fare worse. Do not expect perfection here upon earth. The wheat and the tares will grow together till the harvest. Think twice before you leave the Church of England. Episcopacy, a Liturgy, the Articles, the Territorial system, are not things that ought to be lightly esteemed.

It is a cheap and easy remedy to secede from a Church when we see evils round us; but it is not always the wisest course. To pull down a house because the chimneys smoke, or the windows do not fit,—to chop off a hand because we have cut our finger,—to forsake a ship because she has sprung a leak, or has some few unsound planks,—all this, we know, is childish impatience. But is it a wise man's act to forsake a Church, because things in our own parish, and under our own minister, in that Church are wrong? I answer decidedly and unhesitatingly, No!

It is not so sure as it seems that we mend matters by leaving the Church of England. Every man knows the faults of his own house, but he never knows the faults of another till he moves into it, and then perhaps he finds he is worse off than he was before his move! There are often smoky chimneys, and bad drains, and draughts, and doors that will not shut, and windows that will not open, in No. 2 as well as in No. 1. All is not perfect among Dissenters and Plymouth Brethren. We may find to our cost, if we join them, in disgust with the Church of England, that we have only changed one sort of evil for another, and that the chimney smokes in chapel as well as in church.

Let me conclude by expressing an earnest hope that we shall always resolve to honour the "grace of God," wherever we see it. In whomsoever we find "Aliquid Christi," let us respect him, even though he does not belong to our own communion. In high esteem for the orders and worship of our Church I give place to no man. In my own way I am as "High" a Churchman as any one of my readers. But we travel towards a world in which possession of the grace of the Holy Ghost will be the one thing needful, and Episcopacy and a liturgy will be

of no use to us if we have not been washed in the blood of Christ. Let us remember this on earth, and honour the grace of God, whatever be the denomination of the man who possesses it, and whatever kind of Dissenter he may be. After all, “the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” “In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love” (Rom xiv. 17; Gal. v. 6).

WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO?

A QUESTION ABOUT THE
DISESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,
EXAMINED AND ANSWERED.

BY THE

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“The thing as it is.”—JOB xxvi. 23.

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WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO?

THERE is a subject much talked of in the present day, about which I wish to say a few words. That subject is the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England.

The subject is one of real importance, and demands the careful attention of Churchmen. A Society, called the Liberationist Society, has been formed for the express purpose of promoting Disestablishment, and has many active and able supporters. This Society collects annually large sums of money for the purpose of spreading its own views. It pays lecturers to go throughout the country, making violent attacks on the union of Church and State. It prints and publishes large quantities of tracts, containing statements about the Church of England of a very erroneous character, which will not bear investigation. In short, there is, in full operation, an organized crusade against the Establishment. The campaign has begun. These are facts which every Churchman ought to know. It is folly to ignore them.

The world is fond of saying that clergymen cannot give an honest and disinterested opinion about this subject. "They are only fighting for the loaves and fishes," is the cry. Well, the world may say what it pleases: I am getting too old to care for such charges. I only care for the spread of truth, and I shall not shrink from giving my opinion, and showing "the thing as it is." It may be very true that at present Disestablishment is not within the range of "practical politics." But it may be pressed upon us very soon. Events work quickly in this day. It is well to be prepared with some knowledge of the subject.

In handling the subject I shall say nothing about the justice or honesty of Disestablishment and Disendowment, though I might say a good deal. I suppose Parliament has power to deprive any corporate body of its property, and, if it thinks fit, can take away the endowments of the Church of England. I shall stick close to one simple question:—that question is, "What good would it do?"

Let us, then, suppose that Parliament resolves some day to disestablish the Church of England, as it has already disestablished the Church of Ireland. Let us suppose that an Act of Parliament is passed by which the connection between Church and State is dissolved for ever, and the State takes possession, as far as it can, of the property of the Church. What would the consequences be?

The practical consequences of Disestablishment, I take it, would be something of this kind:—

(1) The Bishops would cease to be Peers of the Realm, and to sit in the House of Lords.

(2) The income of the Bishops and clergy, from tithes, old money endowments, and lands, would be appropriated by the State, and applied to other purposes, as fast as the present receivers of it died off.

(3) In process of time there would be nothing left to the Church, out of all her present possessions, except the church-buildings, the pew-rents, a life-interest in the income of the Bishops and clergy for a few years, and the endowments of the last two centuries. This property, on the principles of the Irish Church Act, would probably be left to the Church of England. Some wild and rabid Liberationists, I believe, have coolly proposed that the clergy shall be stripped of their life-incomes, and turned into the street, as paupers, the very day the Disestablishing Act passes! They have also proposed that parish churches shall be taken away from Episcopalians, and applied to other uses! Whether they are to be put up to auction and sold to the highest bidder, or turned into Libraries, Museums, Mechanics' Institutes, or Music Halls, I do not yet know. I decline, however, to notice such nonsense as this. Until the House of Commons is very unlike any House which has ever been elected in this country, it will never sanction such a policy, or ignore vested interests. The members of the Church of England are far too numerous and influential to make wholesale confiscation possible. There is no earthly reason why the strong Church of England should be treated more hardly than the weak Church of Ireland.

After Disestablishment all Churches and sects would be left on a dead level of equality. No favour or privilege would be granted by the State to one more than another. The State itself would have nothing to do with religion, and would leave the supply of it to the principles of free trade and the action of the voluntary system. In a word, the Government of England would allow all its subjects to serve God or Baal,—to go to heaven or to another place,—just as they please. The State would take no cognizance of spiritual matters, and would look on with Epicurean indifference and unconcern. The State would continue to care for the *bodies* of its subjects, but it would entirely ignore their *souls*.

Gallio, who thought Christianity was a matter of “words and names,” and “cared for none of these things,” would become the model of an English Statesman. The Sovereign of Great Britain might be a Papist, the Prime Minister a Mahometan, the Lord Chancellor a Jew. Parliament would begin without prayer. Oaths would be dispensed with in Courts of Justice. The next king would be crowned without a religious service in Westminster Abbey. Prisons and workhouses, men-of-war and regiments, would all be left without chaplains. In short, for fear of offending infidels and people who object to intercessory prayer, I suppose that regimental bands would be forbidden to play “God Save the Queen.”

This, so far as I can make out, is the state of things which the Liberationists wish to bring about in Great Britain. This is the end and object of all their talk, and noise, and organization, and agitation. This is the delightful condition of matters which their advocates and supporters, both in and out of Parliament, want to set up in the land. This is what they mean when they talk of “Disestablishment.” Let them deny it if they can.

Now, let us consider quietly *what good would all this do?* I will proceed step by step, and examine six broad questions one by one. I will assume that

Disestablishment actually takes place. I will then ask:—

- I. What good would it do to Dissenters?
- II. What good would it do to the Church?
- III. What good would it do to the tithe-payers?
- IV. What good would it do to the poor?
- V. What good would it do to the cause of Christian charity?
- VI. What good would it do to the State?

I shall try to answer each of these questions in order.

I. First of all, What good would Disestablishment do *to the Dissenters*? I answer that question without the slightest hesitation. It would do them no good at all.

I take up this point first because it comes first in order. The Dissenters, as a body, with some notable exceptions, are the chief agitators for Disestablishment. They evidently think that it would be greatly for their benefit, and would improve their position. I venture to think that they are totally and entirely mistaken. I will give my reasons for saying so.

Would Disestablishment *destroy* the Church of England, and take the great rival of Dissenters completely out of the way? Would it leave the Dissenters a clear field, and throw the whole population into their hands? It would do nothing of the kind!—Unless the House of Commons resolves to proscribe the use of the Liturgy,—to make it penal to be an Episcopalian,—to confiscate the property of Churchmen, on the principles of French Communism,—and to imprison or shoot clergymen who work harder than others, on the principles of Sheffield rattening¹,—unless the House of Commons does this, the Church of England will never be killed by Disestablishment. The Dissenters would soon find that the old Church, when disestablished, was not dead, but alive.

Disestablishment would not even ruin the Church *financially*. The pew-rents and offertories would still remain. Parliament could not take them. The endowments of the last two centuries would still remain. Parliament, on the reasonable principles of the Irish Act, would not touch them. The life-interests of the Bishops and clergy, on the same principles, would still remain. A judicious system of life insurance or commutation, such as wise lay Churchmen, accustomed to financial matters, could soon devise, would turn those life-interests into a very large capital for investment, if safe investment could be found. In short, though sorely crippled and impoverished, the Church of England would not be ruined. We could still get on, and would get on, though many of us might have to reduce our expenditure very largely. The Liberationists would soon discover, after spoiling and impoverishing us as much as they could, that we were not quite

¹ “rattening” in 19th cent. was an agitation by militants forcefully taking the belts from grinding machines so workers and businesses could not work unless workers joined or were allowed to join the newly formed Trade Union in Sheffield. [ET editor]

bankrupt. We should maintain our position, in spite of our poverty, and not die. Let the Dissenters remember that.

Disestablishment would not affect the influence of the Church in great towns in the slightest appreciable degree. The tithe-receiving clergy in rural districts would doubtless lose half their income by life insurance or commutation, and be sorely hampered. But the clergy in most large cities, such as London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and Sheffield, who generally depend chiefly on pew-rents, Easter offerings, and offertories, as a body, would be nearly as well off after Disestablishment as they were before. "The great towns govern the country," we are continually told. Yet in most great towns the Church would be as powerful as ever! Once more, I say, let the Dissenters remember that.

Disestablishment would not make the bulk of Englishmen forsake the Church of England and become Baptists, Independents, Presbyterians, or Methodists. It would not fill the chapels and empty the churches. It would not make the aristocracy, or the upper and middle classes, or a large part of the working classes, burn their Prayer-books, desert Episcopally-ordained ministers, and fall in love with extempore prayer. Not a bit of it! The vast majority of Churchmen would stick to Bishops, rectors, vicars, curates, liturgical worship, and the old paths of the Church of England, closer and tighter than ever.

They would make more of their poor old Church in her adversity than they ever did in her prosperity. They would love her better and open their purses more liberally, when they saw her in plain attire, than they ever did when she was clothed in purple and fine linen. In point of number of adherents, I verily believe Disestablishment would soon prove a dead loss to Dissenters, and not a gain.

Disestablishment *would not give more liberty* to Dissenters, or enable them to do anything which they cannot do now. No Christians on earth have such a plethora of civil and religious liberty as the English Nonconformists have in the present day. They have far more freedom than Churchmen! They can build chapels anywhere, preach anywhere, gather congregations anywhere, worship in any way, and serve God in any way, no man forbidding them, while Churchmen are checked and stopped by laws and restrictions at every turn. What in the world could the Dissenters do more, if the Church was Disestablished tomorrow? I do not suppose they would ask leave to shoot or hang all the clergy, to "improve us off the face of the earth," to confiscate the cathedrals and parish churches, and to compel the millions of English men and women who now go to church to go to chapel, on pain of fines or death. But, short of this, I know of nothing they cannot do now. They have free liberty to make all Englishmen Dissenters, *if they can*; and what more do they want? The dissolution of the union of Church and State would do Dissenters no good at all.

Last, but not least, Disestablishment would not remove the social disabilities under which Dissenters, and especially Dissenting ministers, are said now to labour. This, I am aware, is a very difficult and delicate subject, and I am

almost afraid to touch it, lest I should unintentionally give offence or hurt feelings. But the alleged grievance is said to be one which our Dissenting brethren feel very keenly. They complain, I am told, that we do not meet them on terms of social equality, and that we treat them as if they belonged to an inferior caste or order.

I must honestly say that I think there are no just grounds for this charge, and that the grievance complained of is purely sentimental and imaginary. Speaking for myself, I shall certainly not plead guilty. I have often co-operated with Dissenters on behalf of the London City Mission and Bible Societies. I have spoken side by side with their ministers on many a platform. I have entertained the leading members of the Wesleyan Conference at my own house in Liverpool. I have never disputed the talents, gifts, and graces of such men as Angell James, and Sherman, and Binney, and Stoughton, and Spurgeon, and Morley Punshon. Their works are on the shelves of my library, and I read and admire them. If I treated such men as belonging to an inferior caste, I should think I had made a poor exhibition of my Christianity, my courtesy, and my common sense.

But really our Nonconformist brethren seem to forget that when conscientious and earnest-minded Christians do not belong to the same Church, and do not worship God in the same way, there is never likely to be much social intercourse, or visiting, or intermarrying between their families. In fact, *the stronger and deeper the conscientiousness, the greater and wider will be the separation*. Moreover, they seem to forget that so long as young English Churchmen are trained for the ministry at Oxford and Cambridge, and Episcopal Theological Colleges like Highbury and St. Aidan's, and young English Dissenters are generally trained for the ministry at their own peculiar Dissenting Colleges, there is a bond of union wanting between them, which, generally speaking, nothing else will supply. Men must mix together and be educated side by side when they are young, if they are to be on familiar terms when they grow up.

One thing, to my mind, is perfectly certain. The alleged grievance I am now considering has nothing whatever to do with the union of Church and State, and would not be removed by the dissolution of that union. It is a state of things which arises entirely from the fact that Dissenters conscientiously hold one set of opinions, and we conscientiously hold another. Would Disestablishment make us give up our respective opinions? Would it turn Episcopalians into Presbyterians, or make Baptists and Independents adopt the Book of Common Prayer? We all know it would do nothing of the kind. On the contrary, I believe Churchmen would cling to their old opinions more tightly than ever, and keep to themselves more thoroughly than they ever did before. Where, then, is the use of raising a false issue, and holding out expectations from Disestablishment which are certain not to be realized? The existing line of social demarcation between Churchmen and Dissenters may be right or wrong, wise or foolish; but it is a line drawn by the very fact that they belong to two distinct religious systems. The separation of Church and State would do nothing whatever towards the removal of the alleged disability, and it would be felt as

strongly after Disestablishment as before. The much wished-for equality and dead level of Churchmen and sects would not have the slightest effect in filling up the gulf and bridging over the chasm. In social matters Churchmen would keep to Churchmen, and Dissenters would keep to Dissenters, just as they do now, and even more; and I marvel that any man of sense and reflection can expect anything else.

In saying all this I would not be misunderstood. I disclaim the slightest feeling of ill-will towards Dissenters. I have not the least desire to interfere with them. I respect their conscientious convictions, even when I think them mistaken. I am thoroughly thankful for any good work they do. I wish to allow them to work and worship in their own way. I only express my own firm conviction that Disestablishment would do the Dissenters no good, but great harm. In their own interest they had better be quiet and let us alone.

II. In the second place, What good would Disestablishment *do to the Church of England*? My answer is twofold. It might possibly do it a little good; but it would certainly do it a great deal of harm.

The advocates of Disestablishment, I am well aware, are fond of telling us that their movement is all for our real advantage! They mean us no harm! not they! They love the Church of England, but dislike its connection with the State. The Liberationist agitators are in reality our best friends, and we ought to be exceedingly obliged to them for their disinterested labours for our benefit! They want to strike the chains off our limbs, to deliver us from a yoke of bondage, and make us free and independent. Brave words these! and I quite believe that some of those who use them mean what they say. But they utterly fail to convince me. At the risk of being told that I am only caring for “the loaves and fishes,” I will give my reasons.

The good that Disestablishment would do the Church of England is very small. It would doubtless give us more liberty, and might enable us to effect some useful reforms. It would bring the laity forward into their rightful position from sheer necessity. It would probably give us a real and properly constituted Convocation, including laity as well as clergy. It would lead to an increase of Bishops, a division of dioceses, and a reconstruction of our cathedral bodies. It would make an end of Crown jobs in the choice of Bishops, and upset the whole existing system of patronage. It would destroy all sinecure offices, and drive all drones out of the ecclesiastical hive. It would enable us to make our worship more elastic, and our ritual better suited to the times. All these are gains unquestionably, but gains whose value must not be exaggerated.

On the other hand, the harm that Disestablishment would do to the Church of England is very great indeed. It would sorely impoverish the thousands of rural clergy, whose income depends on tithes, and would make it ultimately necessary to diminish their number by at least one-half, to consolidate half the livings and put an end to half the services! The voluntary system in rural districts is notoriously an entire failure. None know that better than the ministers

of Nonconformist country chapels.¹ It would tax the energies of a disestablished Church most heavily to keep up an Episcopal ministry outside the towns. It would immensely cripple the power of the Church of England to do much for the evangelization of the heathen abroad, and the general spread of the Gospel at home. "Sustentation funds" would absorb three-quarters of the Church's attention; and we should find it hard enough to maintain our position, and much harder to extend our lines. Last, but not least, Disestablishment would almost certainly lead to divisions, schisms, and possibly disruption in the Episcopal body. We should all become more narrow and less liberal and comprehensive in our views. Of course, this goes for nothing with some Christians, who seem to think that divisions and schisms are very nice things, and that multiplication of sects is the nearest thing to heaven upon earth! I content myself with remarking that our Lord Jesus Christ says, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." The more divisions among Christians, the greater the weakness and the smaller the influence of Christianity! To promote an increase of division among English Christians is the surest way to help the Pope, the infidel, and the devil.

I will not waste words on those who tell us that the English clergy, after Disestablishment, would preach better, and write better, and speak better, and work better than they do now, and that, like wild elephants, we should all be made tamer and more useful by starving. Anybody can make vague assertions like these: but assertions are worth nothing when they are contradicted by plain facts. I do not see that the American Episcopalians over the water, who have no connection with the State, are a bit better preachers and workers than the clergy of the English Establishment. Above all, I do not see that English Nonconformist ministers, as a body, are at all superior, in preaching or working, to the clergy of the English Established Church.

In short, the assertion of the advocates of Disestablishment, that this movement would do the Church of England good, appears to me utterly destitute of foundation. An ounce of facts is better than a pound of theories. Free Churches are very fine things to talk about, and look very fine at a distance; but matters are not always serene inside. The good that Disestablishment would do to the Church of England is comparatively small, and very uncertain. The harm that it would do is very certain and very great. The advocates of Disestablishment may say what they please about wishing to do us good, but they must not expect us to believe them. They had better drop that line of argument altogether. The man who tries to disestablish and disendow the Church of England, and set it free from the State, is, in my judgment, an enemy of the Church, and not a friend.

III. In the third place, What good would Disestablishment do to *the tithe-payers*? I answer that question very decidedly. It would not do them the slightest good whatever.

¹ See the testimony of Mr. Spurgeon at the end of this paper.

This is a point that needs clearing up. It touches men's pockets, and therefore they feel interested about it. Moreover, there is an amazing amount of ignorance in men's minds about it. I have not a doubt that many farmers and small occupiers of land in England are under the belief that, if Disestablishment came, they would be a great deal better off than they are now. They are secretly rejoicing in the vision of "no more Established Church! no more parsons to take rent-charge! no more tithes! So much more money in our pockets!"

Now I am sorry to dispel this pleasing vision, but I am obliged to do it. Facts are stubborn things, and cannot be evaded. There is such a thing as "reckoning without your host." I recommend tithe-payers, who are generally sensible, hard-headed fellows, to look at the subject on all sides. "Wait a bit, my friends," I would say: "don't be in a hurry. Before you help to destroy the union of Church and State, consider whether the destruction will help your pockets." You think it will. I tell you it will not. Let us see.

It is a fact that for centuries nearly all land in England has been subject to the payment of tithes. For hundreds of years land has been bought and sold, let and hired, rented and farmed, at more or less annual payment, according to the amount of tithe. Tithe has been a regular charge, which has been taken into account in every agreement between landlord and tenant for many generations, *He that pays no tithe pays more rent, and he that pays tithe pays less rent.* Every farmer of average sense knows all this perfectly well. To tell them such things, to use a homely phrase, is like telling them that two and two make four, or that there are twenty shillings in a pound. It is a simple fact, which is known from one end of England to another, wherever men are not wilfully blind, or grossly ignorant, or dishonest reasoners.

Well, if the Church of England is disestablished and disendowed, it is plain that tithe-payment will either be done away or not. The clergy, of course, will cease to receive the tithes. But what will become of the tithes? Will Parliament do away with the payment of tithes altogether? or will Parliament decree that tithes shall be paid to some other purpose than the support of the clergy? One course or another must be adopted, and in either case the tithe-payers would not gain a single farthing!

Let us suppose, on the one hand, that tithes are completely abolished, and cease to be paid. At once every landlord in England would raise his rents, and on every principle of justice and equity he would have a right to do so. A very nice thing it would be for the landlords, and a very pretty addition it would be to their incomes! But the tenants would gain nothing at all! *What they saved in tithes they would lose in rent.*

Let us suppose, on the other hand, that tithes are not abolished when Disestablishment comes, but applied to some other purpose than the support of the clergy. Well, if they are not abolished, there is an end of the whole question. Disestablishment would evidently do no good, in that case, to the pockets of tithe-payers. They would continue to pay, and would be just where they were

before!

I defy any advocate of Disestablishment and Disendowment to show any escape from these conclusions. Some tell us they would apply the tithes to the payment of poor-rates and highway-rates. Where would be the good of this? At once the landlords would raise their rents. Land is now let and hired subject to payment of poor-rates and highway-rates, and they make a regular deduction from the rent. *Take off the burden of poor-rates and highway-rates, and of course the rent would be raised!* Some would-be philanthropists tell us they would apply the tithes to public objects, such as harbours of refuge, public parks for great towns, museums, lunatic asylums, and the like. Public objects, indeed! What benefit would rural tithe-payers get from them? What would a Suffolk tithe-payer care for harbours at Filey or Dover, or parks and museums at Wolverhampton or Oldham? His tithe-money would annually go away for objects which would do him no good at all. I suspect in a few years the tithe-payers would get sick of the new system, and would wish the old system could be set up again.

Let us add to all this, that the Episcopal clergyman, deprived of the tithes in a rural parish, would of course cease to pay any rates, except for his house and garden. At present the clergyman is often the largest ratepayer in the parish! In future what he used to pay must be made up by the other ratepayers. Let us remember, beside, that without the tithes the rural clergyman would in most cases be obliged to curtail his expenses, and to spend much less money in the parish than he does now. In either case the tithe-payers would suffer, and the parish would lose more than it gained by Disestablishment. There is an old fable, which tells of a man killing his goose for the sake of the golden eggs she laid. Of course he found that he never got another egg! I often think of that fable when I hear of rural tithe-payers clamouring for Disestablishment. At any rate, it would do *them* no good.

IV. In the fourth place, What good would Disestablishment do *to the poor*? I answer that inquiry without hesitation. It would not only do them no good, but would do them great harm.

This is a very serious question. "The poor shall never cease out of the land." To "remember the poor" is a plain command of Scripture. All changes, whether political or ecclesiastical, which tend to injure the poor, are, on the very face of them, objectionable. This is the heaviest indictment I bring against the whole Disestablishment movement. It would inflict grievous damage, both temporal and spiritual, on the agricultural poor, the very poor who of all classes in England are most ill-paid, and deserve most consideration.

Disestablishment would injure the poor *temporally*. I challenge any man of average intelligence to deny that in thousands of rural parishes throughout England the clergyman is the means of doing an immense amount of temporal good to the poor. Where is the well-ordered rural parish in which the clergyman's house is not the mainspring of a large machinery of charity to men's bodies?

Who does not know that it is the clergyman who in every well-ordered country parish is naturally expected to take the lead about clothing clubs, shoe clubs, boot clubs, coal clubs, soup clubs, blanket clubs, libraries, and a hundred other means of helping the poor? Who does not know that in every well-ordered country parish the clergyman is ready to be the unpaid friend of every one who needs a friend, whether in the way of money, or advice, or sympathy,—and the friend of poor Dissenters as well as poor church-goers? I defy any one to deny this. The quantity of temporal good which the agricultural poor receive from the clergy at present is something, I suspect, of which dwellers in towns, and Liberationist orators on platforms, have not the slightest idea. It is good which is done quietly and unostentatiously, without parade or blowing of trumpets. But it is done; and the last day alone will declare the full extent of it.

Well, there will be an end of a great deal of this if Disestablishment comes. Stripped of more than half his professional income, reduced to be the *minister of the Episcopalians alone* in his parish, the rural clergyman will, of course, cease to do what he once did for the poor. In most cases he would not be able to do much, if he had the will. He must rigidly confine himself to the members of his own congregation. If any man thinks this would be a nice change, and an advantage to the rural parishes, I differ from him entirely. The destruction of the Establishment would inflict immense temporal damage on the poor.

Disestablishment would do great *spiritual harm* to the poor. Stripped of a large part of her present endowments, the Church of England would be able to do far less than she now does for the extension of Christ's kingdom, whether at home or abroad. Aggressive measures for the evangelization of mining and manufacturing populations, the building of new churches and schools, the formation of new districts in poor neighbourhoods,—all these things would either be entirely stopped or greatly curtailed. With a rural clergy deprived of more than half their income, with town congregations obliged to give liberally to support the Church in the country, the Church's power of doing good to souls would be painfully lessened and diminished. To sustain her without extending, to keep her alive without increasing, to enable her to live without growth, would require the utmost exertions of her children. None would suffer so much from this state of things as the poor,

The plain truth is, that the voluntary system, on which in great measure the Church would be thrown, after Disestablishment, is a total and entire failure in rural districts. Dr. Parker, an eminent Nonconformist minister, calls it "a miserable failure." It is a failure in the United States of America, in spite of all the wealth and energy of the Americans. There are myriads of poor in New York, and in the backwoods, who are just like sheep without a shepherd. It is a failure in England among the Nonconformists at this day. With all their many privileges and advantages, they can neither pay their ministers sufficiently in rural districts, nor provide sufficient chapels for poor neighbourhoods. Above all, they cannot provide day schools for their own poor children, and are obliged to confess it. At the eleventh hour they have supported an "Education Act," which

orders Board-schools to be built by a compulsory rate, and by so doing they have practically admitted that the *voluntary system has thoroughly broken down!*¹

I cannot get over facts like these. I advise every poor man in England who is urged to sign a petition for Disestablishment, to think twice before he signs, and to ask, “What good will it do to the poor? “Disestablish the Church of England, and the very first to suffer from it would be the poor. In the interests of the poor, if there were no other reasons, I see no good, but immense evil, in Disestablishment.

V. In the fifth place, What good would Disestablishment do to the *cause of peace and charity*? I shall answer that question very decidedly. It would do no good at all.

The quantity of stuff and nonsense and silly romantic rubbish, which is talked on this point, is very curious. There are many innocent-minded people, I believe, both Churchmen and Dissenters, who really think that, if the union of Church and State were dissolved, English Christians would get on far more happily and comfortably than they do now. There would be no more jealousies, or envyings, or rivalries, or wranglings, or squabbings, or quarrelling, or party spirit! Ephraim would no longer vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim! The whole Christian body in Great Britain would become a great Evangelical alliance and happy family! Baptists, and Independents, and Presbyterians, and Episcopalians, would fraternize lovingly, and exchange pulpits! Mr. Spurgeon would preach in St. Paul’s, and the Bishop of London in the Metropolitan Tabernacle! Such are the visions with which many worthy Christian laymen amuse themselves, and even laymen who do not approve of Disestablishment. They regard it as a painful operation, like drawing a tooth, and they are very sorry it should ever be performed. But the operation once over, and the tooth once out, they really believe we shall all be much happier and better friends for it. Like little children after a quarrel, we should just “kiss and be friends.”

