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SELF-SURRENDER.

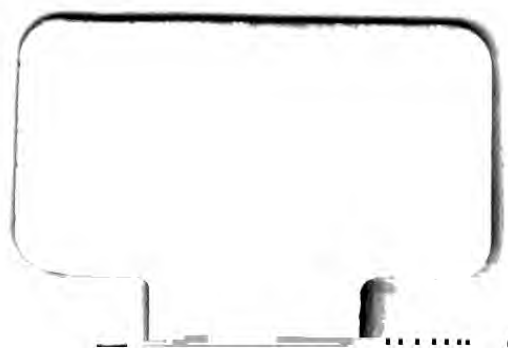
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SELF-SURRENDER.

MISSION ADDRESSES

BY THE LATE

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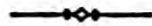
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NOTE.



THESE Addresses were given by Canon Young at a Mission held at S. John's, Mansfield, in 1877. They were printed privately at the time, and are now published as delivered, as they appear deserving of a wider circulation. Canon Young was curate to the Rev. John Keble, at Hursley, for seventeen years, *i.e.* from 1840-1857.



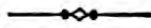
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SELF-SURRENDER.



I.—MEANING OF SELF-SURRENDER.

“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”—ACTS ix. 6.

THE Bible everywhere seems to speak of men as if they were divided into two classes, and only two—the righteous and the wicked, the sons of God and the children of the wicked one, the children of light and the children of this world, the wheat and the tares, the good and the bad soil, the wise and the foolish virgins, those that walk after the spirit and those that walk after the flesh. The Bible, I say, divides men into these two classes. It not only declares that there will be two classes, and two conditions, hereafter; but it takes it for granted that these two classes, these two conditions, exist now, and are manifest to the Eye of God. It implies that every man is either on God's side, and in a state of salvation, or else in a state of alienation from God and in the way to ruin. It does

not of course say or imply, that any *man* can judge of another, on which side of the line he is ; whether he is, or is not, in the number of God's faithful servants ; but though men dare not, cannot judge, God judges ; *His Eye* at all times can discern who those are who are really bent on serving Him, and who are not. Indeed reason itself seems to convince us, that in spite of the various shades of character by which men differ from one another, there must be something which ultimately separates off true service from false and imperfect service. If we could go to the root of the matter, we should find that there was a point, which, after making every allowance for human infirmity, does mark a real and vital difference between one man and another, and between one set of men and another.

Now what is this point of separation ? What is that one thing, which makes that great difference between one man and another, which God discerns ? Many answers doubtless may be given, and have been given, to this question, more or less right and sufficient. That which I propose to urge now is suggested by the words of the text. It is this, that the real, distinguishing mark of God's true servants is conscious and unreserved surrender of self to God ; it is acknowledging, not in word only, but in heart and act, that there is One to Whom we owe ourselves, and submission to Whom is the one end, as it is assuredly the one happiness, of our being.

This it is which constituted Abraham's greatness, and drew for him such distinguishing favour from Almighty God. He believed God—believed not only in His absolute authority over him, but in His love; and therefore he submitted himself to Him without reserve or hesitation. See how large and free is his confidence in God! He trusts Him entirely, and yields everything to Him. He must be safe with Him. He leaves his native land, not knowing whither he is to be led. He murmurs not at being a stranger in the land all his days. He even draws the knife to slay his son. Thus he deals with God as one who truly believes in Him, and trusts Him as a Friend, of boundless power and boundless love. I say the essence of Abraham's greatness was his submitting himself to God so entirely, because he trusted in Him so absolutely. And was it not the same with S. Paul? From that moment, when, on his way to Damascus, he beheld the Face of Christ turned upon him in unspeakable tenderness and love,—from the time when he became conscious, that, defiled as he was, he was nevertheless beloved of Christ—from the time that the love of Christ was thus revealed to him:—from that time the whole current of his mind and thoughts was changed; he felt that he was no longer his own, but Christ's; he gave himself up simply and entirely to do Christ's will: and the life which he henceforth lived in the flesh he lived by the faith of the Son of God Who had loved him

and given Himself for him ; the love of Christ constrained him to live no longer to himself, but to Him Who died for him and rose again.

And is not this the true meaning and explanation of those many passages in the Psalms in which David and the other writers look up to the heart-searching God, and appeal to Him to bear witness to their integrity and uprightness? "Be Thou my judge, O Lord ; for I have walked innocently ; my trust hath been also in the Lord ; therefore shall I not fall." "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me ; try my reins and my heart." "Hear the right, O Lord, and attend unto my cry : give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips. Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence ; let Thine eyes behold the things that are equal. Thou has proved mine heart ; Thou hast visited me in the night ; Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing : I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." These passages seem almost to savour of a self-righteous spirit ; but the self-righteousness is really only in appearance. In other Psalms he confesses his utter inability to stand before God apart from God's free mercy. He is conscious that God looks at his heart, and not merely at the outward acts. He acknowledges his many, and often unperceived, secret transgressions. What the Psalmist means is, that he has simply and unreservedly surrendered himself to God. He knows and feels that he is full of

imperfection ; but his will is entirely one with the Will of God ; there is no department of his duty in which Almighty God can lay His Hand and say, "Here thou art not with Me," no part in which he does not set God before him, and desire to glorify Him, and be governed by Him.

And is not this the secret also of true repentance ? Take the case of S. Peter. S. Peter did not wish to separate himself from Christ, when he said "Depart from me ;" he only meant, and this was known to the Searcher of hearts, "I am utterly unworthy to be near Thee ; but let me stay." It was in fact the cry of entire submission and self-surrender. He had known Christ before ; now he saw Him as He really was : and though he loathed himself, and trembled on account of his unworthiness, yet from that moment Christ was every thing to him ; He filled the whole field of his view, and he cared for none else. On his knees before that holy and gracious Being, Who had now revealed Himself so wonderfully, he offered to Him in heart and deed, though not as yet in word, the devotion of his life. And his loving Lord accepted the offering, and strengthened and purified it, until the Apostle was able to say, with the consciousness that he kept back nothing from Him, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Or take the case of the Prodigal. What is the character of true repentance, as set forth by our Lord in that parable ? Is it not that of absolute,

unconditional self-surrender? The sinner feels that he has ruined himself, that he has despised God's love, and frustrated, as far as in him lay, God's gracious purposes for him: he deserves nothing but punishment; but he hopes and trusts in his Father's love. All other hope is gone: but there is forgiveness with God. Therefore he goes to Him at once, and casts himself down before Him, making no reserves, venturing on no excuses, yielding himself up to Him, and resolving never to take himself to himself again, but to be wholly His, Who has so graciously allowed him to return.

Thus the very essence of true religion consists, as I have been trying to show, in self-surrender. The methods by which the grace of God moves men to such surrender are different: sometimes it is fear, sometimes it is an overpowering sense of God's love and condescension; sometimes it is a long and painful experience of the vanity of the world; sometimes it is the shame and anguish that come from the consciousness of sin. The Holy Spirit has various ways of moving men's hearts and bringing them to Himself. But the drawing, to be effectual, must issue in a thorough, and conscious, yielding up of self and all selfish desires to God. I say "*conscious*" yielding up of self; because wherever there is a real wish and determination on the part of any man to give himself up to God, it is impossible that he should not know it. He must know, whether there are, or are not, certain parts

of his duty from which he shrinks, certain corners of his heart which he wilfully keeps back from God. He must know whether he can look up to God, and say to Him, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I desire in *all* things to do Thy will." Not more different is ice from the running stream, than a half purpose from a whole purpose. "He bloweth with His wind, and the waters flow." So it is when God prevails with a heart to open itself to Him, and to admit Him wholly. There is a perceptible difference of feeling in a man, compared with what he was, which in ordinary cases he cannot mistake. He may have made resolutions before—he may have argued himself into a belief of his sincerity—he may have convinced himself that nothing more can be required of him than he has done—he may have asked himself what there *is* for him to do, and yet have felt a something in him still which needed quieting, something which was ever rising up and troubling him, and requiring to be put down, something which told him plainly, if he would but listen to it, that he had not really surrendered himself to God. But when a man really gives himself up to God, when he gets himself to say honestly and boldly, "I sacrifice to Thee, O Lord, *every* thing which I know to be evil ; I desire to follow Thee, not only in this thing and that thing, but in everything which I know to be according to Thy will ; I desire to be wholly and entirely what

Thou wouldest have me be, and what Thou wouldest make me ; I do not say, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest, for I am weak ; but I will give myself to Thee to lead me where Thou wilt. Try me, O God, and search the ground of my heart ; prove me and examine my thoughts, look well if there be any way of wickedness in me ; search each dark recess of my heart with Thy own bright light, and lead me in the way everlasting : ”—when, I say, a man can bring himself by God’s grace, thus to yield himself to God—what a change is there ! what a perceptible difference which cannot be mistaken ! what a blessed hope, that at length he is doing what he ought to do, and approving himself to his Lord and Saviour ! Then is he indeed a new creature ; old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new.

Now have you ever, my brethren, thus surrendered yourself to God ? Have you ever, on your knees before God, looking up to Him, and conscious that His Eye was upon you, and that you were speaking to Him, said to Him : “ Lord, I am Thine ; Thine by every claim of right and gratitude ; Thou art my Creator, my Father, my Saviour, in Whom I live and move and have my being ; all I have is Thine ; all I hope for comes from Thee ; Lord, I am Thine ; I am not my own ; and I do not desire to be my own any longer. Too long and too wilfully have I chosen to be my own lord : now, O Lord, I turn to Thee ; I give

myself to Thee ; show me Thy way, and give me grace to walk in it."

If there are any among us, as there may be, who have never thus consciously and deliberately dedicated themselves to God, I would urge them, in all love and faithfulness, as they value God's blessing, as they desire their own true happiness, to do so at once. Nothing would be better—I say it advisedly—than for every one of us deliberately and in the very presence of God, to make this surrender. The more solemnly it is done, the better—in express words, or better still, in writing. I can conceive nothing more helpful to any one, whom the grace of God has moved to desire to live a holy and religious life, than that he should draw up a paper, distinctly pledging himself, with God's help, to live for Him, and then to sign it, as in God's presence, with earnest prayer that he may never forget his resolution. He might dedicate himself in some such form as this : "O heavenly Father ; I beseech Thee to have mercy on me, and to accept my poor endeavours to serve Thee. Hitherto, other lords have had dominion over me ; I desire now to renounce them all, and to give myself up to Thee. From this day I promise to be Thine, and to walk in Thy way. I desire to give up my own will in all things, in order to follow Thee. Strengthen me by Thy Holy Spirit, and change me more and more into Thine own image. Oh ! let me never go back from Thee ; but enable

me so to walk with Thee in this life, that I may not be separated from Thee in the world to come." No one can tell how great a benefit it would be to him, if he would be persuaded thus to dedicate himself to God, and putting aside all vain excuses, all pride and worldliness, all selfish longings, all fear and cowardice, would without delay take the bold and decisive step of resolving in God's strength to live a holy life. Depend upon it, it is the only way in which any man can be truly happy.

Many of you know how sometimes birds are shut up in a village church; and if you have watched them, you will have observed that in their anxiety to get free, they fly madly from window to window, thinking apparently each time that they have obtained what they desired; but the bright glass of the window has deceived them, and they have been doomed to disappointment; until at length, exhausted by their ineffectual efforts, they have fallen to the ground and died. Unhappy, silly birds! they knew no better; they did not know that the light was treacherous, that the glass which raised their hopes was really as effectual a barrier as the dark walls. But foolish men might know, if they would, that the pleasures of the world and of self-love, to which they look for happiness, cannot possibly satisfy or delight their souls; in seeking to find satisfaction in them, they are but dashing themselves against the walls of

their prison. As long as they allow themselves to take delight in sin or in the world, they are really in captivity. Oh! open wide the prison-doors, and let the captive soul go free. Cease to worry and disappoint yourself by endeavouring to find happiness and peace in anything short of God. Let your soul go forth to God, and centre itself in Him; and it will be at rest. For "God has made us for himself; and our souls can find no rest, until they rest in Him." (*S. Augustine.*)

II.—REPENTANCE.

“When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”
—ACTS ii. 37, 38.

I SPOKE yesterday of self-surrender as the essence and distinguishing mark of true religion; I said, that to have no will of our own, but absolutely and entirely to yield ourselves to God, to ask from the heart with S. Paul, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” is the essential part of a true conversion to God. Let me go on this morning to consider what answers Holy Scripture enables us to give to S. Paul’s question;—in other words, what it is which God requires a man to do who has thus truly surrendered himself to Him;—how will his self-surrender show itself? In what sort of life will it issue?

It so happens that the Apostle’s question, “What wilt thou have me to do?” occurs repeatedly, though in a slightly different form, in various parts of the New Testament: and I

venture to think that the answers given on those various occasions would be a great help and guide to us in our meditations on the several duties and characteristics of a religious life.

And to-day let us take the question as addressed to S. Peter by the Jews on the Day of Pentecost. The Apostle's sermon had just brought home to them that they had crucified the Lord of glory,—that they had despised and rejected the Messiah, and were as yet impenitent and unbelieving. Conscience had awoke; and in fear they asked what they could do to make amends for their hideous sin. S. Peter's answer was, "Repent,"—*repent*, that is, change your mind towards God and Christ, towards sin and duty; renounce the past with sorrow, and with a firm resolution to enter on a very different course for the time to come. Now this answer of the Apostle, though peculiarly applicable, of course, to the Jews, who had been guilty, though in a great measure probably in ignorance, of the great sin of rejecting Christ, and were just breaking away from Jewish unbelief to the faith of Christ;—though, I say, it was especially fitting and necessary for the Jews to repent of the past before they could enrol themselves as disciples of Him Whom they had hitherto scorned, yet is it still so essential a part of a religious life, as that it must have a prominent—nay, the first—place in any enquiry into the character of that life.

For Repentance is not an act to be done once for all, and then forgotten ; neither is it a series of acts to be performed a certain number of times and then laid aside. Rather is it a condition of mind and heart, to be perfected more and more. It should occupy us all through our lives. We should be ever repenting more and more, growing in penitence as we grow in grace. Why is it that the Church has placed the confession and prayer of the penitent Prodigal as one of the sentences to be read continually at the commencement of the Daily Service, " I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son ;"—why is this, but in order to teach us, that the mind of the Prodigal should go with us all through life? Not only does his confession suit the man who for the first time becomes conscious of his sins, and humbles himself before his God ; but he also who has grown to fuller stature in the practice of holiness, as he becomes more and more sensible of the goodness and mercy of God, and of his own sinfulness, so will he feel that no other prayer gives fuller and truer expression to his utter self-abasement, as he draws near to the Divine Presence.

The change which is indicated by the word Repentance—for Repentance, as you know, means change of mind—may indeed *begin* to take place at a certain time, but it is not completed at once.

As different is the little stream struggling into the light from the broad river in which it issues, rolling in quiet strength, as is the first gush of penitential sorrow and remorse from that deep and thorough self-abasement, which comes from increasing knowledge of ourselves and of the love of God. It is with repentance in this respect, as with other emotions of the mind ;—with love for example. We may, or may not, be conscious when the first feeling of love, in any particular case, arose ; but that first feeling, passionate and irresistible as it sometimes is,—how different is it from that deeper, more absorbing, though calmer, affection, which gradually grows up, when hearts are of each other sure, and when we have sounded the depths of goodness, faithfulness and love, that are in the beloved !

Now this repentance, which must be the work of our lives, growing with our growth, what is it ? It is not merely a change of life. Many persons indeed, are induced to consider themselves true penitents, because they have left off certain special sins in which they once indulged. At one time they lived profligate lives ; but now they are different. They are no longer guilty of any excess. They have sobered down and become steady. They are outwardly respectable and respected. But such a change of life is not necessarily repentance. It is right and good, doubtless, so far as it goes. It is a necessary part

of true repentance ; and may in any particular case be the beginning of it. But by itself, it is not repentance. For repentance is not a change of life—but a change of mind and thought and heart. It is a sincere, earnest, thorough turning of heart to God, in godly sorrow for having displeased and disobeyed Him, and with a real determination to avoid *all* sin for the time to come ;—not merely [those sins of which a man has formerly been guilty, but every form and kind of transgression.

Neither is repentance mere sorrow and compunction. It often happens that a man is roused to a sense of his danger, he is sorry and ashamed of what he has done, and he turns away from his evil practices and endeavours to live a new and holier life ; but his better thoughts and feelings do not last ; temptation returns and he gives way to it ; and this happens, it may be, not once but many times. He goes on sinning and repenting, repenting and sinning again. There is no real improvement in his manner of life or in his character in the sight of God. He knows, it is true, in some measure, what sorrow for sin is, but it is only a superficial sorrow, without change of life. And when he is spoken to of repentance, he has nothing else to think of, but this sorrow which he has felt occasionally ; whereas such sorrow at the best is but the first step towards repentance. For repentance, I repeat it again, is an altered

heart ; and an altered heart cannot be without an altered life.

Speaking shortly, then, Repentance is sorrow for sin, followed by amendment of life. But when we look more closely into the matter, we shall find, I think, that according to a very common division, repentance may be said to consist of three things ;—first, contrition, which means a hearty, loving sorrow for our sins, not because of their consequences only, but because they have been the means of offending God and separating us from Him ; secondly, confession, that is, the humble acknowledgment of our transgressions ; and thirdly, amendment of life. Just as when a child has done wrong, a careful and affectionate parent will require of him, that he should confess his fault humbly and honestly,—that he should be really sorry for it,—and further, that he should undertake to guard against it for the future, submitting patiently, in the meanwhile, to whatever punishment may be laid upon him. This three-fold division of Repentance has been recognized by wise and good men from very early times. “In every one truly penitent,” says an ancient Bishop, “three things are to be considered ;—the conversion of the heart, the confession of the tongue, and the revenge on sin.” And our own Church distinctly acknowledges it in the Communion Service : “Let us,” she says, “remembering the dreadful judgment hanging over our heads, and

always ready to fall upon us, return unto our Lord God, with all contrition and meekness of heart ; bewailing and lamenting our sinful life, acknowledging and confessing our offences, and seeking to bring forth worthy fruits of penance." And we find the same different elements of Repentance mentioned in the Notice for Holy Communion. There the Church, after enforcing the necessity of careful preparation, before men presume to approach God's holy Table, goes on to say, "The way and means thereto is ; First, to examine your lives and conversations by the rule of God's commandments ; and whereinsoever ye shall perceive yourselves to have offended, either by will, word, or deed, there to bewail your own sinfulness, and to confess yourselves to Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life." Here, in like manner, we have, first, Contrition ; then, Confession ; and lastly, Amendment.

The first necessary part therefore of true repentance is Contrition ; that is, a real and lasting sorrow for sin, as sin. Such was the sorrow of David, when he poured himself out in his penitential Psalms. Such was the distress of Manasseh, when in his prison at Babylon he bethought him of the past, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him : "I have sinned, O Lord, and I acknowledge my iniquities ; wherefore I humbly beseech Thee, forgive me, O Lord, forgive me and destroy me

not with mine iniquities. Be not angry with me for ever." Such was the grief of the penitent woman in the Gospel, who followed our Lord into the Pharisee's house, and standing behind His couch began to wash His feet with her tears, and to wipe them with her hair. Such was the grief of S. Peter, when after his sad denial, he went out and wept bitterly. In all these there was the deep distress and sorrow of true repentance. They bewailed and lamented their past lives. They were grieved and broken hearted, because they had offended God. There may be, we know, a feeling of pain and humiliation, which arises from other causes, not from a sense of sin, such as was the sorrow of Cain, of Esau and of Judas. Truly godly sorrow grieves for sin, *as sin*, as an offence against God ; it feels its guilt more than its danger, dreads God's displeasure more than His punishment ; it is humbled as well as alarmed ; it longs to be purified as well as pardoned. It was this which gave such poignancy to David's sorrow : " I have sinned against the Lord ;" " Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." And this it is, a real lasting sorrow for sin, as sin, distinct from the suffering which may attend its consequences, which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of.