Now, I believe nothing whatever of the kind. I am all for unity, wherever it can be obtained, and I would willingly make large sacrifices in order to obtain it. I think the present divided state of English Christians a disgrace to religion. I disclaim the slightest sympathy with those who think that you cannot have too many sects and denominations, and that it does not matter a jot where you worship, or what you hear preached. I want to see more unity, and I should like to see more uniformity. But, for all this, I have not the slightest faith in unity being promoted by force, and plunder, and spoliation, and levelling down. Charity and peace among Christians will never be brought about by violence. Peace between Episcopalians and Dissenters is about the last thing which would result from Disestablishment. It would make a breach that would never be built up.

¹ The reader is once more advised to study carefully the candid admission of Mr. Spurgeon about the voluntary system in rural districts at the end of this paper.

Let us just take a practical, common-sense view of the matter in hand. Let us suppose that the Liberationists succeed in carrying out the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England. Let us suppose that some reckless House of Commons, and some popularity-hunting Prime Minister, give way at length to the importunity of the Liberationists and their many allies, and force through Parliament a Disestablishing Act for the Church of England, like that which was passed for the Church of Ireland. Such an event could only take place, I believe, after years of mischievous strife and agitation, and after hundreds of keen conflicts between Churchmen and chapel-goers all over the land. The Established Church of England, with all its defects and divisions, is a large and powerful body, and would make a long fight, and die very hard. Will any man in his sober senses tell me that this miserable long-drawn strife would promote unity? Would it not rather leave behind it festering sores that would never be healed? Of course it would! It would make unity between English Episcopalians and their adversaries an impossibility for several generations. The costly china plate would be broken. It might perhaps be riveted, but it could never be mended again.

But this is not all. Suppose that the Disestablishing Act tends to deprive the rural clergy, who depend on tithes, of half their incomes, as it certainly would. Suppose that thousands of quiet country rectors and vicars are suddenly obliged to reduce their expenditure, to alter their style of living, to take away their boys from good schools, to give their girls an inferior education, and to sacrifice a great many comforts; and all this in consequence of the attacks of the Liberationist Society and the Dissenters. Suppose all this to take place. Will any man pretend to say that there could possibly be much harmony and friendly feeling between Churchmen and chapel-goers in such a condition of things? It is absurd to expect it. For centuries there would be a gulf between Episcopalians and non-Episcopalians in England, which nothing would fill up. Disestablishment would be the grave of unity.

"It ought not to be so," some innocent-minded man may say. "The union of Church and State is not essential to Christianity. Men may surely differ about it and keep friends. When the battle is over, why not forgive and forget?"—What *ought* to be, is a vague phrase, which I will not stop to discuss. What *would* be, is another question; and from my observation of human nature I have a very decided opinion about it. Believers who hold different views on non-essential points in religion can get on very comfortably so long as they are tolerant, and do not assault each other, and tread on one another's toes. But the moment A begins to say to B, "I shall try to half-ruin your Church, and to get half your income taken away," it is nonsense to expect any more friendship between A and B! The Bible commands us to "forgive our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for those that despitefully use us." But the Bible nowhere says that we are to regard our enemies as beloved brothers and friends. The Bible says, "If any man take thy coat, let him take thy cloak also." But the Bible nowhere says that we are to regard the man who has violently

taken our coats and cloaks as a pleasant, praiseworthy, and honest man, and to shake hands with him as a dear friend.

For my own part, I can truly say that for forty years I have laboured hard to promote unity and good feeling between Churchmen and Nonconformists. I have gone so far in this direction that I have often been blamed, vilified, and slandered by my brother Churchmen, as half a Dissenter. I have gone on steadily nevertheless, and have always said that Dissenters deserve much kindness and consideration, because the Church's neglect has made them what they are. But if Dissenters will not let the Church alone, and will not rest till they have destroyed the Establishment, I give up all hopes of unity. You cannot get on comfortably with men who have deliberately striven to upset your Church, and to take away half your income! Co-operation in future would be almost impossible. The Bible Society and the London City Mission would suffer heavily. From the day that the Church of England is disestablished there will be an end of much unity between Episcopalians and their Dissenting adversaries. There is little enough now, and after Disestablishment there will be much less. It is my deliberate judgment that those who labour to destroy the union of Church and State in England, under the vain idea of putting all Churches and sects on a dead level, are making unity and good feeling between Church and Chapel impossible for two hundred years.

VI. In the last place, what good would Disestablishment do *to the State*? My answer is short and decided. It would do it no good, but very great harm.

This question is far too wide and complicated to be fully discussed in a paper like this. But I shall try to throw a little light on it. If I can only show that the dissolution of the union of Church and State involves far more serious consequences than most of its advocates dream of, I shall be content. Such clap-trap phrases as “non-interference with spiritual matters,”—“unsectarian legislation,”—“allowing no special privilege to any denomination,”—“adopting the principles of free trade in religion,”—“leaving all Churches and sects to themselves,”—“taking no cognizance of any but secular matters,”—all these are fine, high-sounding expressions, and look very pretty in theory. But the moment you begin to work them out logically in practice, you will find grave objections rising up in your way, objections that cannot be got over.

To begin with, Scripture teaches plainly that God rules everything in this world,—that He deals with nations as they deal with Him,—that national prosperity and national decline are ordered by Him,—that wars, pestilences, and famines are part of His providential government of the world,—and that without His blessing no nation can prosper. Now, do we believe all this or not? If we do believe it, it is simply absurd to say that Governments have nothing to do with religion, and that they may safely ignore God. That often quoted text, “My kingdom is not of this world,” has nothing whatever to do with the matter in hand (John xviii. 36). When our Lord spoke these words, He only meant to teach Pilate that His kingdom was not a mere secular kingdom, like a heathen

Roman Emperor's, and that it was not maintained or propagated, like the kingdoms of this world, by the sword. But, to say that our Lord meant that "Governments were never to support or countenance religion," is a preposterous and unwarrantable interpretation of Scripture. Whether men like to see it or not, I believe it is the first duty of a State to honour and recognise God. The Government that refuses to do this, in order to save itself trouble, and to avoid favouring one Church more than another, may think it is doing a very "smart" and politic thing. But I believe its line of procedure is offensive to the Most High, and eminently calculated to draw down His displeasure.

Again, reason itself points out that the moral standard of a nation's subjects is the grand secret of its prosperity. Gold mines, and manufactures, and scientific discoveries, and eloquent speeches, and commercial activity, and democratic institutions, are not enough to make or to keep nations great. Tyre, and Sidon, and Egypt, and Carthage, and Athens, and Rome, and Venice, and Spain, and Portugal, had plenty of such possessions as these, and yet fell into decay. The sinews of a nation's strength are truthfulness, honesty, sobriety, purity, temperance, economy, diligence, brotherly kindness, charity among its inhabitants. Let those deny this who dare.—And will any man say that there is any surer way of producing these characteristics in a people than by encouraging, and fostering, and spreading, and teaching pure Scriptural Christianity? The man who says there is must be an infidel.—Then, if these things are so, the first duty of a State ought to be to encourage and countenance religion among its subjects in every possible way. Does a State want its subjects to be provident, truthful, diligent, temperate, honest, moral, and charitable? Does it or does it not? If it does, it ought to encourage, and not to ignore, *religion*. To punish vice and yet not cherish virtue,—to spend public money in building jails and yet not encourage churches, is, to say the least, an absurdly inconsistent policy. The more true religion the better subjects The more good subjects the more prosperity! The Government which ignores religion, and coolly declares that it does not care whether its subjects are Christians or not, is guilty of an act of suicidal folly. Irreligion, even in a temporal point of view, is the worst enemy of a nation.

Once more, the practical consequences which logically result from carrying out the principle of Disestablishment, are so monstrous and appalling, that one can hardly believe that people who clamour for disconnecting Church and State have ever fully considered them. Let us look at them. Grant that the Church is disestablished, and that the English Government resolves to have nothing more to do with religion, and to leave it to the voluntary system. In order to carry out this principle consistently, the Succession Act must be repealed, and our Sovereigns might be Papists! Our Kings and Queens, if we had any more, would be crowned without any religious service. Our Parliaments would carry on their proceedings without prayer. Our regiments and men-of-war would no longer have chaplains. Our prisons and workhouses would have no chaplains. Even the religious observance of Sunday would be in danger. "Nonsense," some may

say. "Of course we do not want such a state of things. We only want to dissolve the union between the State and the Church of England." People may cry "Nonsense," if they like, but they will never prove that the state of things I have just described will not be the logical consequence of Disestablishment, if followed out to its legitimate conclusions. After Disestablishment, the State, *if it acts consistently*, must either leave the souls of soldiers, sailors, prison and workhouse inmates entirely alone, or else we must get over the difficulty by putting up chaplaincies to public tender, and jobbing them out to the lowest bidder, whether he be Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Socinian, or Papist!—there is no other course open to us. If the rulers of the State, after Disestablishment, appoint any particular chaplains to ships, regiments, workhouses, and jails, they are at once open to the charge of showing favour to one denomination more than another. Of course the Liberationist Society will not let the State do this!

The example of the United States and the Colonies is not the slightest reply to what I am saying. The Americans do not entirely separate religion and the State. The American Congress, I believe, has a chaplain, and is opened with prayer. The army and navy, the prisons and reformatories of America have chaplains, I have no doubt. But even then I can find no guarantee that these chaplains may not be Socinians or Papists!—And after all, the case of America only shows that our shrewd cousins see the utter uselessness of trying to carry out the principles of the Liberationist Society to their logical results, and are obliged to act with *splendid inconsistency*. In practice even a new country like America, not fettered by old precedents, finds it impossible entirely to ignore God. I cannot quite persuade myself that what Americans find impossible will ever be attempted in England. When Liberationists have upset the union of Church and State, they will have to connive at some inconsistencies! The moment they admit the necessity of supplying religion to workhouses and jails, they must either throw open the chaplaincies to public tender, or give up the principle of religious equality, and favour some particular Church by appointing one of its ministers. Furthermore, I am by no means sure that the state of religious matters in the United States, without an Established Church, is nearly so paradisaical and satisfactory as the enemies of Establishments say that it is. Vague assertions are often made on this point, which seem to me, after some little inquiry, to be utterly wanting in foundation. I doubt exceedingly whether religion in the back settlements of America is in a prosperous state. A well-known American tale, called "The Shady Side," gives a painful impression of the position of many American ministers. I doubt whether even in the towns all things are serene, and Christianity is in a flourishing condition. The pictures drawn by Ward Beecher and Talmage, the two well-known American preachers, of the moral atmosphere of New York, are something appalling. My own belief is, to speak plainly, that the example of America tells far more against the Disestablishment movement than for it. It is a remarkable fact, that the farewell address of the famous American statesman, George Washington, contained this

passage:—"Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." Even Daniel Webster, an American statesman of later date, and of lower type than Washington, said, "Religion is the only solid basis of morals, and moral instruction not resting on this basis is only building upon sand. It is a mockery and insult to common sense to maintain that a school for the instruction of youth from which Christian instruction is shut out is not atheistical and infidel" ("Talmage's Sermons," second series, p. 362). It is a simple matter of fact that there is such a widespread feeling of alarm among many Christian men in America at the rapid spread of infidelity and immorality, that a most important Convention was held in New York in the year 1873, in order to set on foot a movement for obtaining a national recognition of Christianity. The land of tall-talk and bunkum, the model country of Liberationist orators, is not the dependable witness against Establishments that many suppose her to be. Look below the surface and behind the curtain of society in America, and you will find little to encourage the separation of Church and State. The great Anglo-Saxon nation without an Establishment would be a far greater and far happier nation if she had one.

After all, I am one of those old-fashioned people who believe in a God. I believe in Him not only as the God of creation, but as the God of providence,—the God who governs the world, the God who hears and answers prayer. Believing all this, I will never admit that it signifies nothing whether a Government recognises Christianity or not, and that it matters little whether a country has an Established Church. I set my foot down firmly on the great principle, "Them that honour Me I will honour, and those that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." I apply that principle to nations, and I believe it will always hold good. The Act of Parliament which disestablished the Church of England might do great damage to the Church, but I am quite sure it would do far more damage to the State. We should lose much, but the State would lose a great deal more. As a patriot and an Englishman I would maintain the union of Church and State for the sake of my country.

What may be before us no man can tell. But in an age like our own,—an age of restlessness,—an age of liberality, falsely so called,—an age of popularity-hunting,—an age of sensationalism and surprises,—an age of idolatry of the mob,—an age of contempt for old things, merely because they are old,—an age of spasmodic feverish zeal for new things, merely because they are new,—an age of change for the sake of change,—an age of laziness and apathy among the defenders of the old things, and of earnestness and perseverance among the advocates of the new,—in such an age I shall never be surprised if Disestablishment comes. When it does come, I believe it will inflict such an amount of damage on the State as the mind of man can hardly conceive. I declare I had far rather see the Episcopal Establishment upset, and the Baptists or

Independents made the Established Church of England, than see the State ceasing to recognise God. I had far rather see our next Sovereign crowned in Westminster Abbey by a Spurgeon, or the President of the Wesleyan Conference, with an extempore prayer, and the Archbishop of Canterbury standing as a private individual in the crowd, than see our Government turning its back on Christianity altogether.

When I read English history, I see plainly that the real greatness of this country dates from the Protestant Reformation. I see that it was under Sovereigns who ordered the Bible to be translated and circulated, and under Parliaments which ratified the Thirty-nine Articles, and took great practical interest in religion,—that our nation took its first great start in its career of freedom, wealth, and power. I see that the influence of England was seldom more felt in Europe than it was in the days of Oliver Cromwell, when that great, though misguided, man threw the shield of England over persecuted Protestants in Savoy, and even awed the Pope by interfering in religious matters. Seeing all this, I will never believe that Disestablishment would do no harm to the State. On the contrary, I believe it would bring down God's heaviest judgments on this realm. I repeat that the Act of Parliament which dissolved Church and State would do great damage to the Church; but it would be as nothing compared to the injury it would ultimately inflict on the State.

In what manner God would punish England, if English Governments cast off all connection with religion, I cannot tell. Whether He would punish us by some sudden blow, such as defeat in war, and the occupation of our territory by a foreign power,—whether He would waste us away gradually and slowly by placing a worm at the roots of our commercial prosperity,—whether He would break us to pieces by letting fools rule over us and allowing Parliaments to obey them, and permitting us, like the Midianites, to destroy one another,—whether He would ruin us by sending a dearth of wise statesmen in the upper ranks, and giving the reins of power to communists, socialists, and mob-leaders,—all these are points which I have no prophetic eye to see, and I do not pretend to determine. God's sorest judgments, the ancients said, "are like mill-stones, they grind very slowly, but they grind very fine." The thing that I fear most for my country is gradual, insensible dry-rot and decay. But of one thing I am very sure,—the State that begins by sowing the seed of national neglect of God, will sooner or later reap a harvest of national disaster and national ruin. If Disestablishment comes, it will do no hurt to the true Church of Christ, the body of real believers: *that* it is beyond the power of man to harm. It will do little comparative injury to the visible Episcopal Church of England: though impoverished and crippled in many ways, she will still live and not die. But it will do boundless harm to the State, and in the end will prove the ruin of all our greatness.

I have now considered the subject of this paper to the best of my ability. I have done it honestly and conscientiously, and have carefully avoided any

exaggeration. It only remains for me to wind up the whole subject by a few words of friendly advice to the various classes into whose hands the paper may fall.

(1) Some of my readers may perhaps be men *who make no profession whatever in religion*, and care neither for Church nor chapel. I fear there are many such men in the land, and I suppose there always will be. Pilate, who asked sneeringly, “What is truth?”—Gallio, who thought Christianity was only a “matter of words and names,”—Festus, who thought it a “superstition concerning one Jesus,”—all these have never wanted successors. Men of this sort, of course, do not care a jot whether the Church of England is disestablished or not. “It is all the same to them. Religion is not a thing in their way.” Yet even to these men I offer a word of counsel.

Are you quite sure that it would be a good thing to have less religion in England than there is now? Of course, if the Church is disestablished and impoverished, there will be less. Now are you quite sure you will like this? Do you wish your wife, your children, your servants, your clerks, your tenants, your labourers, your partners in business, to have less religion and to become more godless than they are now? I should like that question to be answered.

If you do not wish this state of things to arise, I advise you to think twice before you allow the English Church Establishment to be destroyed, and the tithes and land to be taken away. Say what men please, this must have the effect of weakening the Church, lessening the number of her clergy, and reducing the whole quantity of religion in the country to a lower level. A tree once felled and cut down can never be put up again, and its shade and beauty may be regretted in vain. If you stand by and look on with folded arms, careless and unconcerned, while men are sawing in two the connection of Church and State, you may live to find out too late that you committed a fatal mistake.

(2) Some of my readers may be *zealous Churchmen*, who really believe it would be a good thing if the Church was disestablished. There are many men of this class in England, some very “high,” and some very “low” in opinion, who are continually building castles in the air about the “Church of the future.” They have pleasing visions of a free, rich, and powerful Church, no longer fettered by connection with the State, guided by perfect Bishops, no longer interfered with by naughty Parliaments and wicked Courts of law, possessing perfect unity, and able to do a hundred things which it cannot do now. To these amiable and well-meaning enthusiasts I offer a word of counsel.

I will ask them to remember two old proverbs. One says, “All is not gold that glitters.” The other says, “Look before you leap.” A free Church is a fine thing to talk about; but it is not always so free as it appears. There are other chains and screw-presses beside those of Parliament, secular law-courts, and the Royal supremacy. The frogs in the fable found fault with “King Log,” because he lay still like a huge inert mass, and did nothing at all. But they soon found that “King Stork” was much worse. Appeals to Courts of law will not be prevented by Disestablishment. So long as there are rights and wrongs, and

questions of place and salary, so long the English courts of law will be open to Episcopalians who want redress. A diminution of ministerial incomes is a very serious matter, and it will certainly accompany Disestablishment in rural parishes, to the great damage of the Church's power. Let no Churchman dream for a moment that there will ever be Disestablishment without Disendowment.—Last, but not least, unity will not be obtained by dissolving the connection of Church and State. There will be divisions of opinion among English Episcopalians after Disestablishment, and perhaps far more serious ones than there ever were before. Look at the American Episcopal Church across the Atlantic. They have no connection with the State. But they have not attained perfect unity.

It is an utter delusion to suppose that Disestablishment is the only cure for the Church's defects and abuses. Of all common cries in this day, I know none so unreasoning and foolish as this. I grant freely, as I have already said, that we have many things in the Church of England which might be altered for the better. Our dioceses might be divided, our Convocation reconstructed, our cathedrals made more useful, our services made more simple and better suited to the times. But why, in the name of common sense, should we not try to obtain all these Church reforms without Disestablishment? Why not try to correct our abuses without dissolving the union of Church and State? I have read of an Asiatic potentate who never tasted roast pig, till a day came, when his house was accidentally set on fire, and his pig-sty with its squeaking inmates burned. He found the taste of roast pig so good that he resolved to repeat the feast in the following week, by the curious plan of ordering another house with a pig-sty to be burned. And this process went on, the story goes, for several weeks, till at last some one suggested that he might easily have roast pig without burning a house. This potentate, most men will agree with me, was not very wise. But I really think he was not one bit more foolish than those folks who tell us that we cannot reform the Church without disestablishing it! At any rate, let us first try to roast the pig in the common way, before we adopt the rude and coarse plan of setting the house on fire.

In short, I advise my zealous brethren in the Church of England, who are hungering and thirsting for Disestablishment, to be content with such things as they have, to let well alone, and to do nothing rashly. It is not a friend, but an enemy, who is whispering to them, "Break off the union of Church and State,—cast thyself down." Let them ask the wisest Episcopalians in the United States and in the Colonies whether *they* advise Disestablishment, and think it desirable! Let them beware, lest they learn too late, by painful experience, the wisdom contained in the famous epitaph:—"I was well: I would be better: I took physic, and here I am." I always think of that epitaph when I hear an English Churchman expressing a wish for Disestablishment.

(3) Some of my readers perhaps are *honest Dissenters*, who have been told by the itinerant advocates of the Liberationist Society, that it is a Christian duty to endeavour to disestablish the Church of England. Their ears have been filled

with monstrous stories about the Church, until they regard her as a huge public nuisance which ought to be swept away. To them also I tender a few words of friendly advice.,

I may fairly ask to be heard by Dissenters. I am, and always have been, what is called a “Low Churchman.” I have never in my life interfered with Dissenters, or turned a cold shoulder upon them. I have never refused to acknowledge non-Episcopal services. I have never denied that Dissenters have done and are doing much good to souls. I have never vilified them or denounced them as schismatics. To none of these things will I plead guilty. When, therefore, I offer a word of advice to Dissenters, I may ask to be patiently heard.

I advise them, for one thing, to use their own good sense, and not to believe all the gross misstatements that some Liberationists are continually making about the Church of England. It is utterly untrue that Disestablishment would enable the State to save twenty-six millions of annual taxes. The whole endowments of the Church are not five millions a year!—It is utterly untrue that the Bishops are rolling in wealth, and the clergy are overpaid. The Bishops have so many demands on their purses that they can hardly make both ends meet, and the clergy, if incomes were divided, would not have three hundred a year a-piece!—It is utterly untrue that the clergy are paid by the State, or that the people are taxed to pay the clergy: the State never gave the Church any tithes or lands at all!—It is utterly untrue that the Bishops and clergy are “State-made parsons,” seeing that the State cannot ordain any minister, and the Crown can only nominate as Bishops men who are already ordained.—It is utterly untrue that the Church prayers are “State-made prayers,” seeing that the Prayer-book was compiled by our Protestant Reformers.—It is utterly untrue that the Prayer-book is a mere Popish book, considering that the greater part of it is pure Scripture.—All these things are ridiculous untruths, which it is a shame for any man to circulate, and a discredit to any man to believe. May I not ask honest Dissenters, when they hear statements such as these, to exercise their own good sense, and to put the simple question, “Is this really true?” “A cause which can only be built on a foundation of gross misstatements is a very unsatisfactory cause to support. A readiness to believe falsehoods is not a nice character! If there is anything God hates, it is falsehood. “Thou shalt not bear false witness” is a commandment not yet repealed.

For another thing, I advise all honest Dissenters to use their own common sense, and to make a proper distinction between a system and the faults of those who work a system. No doubt many clergymen are worldly, careless, unconverted men. No doubt the endowments of the Established Church are not always well employed. No doubt some clergymen are half-sceptics and some are half-Papists. No doubt some parishes, both in town and country, are sadly neglected. But all this does not prove that the *principle* of an Established Church is wrong. This state of things will not be cured by dissolving the union of Church and State. Are all Dissenting ministers converted men? Do no Dissenting ministers ever spend their incomes badly? Are all Dissenting ministers

entirely sound in the faith, and free from any erroneous doctrine? These are unpleasant questions, and I have no wish to press them. But there is an old proverb which says, "Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones." The abuse of a thing is no argument against the use of it. The occasional inconsistency, or unsoundness of clergymen, in so large a Church as the Established Church of England, with 20,000 ministers in its pale, supplies no proof that the principle of an Establishment is wrong and unsound.

I advise honest Dissenters, for another thing, to remember the broad fact that many of their forefathers and predecessors, among Nonconformists, were strongly in favour of an Established Church, and never admitted the principle that Governments ought to ignore God, and have nothing to do with religion. Owen, and Baxter, and Flavel, and Howe, and Matthew Henry, were men of whom Nonconformists are justly proud. They were men whose names would do honour to the rolls of any Christian Church. Yet every one of these good men was strongly in favour of the connection between Church and State. No men loved religious liberty more. None contended more earnestly against the narrow-minded requirements of Churchmen in their day, and made more sacrifices for Nonconformity than these good men. Yet none of them ever dreamed of maintaining that the connection of Church and State was "an adulterous connection," or that Governments had nothing to do with religion. Alas, we may well say, "How is the fine gold become dim." I firmly believe that if Owen, Baxter, Howe, Flavel, and Matthew Henry could rise from their graves this day, they would be among the foremost opponents of the Liberationist Society.

I ask honest Dissenters in the last place to consider quietly what one single grievance they labour under now,—what disability, what hardship, what disadvantage,—which would be removed by Disestablishment. Let them name one if they can. I declare I cannot put my finger on one. They may possibly complain that Nonconformist ministers are not made so much of as Church ministers, and do not occupy so high a *social* position. Well, if that really is a grievance, I defy them to show how Disestablishment would remove it. I repeat, emphatically, that until Dissenters can persuade the great bulk of the English people to give up Episcopacy and the Liturgy, and to become Baptists, Independents, Presbyterians, or Methodists,—until they can do this, I say, they will never prevent the bulk of Churchmen making much of their own ministers, and giving them a *social* precedence. The alleged grievance has nothing to do with the connection of Church and State, and Disestablishment would certainly not take it away. Why, then, cannot Dissenters keep quiet, and let the Church alone?

(4) And now, last of all, this tract may perhaps be read by *some honest Churchmen* who are content with the present relations of Church and State, and have no wish to see them changed. To them also I shall offer a word of advice, and I earnestly hope it may not be thrown away.

For one thing, we must awake to a sense of the danger in which we stand just now, and must work hard to oppose our enemies. There is no safety in

apathy. If others combine, we must combine. If others agitate, we must boldly resist the agitation. If others assert falsehoods, we must assert truth. If others flood the country with cheap tracts and leaflets attacking the Church, we must meet the attack by a counter-flood of cheap literature in the Church's defence. "Defence, not Defiance," must be our motto. Controversies and conflicts with other professing Christians are odious things. But the conduct of the Liberationists seems likely to leave us no alternative. If they will not let us alone, we must fight.

We have nothing whatever to fear for the connection of Church and State, if Churchmen will only awake, arise, and do their duty. Twenty thousand clergymen and ten million laymen are a force which the Liberationist Society ought never to overthrow. But we must combine, organize, work, write, speak, and spread information; and, above all, we must not go to sleep. The Churchman who folds his arms in our camp, and says, "Peace, peace! anything for a quiet life; let things take their course!" may be a very nice, amiable Churchman, but he is no true friend to the Church of England. I dread the laziness of Churchmen more than the whole attack of the Liberationist Society.