Let us remember then, brethren, that if we would be true penitents, we must be really and heartily sorry for our sins ;—sorry on our own

account, sorry to think we should have been so wicked and so wilful, that we should have run so counter to all God's gracious designs for us, that we should have so defiled ourselves with iniquity, with evil thoughts, words, and deeds, when God made us in His own image, and meant that we should be holy like Himself;—sorry that we are now what we are, so different in every respect from what we might have been, so stained with guilt, so weak, so prone to evil. And we must be sorry also, if I may say so, for God's sake;—because we have so disappointed and distressed Him, our loving Lord and Saviour, Who has done so much for us, and Whose one desire for us was that we should walk in His way and keep from sin; sorry that we should have proved so ungrateful for all His love and favour. This is true Contrition,—out of the love of God and from a remembrance of all His goodness, to grieve from the bottom of our hearts that we should ever, even for one moment, have been other than He would have us be.

But in order to true penitence there is need also of special and distinct Confession of sin. We must not only "lament and bewail our sinful lives," but we must "acknowledge and confess our offences." So long as a man continues impenitent, he will endeavour to hide his sin; he will turn away from the thought of it himself, and he will not confess it to Almighty God. But one of the first impulses of a heart really pierced with a sense

of sin, softened and humbled, is to confess. When the Prodigal came to himself, his first emotion was the conviction of his wretchedness, and he said, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger." His second was a resolution to confess; "I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." It was the same with David after his sin. For several months as it would seem, he went on wilfully shutting his eyes to his real condition in the sight of God. He was sick at heart, and he knew it; but he could not humble himself. He would not look at his sin, nor acknowledge it. He kept silence,—silence from prayer, silence from enquiry and self-accusation; his conscience roared against him all the day long. The hand of God seemed heavy upon him. His moisture, the refreshing dew of God's grace, was dried up; and he was parched and scorched as in the drought of summer. But still he kept silence, neither speaking out of his misery *to* God, nor speaking *from* God to his own soul. But God would not leave him in his wretchedness. He showed him in a parable his own case, and made him pass judgment on himself. He pointed His finger straight at him, and said, "Thou art the man." And then at length the sinner saw himself as God saw him, and cried out of the depth of a broken and humbled

heart, "I have sinned against the Lord." Short as this confession is, it is full and unqualified. There is no self-excuse, or palliation, no throwing of the blame on circumstances, on the sight that bewitched him, or the tempter that ensnared him, or the difficulties that beset him. "I have sinned against the Lord." Behold me, he seems to say, as he hides his face before God,—behold me, a self-condemned, contrite sinner; "I acknowledge my sin, and mine iniquity will I not hide." Thus David humbled himself in full confession. And as it was with David, so will it be with every truly-penitent sinner. Full of the sense of his sinfulness, and longing for pardon, he will pour out his soul before God in sorrowful confession. He will conceal nothing; for he is conscious that he has not yet learnt half his sinfulness, as it appears to God. But humbling himself before his Father, he will spread out the sad record of his offences, his omissions, his broken vows, his aggravated ingratitude.

Nor will he be satisfied with such a general and hasty, although it may be humble and sincere, acknowledgment of his sin, as he will be led to make when his sin is first brought home to him. The more he looks into himself, the more will he feel, that the first view which he has formed of himself, sad and humiliating as it is, is very far from revealing himself thoroughly, and therefore, as his desire is to know himself, and to put away

all his sin, and to be wholly cleansed, he will carefully examine and search his heart and conduct, in order that, laying all his sins, as far as he can, at the foot of the Cross, he may have them all pardoned for his Saviour's sake. Serious self-examination therefore is necessary, in order to that thorough confession, which is so essential a part of true Repentance. If confession is to be real, it must be particular; and it cannot be particular, unless we have been careful in examining ourselves, and ascertaining what our sins are.

It may be thought, indeed, that such minute and particular confession of sin is unnecessary and unprofitable, because all our sins are known to God, and it is enough to sum up our transgressions in one general acknowledgment and humble cry for pardon. But we must bear in mind, that God requires us to confess to Him, not in order that we may acquaint Him with our faults, but in order that we may thereby be brought to a truer knowledge of ourselves, and a deeper humiliation. Special confession will be found in a marvellous way to open our eyes to the extent and heinousness of our sins. Just as men become by degrees hardened in evil, committing without compunction grievous sins which they once shrank from with horror, so is there a blessed growth in purity and tenderness of conscience, as well as in hardness of heart; men come in time to be humbled to the

dust for sins, which at one time sat very lightly on their consciences. And nothing so conduces to this increasing sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin as a habit of constant self-examination and of constant and particular confession.

But once more ; there is need, in order to true Repentance, of a thorough amendment of life. It is, alas ! quite possible for a man to feel sorrow for his sins, and that, not merely worldly sorrow for their consequences, but sorrow for having displeased a merciful and gracious Saviour, and yet after a time to lose that feeling, and to fall again into the very sins for which he grieved. It is possible also for a man to confess his sins, and yet return to them. He may be quite sincere, both in his sorrow and in his confession ; and they may be at the time pleasing and acceptable to God. But contrition and confession are only parts of Repentance, not the whole. The sure test, after all, of the reality of a man's penitence must be his bringing forth the fruits of penitence. He must show by a change of life, and by continual penitential acts, that his sorrow is not a mere passing feeling, but the out-flowing of a changed heart. Strong feelings of remorse and compunction will probably die away. They are like the blossom on the tree, which must, sooner or later, disappear. But if the blossom shall not only fall off from the tree, but ripen into fruit, all will be well, and we shall have much cause for thankfulness. For it is

the fruit of good works, and not the mere blossom of good thoughts and good feelings that God requires. If we would be true penitents, therefore, we must not only bewail and confess our sins, but we must set our faces steadily against those sins which we have remembered and acknowledged, we must pray against them, resolve against them, make rules against them. They are the giants which bar against us the way to heaven ; and we must do all in our power to remove them. We shall be on our guard, therefore, against all occasions and companies which we know from experience are likely to betray us into sin. We cannot of course avoid all temptations, for some of them lie in the very path of our duty ; but we may, and we ought to, avoid every indulgence which borders upon sin and which we have reason to believe is fraught with danger ; and it is just according as we do this, that we shall prove ourselves true penitents. It is true that such a constant and laborious struggle against sin is very hard to flesh and blood. But the Bible everywhere represents the Christian life as a warfare and a struggle, a struggle against sin. The conquest of sin is not a work which will, as it were, *get done* of itself, without special effort on our part : on the contrary we must do it with our might. Our sins will not drop off from us of their own accord ; we must tear them off with hearty purpose, for it is for our life. Oh set yourselves then, brethren, in earnest

to guard against your sins, whatever they are. Go forth against them in Christ's Name ; grapple with them as with deadly foes ; say to them, in the strength of Christ, "I will be free ; sin shall not have dominion over me ; for the grace of Christ is sufficient for me." And be sure that He Who puts it into your heart thus to resolve will aid you in the struggle ; the chains which bind you shall gradually become loose ; Satan shall be obliged to let go his hold, and in time you will be enabled to tread him entirely under your feet.

One word in conclusion. True Repentance is the gift of God. Christ our Saviour was exalted to heaven for this very purpose, that He might *give* repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins. This was one, and one of the most precious, of those gifts which He received to give unto men, when He ascended up on high, and led captivity captive. Shed forth from Him, the Holy Spirit moves in the sinner's heart, and awakens there a godly sorrow. "When He is come," our Saviour said, "He will reprove," that is, convince, "the world of sin." And when He did come, those who heard the Gospel were pricked in their hearts. This Holy Spirit, the gift of our ascended Lord, will, if we seek Him, open the eyes of our souls also to see their true state ; He will show us the infinite distance between us and the holy God ; He will beat down all proud and self-satisfied imaginations ; He will work in us a real and

lasting sorrow for sin, as sin ; He will convert our souls from sin and self and the world ; He will give us that hunger and thirst after pardon, that longing for holiness, that stedfast effectual purpose to be wholly God's, which belong to true repentance ; He will lead us to sad and unreserved confession ; He will humble us in the dust ; He will assist us in all our efforts to conquer sin ;—in one word, He will make us new creatures, turning us from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. All this is His work ; and He will work it in us, if only we are humble and earnest and persevering in our prayers for it.

III.—FAITH.

“Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”—ACTS xvi. 29, 30, 31.

THE circumstances to which these words refer are familiar to us all. It is only necessary to call to your remembrance the dreadful dungeon at Philippi, shaken and disturbed, the very walls perhaps cracked and tottering from the effects of the earthquake,—the two holy men, who had just been breaking the stillness of the night with the voice of praise, remaining quietly in the prison, though their chains were gone,—and the rough Roman jailor, who had doubtless heard these songs in the night, and in whom the sudden terrors of the earthquake combined with the strange demeanour of his prisoners to awaken his conscience, and to make him feel that he was in the presence of a higher power. Suddenly he had become aware, as never before, of another world and a judgment to come, and with a confused

recollection of having heard that his prisoners had been proclaiming "the way of salvation" he fell down at their feet, crying, "What must I do to be saved?" How can I, a wicked man, stand before God? How can I be saved from the condemnation which I feel to be my due? There was but one answer which the faithful Apostles could make. What could they do but bid him believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; give in his name and his trust and his allegiance to that Jesus Whom they preached? So doing, most assuredly he would be saved—saved from the sin which had disturbed him, as well as from the punishment which that sin had deserved.