For another thing, if we would prevent Disestablishment, we must spare no pains to reform the Church of England. We need reform: there is no mistake about that. Our unreformed abuses are the worst foes of the union of Church and State. Our large undivided dioceses, our too often useless cathedrals, our anomalous and ill-constituted Convocation, our want of elasticity in liturgical worship, our shiftless adherence to old-fashioned modes of evangelization, our helpless inability to arrange systematic co-operation of clergy and laity, our barbarous Ecclesiastical Courts, our grossly defective discipline,—all these, and not a few more, are weak points in our line of defence, which skilful enemies are not slow to detect. They are points in which reform would not be difficult, if the matter was not trifled with, but heartily and earnestly taken up. Oh that God would raise up among us some powerful, wise, energetic Church reformer! Church reform is one of the best bulwarks against Church Disestablishment.

We all know what is done on board a man-of-war when an enemy is in sight, and an action is about to begin. The decks are cleared; the lumber is thrown overboard; every man is sent to his quarters; useless passengers and non-combatants are put under hatches, or consigned to the hold. It is high time to do the same with the Church of England, if the struggle for Disestablishment is at hand. It is nonsense to ignore the weak points in our system. We have weak points, and they are part of the strength of our adversaries. Let us strive to get rid of them without delay. Let us resolutely and energetically take up the subject of Church Reform.

I leave the whole subject now with feelings of sorrow. I grieve to think that English Protestant Christians should be on the point of wasting time, and energy, and strength, and talents in such a miserable, unprofitable controversy as this about Disestablishment. If ever there was a time when British Christians should cease from controversy, and unite as one man, in order to resist the

rising flood of Popery and infidelity, that time is now. Yet this is the very time when the Liberationist body chooses to stir up strife all over England, for the most useless and unprofitable cause in the world,—a cause in which their success will do good to nobody, and do harm to many! Well, be it so. The Liberationists are sowing the wind, and they must reap the whirlwind. They are the first to begin the miserable strife, and the blame of all the wretched consequences must lie at their door. But when I think of the ill feeling they are stirring up, the angry passions that will be called forth, the hard words that will be spoken, the divisions that will be made for ever in parishes, if they succeed, the sin that will be caused, the good that will be for ever stopped, and the harm that will be for ever done,—when I think of all *this*, *I cannot help saying with a wise old statesman, “Why cannot you let things alone?”*

The following letter by Mr. Spurgeon deserves the attention of all who think that the voluntary system is a success among the Baptists in the rural districts. It was written in 1867.

“An Epistle to the Members of the Baptized Churches
of Jesus Christ.

“BELOVED BRETHREN,—An exceedingly great and bitter cry has gone up unto heaven concerning many of us. It is not a cry from the world which hates us, nor from our fellow-members whom we may have offended, but (alas that it should be so!) it is wrung from hundreds of poor but faithful ministers of Christ Jesus who labour in our midst in word and doctrine, and are daily oppressed by the niggardliness of churls among us. . . . Hundreds of our ministers would improve their circumstances if they were to follow the commonest handicrafts. The earnings of artisans of but ordinary skill are far above the stipends of those among us who are considered to be comfortably maintained. . . . We are asked repeatedly to send students to spheres where £40 is mentioned as if it were competence, if not more, and those who so write are not always farm-labourers, but frequently tradesmen, who must know what penury £40 implies. A church contributing £70 frequently counts itself munificent, but many of its members must know that such a sum is not respectability, nor much less than hard, pinching, but covert want. I heard the other day of a minister—whose congregation would be shocked to know it, and I hope ashamed also—who very seldom sees a joint of meat, except on other people’s tables, and is indebted to gifts from friends in other denominations for parcels of left-off clothing, which are made up for his otherwise ragged children. With desperate self-denial alone is he kept from debt; comfort he never knows. If these things needed to be so, it were a theme of rejoicing that our brethren are honoured to endure hardness for Christ’s sake; but these are in many cases needless hardships, and should not be inflicted upon our honoured brethren. If their Master called them to it, well and good; but it is not the Master, it is the thoughtless fellow-servant who puts them to so severe a trial. Persuaded that a great reform is needed, I propose to publish such cases of deep necessity as may be supplied to me by Baptist ministers, and are well authenticated. The names and addresses shall be sacredly kept secret, but the facts shall be published, that holy shame may induce a speedy amendment. *Any person can reprint this article, and the more widely it is distributed the better.* I speak not without abundant cause. I am no retailer of baseless scandal. I am no advocate for an idle and ill-deserving ministry. I open my mouth for a really earnest, godly, laborious, gracious body of men, who are men of God, and approved of His Church. Are these for ever to be starved? Shall the

ox that treadeth out the corn be always muzzled? Shall he who planted the vineyard eat none of its fruit? It is our shame as Baptists, to be mean towards our pastors. Brethren, help to roll away this reproach at once and for ever.

“C. H. SPURGEON.”

—The Sword and the Trowel, vol. iii. pp. 17-20.

THE LESSONS OF ENGLISH CHURCH HISTORY.

I FEAR the title of this paper is not very attractive or inviting. History is notoriously regarded as a dry, dull, and uninteresting subject. It is an awkward fact which is related in the book of Esther, that on the night when King Ahasuerus could not sleep, he commanded his servants to read him “the book of records of the chronicles.” (Esther vi. 1.)

But surely this ought not to be so. The study of history, and specially of Church history, ought always to be interesting to a Christian mind. What is history but philosophy teaching by examples? What so common as the remark of wise men, that history often repeats itself? What is so likely to show us what we may expect from human nature in our own times, as an accurate knowledge of the workings of human nature in times past? Let me try to show my readers that there are some deeply interesting lessons to be learned from English Church History.

I have chosen this particular subject because of the times in which we live, and the critical position of the Church of England. It is notorious that the English Establishment is distracted, vexed, and almost rent in twain by the rise and progress of what is commonly called Ritualism. The growth of this school of opinion within our pale is calculated to inflict serious damage on our beloved Church. How to oppose it most wisely, and meet it most successfully, demands the best attention of all faithful Churchmen. To supply Churchmen with a few good historical arguments for opposing Ritualism, to show them a few good reasons why it ought to be firmly rejected, is one great object of this paper.

I need not say that the first and foremost argument to be used against Ritualism, or any other religious error, is the Bible. “To the law and the testimony!” What saith the Scripture? If the advocates of Ritualism can show us that its peculiar tenets—viz. the real presence, the practice of auricular confession, the use of incense, sacrificial vestments, processions, lights on the communion table, and adoration of the consecrated elements in the Lord’s Supper—are things taught in the New Testament, as practised by the Apostles, I am ready to become a Ritualist today. They have never shown it, and they never will. These things are not in the Book.

The second argument to be used against Ritualism is the Church’s authorized confession of faith, the Thirty-nine Articles. These Articles are distinctly recognised by the Statute Law of England as the Church’s test of sound doctrine. The testimony of these Articles, on most of the leading points of the Ritualistic creed, is decidedly Protestant and evangelical. The advocates of Ritualism know that full well! No wonder they often call the Articles “the forty stripes save one.”

The third argument against Ritualism is the Church’s authorized manual of devotion, the Book of Common Prayer. Let that good old book, to use the words of its own *Preface*, “be allowed such just and favourable construction as in

common equity ought to be allowed to all human writings.” Let it be fairly, honestly, and equitably interpreted, with all the light that the well-known opinions of its compilers and the contemporaneous exposition of three centuries throw upon it, and we have no fear for the result. Let the advocates of Ritualism, for instance, show us a single sentence in the Communion Office in which the communion table is called an *altar*, or the Lord’s Supper is called a *sacrifice*, or *adoration* of the consecrated elements is enjoined. Let them explain away, if they can, that most incisive Rubric which follows the Communion Service, and declares that “the natural body and blood of our Saviour Christ are in heaven and not here,”—and that “the sacramental bread and wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored; for that were idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians.” Error about the Lord’s Supper, I do not hesitate to assert, is the cornerstone of the whole Ritualistic system.¹ To that error the Prayer-book, fairly interpreted, affords no sanction at all.

But after all, there is one more argument against Ritualism which seldom receives the attention which it deserves. That argument is to be found in the lessons of English Church History. To point out what those lessons are, to show the conclusions to which an impartial study of English History ought to lead every unprejudiced mind, is the aim which I propose to myself in this paper.

Let me clear the way by explaining what I am about to do. Let no reader suppose for a moment that I am going to wade through the jungles of obscure antiquity, or to deluge him with dry disquisitions about pre-historic times. Whether St. Paul ever preached in England or not; whether there ever was a flourishing ancient British Church; whether Augustine of Canterbury was an apostolic man or an ambitious meddler; whether there was much vital religion in the days of Alfred, and Bede, and Edmund, and Canute, and Harold, and William the Conqueror,—all these are points which I shall leave alone. I shall confine myself strictly to the Church History of the last six hundred and fifty years,—a period in which the Reformation stands about midway. From the history of these six hundred and fifty years I shall try to draw out five most instructive lessons,—lessons built on great, wide, broad, unmistakable facts, which seem to my eyes as clear as the sun at noon-day. Whether my readers will find them interesting I do not yet know. If they do not, I can only declare my belief that the fault will not lie in the facts, but in my way of putting them.

I. The first period of English Church History from which I shall draw a lesson, consists of the three hundred years which immediately preceded the Protestant Reformation. It is a period extending from the reign of Henry III. to that of Henry VIII. It is a period when the Church of this land was thoroughly, entirely, and completely Roman Catholic, when the Bishop of Rome was the spiritual head of the Church, when Romanism reigned supreme from the Isle of

¹ Those who care to examine the controversy about the Lord’s Supper are invited to read the note which concludes this paper.

Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland, when the ministers of religion in England and the people were all alike Papists.

Now what is the lesson I wish to draw from this period? Why, simply this: *that English religion was never in so dark and bad a condition as it was in the days when Romanism had everything its own way in England.*

The facts that prove the truth of this assertion are so painfully numerous that it is hard to say where to begin and where to end, what to select and what to keep back. It is no exaggeration to say that for three centuries before the Reformation, Christianity in England seems to have been buried under a mass of ignorance, superstition, priestcraft, and immorality. The likeness between the religion of this period and that of the apostolic age was so small, that if St. Paul had risen from the dead he would hardly have called it Christianity at all!

As to *ignorance*, there were no English Bibles in the land, except a few in Wycliffe's time, and few of the priests could have told men what the Bible contained. The facts which were brought to light on Bishop Hooper's visitation of the diocese of Gloucester, in the time of Edward VI., are sufficient proof of what I say. Out of 311 clergy of his diocese he found 168 unable to repeat the ten commandments! The worship, so called, consisted of services in Latin, which nobody hardly understood, masses, and prayers to the Virgin and the saints. The practical religion of most lay people was made up of occasional almsgiving, mass-attending, penance, absolution, and extreme unction at the last. Preaching there was hardly any, and what there was was unscriptural rubbish, and not worth hearing. In short, it was a period of darkness that might be felt.

As to *superstition*, the worship of relics, images, and dead men like Thomas à Becket, of itself speaks volumes. Famine, we all know from the last siege of Paris, will make starving men feed greedily on rats and mice, and other most loathsome descriptions of food. Want of the Bible will make people accept the most degrading dogmas as truth, and bow down to worship objects ludicrous, monstrous, and profane.

As to *priestcraft*, the tricks by which the Romish priests extorted money out of people's pockets and enriched the Church, the lying wonders, impositions, and false miracles, are too shocking to dwell upon. The rood or crucifix of Bexley, which frowned when worshippers offered copper, and smiled when they offered gold,—the pretended blood of Christ at the Abbey of Hales,—the pretended feathers from angels' wings,—the clothes of the Virgin Mary,—and pieces of the true cross, are enough to stamp the priests who made money by them, as either fools or knaves. If they believed these things to be real and true objects of adoration, they were fools: if they knew them to be cheats and impositions, and yet took offerings of money for showing them, they were knaves.

As to *immorality*, perhaps the less said about the matter the better. Abbeys, monasteries, and nunneries, an unmarried clergy, and an ignorant, priest-ridden laity, auricular confession, and money-bought absolution,—all these things produced their natural fruits. There was not a commandment of the ten which men

might not easily trample under foot, so long as they kept in with the priests, and submitted to the Church.

This picture of the three centuries before the Reformation, may seem a black and extravagant one. I have no reason to think it is a bit over-coloured. The more you look into authentic and honest history, such as the works of Strype, Burnet, and Blunt, the more you will find it is a true and correct account.¹

Of course my readers will remember I am only speaking of the *religious* condition of the age. I do not say that there were no able statesmen, and brave, honourable warriors in those times. No doubt there were many, just as there were many in the palmy days of heathen Greece or Rome. I do not say that ALL the clergy were ignorant, unlearned, or immoral. I say nothing of the kind.

There were clever ecclesiastical architects in those times. Our cathedrals and old parish churches supply abundant proof of that. Even now we cannot surpass them in building up material temples.

There were hard students and deep thinkers in those times. Such schoolmen as Alexander Hales, in 1240 (doctor irrefragabilis); Roger Bacon, in 1280 (doctor mirabilis); Duns Scotus, in 1308 (doctor subtilis); William Ockham, in 1347 (doctor singularis); Thomas Bradwardine, in 1350 (doctor profundus), were known and respected all over Europe, however little known now.

There were stout opponents of the Pope's supremacy, like Robert Grostète, Bishop of Lincoln. There were bold exposers of Popish corruptions, like John Wycliffe, who paved the way for the Reformation, and did good in their day. There were Lollards scattered here and there all over England, who held much truth, and patiently endured much persecution.

But one swallow does not make a summer. Men like these were bright exceptions, and only made the darkness around them more visible. The fact still remains, that the enormous majority of English clergy and people, for the three centuries before the Reformation, were in a miserable state of superstition, ignorance, and corruption. There was an utter famine of vital Christianity in the land. Practically, the religion of most Englishmen was Mary-worship, saint-worship, and slavery to priests. The true doctrines of Scripture concerning Christ and the Holy Ghost were almost unknown. The truth about repentance, faith, conversion, and justification was nearly as much lost sight of as if it had never existed. If you had taken the first hundred men you could see in the streets of London, Norwich, Bristol, Exeter, York, or Leicester, and asked them separately, "What must a man do to be saved?"—I doubt whether five in the hundred could have given you the right apostolical answer, if their lives had depended on it.

Such was the English Church when the Pope of Rome had everything in his own hands, and Romanism reigned supreme and undisturbed. Let this lesson

¹ Calvin's tract on *The Advantages of an Inventory of Relics*, is a most curious and instructive storehouse of information on Romish relics, and ought to be better known than it is.

sink down into your heart, and be kept ready for use. Keep your powder dry. Listen not to those people who tell you that the grand panacea for the evils of this day is a revival of Catholic principles. Listen not for a moment to those who advise a return to Romish practices, and hint at the benefits of re-union with Rome! Re-union with Rome! I cannot imagine a more monstrous proposition, and one more thoroughly condemned by the teaching of history and common sense.

Tell those who advise re-union with Rome, that you know what Romanism did for England when it ruled undisturbed, and that this is enough for you. Tell them that the beautiful "Catholic system," so called, was the reign of ignorance, priestcraft, superstition, idolatry, and immorality, and that you have no wish to return to it. It was tried for three centuries, and failed; it was weighed in the balances, and found wanting. It built splendid churches of stone, but it raised no living temples to the glory of God. Tell them, in short, that the panacea for these days is not the revival of masses, processions, incense, monasteries, nunneries, sacrificial garments, and the confessional; but more preaching of the Gospel, more reading of the Bible, more repentance, more faith, more holiness. Tell them all this, and you will have learned a good lesson from the Church history of the three centuries before the Reformation.

Facts are facts, and there is no getting over the facts of history. When it is right to forsake light for darkness, and truth for error, knowledge for ignorance, purity for impurity, liberty for bondage, and good for bad, then, and not till then, it will be time for English Churchmen to talk of re-union with the infallible and unchangeable Church of Rome. In the face of the facts of English Church history, I boldly say that rather than go back to Popery, the Church of England had better perish altogether.

II. The next lesson from English Church history to which I shall invite the attention of my readers, will be drawn from the latter part of the sixteenth century, the period between 1530 and 1600. That period comprises the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Bloody Mary, and Elizabeth. Within these seventy years took place the mightiest change of thought and opinion which this country ever passed through. The chains which the Popes of Rome had thrown around England, were broken and cast aside. Englishmen awoke from their long sleep, and returned to the Christianity of the Scriptures. In a word, England ceased to be a Popish country, and became Protestant.

Now what is the lesson I want men to learn from this part of English Church history? Why, simply this: I want them to settle in their minds that *the change of these seventy years is a cause for unmixed thankfulness, and that the greatest blessing God has ever bestowed on this country was the Protestant Reformation*. Hold fast that lesson, and never let it go.

I am sadly afraid a right estimate of the English Reformation is not so common as it used to be. A generation has risen up in the last fifty years, which either reviles the Reformers, or else plumes itself on making an idol of a vague

thing called “earnestness,” and regarding all differences of creeds as strifes of words. Some in this day are not ashamed to scoff at Cranmer, Latimer, and other martyred Reformers, and labour to blacken their characters and depreciate their work. Others do not hesitate to tell you that they think “earnest” Papists quite as good Christians as “earnest” Protestants, and admire Erasmus as much as Luther, Gardiner as much as Hooper, and Queen Mary as much as King Edward VI. Let me, in the face of these strange views, dwell a little on the immense value of the Protestant Reformation, and try to point out how deeply thankful we Englishmen ought to be for it.

I grant many things without demur to those who carp at the English Reformation. I grant that the agents by whom it was first begun and carried out, were many of them most unsatisfactory men. I am not concerned to defend the character of Henry VIII., or of the courtiers of Edward VI., or even of that very arbitrary lady, Queen Elizabeth. I am not prepared to defend everything that Cranmer and his companions did and said in the heat of conflict. I freely admit that the Reformation was never perfected and completed, and that even the best Reformers themselves were not perfect men.

But still, after all these admissions, I firmly maintain that the English Reformation was an enormous blessing, and I pity the Englishman who cannot see it in this light. Say what men will against it, there remain certain great historical facts, which never can be got over, and I commend these facts to the attention of all who read this paper.

I say then, without hesitation, that to the Reformation we owe an English Bible, and permission for everyone to read it. Before the Reformation the Bible was locked up in a dead language, and the laity were discouraged from acquaintance with it.—To the Reformation we owe the revival of the true doctrine of forgiveness of sins by simple faith in Christ’s mediation. Before it men groped in darkness, amidst saints, and priests, and penances, and absolutions, and never got peace for their souls.—To the Reformation we owe an English religious service in every parish throughout the land, which any poor man can understand. Before it the priests repeated prayers in Latin, and the people worshipped by deputy.—To the Reformation we owe the production of a true standard of practical holiness. Before it people fancied the highest pitch of godliness was to be a monk or a nun.—To the Reformation we owe the assertion of the supremacy of the Holy Scriptures, as the sole rule of faith and practice. Before it there was no certain standard, except that most uncertain guide the “voice of the Church.”—To the Reformation we owe the revival of true preaching of the Gospel. Before it people could learn nothing except from forms and ceremonies.—To the Reformation we owe the compilation of one of the best confessions of faith the world has ever seen,—the Thirty-nine Articles. Before it few English Christians knew clearly what they thought or believed.—To the Reformation we owe the simplifying, the purifying, and the popularizing of the whole Christian religion within these realms. Before it the true faith was fairly buried under a mass of idolatry, superstition, priestcraft, and mystery.—In a word, the debt

we owe to the Reformation is so large that the great difficulty is to realize it at all. It is a debt of which we can form no conception at this day, because we can form no adequate idea of the state of things from which the overthrow of Popery delivered us. But this I am bold to say,—whatever England is among the nations of the earth, as a Christian country, whatever political liberty we enjoy, whatever freedom we have in religion, whatever safety for life and property there is among us, whatever purity and happiness there is in our homes, whatever protection and care for the poor,—we owe it, in very great measure, to the *Protestant Reformation*. The man that does not see all this is, in my humble judgment, a very blind or a very ungrateful man.

Let this lesson of English Church history sink down into your heart, and never forget it. Listen not to those who, like some of the Ritualistic champions, are fond of vilifying the Reformation as a “deformation” and scoffing at the Reformers as “unredeemed villains,” deserving no more respect than Danton, Marat, and Robespierre! Violent language like this injures nobody but those who use it. Of course, the enemies of Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and Hooper in this day can easily point to defects in their characters and blemishes in their lives. They were only men, and as men they were imperfect. But when they have strained their malice to the uttermost, they will never find Englishmen who did more good in their day, lived better, died better, and left a better mark on our country, than did our martyred Reformers.

For my own part, the more I consider the enormous difficulties the Reformers had to contend with, the self-willed, tyrannical, inconsistent conduct of Henry VIII., the tender years of Edward VI., the bloody, persecuting cruelty of Queen Mary, the arbitrary, compromising policy of Queen Elizabeth,—the more I consider these things, the more I admire the English Reformers. I marvel not that they did so little, but that they did so much. I marvel not that they were imperfect and committed mistakes, but that they were what they were and did what they did.

Say what men will, there are facts which speak louder than words. The Reformation found Englishmen steeped in ignorance, and left them in possession of knowledge,—found them without Bibles, and left them with God’s Word in every parish,—found them in darkness, and left them in comparative light,—found them priest-ridden and left them enjoying the liberty which Christ bestows,—found them strangers to the blood of atonement, to faith and grace and holiness, and left them with the key to the possession of these things in their hands,—found them blind, and left them seeing,—found them slaves, and left them free. For ever let us thank God for the Reformation! It lighted a candle which ought never to be extinguished or allowed to grow dim.

III. The third lesson from English Church history to which I shall invite the attention of my readers, is taken from the one hundred and fifty years which immediately followed the Reformation. That period includes the reign of James I. and Charles I., the Commonwealth, Charles II., James II., William and Mary,

George I., and George II. Within it you will find some of the most momentous events in the history of England,—the overthrow of the Church and Monarchy, the Commonwealth, the Restoration, the expulsion of the Nonconformists in 1662, the Revolution which expelled the Stuarts from the throne, and the final establishment of religious toleration. Taken altogether, it is a melancholy era in our ecclesiastical annals. I pity the Churchman who can examine it without feelings of shame, sorrow, and humiliation.

Now what is the lesson I learn from this period? Why, simply this: *Departure from the principles of the Reformation inflicted irreparable injury on the Church of England.*

That there was a gradual departure from Reformation principles during the seventeenth century, is as certain as any fact in history. Under the leadership of Archbishop Laud there arose in England a school of Churchmen who made no secret of their want of entire sympathy with our Reformers, and their desire to make our Church less Protestant, less evangelical, less Calvinistic (as they called it), than it was in the days of Edward VI. and Elizabeth. The divines of this school would have been horrified if you had called them Romanizers; but that they were *un-protestantizers* is a fact that cannot well be denied. About the doctrines of grace, about the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, about the Episcopal office, about the primitive Church and tradition, about the ceremonials of public worship, about the so-called impropriety of publicly attacking Popery, about the so-called wickedness of Calvinism,—the tone of these Laudian divines was peculiar and unmistakable. Their hearts were not entirely with the Reformers. Study the religious literature of this day, and you will find that, excepting Hall, and Davenant, and Usher, and Hopkins, and a very few more, there is hardly a Churchman of that day whose writings have the full taste of the Protestant Reformation. You feel at once, as you read most of the divinity of the age of the Stuarts, that you have stepped into a new theology, and are in a new atmosphere. Learning, eloquence, devoutness, good reasoning,—all this you will find abundantly in the pages of Caroline divines. But you miss the clear, distinct, sharply-cut doctrinal system of the martyred Fathers of the Church of England, and their immediate successors. You have landed on a new soil, and are breathing a new air. And the explanation is very simple. Everywhere, almost, under the Stuarts, the bishops and clergy gradually fell away from the old standard of the Reformation, and were less thoroughly Protestant than the men of Edward VI.'s and Elizabeth's day.

Of course it would be a mistake to suppose that there were not many good and conscientious men among the followers of Laud, and the leading Churchmen under the Stuarts. There were many, I believe, who were firmly persuaded they were doing the Church service in drawing back a little from the standard of the Reformers, and who thought they were only making the Church more beautiful, more primitive, and more excellent, because less Genevan. There were many who really thought that the best way to make men Churchmen was to compel them to come to church, and the surest way to stop Nonconformity

was to persecute Nonconformists. But it is a curious fact, and most noteworthy in these times, that these well-meaning Churchmen seem to have been utterly blind to *the consequences* of their movement. They appear never to have asked themselves in what light their proceedings were regarded by others. They did not understand the English people. They awoke too late to find that they had been like children playing with fire. They found that the consequences of drawing back from the old paths, directly and indirectly, were disastrous, mischievous, and evil in the extreme. Let me show you what they were.

First, there arose throughout the middle classes and lower orders a spirit of thorough alienation from the Church of England. The attempt to compel uniformity failed completely, as it always will. Worshippers must be volunteers, and not pressed men. An impression spread everywhere that the bishops were not true Protestants at heart, and could not be trusted. The mass of English people began to dislike prelates whom they saw principally occupied in persecuting Puritans, silencing preachers, checking zeal, exalting forms, deifying sacraments, and complimenting Popery. They began to hate the liturgy itself, when they saw it crammed down men's throats by force, and people persecuted if they prayed without it. The multitude seldom draws nice distinctions. It measures institutions chiefly by their working and administration, and cares little for theories and philosophical principles. Episcopacy no doubt was primitive and apostolical, and the liturgy was very venerable and beautiful. But little by little Englishmen, between 1600 and 1650, began to connect Episcopacy with tyranny, the Liturgy with formality, and the Church of England with Popery, fines, imprisonment, and punishments. When the famous Long Parliament met, in the time of Charles I., there was a painful unanimity of ill-feeling towards the poor old Church of England. The county and borough members, with few exceptions, were found for once entirely of one mind. They were thoroughly dissatisfied with the Church Establishment, and its assailants, both in number and influence, completely swamped its defenders. *And all this was the result of retrograding from Reformation principles.*

But, unhappily, want of confidence was not the only consequence of departure from thorough Protestant principles. The general dissatisfaction culminated at last in the temporary destruction of the Church of England. An ecclesiastical revolution took place, which settled at length into a kind of reign of terror. The pent-up feelings of the middle and lower orders, once let loose, broke out into a hurricane, before which the framework of the Church of England was clean swept away. Bishops, and deans, and clergy, and liturgy were shovelled off the stage like so much rubbish. Good things as well as bad were involved in one common ruin. A bloody civil war broke out. Charles I. followed Laud and Strafford to the scaffold. Everything in Church and State was turned upside down. Common order at last was only kept by the iron hand of a military dictator, that great son of Anak, Oliver Cromwell. The crown and the mitre and the Prayer-book were all alike excommunicated, and rolled in the dust. *And all this was the*

result of departing from the principles of the Reformation. Those who led that movement sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind.