Here, then, is another answer to the question, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" S. Peter bade the Jews repent; S. Paul bids the Philippian jailor believe. And as repentance is necessary through our whole lives, so also is faith; as by repentance is not meant a single act, but the habitual temper of a life, so it is with faith; our whole lives must be one continued act of faith, turning away from the world and from ourselves, to look up to and trust entirely in our unseen God and Saviour. But let us consider more particularly what is Faith. You may say perhaps that it is belief; and so it is. But then remember that the devils believed and trembled; they knew and owned Christ to be their King and Judge; but they had no faith. It is no doubt true that to

believe is often used in Scripture for to have faith ; but faith is belief, and a good deal more. A man may believe that there is a God and a Judge, and a heaven and a hell, as firmly as he believes in his own existence ; he may be as satisfied of the truth of the great mysteries of Christ's Birth and Death and Resurrection, as he is of any other historical event, and yet he may be none the better for it. He may *believe*, and yet shut his eyes and harden his heart, and persevere in his reckless and sinful course nevertheless. And no one will say that such a man has faith. No ; Faith is a much higher, nobler, holier, loftier thing than mere belief. What then is it ?

The Epistle to the Hebrews says that faith is "the substance (or, as it is in the margin of our Bibles, the ground or confidence) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen ;" it is firm trust in, and conviction of the reality of, things not seen and hoped for. Faith brings the things we hope for so clearly and constantly before us, that we seem to have their very substance ; it makes the things we cannot see so plain that our consciousness of their truth and reality is perfect evidence to us. Faith is that power within us, which makes the things of the unseen world as clear to us as the things of the world which we see, which keeps them constantly and vividly before us, which *realizes* them, that is, makes them real to us. Faith is sometimes called, and very

fitly, the eye of the soul. For, just as the bodily eye has always before it the things of the world around us, so Faith has always before it the things of the world unseen. When we walk along the road, our bodily eyes see, whether we try or not, all the things around us. We walk along, and have no need all the time to be *trying* to see the direction which the road takes, or the hindrances that are in the way. If we saw anything in the way, we should at once walk round it, without any trouble, perhaps without being conscious to ourselves of what we had done. Now a perfect faith would do just the same with regard to spiritual and invisible things. God on His eternal throne, Christ on His cross of love, or pleading for ever for His people, the Holy Spirit our Sanctifier, heaven and hell, the constant presence of God, the angels and the evil spirits, the way of life and the way of death,—all would be as plain and present and real to us as the things we see with our bodily eyes. I do not say that any one has this perfect faith. I only say that such perfect faith would make the things of another world as *real* to us as the things of this world. And all faith must do this, more or less ; for it is the very nature and meaning of faith, to look not at the things which are seen and are temporal, but at the things which are not seen and are eternal. Faith is not merely to believe in the existence of the things out of sight ; it is as it were to see them

and live in them : nay more, it is not merely to see Him Who is invisible, it is to see Him more vividly and powerfully than we see any of the things and persons around us.

And now see what follows, when a man has once learnt thus to live in the unseen world, where God and Christ are, and to whom heaven and hell, and all the great things which God has revealed to us in His Word, are deep realities. In the first place he will utterly distrust himself ; he sees how small and weak and insignificant he is in the presence of the great and holy God,—a mere worm of earth, sinful and defiled. The greatness and holiness and beauty of God stand out before him in all their vastness, and he shrinks back with awe ; he cannot bear himself ; he is almost ready to say with S. Peter, “ Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” But, at the same time, while he thus distrusts and shrinks from himself, he is encouraged by the revelation which God has made of Himself, to turn away from himself and look up to and trust in God. The love of the Almighty Father in giving His Only Son for his salvation, and the love of the ever-blessed Son in yielding Himself up to suffering and death, are so stupendous, so overwhelming, when he is able to bring them home to himself, that even the thought of his sin sinks into insignificance in the presence of that love. The deep of God's goodness is infinitely greater and more overpowering than the

deep of his own sin. And so he throws himself upon that goodness ; he lays hold of it, and claims it for himself. If God loves him—if Christ died for him and intercedes for him, he must be safe. There can be no condemnation for him, unworthy though he be. He casts himself boldly on the love of God, and feels that he is on a Rock : he is standing by the fountain of mercy, and whether he can as yet rejoice in God or not, he is sure that the streams of that fountain will some time overflow to him. And so also with regard to the power of sin, as well as its guilt. His faith takes firm hold also of the grace and might of Christ, and he is confident that they will uphold him. In every hour of temptation, the secret prayer arises at once to his invisible but ever-present Protector, "Lord, help me ;" and in every failure he still looks up to Him, and says, "Lord, lift me up ; let not mine enemy triumph over me." He leans continually on Christ's arm and he is safe.

This then is one thing we must do, if we would surrender ourselves to God ; we must live by faith, live in the realities of the things out of sight ; we must trust ourselves simply and absolutely to One above us, Who has supreme authority over us, and Who loves us with a perfect, untiring love, and desires our happiness, and knows far better than we how that happiness is to be attained ; we must feel our entire dependence upon Christ, and rejoice to feel it, because we are sure that He will not

disappoint us. Thus was it with Abraham, when he gave up his country and his kindred and his father's house at God's command, and took God for his all, and went out not knowing whither he went, except that he was following God. Thus Moses also lived in the thought of God's presence, and in the joy of the light of His countenance, when he renounced the wisdom and riches of the Egyptians, and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Away then with all pride and vain-glory ; for God is all in all. Away with all trust in self ; for God alone has strength, we of ourselves are weak and powerless. Away with all self-righteousness ; for our righteousnesses are but filthy rags ; God Alone is holy.

Seek then this living faith. Strive to live entirely in the consciousness of the Presence of the great and holy and loving Being Whom we call God. His Eye, you know, is ever shining upon you, piercing you through and through, and laying bare your every thought. Faith is the answer of the soul to that Eye of God, ever remembering It, ever looking up to It—not trying to shake It off or to escape from It, but rejoicing in It, and basking continually in Its light.

I need scarcely say, my brethren, that such faith as this, such a constant realization of, such a living in and for, what is out of sight, is very difficult and

strange to our feeble, earthly minds. What we see, we believe and care for. What is out of sight is for the most part forgotten and neglected. And so our dear Lord, in all His glory, loveliness and beauty, is thrust out of our minds, by the little anxieties, pleasures, hopes and jealousies of our daily life. The great realities of the unseen world; the continual, all-embracing Presence of God; the glorious, awful, yet withal most consoling, thought, that we are always with Him and He with us; the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; the gracious working of the Spirit in the hearts of men; the blessed privilege of communion with God by prayer and sacraments; the precious promises of God's Word;—these things we strive to think of; some of us at least, from time to time, try to bring them home to ourselves; we feel after them, if haply we may grasp them; but it is only with great effort and difficulty, and very imperfectly, that we can be said in any true sense to realize them; we do not truly see them, feel them, live in them.

I do not say this to dishearten any one. God forbid! No, my brethren,—if you do in any, even the faintest, measure feel and acknowledge the greatness and the nearness of the world which faith reveals—if you do sincerely desire and strive and pray that it may be more a reality to you;—if you mourn over your earth-bound mind and long to be able to walk more by faith and not by

sight only ;—Oh ! be sure that God will regard and bless your prayers and your endeavours ; He will lift you up ; He will enable you to pierce through the mists and shadows of earth, and to live in the glories and realities of the unseen. The darkness will gradually pass away, and the full light of God will shine upon you.

Only we must really feel the folly and the sin of caring only or chiefly for these present earthly things ; and we must truly and earnestly desire, in the depth of our hearts, to live by faith, and to hold communion with God and with the things out of sight.

In whatever degree then we have attained to this consciousness of the value and necessity of faith, let our prayer be with the Apostles, “ O Lord, increase our faith ; O Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief. Open my eyes that I may see Thee, see Thee as Thou art, and as I have never seen Thee before, in Thy adorable holiness and in Thy marvellous love. May I never forget Thee, never lose sight of Thee ; still less ever wilfully turn away from Thee ! But as Thou art ever near me, about my path and about my bed, and spying out all my ways, reading my thoughts and searching out the secrets of my heart,—as Thou art ever loving me, and caring for me, and watching over me for good, so may I ever feel Thy nearness, and bow myself before Thy majesty, and rest upon Thy love. Give me a deeper, nobler,

more vivid, more abiding conception of Thee, as Thou art in Thyself, and as Thou art towards me, that I may be drawn to yield myself entirely and cheerfully to Thy wise and loving will! Grant, O Lord, that I may so walk with Thee in faith, so see Thee at all times, though Thou art removed from my sight, that I may be gradually prepared for the nearer, more open, more entrancing vision of Thy glory in Heaven!"

My brethren, it must be good and right for us thus to pray continually that God would open our dull and earth-bound eyes, and enable us to see things as they really are. And who can tell what a blessing may follow on such prayers? Who knows—if we will but pray in earnest for this great gift of faith—what light may gleam on us from heaven! The cloud of God's presence will fall upon us and encompass us; and though, as sinful men, we cannot but tremble as we enter into the cloud, and realize where we are and what is around us, yet shall we find more and more that it is a *bright* cloud, a cloud of glory, that enfolds us; the more we come to recognize and feel its nearness, the more shall we know at the same time its brightness and its glory.

Only let us remember that as on the one hand true faith leads to holiness, so on the other the more we labour to be holy, the more shall we attain to a true faith. As those who truly believe cannot sin, because they see God at all times

close to them, so those who wilfully sin against God cannot believe in Him. Sin blinds the eye of the soul, and it cannot see God. Therefore to our earnest prayers for the gift of faith, let us add our no less earnest endeavours to keep our conscience pure. Whatever the inner voice of God bids us do, let us do faithfully and at once. Nothing so deadens faith, as to stifle the motions of conscience. Let us be very much on our guard also against allowing our minds to be too much taken up with earthly pleasures or greatness, or the praise of men ; for the thought of God and of heaven fades away from the mind which is occupied with the things of the world. Neither let us be over anxious about little things, but trust God with our all, carrying our cares and anxieties at once to Him.

Above all things, and in all things, let us look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith ; let us go to Him continually ; let nothing keep us away from Him. If we stumble, let us look to Him, to stretch forth His Hand to hold us up. If we fall, let us not lie hopelessly on the ground, but cry earnestly to Him to lift us up. If by His grace we are walking warily, let us thank Him for His goodness, and pray that we may persevere. So shall we walk continually in the light of our Saviour's countenance, and not only prepare ourselves for His visible presence in heaven, but we shall be permitted even now, in this world, to rejoice in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

IV.—LOVE.

“ Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? ”—S. LUKE x. 25.

THIS question was twice asked of our Lord—almost in the same words ;—by the lawyer who speaks in the text, and by the young ruler, of whom we have an account in chap. xviii., as well as in the two other Evangelists.

In the one case Christ answers it by saying, “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbour as thyself,” adding, “ This do and thou shalt live.” In the other, He says, “ Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and thy mother ; ” and adds, “ If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”

Put these two answers together ; and what is the result ? It is this ; that if we would do what God would have us do, we must keep His commandments, but in the spirit, not merely in the

letter; and we must keep them not from any earthly motive, not from fear, but from love. It is the motive which makes all the difference, and constitutes true obedience. You remember how severely our Lord condemned the religion of the Pharisees, which was nevertheless not only a religion of great pretension, but of considerable sacrifice. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye can in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." How strange these words must have sounded to many of Christ's hearers! For the Pharisees not only considered themselves, but were considered by the people at large to be thoroughly devout and religious.

But wherein was the righteousness of Christ's disciples to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? In this, that it was to be pre-eminently a service of love.

Here, then, I venture to think that we have suggested to us another answer to the question we have been considering—"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"—namely, Love Me, follow Me, obey Me, out of love: let love be the ruling principle of your daily life—endeavour to perfect holiness not only in the fear, but in the love, of God. Most men, I suppose, are under the influence of some chief ruling motive, which determines their conduct; they may or may not be conscious of the power which it has over them;

but most probably there is some master principle, which directs the tenor of their lives, and governs their actions. With some it is the love of ease and self-indulgence, with others the love of money, with others the love of praise and admiration, with others the desire of power. With S. Paul it was something very different, the love of Christ, his burning sense of Christ's love for him filling him with love and gratitude in return. This it was that upheld him in his career of toil and suffering, which kept him firm to the faith and labour of love, which caused him to persevere so nobly, unwearied by repulse, unterrified by danger, undeterred by the malice of foes or the desertion of false friends, counting nothing done when anything remained to be done, toiling, wrestling, suffering for the sake of Christ, and withal rejoicing in the midst of his sufferings, because he was thereby made partaker of the sufferings of Christ.

Now do we know anything of this constraining power of love as a motive to a holy life and thorough devotion? It is very likely that we know, from our own happy experience, the power of earthly love, how it stimulates energy, nerves the arm in danger, sustains and strengthens the sinking heart, sweetens toil and drudgery. But do we know what it is to be impelled by the love of Christ, to resist the solicitations of self, and to endure hardness for the sake of following Him? Have we such an overpowering sense of the height

and length and depth and breadth of 'the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, as to be constrained with the Apostle to live no longer to ourselves, but to Him ?

There can be no doubt of the constraining power of this love as a motive to obedience. We see it, as I have said, in S. Paul. From the moment when the love of Christ was first revealed to him—from that day when on his way to Damascus, intent on persecuting the disciples of the Lord, he beheld the face of Jesus bent down upon him in unutterable love—from that day the love which he had seen in the face of Jesus, that gracious pitying look of his Redeemer and his God, filled him with love to Him. It was a marvel to him that he, the persecutor, the reviler, the blasphemer, could be loved,—but God showed him that he was loved ; and seeing himself beloved by Christ, he loved Christ in return, and gave himself up thenceforth to do and suffer His holy will. From that time he was crucified with Christ, and the life that he lived in the flesh he lived by the faith of the Son of God Who loved him and gave Himself for him.

And if we, brethren, can once be brought to see and know, as S. Paul knew, the love of Christ, we too shall be drawn by that sight to love Him, and loving Him, we shall endeavour in all things to do His will. While our natural inclinations prompt us to indulge ourselves, to aim at things of this

world, to delight in them, if given,—to long after them when withholden; to live at random and allow our hearts and minds, our thoughts and words and actions, to take care of themselves, the true love of Christ in our hearts will lead us to delight in pleasing Him. The thought of Him and of His love, the joyous sense of His presence and of His soul-inspiring look of approbation and encouragement, will enable us to resist our natural inclinations and to live for Him rather than for ourselves.

But perhaps you say, How am I to attain this love? This is the very thing that I need. I can in some degree believe: I can in some degree, though very imperfectly, obey; but I cannot, do not love. I am conscious that I have not that personal clinging to Christ, as to my one true friend, the true Lover of my soul, which reason and conscience demand of me, and which the lives of God's saints reveal. How am I to gain it?

First of all, I would say, my brethren, you must pray for it. You must not only set it before you as a great object of desire, as something which in value and blessing far exceeds any earthly treasure, but you must *seek* it, you must ask for it with all your heart, and you must go on asking, wrestling even through the night and saying, "I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless me." If you will thus pray, though you faint—praying against fainting—if you

will say again and again, "O Lord, implant Thy love in my heart; kindle in me by the sight of Thy love the love I cannot give Thee," be sure that your prayer will be heard. Love is a plant of heavenly growth; it will not spring up of itself in our corrupt hearts, overgrown as they are by the thorns of earthly care and hardened by sensual desires; but the Holy Spirit can break up and soften our hard hearts, and clear away the clinging weeds, and implant in us the love which we desire. We may by our own exertions obtain many other things of value and importance; but the true love of Christ is the gift of God, and we must seek it from Him as His gift.

At the same time there is one thing which we can do towards softening our hearts and kindling in them the love of Christ, which may be the greatest possible benefit to us; that is, we may accustom ourselves to meditate on Christ and on His love; we may place ourselves in thought day by day before the great Fountain of love, and as we gaze upon it, some streams will overflow and water us.

There are many good Christians, who are regular in their daily devotions, and to a certain extent exemplary in their lives, who nevertheless are strangers to any keen sense of gratitude and love and eager longing after Christ, and who in consequence have very little comfort or enjoyment in their religion. I very much suspect that the chief

reason of this is, that they do not take time to meditate upon God and upon Christ, on His exceeding beauty and purity and loveliness in Himself, and on His tenderness, forbearance, and long-suffering towards them. Secret, still meditation on the love of Christ would give warmth to their religion, while now they are cold and formal ; it would kindle, revive, invigorate their love to Him, and impart to them a thrill of joy, compared with which all earthly pleasures are foul and vain as summer's dust when the wind plays idly with it. By nature, and through our continual thoughtlessness, we have stony hearts, hearts as hard as the highways ; and the love of Christ and the history of His love make no impression on them ; and yet, if we would be saved, we must have tender, sensitive, loving hearts : our hearts must be broken, broken up like ground, and dug and tended and cultivated, till they become as gardens, gardens of Eden, acceptable to our God, gardens in which the Lord God may walk and dwell ; filled, not with briars and thorns, but with all sweet-smelling and useful plants, with heavenly trees and flowers. The dry and barren waste must burst forth into springs of living water. This change must take place in our hearts, if we would be saved ; in one word, we must have that which by nature we have not—we must have love : we must really love God with all our hearts. And how is this to be effected, under God's grace, except by calm and

serious meditation on the great things which we profess to believe ?

This is a matter of far greater consequence than most persons are inclined to suppose. Even in regard to matters of mere worldly interest, I believe men do not take sufficient time and trouble to *think* of them. They have their opinions indeed, on most subjects, and they do not hesitate to proclaim them. But those opinions are very seldom the outgrowth of their own reflections ; they have not for themselves considered the matters about which nevertheless they speak so freely. Their opinions lie on the very surface of their minds ; they are in fact the opinions of others which they have adopted rather than their own ; they have not made them their own by honest and serious thought. They are often therefore unaware of the deep and important consequences which are involved in the opinions which they avow ; sometimes they do not even seem to acknowledge or comprehend the meaning of the very words they use. If this is true of matters connected with this world, it is no less true, and if true, it is of far greater consequence, in regard to the truths of religion. We do not give ourselves time to *think* of them. We have been acquainted with them all our lives ; we know them, and speak of them continually ; we imagine that we know all that can be said about them. But after all, they are not realities to us : we do not feel them. And why ?

Because we do not reflect on them · we do not really look at them ; and therefore it is no wonder that they make so slight an impression on us. Let me urge you then, as you desire to realize what you profess to believe, about God and the things out of sight, to take time for earnest and steady meditation. Especially, if you would attain to a true love for Christ, set yourself to think seriously and carefully of His great love for you. Go apart from time to time ; and shutting out the world and placing yourself in His presence, try to fix your mind as earnestly as you can upon Him and upon His love.