Nor have we come to the end of the story. There were other indirect consequences, of which we feel the bad effects down to this day. The whole balance of English feeling about the Church of England was completely disarranged and disturbed, and equilibrium has never been completely restored. A pendulum was set swinging which has now oscillated violently for two hundred years. First came a strong reaction in favour of the Church, when the Stuarts returned to the throne after Cromwell's death, having learned nothing and forgotten nothing. Moderation and toleration were then thrown to the winds, and Episcopalians proved that they could be as intolerant as the Nonconformists of the Westminster Assembly. The wretched Act of Uniformity was passed, by which two thousand of the best clergy of the age were turned out of our pale, and lost to the Church for ever. Then came a long and dreary period of exhaustion and stagnation, a time during which the Church, like a torpid sloth, existed and hung on the State tree, but scarcely lived, moved, or breathed. And at last came the season of universal toleration, when Nonconformity was fairly settled, legalized, and rooted in the land for ever, and the Church stood face to face with myriads of irritated Dissenters. And *all this was the consequence of departure from the old principles of the Protestant Reformation.*

Such are the lessons of English Church history in the century and a half after the Reformation,—mischief, irreparable mischief, arising out of the retrograde policy of zealous but misguided Churchmen. I trust these lessons will sink down into the hearts of my readers, and that they will know how to use them.

Listen not to those who in the present day are incessantly misrepresenting the Puritans. Many try to persuade you that the Puritans were enemies to the Church of England, unlearned, ignorant fanatics, who hated alike the crown, the bishops, and the Prayer-book. The man who says so only shows his own ignorance of historical facts. With all their many faults, the Puritans were not so black as they are painted. Charles II., in his declaration of 21st October 1660, admits that the Puritans were not averse either to Episcopacy or a form of prayer. With all their errors and shortcomings, the Puritans, as a body, were better Churchmen in matters of doctrine than many of the men who drove them out of the Church. Their written works speak for them to this very day. Let any intelligent man compare the works of Laud and Heylin, and their companions, with those of Owen, and Baxter, and Manton, and Charnock, and Watson, and Brooks, and their fellow-labourers, and say which class of writers is most in harmony with the doctrine of the Thirty-nine Articles. Let him do that honestly, and I have no doubt whatever about the reply.

Settle it in your mind that the large mass of Nonconformity which has existed in England ever since the days of the Stuarts down to this very day, is mainly the result of the stupid retrograde policy of the bishops of the Church of England. The bulk of the Nonconformists of the seventeenth century would probably never have left our Church, if our Church had not drawn back from the

Reformation. They had no abstract dislike of Episcopacy, or a Liturgy, or an Establishment. But they did dislike the Romanizing tendency of our prelates, and would not give way to it. If men like Cranmer, and Grindal, and Abbot, and Jewel, had been the rulers of the Church, nine-tenths of English Nonconformity, I believe, would never have existed. The blame, in very great measure, lies at our own door. By departure from Reformation principles the Church cut off her own hands, and plucked out her own eyes, and inflicted injuries on herself which will probably never be healed. To speak plainly, nine-tenths of English Nonconformity were created and built up by the Church's own folly and unfaithfulness. We departed first from the Reformation, and retrograded from the sharp-cut Protestantism of the Reformers; and then the Nonconformists departed from us, and set up for themselves. If we are weakened this day by the existence of huge bodies of Independents, Presbyterians, and Baptists in our land, we must remember we ourselves were first to blame. If the Church had done her duty to her children, and walked in the steps of Cranmer, and Ridley, and Latimer, and Jewel, her children in all probability would never have left her fold.

IV. The next period of English Church history to which I shall invite the attention of my readers, comprises the interval between 1730 and 1830, and takes in the reign of the three last Georges. It is an era which witnessed a religious change in this country, second only in importance to that of the Reformation. It witnessed the rise and progress of what is commonly called Methodism, and the formation of the Evangelical body in the Church of England.

Now what is the lesson I want you to learn from this period? It is simply this: *The revival of Reformation principles in the eighteenth century was the salvation of English Christianity.*

Few persons, unless they have specially examined the subject, can have any idea of the low and degraded state of religion in England in the middle of the eighteenth century. From the expulsion of the Puritans in 1662, for a period of eighty or ninety years, the Church of Christ in England seemed to fall lower and lower every year, until a thick moral and spiritual darkness overspread the land. Mere natural theology, with hardly any distinctive doctrines of the Gospel, formed the staple teaching both in church and chapel. Sermons were little better than dry moral essays, devoid of anything likely to awaken or convert souls. Infidelity and Scepticism were openly avowed by many of the laity, and Arianism and Socinianism were unblushingly taught by not a few of the clergy. Learned and well-meaning bishops, like Seeker, and Butler, and Gibson, and Lowth, and Horne, and Lavington, and Warburton, had eyes enough to see the evil of the times, but seemed powerless to meet them. As for the moral writers of the day, such as Addison, Johnson, and Steele, they had no more influence on the masses than Mrs. Partington's famous broom had on the waves of the Atlantic Ocean.

It is really difficult to name a single bright and redeeming feature in this dark picture of the first half of the eighteenth century. The parochial clergy were sunk

in worldliness, and neither knew nor cared anything about their profession. Their lives were too often immoral, and their sermons were so unutterably poor, that the printed ones are now unsaleable, and the unprinted ones must have been rubbish. Education for the lower orders was at zero, and few rural parishes had any school at all. Gambling, duelling, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, fornication, and drunkenness were hardly regarded as sins by fashionable people, and of course were thought very venial by the poor. Hogarth's pictures, and the writings of Fielding, Smollett, Swift, and Sterne, are sufficient evidence of the morality that prevailed!

Hardly one of the good works with which we are now familiar was even known at this period. Wilberforce had not attacked the slave trade. Howard had not reformed prisons. Raikes had not founded Sunday schools. We had no Bible Societies, no Ragged Schools, no City Missions, no Pastoral Aid Societies. The spirit of slumber was over the land. In a religious and moral point of view England was sound asleep. In short, one only marvels that the foundations of Church and State and social order were not completely broken up, and that the country was not given over to a counterpart of the first French Revolution.

Now what was it that, under God, saved England, and turned the tide of irreligion and immorality? To what instrumentality are we indebted for the immense change which unquestionably took place between 1750 and 1830, and the enormous improvement in the moral and religious condition of the land, which even our worst enemies must allow? This is one of the most instructive inquiries in English Church history, and I invite your special attention to the answer.

The agents who revived English Christianity from its fallen and death-like condition, were a few individuals, mostly clergymen, whom God stirred up about the same time; and the agency which they employed was the preaching of the great leading principles of the Protestant Reformation. George Whitefield, John Wesley, Charles Wesley, William Grimshaw, William Romaine, Henry Venn, Daniel Rowlands, John Berridge, and a few score of like-minded clergymen,—these were the men who literally delivered the Church of England from death; and the weapons of their warfare were the glorious old doctrines of our Protestant Reformers. The supremacy of Holy Scripture,—the total corruption of human nature,—the atonement wrought out for us by Christ's vicarious death,—justification by faith,—the absolute necessity of heart conversion by the Holy Spirit,—the inseparable connection between faith and holiness,—salvation by free grace,—these were the truths which the evangelists of the eighteenth century went about preaching and proclaiming. They found them in the Bible; they found them in the Thirty-nine Articles; they found them in the Prayer-book, the homilies, and the writings of the Reformers. Finding them there, they boldly told men that this was the old way of truth, and while they told them so, they turned the world upside down. Yes! without money, without patronage, without bishops, without the press, without Exeter Hall, they effected a spiritual revolution!

The amount of good which these gallant evangelists did will probably never be known till the last day. At first the bishops and nobility affected to despise them; the men of letters sneered at them as fanatics; the wits cut jokes, and invented smart names for them; the Church shut her doors on them; the old Dissenters too often turned the cold shoulder on them; the ignorant mob frequently persecuted and pelted them;—but the movement went on, and made itself felt in every part of the land. Many were aroused and awakened to thought about religion,—many were shamed out of their sins,— many were restrained and frightened at their own ungodliness,—many were gathered together, and induced to profess decided religion,—many were converted,— many were silenced, and secretly provoked to emulation. The little sapling became a strong tree; the little rill became a deep, broad stream; the little spark became a steady burning flame. A candle was lighted of which we are now enjoying the benefit. The feeling of all classes in the land about religion and morality, insensibly assumed a totally different complexion. And all this, remember, was effected by a revival of the doctrines of the Reformation. These were the doctrines which turned England upside down, arrested the attention of peers and philosophers, made colliers and ploughmen weep till their dirty faces were seamed with tears, plucked thousands like brands from the burning, and altered the character of the age. Call them simple and elementary doctrines if you will; say, if you please, that you see nothing grand, new, striking about them; but there remains the undeniable fact of history,—that the revival of Reformation doctrines saved English Christianity from destruction a hundred years ago.¹

Let this fourth great lesson of English Church history sink down into your heart, and be ready to use it. Listen not to those who are fond of running down the Evangelical leaders of the eighteenth century, and undervaluing the mighty work which they did.

Some men, forsooth, in these latter days, will tell us that Whitefield, and Wesley, and Romaine, and Berridge, and Venn, and Grimshaw were unlearned and ignorant men,—narrow-minded zealots, who despised sacraments, and held very partial and imperfect views of truth,— ranting fanatics, who disliked the Prayer-book, and cared for nothing but preaching,—hot-headed enthusiasts, who put no real matter into their sermons, and only “split the ears of groundlings with excessive loudness of voice.” I advise my readers to pay no regard to such accusations. Those who make them are only exposing their own ignorance of simple facts.

As to learning, the Reformers of the eighteenth century were nearly all members of Oxford and Cambridge, and some of them Fellows of Colleges. Romaine and the Wesleys were well known at Christ Church, Oxford. Berridge, of Clare Hall, Cambridge, was one of the first men of his year. They were as well

¹ Those who wish to see this part of my subject more fully discussed, are referred to a volume which I brought out in 1869, entitled *Christian Leaders of the Last Century*. Crown 8vo, cloth gilt, 3s. net (Thynne).

educated as most clergymen of this day, and certainly had more brains than many who now sneer at them.

As to despising sacraments, it is totally false. I cannot find one among them who did not attach great importance to the Lord's Supper, and did not frequently press it in its due proportion on his believing hearers. I doubt if there is a single Ritualist incumbent in all England who has as many regular communicants as Grimshaw had at Haworth. The difference between the Reformers of the eighteenth century and many of their modern detractors is simply this,—they advised none to be communicants unless they repented and believed!

As to neglecting all parts of religious worship except preaching, again the charge is totally false. No one valued the Prayer-book and read it more impressively than Whitefield, Rowlands, and Romaine. No congregations in this day, I suspect, have better or heartier singing than their congregations. They had not "Hymns Ancient and Modern," perhaps, but they had among them such hymn-writers as Charles Wesley, Toplady, and John Newton. Even now Ritualists are obliged to confess the beauty of their hymns. If they do not like their doctrines, they are not ashamed to use their "spiritual songs."

Grand Gothic churches, I grant, the Reformers of the last century did not build. They had no money to build them, and if they had, the age supplied no architects to design them. But after all they had among them plenty of temples of the Holy Ghost. Better a thousand times have ugly square brick chapels full of living stones and the Spirit of God, than grand cathedral-like churches full of coldness, deadness, histrionic ceremonial, superstition, and formality.

Once more I say, let us never despise the men who revived Reformation doctrines in the eighteenth century. Whatever be their faults and infirmities, they saved the life of the Church of England, and without them the Establishment would not have survived to this day. If short-sighted bishops and blind clergy had not snubbed and opposed them, they would have done even a greater work than they did. But for what they did let us thank God, and never refuse to give them the honour they deserve.

V. The fifth and last period of English Church history to which I finally invite attention, is that which extends from the year 1830 down to the present day. It is a period which is characterized by one great and paramount feature. That feature is the rise and progress of that strange Romanizing movement within the Church of England, which rightly or wrongly is called Ritualism.

Now what is the lesson I shall ask my readers to learn from this period? I reply honestly that I shall not talk of any lesson at all. We are in the midst of the conflict. We are poor judges of what is going on around us. But I shall mention the conclusions that I have arrived at in my own mind. These conclusions are simply these, that *Ritualism is a fresh departure from the principles of the Reformation and a movement towards Rome, and that as such it endangers the very existence of the Church of England.*

A question arises at the very outset of this part of my subject which demands consideration. Is the movement called Ritualism a movement towards Rome or not? Do the Ritualists really wish to suppress Protestantism and re-introduce Popery? Hundreds of well-meaning and simple-minded Churchmen reply, No! They would have us believe that Ritualists are only aiming at a more ornate ceremonial than other Churchmen, and that they are not Romanizers at heart. With these amiable apologists I have no sympathy at all. The question is one on which I feel no manner of doubt. That Ritualism is a Romeward movement, and that it leads to Popery, is as clear to my mind as the sun at noonday. The proofs, in my humble judgment, are clear, full, and unanswerable.

It is proved by the writings of all the leading Ritualists of the day. Let any honest and impartial Churchman study such papers as the *Church Times* and *Church Review*, read some of the “Catechisms” and “Manuals of Devotion” published by Ritualistic clergymen, peruse the debates and proceedings of such bodies as the English Church Union, and tell us plainly the impression these writings have on his mind. I defy him to avoid the conclusion that Ritualism is the highway to Rome.

It is proved by the repeated secession of Ritualists from the Church of England to the Church of Rome. Why have such men as Manning, and Newman, and Oakley, and the two Wilberforces, and Orby Shipley, and Luke Rivington, gone over to the Pope’s camp? Simply because they found the principles of their school could land them in no other logical conclusion. But their migration was one more proof that Ritualism is the highway to Rome.

It is proved by the repeated reference to the subject which bishops have made in their charges for the last fifty years. Mild and gentle and conciliatory to an extreme, as these documents have often been, it is impossible not to see that our prelates detect a Romeward tendency in Ritualism. Their cautions to Ritualists, you will notice, are almost always in one direction. “Take care,” they seem to say, “that you do not go too far in a Romish direction. You are excellent, earnest, useful men; but don’t go too near the edge. Your danger is, tumbling over into the arms of Rome”

It is proved by the rejoicings of the Roman Catholics themselves over the whole Ritualistic movement, and the disgust with which it is regarded by Scotch Presbyterians, real old-fashioned Nonconformists, and most English Methodists. Both the joy of the one party and the disgust of the other arise from the same cause. Both see clearly that Ritualism damages Protestantism and helps the Pope.

It is proved, above all, by the unvarying character of all the ceremonial novelties which Ritualists have thrust into our Church worship during the last twenty-five years. They have all been in one direction, whether of dress, or gesture, or posture, or action, or anything else. They have all been as unprotestant as possible. They have all been borrowed or imitated from Popery. They have all exhibited one common bias and animus,—an anxious desire to get as far as possible from the ways of the Reformers, and to get as near as possible, whether

legally or illegally, to the ways of Rome. They have all shown one common systematic determination to unprotestantize, as far as possible, the simple worship of the poor old Church of England, and to assimilate it, as far as possible, to the gaudy and sensuous worship of Popery. A short catalogue of specimens will show what I mean.

(a) The Reformers found the sacrifice of the mass in our Church. They cast it out as a “blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit,” and called the Lord’s Supper a sacrament. The Ritualists have re-introduced the word *sacrifice*, and glory in calling the Lord’s Supper a mass!

(b) The Reformers found altars in all our churches. They ordered them to be taken down, cast the word “*altar*” entirely out of our Prayer-book, and spoke only of the Lord’s table and the Lord’s board. The Ritualists delight in calling the Lord’s table *the altar*, and setting up Popish altars in all their churches!

(c) The Reformers found our clergy sacrificing priests, and made them prayer-reading, preaching ministers,—ministers of God’s Word and sacraments. The Ritualists glory in calling every clergyman a sacrificing *priest*!

(d) The Reformers found the doctrine of a real corporal presence in our Church, and laid down their lives to oppose it. They would not even allow the expression “real presence” a place in our Prayer-book. The Ritualists have re-introduced the doctrine, and honour the consecrated elements in the Lord’s Supper as if Christ’s natural body and blood were in them.

(e) The Reformers found in all our churches images, rood screens, crucifixes, and holy places, and indignantly cast them out. The Ritualists are incessantly trying to bring them back.

(f) The Reformers found our worship stuffed with processions, incense-burning, flag-carrying, candles, gestures, postures, flowers, and gaudy sacrificial garments, and ordered them all to be put away. The Ritualists are always labouring to re-introduce them.

Can anyone in his senses doubt what all this means? Straws show which way the wind blows. Ceremonial trifles show the current of religious feeling. He that looks at the catalogue of facts which I have just brought forward, and then tells us that there is no tendency in Ritualism towards Rome, is past all argument, and must be let alone. There are none so blind as those that will not see.

But after all, is Ritualism doing any harm to the Church of England? With all its faults and defects, does not the movement do more good than evil? Is it not better to believe all things, and hope all things, and to leave Ritualism alone? These are questions which many in their simplicity are continually asking, and they are questions which demand a plain answer.

Some tell us that Ritualism has revived the Church, rallied the laity, infused a new spirit into the Establishment, lengthened her cords, and strengthened her stakes. Some tell us that the existence of a Ritualistic party in our Church is an excellent and healthy symptom, that parties keep each other in check, and act as counter irritants in the constitution, and that except Ritualism abides in the Church we shall not be saved. My own opinion is diametrically the reverse. I

believe that Ritualism has done, and is doing, universal damage to the Church of England, and that, unless checked or removed, it will prove the destruction of the Establishment.

Ritualism is dividing the clergy into two distinct parties, and hastening on an internecine conflict. So long as the difference was only between High Church and Low Church, little harm was done. But when the struggle is between Popery and Protestantism, union is impossible. Both parties cannot possibly co-operate with any advantage in the same ecclesiastical pale, and it is preposterous to suppose they can. One or the other is in the wrong place. What saith the Scripture? The Master Himself has declared, "If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark iii. 25).¹

Ritualism is gradually robbing our Church of some of its best members among the laity. Not a few bankers, lawyers, doctors, merchants, and naval and military officers, are dropping off and leaving the ship. Their confidence is thoroughly shaken. They cannot understand an Established Church in which the service is Romish in one parish and Protestant in another. They are becoming disgusted with the continued toleration of Romish novelties, which their own common sense tells them are as thoroughly unchurchmanlike as they are unscriptural. Some of them go off to the Plymouth Brethren, some join the Dissenters, and some stand aloof, and refuse to take any part in the Church's affairs. This state of things is most mischievous. The life-blood of the Church is being drained away.

Ritualism is alienating the middle classes and lower orders from the Church of England. Thousands of tradesmen and farmers and artisans have an instinctive horror of Popery. They may not be very intelligent or deeply read in theological matters, but they are determined not to put up with Popery. They cannot draw nice distinctions: they are apt to call a spade a spade, and to give things their right name. And if they see the slightest attempt to re-introduce Popish ceremonies into our parish churches, their suspicions are roused, and they walk off to chapel. The Churchman who allows these suspicions to be roused may be earnest, well-meaning, and zealous, but he is no true friend to the Church of England.

Once for all, I must honestly avow that my chief fears of Ritualism arise from the effect which it has on the minds of the lower and middle classes. They do not like it. They will not have it. They call it *Popery*.

¹ If anyone supposes that I wish to narrow the limits of English Churchmanship, and to confine it to one party, he is totally mistaken. I never met a sensible Evangelical Churchman who did not admit fully that the Church of England is a comprehensive Church, and that she was meant to include in her pale the three old-fashioned schools of opinion commonly known as High, Low, and Broad.

But we do maintain, and shall never cease to maintain, that the Church of England was never meant to comprehend downright Popery, and that those who hold all Romish doctrine have no lawful place in her ministry.

Shallow-minded members of the aristocracy,—ill-taught ascetics,—self-willed and half-instructed members of Evangelical families, who want to mix ball-going and worldliness with religious formalism, and to compound for the one by supporting the other,—idle young ladies and thoughtless young men, who love anything gaudy, sensational, and theatrical in worship,—all these may stick to Ritualism and stoutly support it. They are like children who admire poppies more than corn, and like babies who care for toys more than food. But Ritualism does not meet the wants of the hard-working, the hard-headed, the hard-handed masses of the middle classes, and intelligent artisans, the brain and muscle of England. These men want food for their souls and rest for their consciences. They find life too hard and heart-wearing to be content with trifles and toys in worship. If the Church can only offer them Ritualism, they will turn away from her in disgust. If she will faithfully give them the pure Gospel, they will never leave her, and never forsake her.

Only let Ritualism grow and spread for a few more years, and the end will come. The Church will perish for want of Churchmen. Generals and colonels and bands do not make up an army, and bishops and choristers and clergy alone do not make up a Church. The Church of England will never stand if it disgusts and drives away its congregations. Disestablishment will come as a matter of course. The Church of a minority will not be spared in England any more than in Ireland. Statesmen and orators will declare that the English Establishment is “a huge anomaly,” and must be got rid of. The voice of the people will demand our destruction; and on modern principles it will be obeyed. The Church of England, once disestablished, will split into pieces, or become a mere sect, like the Scotch Episcopal Church; and the pages of history will then record that she made shipwreck of all her greatness by the suicidal attempt to recede from Protestantism and re-introduce Popery.

Such are my reasons for regarding Ritualism with unmixed dislike. It threatens the very existence of our beloved Church of England. Such are the conclusions I arrive at from the review of the fifth and last period of English Church history. Whether my fears are well-founded, and the lesson I have drawn the true one, time alone will show. But I should not be doing my duty as an honest man, if I did not tell my readers that we are in a most critical position, and that the future must be regarded with deep anxiety. In short, I leave the Church history of the last sixty years, with the firm belief that, unless Ritualism dries up or is checked, the Established Church of this country in a very few years will be broken to pieces.¹ The leaders of the Ritualists, I willingly allow, may be zealous, earnest, able, well-meaning men. They may conscientiously believe, like many of Laud’s school, that they are helping the Church of England, and doing God service. But it is my firm belief that, like Laud’s school, they are ruining

¹ “The proceedings of the English Church Union will destroy the English Church, if they are encouraged in their present course.”—(Letter of the Bishop of Bath and Wells. December 1870.)

the Church instead of helping it, and are likely to bring the whole house to the ground.

My paper must now come to a conclusion. I have tried to the best of my ability to draw lessons from five periods of English Church history,—(1) from the period before the Reformation,—(2) from the period of the Reformation itself,—(3) from the days of Laud and his party,—(4) from the days of Evangelical revivalism in the eighteenth century,—(5) from the rise and progress of Ritualism in our own day. On each and all of these periods I feel that I have only touched the surface of my subject, and that I might have said far more if time had permitted. But I hope at any rate I have supplied some food for thought. I shall now wind up all with a few words of practical application. I have dealt with five periods of Church history, and I will offer, as a friend, five short pieces of parting advice.

(1) My first advice to every one into whose hands this paper may fall is this. Read up the great facts of English Church history, and make yourself thoroughly familiar with them. Know what our country was when the Pope ruled supreme; know what the Reformation did for us; know what the principles of the Reformation were and are. Read such books as *Foxe's Martyrs*, *Soames' History of the Reformation*, *Fuller's Church History*, *Blunt's History of the Reformation*, *Marsden's History of the Puritans*. Read, not least, your own Thirty-nine Articles, at least once every year. Do this and you will not be easily led astray. Ignorance is one great ally of Ritualism.¹

(2) My second advice is this. Mind you do not underrate the danger in which the Church of England is in from Ritualism. That danger, I believe, is far greater than many suppose. The friends of Ritualism among the clergy are numerous, zealous, able, unwearied. Many Ritualists compass sea and land, and leave no stone unturned, to effect their objects. Many of them, I believe, are determined never to rest till they have the mass at every parish communion table, and the confessional in every church, and sacrificial garments on every clerical back. Do not fold your arms and sit still. If we mean to preserve Protestantism in the Church of England, if we mean to keep the martyrs' candle lighted, we must stand to our arms and fight. Indolence and self-security are another great ally of Ritualism.

(3) My third advice is this. Settle it in your mind that Protestant and Evangelical principles are the real true principles of the Church of England, and the only principles that will keep the Church alive. They are the principles of your own Thirty-nine Articles, and of the glorious Reformation. They are the only

¹ Some men are fond of sneering at *Foxe's Martyrs*, and decrying Foxe as unworthy of credit. Such attacks are ancient things, and the friends of Popery have never ceased to make them. Those who care to see the opinion of Foxe entertained by such men as Parker, Grindal, Whitgift, Fuller, Strype, Burnet, Soames, Dr. Wordsworth, Southey, and Froude, will find them in the preface to my *Light from Old Times*. Cloth gilt, 2s. 6d. net (Thynne). They will there see that the estimate of Foxe formed by these eminent bishops and writers differs widely from that of some modern writers.

principles that do good to souls. Processions, incense, flowers, gaudy vestments, bowings, turnings, crossings, and the like, may gather crowds of gaping people for a time, like any other exhibition. But they convince no sinner, heal no conscience, build up no saint, lead none to Christ. Nothing will do that but the word of the Gospel and the grace of God. Never be ashamed of simple Evangelical religion. Want of confidence in it is another great ally of Ritualism.

(4) My fourth advice is this. Do not be in a hurry to leave the Church of England, because many of her clergy are unfaithful. It is cheap and easy policy for Churchmen to shirk trouble and run away in the hour of conflict; but it is neither manly, nor Christian, nor kind. It is a short-cut road out of difficulties, to launch the long-boat when the good ship is in jeopardy, and to leave your comrades to sink. But it is not the line of action which becomes an Englishman. As Nelson said at Trafalgar, "England expects every man to do his duty," so does the Church of England expect every Protestant Churchman to do his duty, and stick by the ship. Let us not play the enemy's game, by deserting the good old fortress, so long as the Articles are unchanged and the pulpit is unfettered. Let us not basely forsake our old mother in her day of trouble. Rather, like Venn, and Romaine, and Grimshaw, and Berridge, let us man the walls, stand to our guns, nail our colours to the mast, and fight as long as we have a foot to stand on. Sneaks and deserters who are always making strategical movements to the rear are the weakness of an army. Rabbit-hearted Churchmen, who are always bolting into holes at the slightest shadow of danger, are the best allies of Ritualism.