If daily self-examination is necessary in order to counteract our natural tendency to unreality and self-deceit, and to keep us true and honest before God ; —if daily self-denial is necessary in order to keep in check the prevailing tendency to self-indulgence, the practice of daily meditation is no less necessary in order to keep alive in our hearts that love of Christ, which is the only true and prevailing motive to a holy life. It is just in proportion as we love Christ fervently, that we shall be able and willing to give up ourselves, honestly and cheerfully, at whatever sacrifice, to His will ; and it is very much in proportion as we meditate on Christ's love to us, and grow in the knowledge of the depths and sweetness of that love, that we shall become rooted and grounded in love ourselves. Therefore I say again, try to find some time frequently—every

day, if possible—for some short exercise of meditation.

Take some incident in Christ's life or sufferings. Picture the scene to yourself. Dwell upon it until you come to feel that you are in Christ's very presence, that you see Him performing the act of mercy, or hear Him speaking the words of wisdom or tenderness, on which your thoughts are dwelling. Try to see Him—His very look of love and heavenly sweetness. See it turned upon yourself, encouraging you in your self-abasement and drawing you to Himself, or chiding you for your slothfulness or self-sufficiency. So will your heart be drawn out towards Him in prayer, or in devout aspiration, or in holy meditation. So will your heart become hot within you, and while you are musing the fire will kindle; and then, when the fire kindles, speak with your tongue. Do not be in a hurry to leave Christ's Presence, and return to the world. Life is nowadays—more than perhaps at any other time—a perpetual bustle, and anything like quiet mediation is at variance with men's tastes and habits. Let us remember how calm and patient and self-possessed Jesus was. Think of His nights of uninterrupted communion with His Father; think of Him taking His disciples apart with Him to a desert place, to rest awhile, in order that He, and probably they also, might have time for prayer and heavenly intercourse. And in the midst of our daily business, however

we may be pressed, let us endeavour and contrive to find time for going apart, and sitting quietly at the Feet of Jesus, and listening to what He would say to our souls. Let us be sure that He has something to say to us—some special message to deliver, some individual and most precious gift of heavenly Food. He will not send us away empty. Having allured us and brought us into the wilderness, He will speak comfortably to us. He will come to us and sup with us and we with Him. He will show us of His dainties and fill us with His love.

No doubt we shall find it hard at first so to abstract our thoughts and cares from the world and our worldly occupations as to admit Jesus Alone into the secret chambers of our hearts and there abide with Him. But when the heart really desires to be true to Christ—when there is no secret thing which we consciously desire to hide from Him, then we shall be able to bear the thought of His presence, and in time we shall come to delight in Him. No doubt also we shall often be very unwilling to give up the time which is required for such quiet meditation. Perhaps with some of us our hours seem fully occupied already. But surely, amid the many conflicting claims on our time, we must be guided in our decision by the relative importance of the different matters by which we are occupied. And viewed in this light, calmly and earnestly, what is of so great consequence,

after all, as that our hearts should be filled with the Love of Christ? That is the one thing needful for every one of us. Other things are good and right and profitable. But if we have not love, they are worthless. Of what avail is it to spend our days in constant toil—be it ever so good and charitable toil—or to store our minds with useful even religious knowledge, if we do not love Christ? Love must stimulate our labours. Love must sanctify our learning. Therefore, beyond and above everything else, it is Love that we must seek.

And, as I have been trying to show, if we would attain to the true love of Christ we must meditate long and earnestly on His love for us: we must meditate not only on that providential care which has watched over us all our lives long, shielding us in childhood and youth, and giving us all things richly to enjoy—which has restored us from sickness and rescued us from danger, and loaded us with blessings; but on that love which has given us nobler longings and higher aims, and has told us of a world beyond the sky more glorious than the most glowing dreams of earth—has told us of that which can minister to our spirits' needs, of that balm in Gilead, which can bind up the broken-hearted, and heal the wounds of sorrow—which when we first began to know the sinfulness of sin, and to feel its weary cruel burden, told us of a lighter yoke and an easier load, told us of Him

Who gave Himself for us and sent His blessed Spirit to dwell in our hearts. We must meditate on that love and all its tokens, if we desire really to know it, and knowing it to be warmed by it.

Truly this love of Christ is a great and precious gift, well worth all the pains and trouble which it may cost us to win—worth it even here, to say nothing of the eternal recompense.

Shall we not desire to obtain it? Shall we not live for it—pray for it day and night?

Oh as you value your everlasting happiness, be not wanting to yourselves, dear brethren, in this matter. But putting away all mere selfish or earthly objects of desire, which are only for a day and perish in the using, seek in earnest the true love of Christ and the knowledge of His love for you. Seek to know and feel that love, as S. Paul knew and felt it, when he desired to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, or when he said that the life which he lived in the flesh, he lived by the faith of the Son of God Who loved him and gave Himself for him. Cast in your lot resolutely, though humbly, with the saints, whose hearts are ravished with the love of Christ, and then with them you shall follow Christ and obey Him joyfully in this world—with them you shall lie down in peace and take your rest when your appointed hour comes—and with them finally, when you awake in the other world, you shall know Christ and His love in the perfection of that full

revelation of Himself, which shall be vouchsafed, of His exceeding goodness, to all those who are permitted to approach Him in His glory and see Him as He is.

May this be our blessed portion—your portion and mine—for the sake and through the grace of Him Who died to purchase it for us!

V.—SELF-DENIAL.

“ And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then ? ”
—S. LUKE iii. 10-14.

AMID the multitudes who came streaming forth from all parts of the country to wait upon the strange preacher of repentance on the banks of Jordan were some, doubtless, who were really in earnest anxiety about their condition in God's sight—some who as they listened to his words were seriously alarmed, and, conscience-stricken, were constrained to cry out, “ What shall we do ? ” That is a cry, which though sometimes no doubt the expression of mere transient feelings, always accompanies true conversion. No one can turn heartily to God without thus surrendering himself entirely to do His will, and to bring forth the fruits of repentance.

S. Luke mentions three distinct classes of persons who came to S. John with this question, What shall we do?—the people at large, the publicans, the soldiers—all equally conscious that the truth of the repentance which they professed

must be shown in deeds, and anxious to know how they were to show it. The answer of the Holy Baptist was, in effect, the same to all. He did not require them to follow his example, and retire from the world, and live a hard and lonely life in the wilderness. No! they were to continue, each and all of them, in their appointed condition of life and to fulfil its necessary duties. But they were to be specially on their guard against the sins, whatever they might be, which were the peculiar sins of that condition. Thus the people at large, whose besetting sin was selfishness, he exhorted to give freely of their substance to the poor: the Publicans he warned against extortion: the soldiers against violence, unfairness, and discontent. He knew the besetting sins of each; and he told them plainly that if they would work the work of God, they must set themselves to correct and overcome their sins; he knew the special hindrances in the way of their conversion, and he urged them to remove them.

And it is the same with us. We, too, have special hindrances and difficulties in the way of that entire surrender of ourselves to God which He requires—special evil inclinations which must be continually and painfully subdued: in other words, the self-surrender, of which I have spoken, as being the essence and distinguishing characteristic of true religion, requires great and constant self-denial.

Every one who knows anything of himself must know that, let him be ever so sincere in desiring to give himself up to Christ, it involves a perpetual conflict with self. Yes, self is ever striving to supplant Christ in our hearts ; and to rob Him of that sacrifice which is His due. That self which echoed in the heart of Eve the suggestion of the Evil One, that not only was the tree pleasant to the eye and good for food, but to be desired to make man wise and lift him up to God ;—that self which kindled the flame of guilty passion in the soul of David and would not suffer it to die away until the deed of infamy and of blood was done ;—that self which fostered the love of money in the heart of Judas, and led him on by stealthy steps, until the devil took entire possession of him, and made him his instrument for the delivery of his Master to his enemies ;—that same self is working in the same direction, though in different forms, in each one of us. Some it lays hold of by means of their bodily appetites, which clamour for indulgence, by intemperance or lust, and it will not let them go until they yield to its solicitations. Oh ! how many are there who were at one time running well and seemed to be making progress in the heavenly race, whom self has suddenly mastered in the form of sensual indulgence, and so, for a time at least, if not for ever, they have made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience ! To others again self suggests thoughts of ease and sloth ; it says, “ I

cannot go on taking so much trouble, or giving up so much indulgence, for the sake of religion ;—it is too much to expect of me, and I do not see why it should be expected ;” and self gains the day and the man refuses to endure hardness in order to follow Christ. Others, self allures by visions of earthly wealth and the love of display. The foolish man or woman is pleased with gay apparel, or costly furniture, or a sumptuous table; they delight to see themselves surrounded with such things, and they readily make far greater sacrifices for the sake of them, than for Christ or for His poor. In others (alas! how many) self takes the form of high and self-pleasing thoughts of themselves, and contempt or perhaps envy of others. They not only think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but they are always thinking of themselves, and taking credit to themselves for what is either utterly worthless, or else the free gift of God—their power, or their rank, or their ability, or their personal appearance, or their natural gifts, or their fancied goodness, or their high character among their fellows. Thus in every one of us, in one form or another, the idol self is reared up in the place of God—secretly and imperceptibly, it may be, but very really. It is not an open enemy that thus strives to injure us ; but it is our constant guide and companion, our most intimate acquaintance that betrays us—our own self, which draws back the safeguards of our souls, and lets in its

two allies, the world and the devil. Self is ever obtruding itself; and wherever it appears, there, if we would yield ourselves to Christ and live in union with Him, it must be checked and resisted. A life of self-surrendered must needs be a life of perpetual self-denial.

And you know how this word self-denial is written on the very threshold of Christ's courts, at the entrance of that up-hill narrow road along which He would have us walk—"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself."

First of all, we must deny the flesh, with its affections and lusts. This it is which again and again overcomes us; this it is which often weakens our willing spirit; this it is which makes heaven into a far country, and earth with its enjoyments an abiding home; which hides God from us and brings a mist over the other world, and darkens us with unbelief. There are many persons—many who would resent to be told the truth plainly (would to God that the arrow now shot at a venture might penetrate the harness of some one to whom the warning belongs)—there are many persons, to whom it is for their life, the life of their soul, that they should set themselves steadily to deny their bodily appetites; their indulgence in one form or another, is ruining them, and their eternal safety depends on their checking that indulgence.

But further; take the senses one by one;

and you will see from the Bible as well as from your own experience, the absolute necessity of restraining them, if you would not suffer them to betray you to your ruin. Our *eyes* are to be mortified ; since it is often by these that corruption enters the heart. How many souls are ruined by curiosity, by vanity and outward show. What great reason have we therefore to pray "O turn away mine eyes, lest they behold vanity, and quicken Thou me in Thy way," and to remember the words of the prophet, "He that shutteth his eyes from seeing evil, he shall dwell on high." Then again the *ears* must have their share in this denial of self. Was it not by these that Eve being deceived was in the transgression? and have not *our* ears drunk in the liquid fire of corrupting or uncharitable conversation, till our whole nature seemed to be burning? Oh that He Who made the ear would make us steadfast in determining not to listen to any but what is pure and lovely and of good report!

Our *tongues*, too, must be restrained. The tongue can no man tame: not Moses, the meekest of men, provoked to speak unadvisedly with his lips ; not Job, the patient one ; not Peter, the chief Apostle, actually denying his Master, and breaking forth into oaths and curses in his earnestness to protest his ignorance of Him. And *our* tongues, how often have they betrayed us! how many suggestions of evil to others, how much slandering,

how much taking of God's Name in vain! how many of those idle words of which we shall have to give an account at the Day of Judgment! This surely is the member with which, for very many, our self-denial must begin; so that we may teach *ourselves* by silence, and win *others* by the soft answer that turneth away wrath. This surely is the member for which we need specially to pray for help: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; and keep the door of my lips."

But let us never forget that our members are but *instruments*—it may be of God's glory, or it may be of our shame—instruments which depend upon the state of the heart within. We must keep our *heart* with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life; it is the pride of our heart, its vanity, its passion, its self-will, its worldliness, its likes and dislikes, which must be checked, fought against, resolutely beaten down. In that secret chamber we must commune with ourselves and be still, before we go out into the world, and deny ourselves amid numerous temptations. There, in the heart, the battle has to be fought; we must find out our besetting dangers and steadily resolve with God's help to guard against them.

Self is the great hindrance in the way of our entire devotion to God, the chief enemy of our salvation; and therefore, in whatever form it assail us, we must renounce and restrain it. The man whose danger is in the tyranny of his natural

passions, in sensual pleasure, or in the disposition to excess in meat or drink—with him the safety of his soul depends on his curbing those passions, in keeping under his body and bringing it into subjection, in dealing hardly with himself, in order that he may gain the mastery over his bodily appetites, and abstain from those fleshly lusts which war against his soul. We are all indeed more influenced by our senses and by the love of bodily indulgence than we care to allow, and therefore it may be of the greatest advantage to us from time to time to refuse our bodies that indulgence which they desire, in order to prove to ourselves, that they are our slaves and not our masters.

Those again whose besetting danger comes from the love of the world will do well to find some corresponding rule of self-denial. It is not enough to *say* that the world is nothing, and will soon pass away, and that all the things which we so much covet and set our hearts upon, are only fuel for the fire of the Great Day;—it is not enough to allow in words that we must set our affection on things above and not on things on the earth, but we must test the sincerity of such expressions by actually giving up what we value of those worldly goods for the sake of Christ. When our Saviour saw how the young ruler's heart was set upon his possessions, He bade him sell all that he had and give to the poor. He knew the greatness of his danger, the

ensnaring power of worldly goods, and therefore He prescribed a strong but effective remedy. He knew that nothing short of such entire surrender of his worldly wealth would deliver his soul, and therefore He required it. And if He does not require exactly the same sacrifice from each one of us, we must not on that account conclude that we are to give up nothing for His sake, or only that which costs us nothing. If there is any meaning in our Saviour's repeated and most earnest warnings about the danger of riches, they must at least teach us that there is no safety in the possession of the things of the world, unless men dispense them freely and cheerfully for the glory of God and the good of their brethren, and unless they are careful moreover so to dispense them, as that their liberality shall be a real sacrifice to them, a real proof that they do in truth postpone the comforts and luxuries of the world to the interests of their souls and of eternity !

In like manner, if our temptation is to high thoughts of ourselves, it is obvious that the remedy lies in constant and careful self-abasement. Let us in our daily life seek to prefer others to ourselves—let us try to be glad when they are praised and we are passed by—others listened to and we disregarded. Let us try to be really afraid of the praise of others. If it comes to us, let us think how soon the tongue of the speaker would be silent, if he knew of us what we ourselves know. When

in any way our conduct is brought into comparison with that of others, let us try to remember what is good in them, and what is evil in ourselves—let us consider amid what disadvantages they have become what they are, while we, on the other hand, though fenced round and protected by God's grace, are only what we are. Let us thus endeavour to know and forget ourselves, and then we shall be more able and willing to offer ourselves wholly to God.

Such constant self-denial, difficult as it is, and impossible to our unassisted efforts, should not be too much for those who know the love of Christ. Was not His life an example of the truest, fullest self-sacrifice and self-denial, that ever was or could be? Should it not nerve and encourage us, when the world entices, or when self rebels, when we are tempted to seek great things for ourselves, or to shrink from bold confession, to remember that we belong to Him, and are invited to tread in His steps? It has often been said that one drop of His precious Blood might have redeemed the world, and a thousand such worlds as ours. But there is in Christ's life and death a prodigality of sacrifice. In His love and in His pity He redeemed us; and His pity and His love knew no bounds. Think of Him as He gave up heaven to sojourn upon earth. Think of His days of toil and His nights of watching—how in the hot noonday glare He taught and healed and comforted the weary

and afflicted—how in the cool evening time, that brings to most a rest from toil, His labours knew no respite ;—how the thoughtless or the curious multitude thronged and pressed Him ;—and when at length night came and men departed, then often, because no other time was given, the nights were spent upon the bare hill side in communion with His Father ; think of His agony and bloody sweat ; His sorrowful distress ; the mocking, the scourging, the Cross itself. These are the marks of the path our Saviour trod. Shall we not desire and strive to follow Him ?

In that bleeding Form, in that terrible agony, in that desolation, shame, and death, we see God's estimate of sin—God's estimate, that is, of many things which we do continually. In that sacrifice upon the Cross, in those voluntary sufferings, in that death for others, we see the pattern of what our lives should be. Can we venture to compare our lives with His ? What do we really give up to Him, which He knows it is a sacrifice and a self-denial to us to give ? Where are the sacrifice and self-denial in our religion ? Useless as the blood of goats and the ashes of the heifer are all our religious observances, if our wills are not sacrificed, and our bodies not subdued. How shall we stand in the judgment, if the Cross, and not our own inclinations, be taken as the measure of right and wrong ? Alas ! instead of giving up anything to Him, we rob Him of hearts and lives and time and

means and talents, which are really His. We take up with the world, and delight to surround ourselves with its good things—we please ourselves and forget Him—we spend our days too often in unprofitable idleness, or in endless activity for this world alone, with little, oh ! how little, thought of Him. How different is this from that daily self-denial, that daily taking up of the Cross, from that new creation, which Christ desires to see in us !

Oh ! be we constrained to live no longer to ourselves, but to Him. Let us set ourselves to follow Christ, and to tread in His steps, Who pleased not Himself. Slowly indeed at first shall we go after Him ; but under His Cross and by His marvellous mercy we shall be taught even here that to be crucified with Christ, in the bitter conquest of self, is to gain the foretaste of His Crown, according to His own most alarming, yet most consoling word, —“ He that loveth his life shall lose it ; but he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”

VI.—ACTIVE CHARITY.

“ Rise, and stand upon thy feet ; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.”—ACTS xxvi. 16.

THIS is the answer which our Lord gave to S. Paul's earnest inquiry, “ Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? ” He was to be His witness unto all men. He was to be especially the Apostle of the Gentiles, and to preach among them the unsearchable riches of Christ. Christ called S. Paul, because He had a special work for him to do in the world ; and I need not tell you how completely he fulfilled that work. He laid himself out with untiring devotion for the conversion of lost and ignorant souls to Christ. He not only gave up everything that he prized in the world ; but he was willing even to forego the rest and joy of Christ's more immediate presence in Paradise, in order that he might minister to the souls of men. You remember that remarkable passage in the Epistle to the Phillipians : “ I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is

far better ; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." He held the balance as it were between life and death ; and he had no hesitation in answering that so far as his personal wishes were concerned, he preferred death, because it would bring him nearer to Christ ; nevertheless, though death in itself was preferable, he chose to live, for the sake of others, because he knew that his remaining in the flesh would be for the good of the Church. He looked upon his life therefore as a time given him by God, wherein to do a certain work for His glory and the benefit of his fellow Christians and the world at large. And the simple question with him was, whether his life or his death would prove most serviceable for the good of the Church. If at any time he had had reason to think that his death was necessary as a testimony to the truth of the Gospel, or that it could in any way promote the cause of God, and the well-being of his brethren, then we may be sure that he would have said at once, and cheerfully, "Let me die." But if on the other hand he thought, as he appears to have thought, and as doubtless he had good reason for thinking, that by living he could carry on an important work, which few others were able to carry on, in building up the infant Church, and strengthening it in trials, and guiding it amid perils, then he said, and said sincerely, "Let me live." And he adds immediately, that he had no doubt that his life would

be spared, not because it would be better for himself, that it should be so, but because it would be more profitable for the Church.