(5) My last advice is this. Work publicly and privately, and work hard, for the defence of Christ's truth and the maintenance of Reformation principles in the Church of England. But work together in an organized and systematic way, or else you will do very little. "Men with muskets" do not make an army, as the French found to their cost, and Evangelical Churchmen without organization will do but little in opposing Ritualism. Associate, unite, organize, work together, keep together, and much may be done. Work charitably and kindly, and make allowance for the utter ignorance in which many Ritualists live of the real nature of Evangelical principles. Many of them, alas, appear to know no more of the views of Evangelical Churchmen than an illiterate country labourer knows of the streets of London. They talk and write as if they had never heard of any theological school but their own! Remember this, and deal gently with them. But while you work charitably, lovingly, courteously, kindly, do not forget to work hard.—Work for your Church's sake; the Church of Hooper and Latimer deserves some exertion.—Work for your children's sake; when you are dead take heed lest they be left like sheep without a shepherd.—Work for your country's sake; her Protestantism is the key of her strength: this once lost, she is like Samson shorn of his hair.—Work not least for your own soul's sake. It will do you good. It will nerve your graces. It will keep down besetting sins. It is not exercise, but sitting still, that does the body harm.

Think of these things, and do not despise them. Some men may cry, "Peace! peace! Keep quiet! Oh, sacrifice anything for peace!" I answer, there can be no real peace while our Church tolerates and fosters Popery. Is ecclesiastical peace really so sweet that it is worth purchasing at the expense of truth? Is a quiet life so precious that, in order to secure it, we will tolerate the mass and auricular confession? Is it, or is it not?

God forbid that we should ever sacrifice truth to a love of peace! Peace in a Church without truth is a worthless possession. What others think I know not. My own mind is made up. I have come to one decided conclusion. I say, give me a really Protestant and Evangelical Established Church, or no Established Church at all. When the Reformed Church of England renounces her Protestant principles, and goes back to Popery, her life and glory will have clean departed, and she will not be worth preserving. She will be an offence to God, and not a resting-place for any true Christian.

NOTE.

CONTROVERSY about the Lord's Supper, we all know, is at this moment one of the chief causes of division and disturbance in the Church of England. No less than four great legal suits have arisen out of the subject; suits commonly known as the Mackonochie case, the Purchas case, the Bennett case, and the Ridsdale case. At such a crisis, it may not be uninteresting to some readers to hear the opinions of some of our well-known English divines about the points in dispute.

I will give fourteen quotations from fourteen men of no mean authority, and ask the reader to consider them.

(1) Archbishop Cranmer, in the Preface to his *Answer to Gardiner*, says:—

“They (the Romanists) say that Christ is corporally under or in the forms of bread and wine; we say that Christ is not there, neither corporally nor spiritually. But in them that worthily eat and drink the bread and wine He is spiritually, and corporally He is in heaven.—I mean not that Christ is spiritually, either on the table, or in the bread and wine that be set on the table, but I mean that He is present in the ministration and receiving of that Holy Supper, according to His own institution and ordinance.”—(See *Goode on the Eucharist*, vol. ii. p. 772.)

(2) Bishop Ridley, in his *Disputation at Oxford*, says:—

“The circumstances of the Scripture, the analogy and proportion of the Sacraments, and the testimony of the faithful Fathers, ought to rule us in taking the meaning of the Holy Scripture touching the Sacraments.

“But the words of the Lord's Supper, the circumstances of the Scripture, the analogy of the Sacraments, and the sayings of the Fathers do most effectually and plainly prove a figurative speech in the words of the Lord's Supper.

“Therefore a figurative sense and meaning is specially to be received in these words,—‘This is my body.’”—(See *Goode on the Eucharist*, vol. ii. p. 766.)

Again, in the same *Disputation at Oxford*, he says of the Romish doctrine of the Real Presence:—

“It destroyeth and taketh away the institution of the Lord's Supper, which was commanded only to be used and continued until the Lord Himself should come. If therefore He be now really present in the body of His flesh, then must the Supper cease; for a remembrance is not of a thing present, but of a thing past and absent. And, as one of the Fathers saith, ‘A figure is vain where the thing figured is present.’ (See *Foxe's Martyrs*, *in loco*.)

(3) Bishop Hooper, in his *Brief and Clear Confession of the Christian Faith*, says:—

“I believe that all this Sacrament consisteth in the use thereof; so that without the right use the bread and wine in nothing differ from other common bread and wine that is commonly used: and therefore I do not believe that the body of Christ can be contained, hid, or enclosed in the bread, under the bread, or with the bread,—neither the blood in the wine, under the wine, or with the wine. But I believe and confess the only body of Christ to be in heaven, on the right hand

of the Father; and that always, and as often as we use this bread and wine according to this ordinance and institution of Christ, we do verily and indeed receive His body and blood.”—(*Hooper’s Works*: Parker Society Edition, vol. ii. p. 48.)

(4) Bishop Latimer, in his *Disputation at Oxford*, says:—

“In the Sacrament there is none other presence of Christ required than a spiritual presence. And this presence is sufficient for a Christian man, and the presence by which we abide in Christ, and Christ in us, to the obtaining of eternal life if we persevere in the true Gospel; that this same presence may be called a real presence because to the faithful believer there is the real and spiritual body of Christ.”—(*Latimer’s Works*: Parker Society Edition, vol. ii. p. 252.)

Again, he says in the same disputation: “Christ spake never a word of sacrificing in saying of mass; nor promised His hearers any reward, but among the idolaters with the devil and his angels, except they repent speedily. Therefore sacrificing priests should now cease for ever; for now all men ought to offer their own bodies a quick sacrifice holy and acceptable before God. The Supper of the Lord was instituted to provoke us to thanksgiving, and to stir us up by preaching of the Gospel, to remember his death till He cometh again.”—(*Works*, ii, 256.)

Again, he says in his last examination: “There is a change in the bread and wine, and such a change as no power but the omnipotency of God can make, in that that which before was bread, should now have the dignity to exhibit Christ’s body. And yet the bread is still bread, and the wine is still wine; for the change is not in the nature, but the dignity.”— *Works*, ii. 286.)

(5) Bishop Jewell, in his work on the Sacraments, says:—

“Let us examine what difference there is between the body of Christ and the sacrament of His body.

“The difference is this: a sacrament is a figure or token; the body of Christ is figured or tokened. The sacramental bread is bread, it is not the body of Christ; the body of Christ is flesh, it is no bread. The bread is beneath; the body is above. The bread is on the table; the body is in heaven. The bread is in the mouth; the body is in the heart. The bread feedeth the body; the body feedeth the soul. The bread shall come to nothing; the body is immortal, and shall not perish. The bread is vile; the body of Christ is glorious. Such a difference is there between the bread which is a sacrament of the body, and the body of Christ itself. The Sacrament is eaten as well of the wicked as of the faithful; the body is only eaten of the faithful. The Sacrament may be eaten unto judgment; the body cannot be eaten but unto salvation. Without the Sacrament we may be saved; but without the body of Christ we have no salvation,—we cannot be saved.”—(*Jewell’s Works*, vol. iv., Parker Society Edition, p. 1121.)

(6) Richard Hooker, in his *Ecclesiastical Polity*, says:—

“The real presence of Christ’s most blessed body and blood is not to be sought for in the Sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the Sacrament.

“And with this the very order of our Saviour’s words agreeth. First,

‘Take and eat;’ then, ‘This is my body which is broken for you.’ First, ‘Drink ye all of this;’ then followeth, ‘This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.’ I see not which way it should be gathered by the words of Christ,—when and where the bread is His body or the wine His blood, but only in the very heart and soul of him which receiveth them. As for the Sacraments, they really exhibit, but for aught we can gather out of that which is written of them, they *are* not really nor do really *contain* in themselves that grace which with them or by them it pleaseth God to bestow.”—(Hooker, *Eccl. Pol.*, book v. p. 67.)

(7) Jeremy Taylor, in his book on the Real Presence (edit. 1654, pp. 13-15), says:—

“We say that Christ’s body is in the Sacrament really, but spiritually. The Roman Catholics say that it is there really, but spiritually. For so Bellarmine is bold to say that the word may be allowed in this question.

Where now is the difference? Here by *spiritually*, they mean spiritual after the manner of a spirit. We by *spiritually*, mean present to our spirit only. They say that Christ’s body is truly present there as it was upon the cross, but not after the manner of all or anybody, but after that manner of being as an angel is in a place. That’s their *spiritually*.—But we by the real spiritual presence of Christ do understand Christ to be present, as the Spirit of God is present in the hearts of the faithful, by blessing and grace; and this is all which we mean beside the topical and figurative presence.”

(8) Archbishop Usher, in his Sermon before the House of Commons, says:—

“In the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, the bread and wine are not changed in substance from being the same with that which is served at ordinary tables; but in respect of the sacred use whereunto they are consecrated, such a change is made that now they differ as much from common bread and wine as heaven from earth. Neither are they to be accounted barely significative, but truly exhibitivè also of those heavenly things whereunto they have relation; as being appointed by God to be a means of conveying the same to us, and putting us in actual possession thereof. So that in the use of this holy ordinance, as verily as a man with his bodily hand and mouth receiveth the earthly creatures of bread and wine, so verily with his spiritual hand and mouth, *if he have any*, doth he receive the body and blood of Christ. And this is that real and substantial presence which we affirm to be in the inward part of the sacred action.”

(9) Bishop Beveridge, in his comment on the Twenty-eighth Article, says:—

“If the bread be not really changed into the body of Christ, then the body of Christ is not really there present; and if it be not really there present, it is impossible that it should be really taken and received into our bodies, as bread is.”

Again, he says, “I cannot see how it can possibly be denied, that Christ ate of the bread whereof He said, This is my body; and if He ate it, and ate it corporally (that is, ate His body as we eat bread), then He ate Himself, and made one body two, and then crowded them into one again, putting His body into His body, even His whole body into part of His body, His stomach. And so He must be thought not only to have two bodies, but two bodies one within another; yea, so as to be one devoured by another; the absurdity of which, and of like assertions, he that hath but half an eye may easily discover. So that it must needs be granted to be in a *spiritual* manner that the Sacrament was instituted, and by consequence that it is in a spiritual manner the Sacrament must be received.” — (*Beveridge on the Articles*. Ed. Oxford: 1846. Pp. 482-486.)

(10) Waterland says:—

“The Fathers well understood that to make Christ’s natural body the real sacrifice of the Eucharist, would not only be absurd in reason, but highly presumptuous and profane; and that to make the outward symbols a proper sacrifice, a material sacrifice, would be entirely contrary to gospel principles, degrading the Christian sacrifice into a Jewish one, yea, and making it much lower and meaner than the Jewish one, both in value and dignity. The right way, therefore, was to make the sacrifice spiritual, and it could be no other upon Gospel principles.”— (*Works*, vol. iv. p. 762.)

“No one has any authority or right to offer Christ as a sacrifice, whether really or symbolically, but Christ Himself; such a sacrifice is His sacrifice, not ours,— offered for us, not by us, to God the Father.”— (*Works*, vol. iv. p. 753.)

“The words of the Catechism, *verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful*, are rightly interpreted of a real participation of the benefits purchased by Christ’s death. The body and blood of Christ are taken and received by the faithful, not corporally, not internally, but verily and indeed, that is *effectually*. The sacred symbols are no bare signs, no untrue figures of a thing absent; but the force, the grace, the virtue, and benefit of Christ’s body broken and blood shed, that is, of His passion, are really and effectually present with all them that receive worthily. This is *all the real presence* that our Church teaches.”— (*Waterland’s Works*. Oxford: 1843. Vol. vi. p. 42.)

(11) Bishop Burnet, in his comment on the Twenty-eighth Article, says:—

“We assert a real presence of the body and blood of Christ: but not of His body as it is now glorified in heaven, but of His body as it was broken on the cross, when His blood was shed and separated from it: that is, His death, with the merits and effects of it, are in a visible and federal act offered in the Sacrament to all worthy believers. By *real* we understand true, in opposition both to fiction and imagination, and to those shadows that were in the Mosaical dispensation, in which the manna, the rock, the brazen serpent, but immeasurably the cloud of glory, were types and shadows of Messiah that was to come, with whom came grace and truth, that is, a most wonderful manifestation of the mercy and grace of God, and a verifying of promises made under the law. In

this sense we acknowledge a Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament. Though we are convinced that *our first Reformers judged right concerning the use of the phrase, Real Presence, that it was better to be let fall than to be continued*, since the use of it, and that idea which does naturally arise from the common acceptance of it, may stick deeper, and feed superstition more than all those larger explanations that are given to it can be able to avert.”

(12) Dean Aldrich, of Christ Church, says:—

“The Church of England has wisely forborne to use the term of ‘Real Presence’ in all the books that are set forth by her authority. We neither find it recommended in the Liturgy, nor the Articles, nor the Homilies, nor the Church’s Catechism, nor Nowell’s. For although it be seen in the Liturgy, and once more in the Articles of 1552, it is mentioned in both places as a phrase of the Papists, and rejected for the abuse of it. So that *if any Church of England man use it, he does more than the Church directs him. If any reject it, he has the Church’s example to warrant him; and it would very much contribute to the peace of Christendom if all men would write after so excellent a copy.*”—(Dean Aldrich’s “Reply to Two Discourses.” Oxford: 1682. 4to, pp. 13-18.)

(13) Henry Philpotts, Bishop of Exeter, in his letter to Charles Butler, says:—

“The Church of Rome holds that the body and blood of Christ are present under the accidents of bread and wine; the Church of England holds that their real presence is in the *soul of the communicant* at the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

“She holds, that after the consecration of the bread and wine they are changed not in their nature but in their *use*; that instead of nourishing our bodies only, they now are instruments by which, when worthily received, God gives to our souls the body and blood of Christ to nourish and sustain them; that this is not a fictitious or imaginary exhibition of our crucified Redeemer to us, but a real though spiritual one, more real, indeed, because more effectual, than the carnal exhibition and manducation of Him could be (for the flesh profiteth nothing).

“In the same manner, then, as our Lord Himself said, ‘I am the *true* bread that came down from heaven’ (not meaning thereby that he was a lump of baked dough, or manna, but the true means of sustaining the true life of man, which is spiritual, not corporeal), so in the Sacrament, to the worthy receiver of the consecrated elements, though in their nature mere bread and wine, are yet given, truly, really, and effectively, the crucified body and blood of Christ; that body and blood which were the instruments of man’s redemption, and upon which our spiritual life and strength solely depend. It is in this sense that the crucified Jesus is present in the Sacrament of His Supper, not in, nor with, the bread and wine, nor under their accidents, but in the souls of communicants; not carnally, but effectually and faithfully, and therefore most really.”—(*Philpott’s Letter to Butler*. 8vo. edit. 1825, pp. 235, 236.)

(14) Archbishop Longley says, in his last Charge, printed and published after his death in 1868:—

“The doctrine of the Real Presence is, *in one sense*, the doctrine of the Church of England. She asserts that the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper. And she asserts equally that *such presence is not material or corporeal*, but that Christ’s body ‘is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner.’ (Art. xxviii.) Christ’s presence is effectual for all those intents and purposes for which His body was broken and His blood shed. *As to a presence elsewhere than in the heart of a believer, the Church of England is silent*, and the words of Hooker therefore represent her views: ‘The real presence of Christ’s most blessed body and blood is not to be sought in the Sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the Sacrament.’”

I will now conclude the whole subject with the following remarkable quotation, which I commend to the special attention of all my readers. It is from a pamphlet by the Rev. W. Maskell:—

“The strong assertions” of the Prayer-book Communion Service, “in their plainest and obvious meaning, support the low view, held and insisted on by so many of our clergy, that the Real Presence is a doctrine *not approved by the Church of England*, and not to be distinguished from the Romish error, as they go on to say, of Transubstantiation.”—(From a Second Letter on: ‘*The Present Position of the High Church Party in the Church of England*,’ by the Rev. W. Maskell, vicar of St. Mary’s Church, Torquay, p. 62. (1850.)

I shall make no comment on the above quotations. They speak for themselves. They prove, at any rate, that the views of the Lord’s Supper which are commonly held by Evangelical Churchmen (so called) are not new. They are “old paths,” paths marked by the feet of some of the greatest divines of the Church of England.

XVI.

CAN THE CHURCH REACH THE MASSES?

IT is a great fact which, I fear, admits of no dispute, that the working classes of England, as a body, are “conspicuously absent” from the public worship of God on Sundays. Census after census in our large towns has lately brought this painful fact before the public mind. My own eyes continually see proofs of it, when I preach in some quarters of Liverpool. I often see things which make my heart bleed. After making every allowance for defective, unfair, and unfriendly enumerations, there remains a mass of evidence which cannot be gainsaid. A vast number of English working men never go either to Church or Chapel, and, to all appearance, live and die “without God.”

This state of things, we must all feel, is eminently unsatisfactory, and deserves the best attention of all loyal Churchmen. But it is much more than unsatisfactory. It endangers the very existence of the Established Church of England. We cannot expect to prosper and hold our position without “the masses.” The Church, whose adherents are a minority in the land, will not be long allowed to retain her endowments and her connection with the State in this age; and without the working classes our Church is in a minority at any Parliamentary age election. A regiment consisting only of officers and band, without rank and file, adds nothing to the strength of an army. A Church which can only number the rich among its members, and is deserted by the poor, is in a most unhealthy condition, and not like a servant of her Divine Master, whom “the common people heard gladly” (Mark xii. 37). I repeat that we are in front of a dangerous and unsatisfactory state of things. It is high time to search our ways, and try to “set our house in order,” if we would not die, but live.

The subject is wide, and I can do little more than touch the fringe of it. I shall simply try to clear away three common delusions, and to point out four remedial things which, in my opinion, are much wanted in this day, and, by God’s blessing, might improve our position. As Napoleon said at Marengo, “It is not too late to win the battle.”

(a) For one thing, then, I do not believe that the absence of working men from public worship arises from *the spread of systematic infidelity* among them. I know that this is an opinion held by many; but I take leave to call it a delusion. My own impression is decided, that even among the rudest and roughest ranks of English society, there is often a deep-seated vein of sturdy faith in a God and a world to come. No doubt there is a large quantity of most offensive infidel literature, of a common nature, which is exclusively circulated among the poorer classes, and is far too coarsely flavoured to suit the taste of the upper ten thousand. But of real reasoning and argumentative scepticism, there is just as much (and perhaps more) among the rich as among the poor. It does not strike us, probably, for the simple reason that the poor are many, and the rich are few. But at this very moment, I shrewdly suspect there are more agnostics and sceptics,

in proportion to the population, in the West End of London than in the East! Nor is this all. The Tower Hamlets unbeliever is often a more honest man than his rich brother in Belgravia. Erring as he is, he has the courage of his opinions, and never goes to Church at all! The rich sceptic, on the contrary, will often attend religious services for respectability's sake, or by way of example to his servants, while in reality he despises the whole thing in his heart.

(b) For another thing, it is a complete delusion, in my opinion, to suppose that the working classes in England have any *inherent dislike to the Established Church*, and, if left to themselves, prefer the Dissenting Chapel. I believe nothing of the kind. I grant that our poorer brethren are very apt to judge the Church by the parson, and if he is not a satisfactory *persona ecclesicæ*, to take a dislike to the body which he represents. If, for instance, he is a thoroughly worldly man, "a Nimrod, a ramrod, or a fishing-rod," who neither does his duty as a preacher or a pastor,—or, if he is one who, in his zeal for ceremonial, does things which they think are Romanism,—it is very likely they will forsake the Church, and stay at home, or go to Chapel. But whenever the Church is properly represented, both in the pulpit and the parish, I maintain that, as a general rule, the working men will stick to her, and prefer her ministrations to any other. They like her Prayer-book, her orders, and her general system, and will stand by her to the last.

(c) Once more, but not least, I regard it as a rank delusion to imagine that *Christianity is an effete and worn-out system*, that the old gospel has lost its power, and that the nineteenth century requires a new religion. This is a sadly common idea in certain quarters. Men of intellect, as they are called, sneer contemptuously at such grand old verities as the atonement of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, the reality of miracles, the need of the grace of the Holy Spirit, the personality of Satan, the judgment to come. They coolly tell us that these things will never move the working classes in this day, and that they will not come to Church unless we give them a broader, more rational theology, stripped of everything supernatural. I do not admit this for a moment. It is empty talk and baseless assertion. I fail to see the slightest evidence that the old religion, which "turned the world upside down" eighteen centuries ago, has lost any of its power. I can discover no new system of teaching which regenerates heathen tribes, relieves burdened consciences, binds up broken hearts, checks sin, changes characters, deprives death of its terrors, compared to the old-fashioned gospel of Christ. If there is such a new system, let men show it to us, and show us its fruits. The working classes, I am convinced, are not to be won to public worship by modern wind-bags and fireworks, but by the old story of the Cross.

But, after all, what *positive* suggestions can be made in order to meet the evil which we deplore? What is it that is wanting in the present day, which would be likely to draw the working classes into our Churches, if we could supply it? I will briefly name four things which, in my judgment, are secrets of strength, and commend them to the consideration of my readers.

I. My first suggestion is this. If we want to get at the working classes, the Church must have a *great increase of living agents* in the large overgrown parishes, where working men chiefly reside.

No man, however zealous, can do more than a certain amount of work. To suppose that the incumbent of a parish of 10,000 people in a mining, manufacturing, or seaport district, can keep pace with, or overtake the spiritual wants of his parishioners, so long as he is single-handed and alone, is simply absurd. The thing is physically impossible. When he has every week read the services and preached sermons, married, baptized, and buried according to requirement, visited a few sick, and superintended his schools, his week will be gone. There will be hundreds of houses which he has no time to enter, and even thousands of men and women whom he does not know, and who hardly know his name. Can any one wonder if the isolated incumbent of such a parish often breaks down in health and heart, and resigns or dies? Have we any right to be surprised if the working classes in such a parish live without religion, and are a prey to drunkenness, gambling, extravagance, improvidence, Sabbath-breaking, unchastity, and general immorality? What else can be expected from human nature, if half-educated men and women are never visited, and are left to themselves? What right have we to be surprised and indignant if many of them join some Nonconformist body, or go over to the Church of Rome? Why should they care for a Church which does not seem to care for them? To frown on seceders in such a case as schismatics is senseless and foolish. If the Church of England really wants to get hold of, and keep hold of, the working classes in such a district as I have described, she must send more living agents among them. If she does not begin here, she will certainly lose them, and in many cases has lost them already. If she does not go down to the people, the people will not come up to her.

When I speak of living agents, I mean missionary curates, Scripture-readers, lay agents, Bible-women, and voluntary lay helpers. To begin spiritual operations by building churches in huge, overgrown, neglected parishes of working-folks, is useless waste of money and time. It is beginning at the wrong end. You may build the churches, as certain well-meaning men did in Bethnal Green, forty-five years ago, and find them, by and by, as empty as barns in July. The right course is to walk in the steps of the apostles, and begin with living agency. There was a grand heathen temple of Diana when St. Paul was at Ephesus, but I do not find that this great servant of Christ reared a church or a cathedral. He lived and died a tent-maker! Our first step should be to send living agents from street to street, and lane to lane, and alley to alley, and house to house, and room to room, and garret to garret, and cellar to cellar, until there is not a working man or woman in the parish who has not been looked in the face, or shaken by the hand, and until not one can say, "The Church of England does not care for my soul."

Only let us distinctly understand that the agents we send forth must be men and women of the right sort, whose chief weapon is the written word of God, the Bible. The missionary curate must not be a man who stands on his dignity

as an ordained minister, and never feels at ease unless he has a Prayer-book in his hand and a surplice on his back. He must walk in the steps of the apostles. He must be content with the first elements of the gospel on his lips, and the simplest possible kind of religious services, held anywhere and in any place when he can get together a few, in a barn, a cellar, a garret, a warehouse, or even in the open air. The lay agent must be eminently a man of love and patience, not discouraged by opposition and coldness, but always the same, however he is treated, and always full of Christ, the Bible, and readiness to do good.

Lastly, but above all, it must never be forgotten that no living agent, whether clerical or lay, will ever be of use unless he knows something of saving religion by his own heart's experience. Unless he has some real experimental knowledge of the sinfulness of sin, the excellence of Christ's Gospel, and its suitableness to the wants of man's soul, the beauty of holiness, the value of the Bible and prayer, the unspeakable importance of Sabbath-keeping, temperance, and chastity, he will do the Church of England very little service. The working classes have a keen sense of *reality*. They have an instinctive horror of formalism, ceremonialism, priestcraft, hypocrisy, and false profession. They hate all this with a perfect hatred. But if a living agent comes among them who is a real, thorough Christian, and full of zeal and love to souls, he will generally see "signs and wonders" following his work. Even those who will not take his advice will respect him, and allow no one to do him harm.

So much for my first suggestion. If the Church of England wants to reach the working classes, her first and wisest course is to multiply her living agents. If her wealthy children among the laity will not come forward and enable her to do this, she will be ruined.

II. My second suggestion is this. The Church ought to provide facilities for *an organized system of aggressive evangelization* in her large parishes.

This subject is a very delicate and difficult one, and I approach it with some diffidence. But the extremely critical position of our beloved Church in many of our large parishes makes plain speaking a positive duty. When a ship is among breakers, it is no time to stand on ceremony. Let me therefore explain fully what I mean.

The parochial system of our Church—the system by which every incumbent has a territorial district assigned to him, and represents the Church of England within it— is an admirable system, when properly worked. I know no system so likely to do good, so wisely conceived, and so eminently calculated to promote the salvation of souls. It marks out definite work for every clergyman, and prevents him becoming the minister of a few picked, petted, and partial adherents. It secures spiritual oversight for every family in our population, so that no one can ever say, "There is no one to care for my soul." I do not hesitate to say that an English parish rightly worked, with right preaching in the pulpit, right education in the schools, right visiting from house to house, and right machinery for assisting the sick and poor, is one of the pleasantest and most refreshing

sights in this evil world. Granted a faithful administration, and I know nothing so good as the parochial system of the Church of England.

But just in proportion to the good which the parochial system does when it is properly worked, is the harm which it does when it is worked badly, or not worked at all. The old saying is true, "The worst thing is the corruption of a good thing." Grant for a moment that the clergyman of some huge overgrown parish is aged, worn out, or thoroughly out of health,—or grant that he is poor and obliged to take pupils or write for his livelihood, and so unable to give his whole time to his parochial work,—or grant that he is oppressed and bowed down with private family troubles,—or grant that he is unfit, from his turn of mind, for the charge of a large town population,—or grant, what is worst of all, but unhappily quite possible, that he is unsound in doctrine and does not preach the gospel, or worldly in life and cares nothing for spiritual things,—grant any of these things, and the parochial system becomes a most damaging institution, a curse and not a blessing, a hindrance and not a help, a nuisance and not a benefit, a weakness and not a strength to the Established Church of this realm.