Now the revelation of His will for him which Christ made to S. Paul at the time of his conversion, illustrated as it was by the Apostle's subsequent history, suggests to us another and very important portion of the work which Christ requires of each one of us. If we ask Him honestly, and earnestly, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? He will bid us not only repent, not only live by faith, not only obey Him in love, not only deny ourselves, but also bear witness for Him in the world, and lay ourselves out for the good of the souls and bodies of our brethren. God has sent us into the world to minister to our fellows; and unless we are so doing, we are not doing God's work. Perhaps you may think that this was true as regards S. Paul, who had a special work for Christ as His Apostle; but that you are not called to that work. It is true of course that S. Paul was an Apostle, and that his work in regard to others was different from ours. But the difference consists in the nature of the work, not in the circumstance that he had to live for others and work for them, and we have not. You may say again that following the Apostle's example in this matter is a work especially incumbent on Clergymen, who are his successors in the ministry: and you would say truly. Clergymen are most especially bound

to take pattern by S. Paul in his zeal for the good of others (God forgive us, that we follow him so imperfectly!) But after all, the truth is, that we are all successors of the Apostle in this matter; and that which formed to him the principal charm and attraction in life ought to occupy a similar position in our minds to that which it did in his. For indeed, we are all bound together by ties infinite in number, and incalculable in strength. Besides the ties of family and society, and the influence which is given to one man over another by the unequal distribution of wealth, there are many moral and spiritual bonds which bind us together, and make it possible for one man to exercise over his fellows an immeasurable influence for evil or for good. However young a man may be, or however old he may be, he has a large sphere of influence, larger probably than he has any idea of. The young man who keeps himself pure, who cleanses his way by taking heed thereto according to God's Word, is in truth preaching the fear of God, and therefore, according to Solomon, he is preaching true wisdom, in such a manner as cannot fail to *tell*. And the old man, who is old in holiness as in years, has numberless opportunities of doing good, and does good in numberless ways, which are peculiar to himself. So it is with all classes and conditions of men; as the Apostle says elsewhere, "No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself." And if a man learn to look

upon his position in the world in this way—if he look upon his life, not as a selfish possession of his own, but as a gift in which all his fellows have an interest and a share, and if he conduct his life under a sense of the responsibility thus thrown upon him—*then* he is taking a worthy view of his life—a view of which he need not be ashamed when the summons is sent, “Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.”

Consider then, my brethren, as thinking men and women, that God has sent you into the world for a purpose, not merely to get through life somehow or another, but to do a certain work for Him in it—to serve God in your generation. It becomes you therefore to look not only at your own things, but every man also on the things of others. We cannot indeed, as I said before, live for ourselves, even if we would. We cannot prevent our actions from having an influence on the character and conduct of other men. We have duties to discharge, which it must be to the injury of others, if we neglect. We have acts of love and charity to perform, which it must be to the loss of others, if we omit. We have an example to exhibit, which must influence, for good or for evil, those who are witnesses of it. A man cannot dwell apart—he cannot insulate himself from his fellows; he cannot, whether in the world, in his business, or in his family, divest himself of the necessity of doing

some good or some harm every day. He cannot help himself. He can no more get rid of the effect of his conduct and example on other minds, than he could walk out under a broad sunlight, unattended by his own shadow. We cannot tell at any hour of the day who may be observing us, bringing down, it may be, their standard of religious thought and practice to ours. We copy others and others copy us, without either being aware of it. Our good or our evil is always spreading. No man liveth to himself. Indeed we may go further than this; and say, that the responsibility attaching to individual conduct is not to be limited to its effect on those of the present generation. Our good or our evil deeds live after us—they rise again and reproduce themselves in those whose characters we have helped to form, while they again will influence others in never-ending succession. Would that a bad man could live for himself! nay, would that he could influence for evil none but the spectators of his misdoing or the partners of his sin! But it cannot be. There is no limit to be assigned to the effect which a single act of wickedness may have upon other minds—how *many* it may corrupt, or how *far*! No; neither while we live, nor after we are gone, can we keep our evil to ourselves. It is as when one letteth out water. At first it may only flood the house; but the noisome exhalations which arise may in the end taint the whole neighbourhood. See then, my brethren, what a solemn

thing it is to live—solemn, not only because life is so short and uncertain, nor because so much depends upon it, even an eternity of happiness or misery—but solemn also, because there is a great and important work to be done in it. We are not sent here merely to please ourselves—just to get as much enjoyment as we can for ourselves during the years, many or few, that God may spare us. No! God has sent us, as I said before, to work for Him; and especially to work for Him in doing what we can for the souls and bodies of our brethren.

There is one discourse of our Lord which sets this duty of active charity in a very strong light—where, in truth, He seems to make it essential to our salvation. In that discourse He draws a picture of Himself sitting on the throne of His glory, while all nations are gathered before Him, and He separates them the one from the other, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. There are but those on the right hand and those on the left. There is only the choice between the course which leads to eternal punishment and that which leads to eternal life. To the one He says, “Come, ye blessed of My Father;” to the others, “Depart from Me, ye cursed.” And when He speaks to these last, and gives the reason of their rejection, He does not speak of what we call deadly sins. It is not the adulterer, or the drunkard, or the murderer, or the liar, on whom

the appalling sentence passes. Not so ; these are condemned elsewhere, again and again, in Holy Scripture ; but here it is those who have failed to recognize the duty of waiting on their brethren according to their opportunity. And hence we dare not say that it is a sign of imperfection, when men or women keep themselves to themselves, and devote themselves to their own concerns, and do not go forth to sympathize with, and, as far as in them lies, to relieve the distress and wants of their brethren : we may not say that it is merely a sign of imperfection, when Christ says, that without it we cannot be saved : " Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."

Christ comes before us continually as a poor, wayfaring man of grief ; or as a homeless wanderer, or as a desolate prisoner. And sometimes it is our duty to find out the Divine Sufferer, hiding Himself, as He does, in the rich chamber or the poverty-stricken home ; and wherever we find Him, there to minister to Him. What a privilege to be able so easily to find *Him* ! What a peril to run the risk of losing sight of Him, and forfeiting our crown ! The time will come, when those who have waited on Christ's poor will find that they have in truth waited upon Him.

" He spake ; and my poor name He named ;
Of Me thou hast not been ashamed ;
These deeds shall thy memorial be ;
Fear not ; thou didst them unto Me."

And now, brethren, let me just say a few words in conclusion. God knows exactly where we are, each one of us, in regard to the religious life ;— whether there has been ever a time when we have consciously and seriously resolved to give ourselves up to Him ; and, if there has been, whether we have faithfully kept our resolutions, or whether we are still holding back from that thorough surrender of ourselves, to which He is ever calling us ; and, if so, what it is in each case which holds us back. He knows whether this Mission week with all its prayers and its stirring appeals to our hearts and consciences has made, or is likely to make, any difference to us in this respect ;—whether we are now being inwardly and powerfully moved by His grace to make the surrender which we hitherto shrunk from, or whether we have renewed with increased fervour and more burning love the vows of former years.

Oh ! once more, before I have done, let me ask you to consider seriously what is your condition as regards the religious life, as God sees it at this moment. Does He see you still hesitating ? still undecided ? or—which God forbid—does He see you determined not (as yet, all events) to do what nevertheless reason and conscience strongly urge upon you ? It is a serious question ; but I entreat you to grapple with it. Where am I in the religious life ? have I given myself to God ? or am I still in the depth of my heart refusing ?

Oh! that the question might ring in our ears until we were constrained to answer it.

Remember, such a change as I have spoken of—a change from carelessness or sinfulness or self-deceit, to a through surrender of ourselves to God, cannot take place without a struggle—without very serious determination and effort. It will not come of itself. We shall not wake up to-morrow morning, or any other morning, and find it done for us. We must resolve—we must pray—we must consider—we must converse with ourselves—we must take trouble. It is not enough to receive impressions, to acquiesce in certain statements, to indulge certain feelings, to speak certain words. We must *think*; and we must *act*. And the sooner we make up our minds to such thoughts and acts, the better;—the better for our peace of mind now, as well as for our safety hereafter.

Oh! if we could have any conception of Christ's desire for our thorough conversion to Him—if we could but perceive the yearning of His heart, we should not hesitate. The attractive power of His will would conquer ours; and we should throw ourselves at His feet in utter self-abasement and self-surrender, saying, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

O Lord; raise up Thy power and come among us! Stir up the wills of each one of Thy servants, that they may co-operate with Thy will, for their salvation!

This blessed Mission week has nearly run its course—one of those precious seasons of grace when the good Lord knocks more powerfully than at other times at the door of our hearts, and claims them for Himself. Oh! let it not pass away without our having said, each of us, with all the force of a determined, courageous, yet self-distrusting will, “Lord, I am Thine; and I desire to be Thine, and Thine alone henceforth. Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that my one desire is to live for Thee, and with Thee, here and hereafter.”

So when you kneel, as I trust you will kneel, at Christ's Holy Table, week by week, to receive the precious gifts of His Love, the fruit of His Passion, and the power of His Resurrection, you shall hear a voice within you, saying, “Fear not, faithful soul, for I am with thee. ‘When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.’ No doubt the way will often seem to thee long and wearisome. There will be fightings without, and fears within. But fear not—only believe. Trust thyself to Me. See Me ever on thy right hand, ready to defend and cherish thee. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. There shall no temptation come to thee which My grace will not enable thee to bear. Fear not—only believe. I have

loved thee with an everlasting love : I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands. Thy name is written upon My heart. He Who died for thee—He Who intercedes for thee—will not loose His hold of thee. Nor man nor devil shall pluck thee out of My hand. Only *abide* with Me: and thou shalt be safe. Safe amid the trials and sorrows of life ; safe in the dark hour of death. Death shall be gain to thee ; for it shall take thee to be with Me in Paradise, where with the souls of My faithful ones thou shalt rest in peace, and in hope of a joyful resurrection ; and at length, when I come again, in the ocean of My love thou shalt lose thyself, but thou shalt find Me and be found and blessed by Me to all eternity.”

THE END.

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