Now, it is nonsense to deny that there are some large parishes in almost every diocese in England where the parochial clergyman, from one cause or another, does little or nothing. The parishioners are not visited, and are like sheep without a shepherd. The bulk of the people never come near the church at all. Sin, and immorality, and ignorance, and infidelity increase and multiply every year. The few who worship anywhere take refuge in the chapels of Methodists, Baptists, and Independents, if not in more questionable places of worship. The parish church is comparatively deserted. People in such parishes live and die with an abiding impression that the Church of England is a rotten, useless institution, and bequeath to their families a legacy of prejudice against the Church, which lasts long if not for ever. Will any one pretend to tell me that there are not many large English parishes in this condition? I defy him to do so. I am writing down things that are only too true, and it is vain to pretend to conceal them.

But what does the Church of England do for such parishes as these? I answer, *Nothing, nothing at all!* It is precisely here that our territorial system fails and breaks down altogether. So long as the parochial minister does his duty up to the bare letter of legal requirement, it is a ruled point, both in theory and in practice, and a matter of ecclesiastical etiquette, that nobody must interfere with him! His people may be perishing for lack of knowledge! Infidels, Mormonites, and Papists may be going to and fro, and beguiling unstable souls! Dissenters of all sorts may be building chapels, and filling them with the families of aggrieved and neglected Churchmen! The children of the Church may be drawn away from her every year by scores! But no matter! The Church cannot interfere! The Church of England looks on with folded arms, and does nothing at all. Can any one imagine a more ruinous system? Can any one wonder that some irritated and disgusted Churchmen become confirmed Dissenters, and that others despise or loathe the Church which allows such a state of things to go on,

and that thousands relapse into a state of semi-heathenism? Can any one feel surprised if the inhabitants of such parishes complain bitterly that they are left without remedy until their parson is either converted or dead?

I write strongly because I feel warmly. I do not believe there are five Bishops on the bench who would not admit they have large parishes in their dioceses which are in a most unsatisfactory state, and yet under our present ministerial system they cannot be improved by the Church of England. No! If the incumbent likes to shut his door against improvement, and entrench himself behind a perfunctory discharge of his duties, the Bishop can only sit still, and wait, and hope, and pray! And while this goes on for twenty or thirty years, the Church suffers, Churchmen are driven into Dissent, the world mocks, the infidel sneers, the devil triumphs, and souls are ruined. In short, a neglected parish is at present a keyless Bramah lock, and cannot be picked. Like the Englishman's house, it is the incumbent's castle, and nobody can enter it to do good, except a Dissenter! It was a common joke of O'Connell's, that a certain Irish town had over its gates the inscription, "Jew, Turk, and Atheist may enter here, but not a Papist." I fear that the case of a neglected English parish is somewhat parallel. You may write over its boundaries, "Infidels, Papists, and Dissenters may enter here and do what they like, but not a Churchman." If this is not a weak point, a flaw, and a blot in our ecclesiastical system, I know not what is. It is an abuse that cries to heaven against the Church of England, and it ought to be redressed. Here, if anywhere, there is need of reform.

The suggestion I have to make is this. Let the Bishop of every diocese be empowered to call into existence a new class of ministers, to be named "Evangelists." Let him be empowered, with the advice of a select Council of presbyters and leading laymen, to arrange with any incumbent of a large overgrown parish to separate from such parish a district of 3000 or 4000 people, and place them under the charge of an evangelist, to work in any way that he can. Let the evangelist be licensed to the Bishop, and responsible to him and his Council only, they undertaking to superintend and maintain him. Let the incumbent of the mother Church be set free from any responsibility whatever for the separated district. Let the main object of these evangelists be to proclaim Christ's Gospel in its simplest form, to arouse the careless, to arrest the attention of the indifferent, to inform the ignorant, to gather together the scattered believers, and to show them how to keep their souls in the right way. Let them, in short, use the same weapons that were used a century ago, with such mighty power, by Grimshaw and Berridge. But, unlike these noble-minded men, let them be sanctioned, authorized, commissioned, and encouraged by those in authority, and not snubbed, threatened, frowned upon, and rebuked. Above all, let them proclaim, as Berridge and Grimshaw used to do everywhere, that they come as members and friends of the Established Church of England, and desire to strengthen and assist her cause.

Now, I am well aware that the suggestion I now make is open to a host of objections, and could only be carried into effect with great difficulty. But I have

yet to learn that the objections are insuperable. As to difficulty, there never was any good thing done in this world without it. The great enemy of souls never allows his kingdom to be invaded without a struggle. One thing, at any rate, is very certain. The plan I suggest has been tried in the dioceses of London and Rochester with great success, and with much benefit to the Church of England. This is a simple fact. It is an old saying that an ounce of fact is worth a pound of theory.

(a) Some men will tell me that the plan I suggest is not Scriptural. I am not so sure of that. I find a text in which an inspired apostle says, "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, *evangelists*; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. iv. 11). Moreover, if we talk of Scriptural authority, I think we might be puzzled to find any direct express authority for parishes, dioceses, and rural deaneries, or for rectors, vicars, archdeacons, and rural deans. At any rate, there is nothing contrary to Scripture in the idea of "an evangelist." Nay, rather it might easily be shown that the first preachers we read of in the Acts were much more like itinerant Evangelists than settled parochial clergymen!

(b) Some men, again, will tell me that the plan I suggest is entirely new. This, again, admits of considerable doubt. I find in the early Church, according to Dr. Burton, "there appear to have been, in addition to presbyters and deacons, who may be called resident ministers, preachers of the gospel who were not attached to any particular Church, but who travelled about from place to place discharging their spiritual duties. These men were called in a special manner Evangelists." (See Riddle's "Christian Antiquities.") I find in the reign of Edward VI. that our own Reformers appointed certain preachers, among whom were Bradford, Knox, and Grindal, who had a general commission and went everywhere in England preaching the Word. In short, the charge of novelty cannot be supported.

(c) But some man will object that the scheme I propose would break up the parochial system, and greatly damage the Church of England. I do not believe it a bit. I believe, on the contrary, to begin with, that it would do immense good among the laity. It would rally them round the Church of England, and show them that they were not entirely forgotten. It would keep them within the pale of the Church, and preserve them from being carried off by Dissenters and Plymouth Brethren. But I go a step further. I believe it would do good eventually among the parochial clergy. They would see at last that the diocesan evangelist did not come into their parishes as an enemy, but as a friend. They would gradually learn to value his aid, and might even be provoked to emulation by hearing and seeing what he did.

The truth must be spoken on this matter, however offensive it may be to some. The Church of England *has made an idol of her parochial system*, and has forgotten that it has weak points as well as strong ones, defects as well as advantages. To hear some men talk, you might fancy the parochial system came down from heaven, like the pattern of the Mosaic tabernacle, and that to attempt any other sort of ministry but a parochial one was a heresy and a sin. It is high

time that we should change our tone, and humbly acknowledge our mistake. It is useless to ignore the fact that neglected or unworked parishes weaken the Church of England, and that they cannot be safely let alone, however difficult the application of the remedy may be. We must face this difficulty if we want to win back the affections of myriads of our fellow-countrymen. We must break the bonds which black tape has too long placed on us, and cast them aside. Parishes must no longer be regarded as ecclesiastical preserves, within which no Churchman can fire a spiritual shot, or do anything without the licence of the incumbent. This notion ought to go down before a new order of things, sanctioned and directed by the Bishop and his Council. Of all possible reforms, there are few that I desire, more heartily to see than the institution of an order of diocesan "Evangelists."

The subject is one which requires great plainness of speech. In true love to the Church of England I will give place to no man. I daily pray for her peace and labour for her prosperity. But I dare not shut my eyes to the fact that my Church is sadly wanting in elasticity and power of adapting herself to circumstances. Its organization is stiff and rigid, like a bar of cast-iron, when it ought to be supple and bending like whalebone. Hence its machinery is continually cracking, snapping, and breaking down. Churchmen talk and act as if a system which did pretty well for five millions of Englishmen 250 years ago, when there were very few Dissenters, must needs be perfectly suited to the thirty millions of today! Like some fossilized country squire, who lives twenty miles from a railway, and never visits London, the poor dear old Church of England must still travel in the old family coach, shoot with the old flint-locked single-barrel gun, and wear the old jack-boots and long pigtail. And all this time Dissent is netting the Church's children by scores, and laughing in her sleeve at the old gentleman's folly. Surely it is high time to awake out of sleep and attempt some reform of our parochial system!

I leave this suggestion here. If I have said enough to set some minds thinking, I shall be abundantly satisfied. I have learned by sorrowful experience that the plan I propose is not acceptable in some quarters. An excessive tenderness for the supposed rights of incumbents makes people shrink from the very idea of interfering with their parishes, however unsatisfactory their condition may be. But nothing will alter my opinion, that unless such a system of aggressive evangelization as I propose is adopted, the working classes in many districts will never be brought into the Church of England, and will live and die outside.¹

¹ The following passage appears in a leading article of the *Times* newspaper of February 14th, 1883. It supplies such a remarkable confirmation of some of the opinions expressed in this part of my paper that I make no apology for inserting it:—

"The Church sees thousands of her children committed for no one knows how long to the spiritual care of some one who has long ceased to care for souls, if, indeed, he ever did. Such a man may have his merits, and may have run up in a long course of years some score of good service. By every rule of public affairs, not only ought he to have the liberty to retire—he ought to be encouraged, nay, compelled, to retire. The first rule of public service is that it be done, and

III. My third suggestion is this. We want a great deal more *direct lively preaching of the gospel* in all our pulpits, whether in the full liturgical service of the Church or the simpler elementary service of the mission room.

In saying this I would not be mistaken. I ask men to remark that I lay stress most emphatically on the words “direct” and “lively.” That the distinctive doctrines of the gospel are far more frequently found in the sermons of this day than they were in the sermons of last century I have no doubt whatever. The wretched moral essays which our forefathers often heard, and which brought out the bitter remark that the clergy were only “apes of Epictetus,” are no longer tolerated, and, I trust, will never return. But still, I must express a suspicion that the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel are often placed before the working classes in such an unattractive way that they will not listen, and will rather stay at home.

It is vain to deny that when Christ’s gospel has been preached by such men as Whitfield, and Wesley, and Venn, and Grimshaw, in days past,—or by Spurgeon, or Guthrie, or Moody, or Aitken, in our own age,—there was, and is, little difficulty in getting working men to hear them. Where is the defect, then?

that it be done as well as possible. Having, then, due regard to the great end for which Churches are founded and maintained, it is straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel to make scruples about ‘simony,’ as it is called, and leave large congregations in incapable and indifferent, if not unwilling, hands.

“There is no Church, there is no Government, there is no institution in the world, that so little adapts its means to its ends, its resources to work, its men to its positions, as the Church of England. The fact is proved, the want supplied, and the evil mitigated by the surrounding atmosphere of Nonconformity, everywhere pressing in to fill the void. Always and everywhere there are to be found those who will reap a harvest of souls wherever it may offer itself. The kingdom of grace has a spontaneous development, which ever supplies the shortcomings of human government and administration. No Bishop, however exalted, no theologian, however narrow or however Quixotic, can deny, even upon his own theories, a Divine origin and order to the self-denying zeal of the men who do their best, by the simplest means at hand, to raise the surrounding tone of morality and religion, to rebuke vice, and to encourage the virtues that all alike recognise, even if they practise them not. The good work to be done is as plain and as universal as the sun in the heavens. The school and the field of true faith is all the world, and knows no demarcations or prohibitions. An artificial and cumbersome establishment, standing upon gone-by ages, and inheriting innumerable anomalies, hindrances, and scandals, may be too sacred a thing to be rudely handled. But it cannot cover the ground or reap the harvest. Part—indeed, the greater part—must be left to those who, if less privileged, are less trammelled, and who have the power not of authority, but of freedom. In such a case there must be some jarring, some antagonism. How shall it be cured? How shall the Established Church acquire for itself that full liberty of action which it continually sees employed against itself? It must condescend to gather all the lessons it can from the organization and tactics of those whom it only too naturally regards as its rivals, if not foes? How do they get possession of the ground? How do they advance everywhere and hold the ground they win? They do it by the use of common sense. That is what the Church of England will have to submit to. The ministry—that is, the entire system of employment in the service of the Church of England—will have to be adapted to the work everywhere to be done, unless the Church is to find itself one day the shadow of a great name.”

What is it that is wanting? I fear there is only one simple answer:—Our clergymen, as a body, do not pay sufficient attention to the *way of putting things*. They forget that it is not enough to have good tools, if they do not handle those tools in the right way. Will any one tell me that Whitfield, last century, or Moody, in our own time, would ever have assembled myriads of working men, by their preaching, if they had only read to them, in a kind of monotone voice, dry, heavy, stiff, dull, cold, tame, orthodox theological essays, couched in the first person plural number, full of “we” and “we” and “we,” and destitute of warmth, vivacity, direct appeal, or fire? I will never believe it. But surely, if their style of address arrests and attracts the working classes, it seems a thousand pities that it is not more generally adopted. It is perfectly amazing to me that at this late period of the world men should need to be told, what Greeks and Romans knew well, that it is not the speaker’s thoughts only which arrest the attention of hearers, but the style and manner in which those thoughts are conveyed.

I hear people complain, sometimes, that “Mission Services” produce no lasting effect; and too often the complaint is just and well-founded. Yet the explanation, in many cases, is simple and easy. A mission preacher is invited to come into a parish, and when he comes he addresses the people with “thoughts that breathe and words that burn.” He brings, very probably, no new doctrine. He tells them nothing that they have not heard before. But he tells his story with such vivacity, and fire, and personal application, that he rouses the whole parish, and makes all classes want to hear him. The church is filled. The incumbent is delighted. The old clerk and sexton keep awake. The empty benches are all occupied. The whole place seems stirred. And then what happens, far, far too often? The mission preacher goes away, and the fire cools down. The innocent, well-meaning incumbent returns to his old style of preaching and gets into his old groove, and in two months undoes the missionary’s work, and empties the church again! And all this is because he will not see that fiery liveliness and directness of style are one grand secret of pulpit success. “Be awake yourself, if you want to keep your people awake,” is an excellent pulpit maxim. For my part, I heartily wish that clergymen who invite missionaries to address their people would remember, that if they would keep up the missionary’s work, they must preach in his style. I suspect it would be a great gain to the Establishment if a huge bonfire were made, and myriads of dull, essay-style sermons were dragged out of parsonage studies, thrown into the bonfire, and burned!

After all, it is vain to shut our eyes to the fact that there is great room for improvement in the preaching of the Church of England. At present it is certainly below the mark. Neither in matter, nor in style, nor in delivery, does our pulpit come up to the requirements of the day. There never was a time since the beginning of the world when powerful speaking of any kind had more influence than it has now. There never was a time when it was so important for the clergy to speak for Christ with eloquence, life, plainness, and power. But, alas, how sadly rare this kind of preaching is! How far a man may travel before he hears a really striking sermon! How few clergymen command the attention of their

congregations! How many forget that “the foolishness of preaching” is not foolish preaching! These things ought not so to be.

One reason, no doubt, is the utter want of training for the pulpit which the Church of England provides for her young ministers. Few men, I believe, ever go into orders with any clear idea of what a sermon ought to be, or how they ought to set about making one. Their sermons for the first few years of their ministry are nothing better than experiments, and they often end with giving up in despair, and regularly preaching the compositions of other men. “Alas! master, it was borrowed,” would be the true comment on many a clergyman’s sermon. This is an evil which might partly be remedied by the Universities providing instruction in sacred rhetoric, and partly by the Bishops laying more stress on the composition of a sermon in their examinations for orders. But it is a matter in which something ought to be done. There is real need for reform.

The main reason why the pulpit of the Church of England is so weak is, I fear, a much more serious one. A stupid notion has lately possessed many clerical minds, that preaching is no longer of importance,—that education and the increase of reading make men think little of sermons,—that the prayers of the Church are the principal thing, and the sermon is of little moment,—that our main effort should be to improve the ceremonial of the Church, and that we need not think much about the pulpit! A greater mass of delusion than all this line of argument I cannot conceive. It may suit those who want excuses for laziness in preparing their sermons. It will never satisfy those who open their eyes and look at facts. There never was a period in the history of our Church when men were more ready to listen to really good sermons, if they can only get them, or more quick to show their dislike to bad sermons, if you will preach bad ones. Shrewd men of all schools of opinion are wide awake on this point. Wise men, whether High, or Low, or Broad, do not think lightly of sermons, or hold them in low esteem. Let us all look this matter in the face, and see if we cannot improve. Let us strive to reform our preaching.

I cannot, however, leave this part of my subject without adding the expression of my own firm conviction, that there is *far less preaching of the whole Gospel* than there ought to be. When I say that, I mean that there is not enough made of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and His office and work for our souls. We are all apt to forget that it is quite possible to make an orthodox statement of doctrine, and yet not to *present Christ* to our hearers in the manner and proportion in which He is presented to us in the New Testament. I am struck with the undeniable fact that all preachers who succeed in getting hold of the working classes—whether Whitfield, or Moody, or any other—give a very marked prominence in their sermons to the atoning death, the ever-living intercession, the boundless mercy, the almighty power to save, of that blessed Person in whose name Christian worshippers meet together. You have only to read reports of their preaching in order to see proof of what I say. And I will not hesitate to declare my firm belief, that if we would get hold of the working classes, we must make “Christ crucified and risen again” the sun and centre of our sermons,

far more than we have done in the Church of England. It is a lever which shook the world eighteen centuries ago, and is able to shake it now. It is a great magnet which in every age, from the apostles downwards, has drawn men whom nothing else could draw. And it is a magnet, I am convinced, which has lost none of its attractive influence. I need hardly say that it would be easy to enlarge on this point, if time permitted. But I cannot leave it without quoting the words of a mighty layman, which deserve attention,—a layman of great experience and observation,—a layman who in his day has taken great interest in religious questions. The layman I mean is the late Prime Minister of England—Mr. Gladstone. He said on the 22nd March 1877: “It is the preaching of Christ our Lord which is the secret, and substance, and centre, and heart of all preaching; not merely of facts about Him, and notions about Him, but of His person, His work, His character, His simple yet unfathomable sayings,—here lies the secret” (*Times*, March 23rd, 1877.) That witness is true. Mr. Gladstone never said a truer thing in his life. The sermon full of Christ is the sermon which the Holy Spirit most usually blesses to the souls of all classes.

IV. The fourth and last suggestion, which I venture to make, in order to solve the problem discussed in this paper, is one which I hold to be of vast importance.

I say, then, that if we want to bring the working classes to church, *there needs, throughout the land, a great increase of sympathy and friendly personal dealing with them on the part of the clergy.*

I confess that I have immense faith in the power of sympathy and kindness. I believe the late Judge Talfourd hit the nail right on the head when he said, in almost his last Charge to a Grand Jury, at Stafford Assizes: “Gentlemen, the great want of the age is more sympathy between classes.” I entirely agree with him. I think an increase of sympathy and fellow-feeling between high and low, rich and poor, employer and employed, parson and people, is one healing medicine which the age demands. Sympathy, exhibited in its perfection, was one secondary cause of the acceptance which Christ’s Gospel met with on its first appearance in the heathen world. Well says Lord Macaulay: “It was before Deity taking a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the synagogue, and the doubts of the academy, and the fasces of the lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust.” And sympathy, I firmly believe, can do as much in the present century as it did in the first. If anything will melt down the cold isolation of classes in these latter days, and make our social body consist of solid cubes compacted together, instead of spheres only touching each other at one point, it will be a large growth of Christlike sympathy.

Now I assert confidently that the English working man is peculiarly open to sympathy, and the clergyman has peculiar opportunities of showing it. The working man may live in a poor dwelling; and after toiling all day in a coal-pit, or cotton-mill, or iron-foundry, or dock, or chemical works, he may often look

very rough and dirty. But after all he is flesh and blood like ourselves. Beneath his outward roughness he has a heart and a conscience, a keen sense of justice, and a jealous recollection of his rights, as a man and a Briton. He does not want to be patronized and flattered, any more than to be trampled on, scolded, or neglected; but he does like to be dealt with as a brother, in a friendly, kind, and sympathizing way. He will not be driven; he will do nothing for a cold, hard man, however clever he may be. But give him a clergyman who really understands that it is the heart and not the coat which makes the man, and that the guinea's worth is in the gold, and not in the stamp upon it. Give him a clergyman who will not only preach Christ in the pulpit, but come and sit down in his house, and take him by the hand in a Christ-like, familiar way during the week. Give him a clergyman who realizes that in Christ's holy religion there is no respect of persons, that rich and poor are "made of one blood," and need one and the same atoning blood, and that there is only one Saviour, and one Fountain for sin, and one heaven, both for employers and employed. Give him a clergyman who can weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice, and feel a tender interest in the cares, and troubles, and births, and marriages, and deaths of the humblest dweller in his parish. Give the working man, I say, a clergyman of that kind, and, as a general rule, the working man will come to his Church. Such a clergyman will not preach to empty benches.

I invite the special attention of my clerical brethren to this point. We live in days when public work of all kinds seems every year to absorb more of a clergyman's time. Committees, Bible classes, semi-secular lectures, meetings, frequent services and Communion, are rapidly increasing so much that they seem to leave ministers no time for old-fashioned house-to-house work, family work, and winning the confidence of individual souls. I warn them to be on their guard. A house-going minister is one secret of a church-going people. All the public work in the world, however good, will not compensate for the loss of opportunities for cultivating relations of sympathy between yourselves and your people. Make time for going among them, sitting down with them, holding friendly converse with them, talking face to face, and in the long run you will find no time so well bestowed.

I am not speaking theoretically only. I have seen proof upon proof that I have warrant for what I say, both in colliery districts and in towns. I will give one, and so conclude my paper.

I know at this moment a parish of 5000 people in Liverpool with not a rich man in it, but only small shopkeepers, artisans, and poor. There are only thirty families in it which keep a servant, and not one family which keeps two. There are 195 houses with more than one family in each. There are 133 families living in cellars. Many of these cellars are within a few yards from the church, and under its shadow. In short, that this is a thoroughly poor, working class parish, I think no one can deny.

Now, what does the Church of England do in this parish? Listen reader, and I will tell you.

In a plain brick church, holding 1000, built thirteen years ago, there is a simple, hearty service, and an average attendance of 700 on Sunday morning, 300 in the afternoon, and 950 in the evening. About half the sittings are rented and half free.¹ In three mission rooms there is an average attendance of about 350 in the morning, and 450 in the evening.

The communicants are almost all of the working classes, and nearly half men. I myself helped once to administer the consecrated elements to 395 persons, and I saw the hands which received them, and I know by those hands that many of them were dock labourers and foundry men.

The worthy minister of this parish began his work *alone* about fourteen years ago, with four people in a cellar. After his church was built, he had only eight communicants at his first administration of the Lord's Supper. He has now 800 communicants, and is aided by two paid curates, one paid Scripture reader, one paid Bible-woman, and one paid organist. But he has besides, 82 voluntary Sunday school teachers, 120 Church workers, 18 Bible classes, with 600 adults on the register, and 1700 Sunday scholars. There are six services in church every week, and four services in mission rooms, throughout the year, besides two prayer meetings every month.

The practical and moral results of the Church's work in this parish are patent and unmistakable. Of course some of the people remain to this day irreligious, careless, unchanged, and, like the "wayside" hearers in the parable of the sower, the wheat and the tares will grow together till the harvest. No minister can give grace, however faithfully he may preach it. But there are plain proofs in this case that labour is not in vain. It bears "fruit that remains." The congregation raises £800 a year for the cause of God. There are 1100 pledged abstainers in the district. There is not a single house of ill fame or a single known infidel in the parish.

These are facts, simple facts, which any one who visits Liverpool may, if he likes, verify for himself. The incumbent of this parish is a quiet, unpretending man, who perhaps would not gather a congregation in the Temple, Westminster Abbey, or St. Paul's, or fascinate an Oxford or Cambridge University audience. But of one thing I am certain, he is a man who tries to preach Christ in the pulpit, and to visit his people in a Christ-like, sympathizing way as a pastor, at the rate of 75 families a week, and to these two things I attribute his success.

Of course man cannot command success under any circumstances. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." Nor can such results as those I have just stated be reasonably expected in huge, overgrown, long-neglected parishes of fifteen or

¹ Let me here remark that I do not believe for a moment that the working classes are to be drawn to church by an immense amount of sensuous ornament and decoration, or by the "free and open" system. The best attended working man's Church in Liverpool is not a free and open one, and I cannot hear that the congregation wish for a change. As to excessive decoration, I believe the intelligent working man regards it as childish, and does not care to see it. On both points I could say much. But opinions differ, and for peace sake I forbear.

twenty thousand people. In such districts it is no wonder if thousands are slaves of drink, or live in ignorance, worldliness, and sin, and cannot be got at. Yet even then much may be done by a right incumbent, with a good staff of curates and lay-helpers, and by steadily keeping in view territorial subdivision.

But nothing shall make me flinch from the position that, with a proper supply of clergy and lay-helpers of the right sort, and a reasonable subdivision of our large parishes, we have no reason to despair about the working classes. I will never admit that they are hopelessly sunk in ignorance and infidelity,—never, never! I will never admit that they cannot be got to church,—never, never! Give us right preaching in every pulpit, accompanied by right house-to-house visiting in every parish, and I believe the working classes will be found the best friends and members of the Church of England. She will become in deed as well as in name “the Church of the people.”

I assert emphatically that by the use of right means, and with God’s blessing, the Church can reach the masses.

XVII.

THOUGHTS FOR SCEPTICS.

WE live in times when a wave of unbelief is passing over Christendom, like a wave of fever, cholera, diphtheria, or plague. It is vain to deny it. Every intelligent observer of the times knows that it is so. I do not say for a moment that the advance of science necessarily makes men unbelievers. Nothing is further from my thoughts. I welcomed the visit of the British Association to Southport in the Diocese of Liverpool in 1883, and I am thankful for every addition to our knowledge which its leaders annually announce. I doubt whether formal, organized, systematic, reasoning infidelity is so common as many suppose. But I do say that there is in the air of these times a disposition to question everything in revealed religion, and to suspect that science and revelation cannot be reconciled. The faith of many church-goers and professing Christians seems cold, and languid, and torpid. They are continually harping on petty modern objections to Scripture,—“Are such and such things in the Bible really quite true? Do not some clever and learned people say we should not believe them?” This is the kind of mischievous talk which is often heard in many quarters. To supply some simple antidotes to this sceptical spirit, to show the unreasonableness of it, to nerve and invigorate the Christian, to make him see the strength of his position, to help him to get rid of a doubting spirit, and to enable him to grasp his old creed more tightly than ever,—these are the objects I have in view in this paper.

In times like these it is well to remember the striking words which came from the lips of Zophar the Naamathite, one of the three friends who came to comfort the patriarch Job in his affliction. Those worthy men, no doubt, meant well; and their sympathy is deserving of all praise in a cold and unfeeling world. But they completely misunderstood the case before them, and so proved “physicians of no value.” They only irritated the poor sufferer, and added to his troubles. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that they said many wise and excellent things, and of these the following passage is one: “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?” (Job xi. 7, 8).

These verses contain four weighty questions. Two of them we certainly cannot answer, but two we can. A little brief discussion of the whole subject to which the passage points appears suitable to the age in which we live.

I. First, and foremost, a wise Christian ought always to admit that *there are many things in Bible religion which of necessity we cannot fully understand*. The Book of Revelation, the Book of God, contains much which, like God Himself, we cannot “find out to perfection.”

The catalogue of these hard things is not a small one, and I shall only supply a few leading instances. I will mention the Mosaic account of creation—the fall, and entrance of sin into the world—the doctrine of the Trinity—the incarnation

of Christ—the atonement for sin made by Christ’s death—the personality and work of the Holy Spirit—the inspiration of Scripture—the reality of miracles—the use and efficacy of prayer—the precise nature of the future state—the resurrection of the flesh after death,—each and all of these subjects, I say, contains much that we cannot fully explain, because it is above the reach of our faculties. No Christian of common sense, I believe, would pretend to deny it. The humblest child could ask questions about each of them which the wisest theologian in Christendom could never answer.

But what of it? Does it follow that we are to believe *nothing* about a subject, and to reject it altogether, because we do not understand *everything* about it? Is this fair and reasonable? Is this the way that we deal with our children when we require them to begin the study of mathematics, or any other branch of education? Do we allow our boys to say, “I will learn nothing till I understand everything?” Do we not require them to take many things on trust, and to begin by simply believing? “I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say.”

The plain truth is, that to refuse to believe Christian doctrines because they are *above* our reason, and we cannot fully understand them, is only one among many proofs of man’s natural pride and arrogance. We are all, at our best, poor, weak, defective creatures. Our power of grasping any subject, and seeing all round it, is extremely small. Our education rarely goes on for more than twenty years, and is often very shallow and superficial. After twenty-five most of us add little to our knowledge. We plunge into some profession in which we have little time for thought or reading, and are absorbed and distracted by the business and cares of life. By the time we are seventy, our memories and intellects begin to fail, and in a few years we are carried to our graves and see corruption. And is it likely, or probable, or reasonable to suppose that such a creature as this can ever understand perfectly the Eternal and Almighty God, or the communications that God has made to man? Is it not rather certain that there will be many things about God and revelation that he cannot, from his very nature, comprehend? I will not insult my readers by asking for a reply. I assert, without hesitation, that no Christian ever need be ashamed of admitting that there are many things in revealed religion which he does not fully understand, and does not pretend to explain. Yet he believes them fully, and lives in this belief.

After all, when a Christian meets one of those few men of science who profess to believe nothing in religion which he cannot fully *understand*, he would do well to ask him a simple question. Has he ever investigated the facts and doctrines of the Bible, which he says are incredible, with the same careful pains which he exercises when he uses his microscope, his telescope, his spectroscope, his dissecting knife, or his chemical apparatus? I doubt it extremely. I venture to believe that if some scientific infidels would examine the Book of God with the same reverent analysis with which they daily examine the Book of Nature, they would find that the things “hard to be understood” are not so many and inscrutable as they now suppose, and that the things plain and easy are a wide field which richly repays cultivation. That we “cannot find out the

Almighty to perfection” let us always admit. But let us never admit that we can find out nothing, and are justified in neglecting Him.

II. The second point which I wish to bring forward is this. A wise Christian ought always to remember that *there are countless things in the material world around us which we do not fully understand*. There are deep things in the Book of Nature as well as in the Bible. Its pages contain hard knots and mysteries as well as the pages of the Book of God. In short, science contains its hard things as well as faith.

I am quite sure that the wisest and most learned men of science would be the most ready to admit the truth of what I have just said. If anything has specially characterized them in every age, it has been their deep humility. The more they have known, the more they have confessed the limited extent of their knowledge. The memorable language which Sir Isaac Newton is said to have used towards the end of his life ought never to be forgotten:—“I have been nothing more than a little child who has picked up a few shells and pebbles on the shore of the ocean of truth.”

How little, to begin with, do we know about the heaven over our heads, or the earth under our feet! The sun, the moon, the planets, the fixed stars, the comets, can all supply deep questions which the wisest astronomers cannot answer. Yet, for all this, who but a fool would despise the work of Newton, and Halley, and Herschel, and Arago, and Airey? The age of the globe on which we live, the date and cause of the various convulsions it has gone through, long before man was created, the duration of the periods between each change of climate and temperature, what wise geologists will dare to speak positively of such subjects as these? They may speculate, and guess, and propound theories. But how often their conclusions have been overthrown! Yet who would dare to say that Buckland, and Sedgwick, and Phillips, and Lyell, and Murchison, and Owen had written nothing worth notice?

How little can we account for the action of some deadly poisons, and especially in the case of snake-bites and hydrophobia! The virus of a mad dog’s bite will often remain dormant in the system for months, and then become active, and defy all medical treatment. But no one can explain what that virus is. The deaths caused by snake-bites in India are reported to be about 20,000 a year. Yet to this day the precise nature of the cobra’s venom has baffled all chemical analysis, and once received into the human body, the most skilful doctors find they cannot prevent that venom causing death. But what man in his senses would conclude that chemistry and medicine are unworthy of respect, and that Liebig, and Fresenius, or Hervey, and Hunter, and Jenner, and Watson, have conferred no benefit on the world?

How little can men of science account for all the phenomena of light, heat, electricity, magnetism, and chemical action! How many problems lie under the words, “matter, force, energy,” which no one has solved! Far be it from me to disparage the extraordinary advances which physical science has made in this

generation. But I am quite certain that its leading students, from Faraday downwards, will confess that there are many things which they cannot explain.

How little do we know about earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, and epidemics! They come suddenly, like the recent awful catastrophes at Ischia and Java, or the historic events at Pompeii and Lisbon. They cause immense destruction of life and property. But why they come when they do come, and what laws regulate them, so that the inhabitants of a country may be prepared for them, even in this enlightened nineteenth century, we are totally and entirely ignorant. We can only lay our hands on our mouths and be still.

How little, to bring matters to a familiar point, how less than little, or nothing in reality, can we explain the connection between our minds and bodies! Who can tell me why a sense of shame makes the little child's face turn red, or a sense of fear makes the same face turn pale? Who can tell me how my will affects my members, and what it is that makes me walk, or move, or lift my hand whenever I wish? Nobody ever did explain it, and nobody ever will. It is one of the many things that baffle all inquiry.

Now what shall we say to the facts I have adduced? That they are facts I am sure no man of common sense will deny. If I were to say to a man of science, "I do not believe any of your conclusions because there are many hard things in the Book of Nature which you cannot explain," I should be acting very foolishly. I shall do nothing of the kind. I have not the slightest sympathy with those weak-kneed Christians, who seem to think that science and religion can never harmonize, and that they must always scowl and look askance at one another, like two quarrelsome dogs. On the contrary, I shall always hail the annual discoveries of physical science with a hearty welcome. For the continual progress of its students by experiment and observation, and for their annual accumulation of facts, I am deeply thankful. I am not the least afraid that science will ever finally contradict Christian theology (though it may appear to do so for a season), if students of science will only be logical. I only fear that, in their zeal, they are sometimes apt to forget that it is most illogical to draw a general conclusion from a particular premise,—to build houses of theories without foundations. I am firmly convinced that the words of God's mouth and the works of God's hands will never be found really to contradict one another. "When they *appear* to do so, I am content to *wait*. Time will untie the knot.

I do not forget that some young philosophers are fond of talking of the "Laws of Nature," and of saying that they cannot reconcile them with the Bible. They tell us that these "laws" are unchangeable, and that the miracles and supernatural parts of Revelation, which seem to contradict the laws of nature, are therefore incredible. But these philosophers would do well to remember that it is not at all certain that we know *all* the laws of nature, and that higher and deeper laws may yet be discovered. At any rate they must own that some of the existing "laws" were not known and received three or four centuries ago. But surely, if that is the case, we may fairly assume that many other "laws" may yet be found

out, and that many problems which we cannot solve now will be solved hereafter. (See Note A.)

Two things, however, I must say, before leaving this part of my paper.

(a) On the one side, I appeal to those few men of science who turn away from Christianity, and refuse to believe, because of the hard things which its creed requires them to believe. I ask them whether this is just and fair. We do not turn away from physical science because it contains many things which they themselves admit they cannot explain. On the contrary, we bid them God-speed, and wish success to their researches and investigations. But in return we ask them to deal honestly with Christianity. We admit that it contains difficulties, like physical science; but we cannot allow that this is any reason why it should be rejected altogether.

(b) On the other side, I appeal to those timid Christians whose faith is shaken by the attacks which men of science sometimes make on their creed, and are ready to throw down their arms and run away. I ask them whether this is not weak, and cowardly, and foolish? I bid them remember that the difficulties of the sceptical man of science are just as great as those of the Christian. I entreat them to stand firm and not be afraid. Let us frankly admit that there are deep things and "hard to be understood" in our creed. But let us steadily maintain that this is no proof that it is not true and not worthy of all acceptance.

III. The third and last point to which I shall ask the attention of my readers is this. *While it is true that we cannot find out the Almighty to perfection, it is not true to say that we can find out nothing at all in religion.* On the contrary, we know many things which are enough to make unbelief and agnosticism inexcusable.

What then, do we know? Let me mention a few facts which no intelligent person can pretend to deny.

(a) We find ourselves living in a world full of sorrow, pain, strife, and wickedness, which no advance of science, learning, or civilization is able to prevent. We see around us daily proof that we are all, one after another, going out of this world to the grave. Humbling as the thought is, we are all dying daily, and these bodies, which we take such pains to feed, and clothe, and comfort, must see corruption. It is the same all over the globe. Death comes to all men and women alike, of every name, and nation, and people, and tongue; and neither rank, nor riches, nor intellect, can grant exemption. Dust we are, and to dust we return. At any rate, we know this.

(b) We find, moreover, that all over the world the vast majority of mankind have a settled, rooted, inward feeling, that this life is not all, that there is a future state, and an existence beyond the grave. The absence of this feeling is the exception. There it is. Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Hindustan, China, Mexico, and the darkest heathen tribes, as a general rule, are agreed on this point, however strange and diverse their ideas of God, and religion, and the soul. Will any one tell me that we do not know this?

(c) We find, moreover, that the only thing which has ever enabled men and women to look forward to the future without fear, and has given them peace in life and hope in death, is that religion which Jesus Christ brought into the world eighteen hundred years ago, and of which Christ Himself is the sun, and centre, and root, and foundation. Christ, I say emphatically, Christ and His Divinity, Christ and His atoning death, Christ and His resurrection, Christ and His life in heaven. Yes! that very religion of Christ which some tell us they cannot receive because of the mysteries and difficulties of its creed, has made the deepest moral mark on mankind that has ever been made since man was created. Nothing called religion, whether classic heathenism, or Buddhism, or Confucianism, or Mahometanism, has ever produced effects on consciences and conduct, which can bear comparison for a moment with the effects produced by Christianity. The changes which have taken place in the state of the world before Christ and the world after Christ, and the difference at this day between those parts of the globe where the Bible is read, and those where it is not known, are great patent facts which have never been explained away. The holiest lives and the happiest deaths which have been seen on the earth for eighteen centuries have been the result of the supernatural theology of the Bible, of faith in and of obedience to Christ, and the story of the cross. I challenge any one to deny this.

(d) We find, above all, that the Historic Founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ Himself, is a great fact which has been before the world for eighteen centuries, and has completely baffled all the efforts of infidels and non-Christians to explain it away. No sceptical writer has ever given a satisfactory answer to the question, "Who was Christ? Whence did he come?" The superhuman purity of His life, confessed even by men like Rousseau and Napoleon (see Note B), the superhuman wisdom of His teaching, the superhuman mystery of His death, the inexplicable incident of His resurrection, the undeniable influence which His apostles obtained for His doctrines without the aid of money or arms,—all these are simple matters of history, and demand the attention of every honest man who really wishes to inquire into the great subject of religion. They are indisputable facts in the annals of the world. Let those who dare deny them.

Now what shall we say to these facts? That they are facts I think no one of average intelligence can possibly deny. I assert that they form a mass of evidence in favour of Christianity which cannot be safely neglected by any honest mind. "What canst thou know?" says Zophar. I answer, we know enough to justify every Christian in resting his soul calmly and confidently on the revelation which God has given us of Himself, and of Christ, in His Bible. That revelation is supported by such an enormous mass of probable evidence that we may safely trust its truth. I answer, furthermore, that we "know" enough to warrant us in urging every sceptic to consider seriously, as a prudent man, whether he is not occupying a very dangerous and untenable position. Probabilities are all against him; and probabilities, in the vast majority of things, are the only guide of choice and action. He cannot say that the witness of eighteen centuries is so weak and worthless that it deserves no attention. On the contrary, it is so strong

that, if he cannot explain it away, he ought either to throw down the arms of his unbelief, or to avow that he is not open to reason. In a word, he is not willing to be convinced. He has shut his eyes, and is determined not to open them. Well might our Lord say, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Well might He "marvel at unbelief" (Luke xvi. 31; Mark vi. 6).

I shall now conclude this paper with two general remarks which I commend to the attention of all who read it.

1. For one thing, let me try to show *the true causes of* a vast amount of the unbelief of the present day.

That there is a good deal of unbelief in this age it is vain to deny. The number of people who attend no place of worship, and seem to have no religion, is very considerable. A vague kind of scepticism or agnosticism is one of the commonest spiritual diseases in this generation. It meets us at every turn, and crops up in every company. Like the Egyptian plague of frogs, it makes its way into every family and home, and there seems no keeping it out. Among high and low, and rich and poor, in town and in country, in universities and manufacturing towns, in castles and in cottages, you will continually find some form of unbelief. It is no longer a pestilence that walketh in darkness, but a destruction that wasteth at noonday. It is even considered clever and intellectual, and a mark of a thoughtful mind. Society seems leavened with it. He that avows his belief of *everything* contained in the Bible must make up his mind in many companies to be smiled at contemptuously, and thought an ignorant and weak man.

(a) Now there is no doubt that, as I have already said, the seat of unbelief in some persons is *the head*. They refuse to accept anything which they cannot understand, or which seems above their reason. Inspiration, Miracles, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Holy Spirit, the Resurrection, the Future State, all these mighty verities are viewed with cold indifference as disputable points, if not absolutely rejected. "Can we entirely explain them? Can we satisfy their reasoning faculties about them?" If not, they must be excused if they stand in doubt. What they cannot fully understand, they tell us they cannot fully believe, and so they never observe the Sabbath, and never exhibit any religion while they live, though, strangely enough, they like to be buried with religious forms when they die.

(b) But while I admit this, I am equally certain that with some the real seat of unbelief is *the heart*. They love the sins and habits of life which the Bible condemns, and are determined not to give them up. They take refuge from an uneasy conscience by trying to persuade themselves that the old Book is not true. The measure of their creed is their affection. Whatever condemns their natural inclinations, they refuse to believe. The famous Lord Rochester, once a profligate and an infidel, but at last a true penitent, is recorded to have said to Bishop Burnet, as he drew near his end, "It is not reason, but a bad life which is the great argument against the Bible." A true and weighty saying! Many, I am

persuaded, profess that they do not believe, because they know, if they did believe, they must give up their favourite sins.

(c) Last, but not least, with far the greater number of people the seat of unbelief is a lazy, indolent *will*. They dislike all kind of trouble. Why should they deny themselves, and take pains about Bible-reading and praying, and Sabbath observance, and diligent watchfulness over thoughts, and words, and actions, when, after all, it is not quite certain that the Bible is true? This, I have little doubt, is the form of unbelief which prevails most frequently among young people. They are not agitated by intellectual difficulties. They are often not the slaves of any special lusts or passions, and live tolerably decent lives. But deep down in their hearts there is a disinclination to make up their minds, and to be decided about anything in religion. And so they drift down the stream of life like dead fish, and float helplessly on, and are tossed to and fro, hardly knowing what they believe. And while they would shrink from telling you they are not Christians, they are without any backbone in their Christianity.

Now, whether head, or heart, or will be in fault, it is some comfort to remember that there is probably less of real, downright, reasoning unbelief than there appears to be. Thousands, we may be sure, do not in their heart of hearts believe all that they say with their lips. Many a sceptical saying is nothing more than a borrowed article, picked up and retailed by him who says it, because it sounds clever, while, in reality, it is not the language of his inner man. Sorrow, and sickness, and affliction often bring out the strange fact that so-called sceptics are no sceptics at all, and that many *talk* scepticism merely from a desire to seem clever, and to win the temporary applause of clever men. That there is an immense amount of unbelief in the present day I make no question; but that much of it is mere show and pretence is, to my mind, as clear as noonday. No man, I think, can do pastoral work, and come to close quarters with souls, visit the sick, and attend the dying, without coming to that conclusion.

The parting advice I offer to heart sceptics is simply this. Let me entreat you to *deal honestly with your soul about secret sins*. Are you sure there is not some bad habit, or lust, or passion, which, almost insensibly to yourself, you would like to indulge, if it were not for some remaining scruples? Are you quite sure that your doubts do not arise from a desire to get rid of restraint? You would like, if you could, to do something the Bible forbids, and you are looking about for reasons for disregarding the Bible. Oh! if this is the case with any of my readers, awake to a sense of your danger! Break the chains which are gradually closing round you. Pluck out the right eye if need be; but never be the servant of sin. I repeat that the secret love of some vicious indulgence is the real beginning of a vast amount of infidelity.

The parting advice I offer to lazy sceptics is this. Let me entreat you to *deal honestly with your souls about the use of means for acquiring religious knowledge*. Can you lay your hand on your heart and say that you really take pains to find out what is truth? Do not be ashamed to pray for light. Do not be ashamed of reading some leading book about the Creeds and the Confession of

your own Church, and, above all, do not be ashamed of regularly studying the text of your Bible. Thousands, I am persuaded, in this day, know nothing of the Holy Book which they affect to despise, and are utterly ignorant of the real nature of that Christianity which they pretend they cannot believe. Let not that be the case with you. That famous "honest doubt," which many say is better than "half the creeds," is a pretty thing to talk about. But I venture a strong suspicion that much of the scepticism of the present day, if sifted and analyzed, would be found to spring from utter ignorance of the primary evidences of Christianity.

2. The other concluding remark which I will make is this. I will try to explain *the reason why so many professing Christians are continually frightened* and shaken in their minds by doubts about the truth of Christianity.

That this is the case of many I have a very strong impression. I suspect there are thousands of Sabbath-keeping, church-going Christians who would repudiate with indignation the charge of scepticism, and yet are constantly troubled about the truth of Christianity. Some new book, or lecture, or sermon, appears from the pen of men like Darwin or Colenso, and at once these worthy people are scared and panic-stricken, and run from clergyman to clergyman to pour out their anxieties and fears, as if the very ark of God was in danger. "Can these new ideas be really true?" they cry. "Must we really give up the Old Testament, and the flood, and the miracles, and the resurrection of Christ? Alas! alas! what shall we do?" In short, like Ahaz, their "hearts are moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." (Isa. vii. 2.)

Now what is the cause of this readiness to give way to doubts? Why are so many alarmed about the faith of eighteen centuries, and frightened out of their wits by attacks which no more shake the evidences of Christianity than the scratch of a pin shakes the Great Pyramid of Egypt?

The reason is soon told. The answer lies in a nutshell. The greater part of modern Christians are utterly ignorant of the evidences of Christianity and the enormous difficulties of infidelity. The education of the vast majority of people on these subjects is wretchedly meagre and superficial, or it is no education at all. Not one in a hundred church-goers, probably, has ever read a page of Leslie, or Leland, or Watson, or Butler, or Paley, or Chalmers, or M'Ilvaine, or Bishop Wilson, or Porteus, or Whately. What wonder if the minds of such people are like a city without walls, and utterly unable to resist the attacks of the most commonplace infidelity, much less of the refined and polished scepticism of these latter days.

The remedy for this state of things is patent and plain. Every professing Christian should arm his mind with some elementary knowledge of the evidences of revealed religion and the difficulties of infidelity, and so be ready to give a reason of the faith that he professes. He ought not merely to read and love his Bible, but to be able to tell any one why he believes the Bible to be true. Ministers should preach occasionally on evidences. It was one of that great man Cecil's counsels to a clergyman, "In your sermons never forget the infidel." Schools, colleges, and universities, which make any pretence to be Christian,

should never altogether leave out evidences in their scheme of instruction for the young. In short, if we want the coming generation to hold fast Christianity, we must provide them with defensive armour.

With these two remarks I close my paper. Thank God! we travel on to a world where there is no ignorance, no scepticism, and no doubt. We shall soon see as we have been seen, and know as we have been known. Alas! what a waking up remains for many the moment the last breath is drawn! There is no unbelief in the grave. Voltaire now knows whether there is a sin-hating God; and David Hume now knows whether there is an endless hell. The infant of days, by merely dying, acquires a knowledge which the subtlest philosophers, while on earth, profess their inability to attain. The dead Hottentot knows more than the living Socrates. To that future world the true Christian may look forward calmly, confidently, and without fear. He that has Christ in his heart, and the Bible in his hand, is standing on a rock, and has no cause to be afraid. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, let us be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. xv. 58.)

If we cannot "find out the Almighty to perfection," we can know enough to give us peace in life, and hope in death. What we "know" let us hold fast.

One thing, at least, is certain. If we "*know*" little, we can *do* much. Is it not written, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God;" "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." (John vii. 17; Deut. xxix. 29.)

NOTE A.

The following page from Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" contains so many useful thoughts about miracles and the so-called laws of nature, that I make no apology for giving it to the readers of this paper, and commending it to their attention. In giving it I must not be supposed to be a wholesale admirer of the writer, or of his peculiar style:—

"But is not a Miracle simply a violation of the Laws of Nature?' ask several. Whom I answer by this new question, What are the Laws of Nature? To me, perhaps, the rising of one from the dead were no violation of these Laws, but a confirmation; were some far deeper Law, now first penetrated into, and by Spiritual Force, even as the rest have all been, brought to bear on us with its Material force.

"Here, too, some may inquire, not without astonishment, 'On what ground shall one that can make iron swim, come and declare that therefore he can teach religion?' To us, truly, of the nineteenth century, such declaration were inapt enough, which, nevertheless, to our fathers of the first century was full of meaning.

"But is it not the deepest Law of Nature that she be constant?' cries an illuminated class. 'Is not the Machine of the Universe fixed to move by unalterable rules?' Probable enough, good friends; nay, I, too, must believe that the God whom ancient inspired men assert to be 'without variableness or shadow of turning' does indeed never change; that Nature, that the Universe, which no one whom it so pleases can be prevented from calling a Machine, does move by the most unalterable rules. And now of yon, too, I make the old inquiry, 'What those same unalterable rules, forming the complete statute book of Nature, may possibly be?'

"They stand written in our Works of Science,' say you,—'in the accumulated records of man's experience'? Was man with his experience present at the Creation, then, to see how it all went on? Have any deepest scientific individuals yet dived down to the foundation of the Universe, and gauged everything there? Did the Maker take them into His counsel, that they read His ground-plan of the incomprehensible All; and can say, 'This stands marked therein, and no more than this'! Alas! not in any one! These scientific individuals have been nowhere but where we also are, have seen some handbreadths deeper than we see into the Deep that is infinite, without bottom, as without shore.

"System of Nature! To the wisest man, wide as is his vision, Nature remains of quite *infinite* depth, of quite infinite expansion; and all experience thereof limits itself to some few computed centuries and measured square miles. The course of Nature's phases, on this our little fraction of a Planet, is partially known to us; but who knows what deeper courses these depend on, what infinitely larger Cycle (of causes) our little Epicycle revolves on? To the Minnow every cranny, and pebble, and quality, and accident of its little native Creek may have become familiar; but does the Minnow understand the Ocean Tides and periodic currents, the Trade-winds, and Monsoons, and Moon's Eclipses; by all which the condition of its little is regulated, and may, from time to time (unmiraculously enough) be quite overset and reversed? Such a Minnow is Man; his Creek this Planet Earth, his Ocean the immeasurable All, his Monsoons and Periodic Currents the Mysterious Course of Providence through Æons of Æons!"

NOTE B.

The language of Rousseau about Christ, referred to in this sermon, is so remarkable that I think it may be useful to give it in its entirety:—

“Is it possible that He, whose history the Gospel records, can be but a mere man? Does He speak in the tone of an enthusiast, or of an ambitious sectary? What mildness, what purity in His manners! What touching grace in His instructions, what elevation in His maxims! What profound wisdom in His discourses! What presence of mind! What ingenuity, and what justness in His answers! What government of His passions! What prejudice, what blindness or ill faith must that be which dares to compare Socrates, the son of Sophroniscus, with the Son of Mary! What a difference between the two! Socrates dying without pain, without disgrace, easily sustains his part to the last. The death of Socrates philosophizing tranquilly with his friends is the mildest that could be desired: that of Jesus expiring in torments, injured, mocked, cursed by all the people, is the most horrible that can be feared. Socrates, taking the empoisoned cup, blesses him who presents it to him with tears. Jesus, in the midst of a frightful punishment, prays for his enraged executioners. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God.”—*Rousseau, Emile*.

The words of Napoleon at St. Helena towards the close of his life were these: “I know men, and I tell you that Jesus is not a man.”

XVIII.

THE BEST EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

OUR lot is cast in times when there is a tendency to try all ancient institutions by their *results*. Schools, colleges, universities, corporations, old endowed charities, all are successively put into the crucible, and placed in the furnace. "Will an institution stand the fire? Is the result of the operation dross or good metal?" These are the only questions which men require to be answered.

Now, I wish to apply this great principle to the religion which our Lord Jesus Christ brought into the world eighteen hundred years ago. Some men tell us that it is an effete and worn-out thing, utterly unsuited to the nineteenth century. Christianity, in short, is regarded with contempt by many who call themselves leaders of thought in modern times. Like an old almanac, its work is done, and it may be thrown aside! Its Bible and its Sundays, its ministers and its worship, its prayers and its sacraments, all are unworthy of the notice of intellectual men, and may be safely neglected, smiled at, and handed over to the ignorant and the poor! Such is the line of thinking, writing, and talking in too many quarters.

Now, my simple object in this paper is to point out the unreasonableness, not to say dishonesty, of ignoring the enormous results and effects which Christianity has produced in the world. I ask the sceptic and the agnostic to try Christianity by its *fruits*. I defy them to deny the existence of those fruits. I say that mankind owes a huge debt to Christianity, whether mankind knows it or not, of which the amount can never be calculated. In short, the fruits of Christianity are an unanswerable proof to my own mind of its divine origin, and a stupendous difficulty in the way of infidelity, which has never been fairly grappled with or explained away. They demand attention. They court investigation. The plain words of our Lord Jesus Christ contain a principle which is too much forgotten in this day: "Every tree is known by his own fruit" (Luke vi. 44).

There are only two points to which I shall invite the attention of my readers.

I. For one thing, *let us consider "briefly some of the fruits which Christianity has produced in the world."*

II. For another, *let us consider the leading doctrines by whose agency these fruits have been produced.*

I do not for a moment pretend to bring forward anything new or deep. I am going to speak of ancient, familiar things, which any one of average intelligence can understand. But it is precisely the simplicity of my argument which makes many overlook it. We have so many great swelling words in this day from the enemies of Christianity, about "laws of nature, development, matter, germs, force," and the like, that we are apt to forget the immense mass of evidence in favour of revealed religion which is lying close by our side.

I. In the first place, *what fruits has Christianity produced in the world?*

We are not fit to consider this question, unless we realize the actual condition of the world when Christianity was introduced. We must remember that the Augustan age, when the Lord Jesus Christ was born and His Church founded, was the era when heathenism had carried art and literature to the highest pitch of excellence. Even at this day the temples of Luxor and Carnac, the Parthenon at Athens, and the Coliseum at Rome, are among the most remarkable buildings in the world. The works of Homer, and Herodotus, and Thucydides, and Æschylus, and Sophocles, and Euripides, and Plato, among the Greeks,—of Cicero, and Tacitus, and Virgil, and Horace, among the Romans,—are admired and read by almost all educated men, and in their way are unsurpassed after eighteen centuries have passed away. In short, if the education of mind, and reason, and intellect, and the cultivation of art and literature, could make men holy and happy in this life, and give them a good hope for the life to come, the world, before Christ, did not need the introduction of Christianity.

But what was the world before Christ, even the most polished and refined portion of it, in the matter of religion and morality? That is the question. The answer may be given in the words of St. Paul: “The world by wisdom knew not God” (1 Cor. i. 21). Darkness, thick darkness, covered the earth. Athens and Rome were full of magnificent temples, in which men worshipped images of gold, and silver, and wood, and stone, the work of their own hands. The greatest philosophers, such as Socrates, groped, as in the night. The doctrine of the Being of the true God seems to have been completely lost, and in its place the most debasing idolatry and grovelling superstition universally prevailed.

The following passage from Bishop Wilson’s admirable “Lectures on Christian Evidences” (vol. i. p. 47, 2nd edition), contains a picture which I believe is not one bit over-coloured:—“Whether you consider the barbarian nations, or those which were most polished,—whether you look back to the earliest times of which we have any authentic history, or those nearer the birth of our Lord,—all was one thick impenetrable mass of moral disorder and ruin. The most abject and disgusting idolatry, the worship of the beasts and birds, of stocks and stones, the deification of kings and warriors, of human virtues and vices, of insects and creeping things, and even of that most disgusting of all reptiles, the serpent, prevailed. Practices the most flagitious were interwoven with the histories and ceremonies of these wretched deities. From this source, aided by the corrupt heart of man, flowed out a torrent of vices and abominations in public and private life. Fraud, theft, rapine, fell revenge, suicide, fornication, adultery, murder of infants, unnatural crimes, the atrocious cruelties of war, the slavery and oppression of captives, gladiatorial shows, not only abounded, but were patronized, countenanced by the great body of men, connived at, if not practised, by statesmen and philosophers, publicly reprobated by none.”

Hear what the worthy Bishop says in another passage:—“The heathen were impure and abominable even in their religion. Their gods and goddesses were profligate, impure, revengeful, odious. ‘The very light that was in them was darkness.’ For what could the histories of Jupiter, Juno, and Bacchus and

Mercury and Venus teach, but vice, and drunkenness, and lewdness, and theft, and fraud? What were the Floralia, and Bacchanalia, and Saturnalia? ‘It is a shame,’ observes the great apostle, ‘even to speak of those things which were done of them in secret’ (Eph. v. 12). Christians, as individuals, may be wicked and unjust, and, alas! often are so. But this is *notwithstanding* their religion, and in spite of it, as Bishop Warburton has fairly remarked, and therefore cases of the grossest iniquity are rare. The heathen, on the contrary, were impure and abominable *in consequence* of their religion, and because of it; and therefore a depravity of which we have scarcely a conception prevailed, and cases of virtue and comparative purity were rare and uncommon.”

Now I believe this terrible picture of the world before Christ is not one bit overdrawn. I believe it would be easy to confirm its accuracy by reference to Greek and Latin authors. But it would be impossible to do so without bringing forward things of which “it is a shame even to speak.” I only ask Christians to remember that the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which is often not read through in public, contains a plain, unvarnished description of heathenism as it really was in the days of St. Paul.

But what was the agency by which this awful state of things in the heathen world was altered, amended, and gradually swept away throughout all the Roman empire? That it has been swept away is a simple historical fact. But what wrought the change? What was it that emptied the heathen temples, destroyed the vocation of the idolatrous priesthood, raised the whole standard of morality, and, to use the words of Scripture, “turned the world upside down”? (Acts xvii. 6). I answer, unhesitatingly, the introduction and progress of Christianity. How vast, and wide, and deep the change was we can hardly realize at this present day. What *is* before our eyes in Europe we know. What *was*, when heathenism reigned supreme, we cannot grasp and take in.

I ask your attention to the following eloquent passage from the pen of a living writer:—

“The argument which meets us *first* in surveying the history of Christianity, and in estimating the outstanding and singular features of its success, is its early, wide, and, within certain limits, absolutely irresistible diffusion. Other facts attest this; but I select one as to which there can be no controversy, the extirpation by it of idolatry such as it existed in the old Roman world. That system, from the Euphrates to the farthest shore of Britain, from the Nile to the forests of Germany, has utterly passed away. The whole regions around the Mediterranean, to the limits of civilization, and beyond them, ‘have changed their gods;’ and though something, as time advanced, may be claimed for Mahommedanism, the great, decisive, all-prevailing impulses have come from Christianity. The classic Paganism, Greek and Roman, the Assyrian, the Egyptian and North African, the Druidic, and ultimately the Teutonic, have all fallen to rise no more; and at this moment there is not on the face of the earth a single worshipper of the ‘great goddess Diana’ or ‘the image that fell down from Jupiter,’ of Baal or Dagon, of Isis or Serapis, of Thor or Wodin. They are preserved in imperishable

literature and in equally imperishable art. Homer and the great tragedians have enshrined them. Virgil and Ovid record them, and even Milton in his ‘Paradise Lost,’ to say nothing of that wonderful Book, which, in revealing their abominations, will be found to have carried farthest and widest their memory. But not a single shrine remains to them in the proper sense of the word, not even where the Apollo or Venus, the Minerva or Hercules, enchain universal admiration. They are abolished as idols, while immortalized as relics; and not even the exquisite beauty lavished upon them can hide the moral deformity to which they owe their downfall. It is long centuries since one simple soul regarded them with anything of the feeling with which the African trembles before the rudest fetish, or the Hindoo before the most unsightly of his divinities. Another conquest so complete and absolute does not mark the history of the world. All ranks and classes passed through the revolution. The husbandman had to give up his offerings to Liber and Ceres, the sailor his votive tablets to Neptune, the soldier his chaplets to Mars. The youth had to forget his place in the procession, the virgin her part in the dance or secular games. The senator had to forego his libation on entering the senate, the general his search after the omens before battle, the very emperor the honour of his own coins and titles of divinity. What but an immense and boundless power could have wrought this change, and wrought it, not by constraint, but willingly, through the force of persuasion? (“The Success of Christianity,” by Principal Cairns, pp. 5, 6. Rel. Tract Soc.)

Will any of those who profess to deny the truth of Christianity deny the facts which this passage contains? It is impossible. He will find all history against him. But if he cannot deny the facts, he ought to tell us how they can on his principles be accounted for. We say they are irrefragable and unanswerable proofs that Christianity came down from God.

Great, however, as the fruits of Christianity have been in the overthrow and destruction of idolatry, they are fully equalled, if not surpassed, by the enormous practical results which Christianity has produced on the moral standard and social conduct of mankind. About human life and property,—about women, children, servants, and the poor,—about justice and equity between man and man,—about decency, purity, and charity,—about all these subjects the standard of public opinion has been entirely changed since the gospel leavened the Roman world.

Once more I ask attention to a passage in which another living writer has ably summed up the practical results of Christianity:—

“We fear no challenge when we affirm that in its purest form Christianity has fostered the ideas and encouraged the habits out of which all true civilization springs. It has fostered regard for *man* as essentially a noble being, having an immortal soul made in God’s image, with boundless capacities of expansion and improvement; regard for *woman* as the helpmeet and companion of man—not his drudge, or slave, or concubine; regard for *marriage* as a holy contract entered into before God, not to be lightly set aside; regard for *children* as the heritage of the Lord—not burdens or incumbrances, but lent by the Lord to be

brought up for Him; regard for the *family* as a divine institution, intended to be a fountain of holy joys, and a nursery of all estimable habits and all kindly affections; regard for the *sick*, the *infirm*, and the *aged*, whose sorrows we are ever to pity, and whose privations we are to make up in some measure from our more ample stores. The very word Christian, in its true spirit, has been identified with all these ideas and habits. In that sense it has a glory all its own; and no more damaging criticism can be passed on persons outraging truth and rectitude than that they are a disgrace to the Christian name.” (“Christianity and Secularism,” by Dr. Blaikie, p. 5. Rel. Tract Soc.)

It would be perfectly easy to add to the statements contained in this passage if time and space permitted. The difficulty in the matter is not so much the discovery of evidence as the selection of it. The mass of facts which might be adduced to show the rich and blessed fruits of Christianity is simply enormous, and I pity the sceptic who refuses to look at it. To those who care to investigate the subject more fully I strongly recommend two volumes which have recently been published. One is called “*Gesta Christi*,” by an American writer named Brace; the other is called “*Modern Missions and Culture*,” by Dr. Werneck, a German. Each of these volumes contains a vast quantity of valuable information which is accessible to few English readers, and will richly repay perusal.

I admit most fully that there have been periods, during the last eighteen centuries, when the fruits of Christianity have been miserably scanty and poor, and the tree which bore them has seemed rotten and only fit to be cut down. I do not forget the corruption of faith and practice in the dark ages, the hideous immorality of many bishops of Rome, the vile doings of many monasteries and nunneries, the ignorance and superstition of priests, the grovelling superstition of laymen. These are things I do not pretend to deny. I grant that the tide of truth sometimes ebbed so low that it was almost out of sight, and the light was so dim that it was well-nigh extinguished. But it must be remembered that in the worst times there were always some men who protested loudly against the wickedness around them, such as Bradwardine, and Grostete, and Wycliffe, and John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and Savonarola. And there were always some scattered bodies of Christians who, by life and doctrine, witnessed faithfully against corruption, such as the Vallenses and Albigenses, the Waldensian Churches, and the Lollards. And, after all, if the state of the Roman world in the days of the apostle and the state of the world at this day could be fairly compared, there is not the slightest doubt what the verdict would be. The change for the better would be found so vast that no words could describe it. The fruits of Christianity are such, in spite of all failures and defects, that the moral difference between the world before Christ and the world after Christ is the difference between gold and dross, sweet and bitter, white and black, darkness and light.

The plain truth is, that we are all so familiar with the public blessings Christianity has insensibly conferred on the world, that we cannot realize the condition of things from which it has delivered us. Few men take the trouble to read or think about anything except eating, drinking, dressing, business, politics,

recreation, money, and temporalities. The many never reflect on the enormous debt which they daily owe to the effects of Bible religion and the very Christianity which so many pretend to despise. Does the infidel, who lies in some hospital for weeks, tenderly nursed and cared for, reflect that without Christianity there would have been no hospital at all? I doubt it.—Does the British workman, who never goes to a place of worship, and never reads his Bible, and often sneers at parsons, reflect that without Christianity he would never have been sure of his wages, and would have often been treated as a bond-slave and a serf? I doubt it.—Does the high-born woman of fashion, who makes a god of dress and amusement, and regards “religious people” with ill-disguised contempt, ever reflect that without Christianity she would have enjoyed little liberty of action, little independence of thought or choice, and her very honour would have been little respected? I doubt it.—Does the scientific agnostic, who sits at home at ease, or travels about on Sundays, and despises churches, clergymen, and Bibles, and ignores his soul,—does he ever fairly and honestly reflect that without Christianity he would have had little safety for property, home, or person, little liberty of thought, and little chance of justice if he came in collision with ruling power? Does he, I say, think of all this? Once more I say, I doubt it.—In short, I am firmly convinced that of all the debts which have been repudiated since creation, there never was one so shamefully ignored and repudiated as the debt which the world owes to Christianity. If revealed religion could only be fairly tried by its fruits, there is no doubt what the verdict would be. Secularism, agnosticism, scepticism, and infidelity would be confounded and silenced for ever.

II. I will now turn to the other point which I undertook to consider. Let us inquire what were *the leading doctrines of Christianity by the agency of which its fruits have been produced.*

I regard this point as one of great importance. It is certain that not everything called Christianity is the Christianity which was taught by Christ and His Apostles. It is equally certain that nothing but “the tree” that they planted will ever bear good fruit. To expect good fruit from the grossly unscriptural religion of pre-Reformation days, or from the vague, hazy, broad, boneless, jelly-fish teaching, which many call religion in the nineteenth century, is unreasonable and absurd. Such religions never yet bore good fruit: they never can and they never will.

Fruit-bearing Christianity has never been a *mere vicarious* religion. By that I mean a religion which teaches men to put their souls in the hands of a priest, and to leave him to settle matters between them and God. Nor yet has it been a *mere formal and ceremonial* religion. By that I mean a religion which teaches men to rest in the observation of times and seasons, and gestures and postures, and bodily acts, in which the heart and soul have nothing to do. Nor yet has it been a religion of mere *asceticism*. By that I mean a religion which teaches men and women that the way to please God is to shut ourselves up in monasteries and nunneries, and leave the world to itself. Nor yet has it been a *mind-cramping*

religion. By that I mean a religion which teaches men that they must not think and read for themselves, but must shut their eyes, and hear the Church, and believe whatever they are told. Christianity of these kinds, I repeat emphatically, has never borne good fruit. Whenever and wherever it has prevailed, in any country or at any era, such religion has done little or no good to the world. It has made no mark on lives or characters. It has been no better than a refined and polished heathenism, a stuffed carcase, a whitened sepulchre, a body without life. It has certainly supplied no evidence to silence the sceptic, or to prove the truth of divine revelation.

The Christianity which I call fruit-bearing,—which shows its divine origin by its blessed effects on mankind,—the Christianity which you may safely defy infidels to explain away,—that Christianity is a very different thing. Let me show some of its leading marks and features.

(a) For one thing, fruit-bearing Christianity has always taught *the inspiration, sufficiency, and supremacy of Holy Scripture*. It has told men that “God’s Word written” is the only trustworthy rule of faith and practice in religion, that God requires nothing to be believed that is not in this Word, and that nothing is right which contradicts it. It has never allowed reason, the verifying faculty, or the voice of the Church, to be placed above, or on a level with Scripture. It has steadily maintained that, however imperfectly we may understand it, the old Book is meant to be the only standard of life and doctrine.

(b) For another thing, fruit-bearing Christianity has always taught fully the *sinfulness, guilt, and corruption of human nature*. It has told men that they are born in sin, deserve God’s wrath and condemnation, and are naturally inclined to do evil. It has never allowed that men and women are only weak and pitiable creatures, who can become good when they please, and make their own peace with God. On the contrary, it has steadily declared man’s danger and vileness, and his pressing need of a divine forgiveness and satisfaction for his sins, a new birth or conversion, and an entire change of heart.

(c) For another thing, fruit-bearing Christianity has always set before men *the Lord Jesus Christ* as the chief object of faith and hope in religion, as the Divine Mediator between God and men, the only source of peace of conscience, and the root of all spiritual life. It has never been content to teach that He is merely our Prophet, our Example, and our Judge. The main things it has ever insisted on about Christ are the atonement for sin He made by His death, His sacrifice on the cross, the complete redemption from guilt and condemnation by His blood, His victory over the grave by His resurrection, His active life of intercession at God’s right hand, and the absolute necessity of simple faith in Him. In short, it has made Christ the Alpha and the Omega in Christian theology.

(d) Last, but not least, fruit-bearing Christianity has always honoured the *Person of God the Holy Ghost*, and magnified His work. It has never taught that all professing Christians have the grace of the Spirit in their hearts, as a matter of course, because they are baptized, or because they belong to the Church, or because they are communicants. It has steadily maintained that the fruits of the

Spirit are the only evidence of having the Spirit, and that those fruits must be seen,—that we must be born of the Spirit, led by the Spirit, sanctified by the Spirit, and feel the operations of the Spirit,—and that a close walk with God in the path of His commandments, a life of holiness, charity, self-denial, purity, and zeal to do good, are the only satisfactory marks of the Holy Ghost.

Such is true fruit-bearing Christianity. Well would it have been for the world if there had been more of it during the last eighteen centuries! Too often, and in too many parts of Christendom, there has been so little of it, that Christ's religion has seemed extinct, and has fallen into utter contempt. But just in proportion as such Christianity as I have described has prevailed, the world has benefited, the infidel been silenced, and the truth of Divine revelation been acknowledged. The tree has been known by its fruit.

This is the Christianity which, in the days of the Primitive Church, “turned the world upside down.” It was this that emptied the idol temples of their worshippers, routed the Greek and Roman philosophers, and obliged even heathen writers to confess that the followers of the “new superstition,” as they called it, were people who loved one another, and lived very pure and holy lives.

This is the Christianity which, after dreary centuries of ignorance, priest-craft, and superstition, produced the Protestant Reformation, and changed the history of Europe. The leading doctrines which were preached by Luther and Zwingli on the Continent, and by Latimer and his companions in England, were precisely those which I have briefly described. That they bore rich fruit, in an immense increase of general morality and holiness, is a simple fact which no historian has ever denied.

This is the Christianity which, in the middle of last century, delivered our own Church from the state of deadness and darkness into which she had fallen. The main truths on which Whitfield, and Wesley, and Romaine, and Venn, and their companions, continually insisted, were the truth about sin, Christ, the Holy Ghost, and holiness. And the results were the same as they were in the primitive days, and at the era of the Reformation. Men persecuted and hated all who taught these truths, but no one could say that they did not make men live and die well.

This is the Christianity which is doing good at this day, wherever good is done. Search the missionary stations in Africa, India, or China. Visit the great overgrown, semi-heathen parishes in colliery districts or manufacturing towns in our own land. In every case you will find the same report must be made. The only religious teaching which can show solid, positive results, is that which gives prominence to the doctrines which I have endeavoured to describe. Wherever they are rightly taught, Christianity can point to fruits which are an unanswerable proof of its divine origin.

So much for fruit-bearing Christianity. I leave the subject with one remark about it. Let it never be forgotten that its leading principles are those which are least likely to please the natural man. On the contrary, they are precisely those which are calculated to be unpopular and to give offence. Proud man does not like to be told that he is a weak, guilty sinner,—that he cannot save his own

soul, and must trust in the work of another,—that he must be converted and have a new heart,—that he must live a holy, self-denying life, and come out from the world. Surely the mere fact that this kind of unpopular teaching characterizes successful Christianity, and bears fruit in the world, is a strong evidence that Christianity is a divine revelation, and really comes from God.

And now I will conclude this paper with four words of practical application, which I shall address to four different classes of people.

1. In the first place, I have a word for *those who are tempted to give way to scepticism and unbelief*, and are half disposed to throw overboard Christianity altogether. What shall I say to you? Listen, and I will tell you.

I entreat you, before you go any farther, *to deal honestly with the religion of faith* and those who profess it, and try it by its fruits. That there is such a religion in the midst of us, and that there are thousands who profess it, are simple facts which nobody can deny. These thousands believe without doubting certain great truths of Christianity, and live and die in their belief. Let it be admitted that, in some points, these men of faith do not agree,—such as the Church, the ministry, and the sacraments. But after every deduction, there remains an immense amount of common theology, about which their faith is one. On such points as sin, and God, and Christ, and the atonement, and the authority of the Bible, and the importance of holiness, and the necessity of prayer, and self-denial, and the value of the soul, and the reality of heaven and hell, and judgment, and eternity,—on such points as these, I say, these men of faith are very much of one mind.

Now, I ask all sceptics and agnostics, is it honest to turn away from these men of faith and their religion with contempt, because they have many weaknesses and infirmities? Is it fair to despise their religion, and wrap yourself up in unbelief, because of their controversies and strifes, their feeble literature and their party spirit? Is it fair to ignore the fruits of peace, and hope and comfort, which they enjoy? Mark the solid work which, with all their faults, they do in the world, in lessening sorrow and sin, and increasing happiness, and improving their fellowmen. What fruits and work can unbelief show which will bear comparison with the fruits of faith? What good has secularism, or agnosticism, or deism, done to mankind? What missions have they sent forth to the world? What cities or countries on earth have they civilized, purified, and made more holy and happy? What have the gods which some despisers of revelation seem to worship,—evolution, development, matter, force, destiny,—what have they done to enable men to meet the many ills to which all flesh is heir? What aching consciences have they relieved? What broken hearts have they bound up? What sick-beds have they cheered? What bereaved parents and widows have they comforted? We ask in vain. We shall get no answer. Look these facts in the face and deal honestly with them. Systems ought to be judged by their “fruits” and results. When the so-called systems of modern unbelief and scepticism, and free thought, can point to as much good done in the world by their adherents as simple faith has done by the hand of its friends, we may give them some attention.

But till they do that, I boldly say, that the simple, old-fashioned religion of faith has a just claim on our respect, esteem, and obedience, and ought not to be lightly esteemed, ridiculed, or despised.

2. In the second place, I have a word for *those professing Christians who have no life or reality about their religion*, and are only nominal members of Christ's Church. I need hardly say there are myriads of people in this condition. They are not sceptics, and would be justly offended if you called them infidels or agnostics. Yet, if truth must be spoken, except going to church or chapel on Sundays, they give no sign of Christianity. If you mark their daily life, they seem neither to think, nor feel, nor care for their souls, or God, or eternity.

Now, I warn any readers of this paper who are in this state, and I say it with pain, that you are the true cause of a vast proportion of infidelity. I remember a careless sceptic saying to me,—“Do you think I am going to believe your Christianity, when I see so many of your church-goers behaving as they do? Do you mean to tell me that they think their creed is true, and that they really believe in a resurrection and a judgment to come? It will be time enough for me to believe when I see your people really believing. At present your Christianity seems a great sham and a mere form.”—Alas! such talk as this is only too much justified by facts. Nothing, nothing, I am convinced, does so much to help the progress of modern infidelity as the utter absence of reality and earnestness among professing Christians. Men and women who crowd churches on Sundays, and then live worldly, selfish lives all the week, are the best and most efficient allies of scepticism. “If you believed what you repeat under the pulpit,” the sceptic says, “you would never live as you live at home.” Oh that people would think of the mischief done by inconsistency! “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.” It is bad enough to ruin your own soul. But do not add to your sin by ruining others.

3. In the third place, I have a word for *those sincere but weak-minded Christians who are surprised and frightened at the unbelief of these latter days*, and live in a constant state of panic and alarm. What shall I say to you? Listen, and I will tell you.

I ask you, then, to look to your Bibles, and lay aside your fears. There is nothing in unbelief which ought to surprise you. Search the Scriptures, and you will find that the unbelief of this present century is only an old enemy in a new dress, an old disease in a new form. Since the day when Adam and Eve fell, the devil has never ceased to tempt men not to believe God, and has said, directly or indirectly, “Ye shall not die even if you do not believe.” In the latter days especially we have warrant of Scripture for expecting an abundant crop of unbelief:—“When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.” “There shall come in the last days scoffers” (Luke xviii. 8; 2 Tim. iii. 13; 2 Pet. iii. 3). Here in England, scepticism is that natural rebound from semi-popery and superstition, which many wise men have long predicted and expected. It is precisely that swing of the

pendulum which far-sighted students of human nature looked for; and it has come.

But as I tell you not to be surprised at the widespread scepticism of the times, so also I must urge you not to be *shaken in mind by it*, or moved from your steadfastness. There is no real cause for alarm. The ark of God is not in danger, though the oxen seem to shake it. Christianity has survived the attacks of Hume and Hobbes and Tindal, of Collins and Woolston and Bolingbroke and Chubb, of Voltaire and Paine and Holyoake. These men made a great noise in their day, and frightened weak people; but they produced no more effect than idle travellers produce by scratching their names on the pyramids of Egypt. Depend on it, Christianity in like manner will survive the attacks of the clever writers of these times. The startling novelty of many modern objections to Revelation, no doubt, makes them seem more weighty than they really are. It does not follow, however, that hard knots cannot be untied because our fingers cannot untie them, or that formidable difficulties cannot be explained because our eyes cannot see through or explain them. When you cannot answer a sceptic, be content to wait for more light; but never forsake a great principle. In religion, as in many scientific questions, said Faraday, “the highest philosophy is often a judicious suspense.” We can afford to wait.

4. In the last place, I have a *word for all true believers who lament the spread of unbelief*, though their own faith is unshaken. What shall I say to them? What advice shall I offer? Listen, and I will tell you.

I must plainly say, and I say it with sorrow, that we who profess faith, and are never troubled with unbelief, are not altogether free from blame. Too often our faith is little better than a mere “otiose assent” to certain theological propositions, but not a living, burning, active principle, which works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and brings forth much fruit of holiness and good works. It is not the faith which made primitive Christians rejoice under Roman persecution, and made Luther stand up boldly before the Diet of Worms, and made Ridley and Latimer “love not their lives to the death,” and made Wesley give up his position at Oxford to become the Evangelist of England. We are verily guilty in this matter. If there was more real living faith on earth, I suspect there would be less unbelief. Scepticism, in many a case, would shrink, and dwindle, and melt away, if it saw faith more awake, and alive, and active, and stirring. Let us, for Christ’s sake, and the sake of souls, amend our ways in this matter. Let us pray daily, “Lord, increase our faith.” Let us live, and move, and have our being, and deal with men, as if we really believed every jot and tittle of our creeds, and as if a dying, risen, interceding, and coming Christ were continually before our eyes. We may depend on it the old saying is true,—“The inconsistency of believers is the infidel’s best argument.”

This, I am firmly convinced, is the surest way to oppose and diminish unbelief. Let the time past suffice us to have lived content with a cold, tame assent to creeds. Let the time to come find us living, active believers. It was a solemn saying which fell from the lips of an eminent minister of Christ on his death-

bed,—“We are none of us more than half awake!” If believers were more thorough, and real, and whole-hearted in their belief, there would be far less unbelief in the world.

The words of our Lord Jesus Christ to which I referred in the beginning of this paper contain a mine of truth,—“Every tree shall be known by its own fruit.” If the tree of Christianity bore more fruit, the axe of infidelity would never harm it, and would be laid to its root in vain.

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