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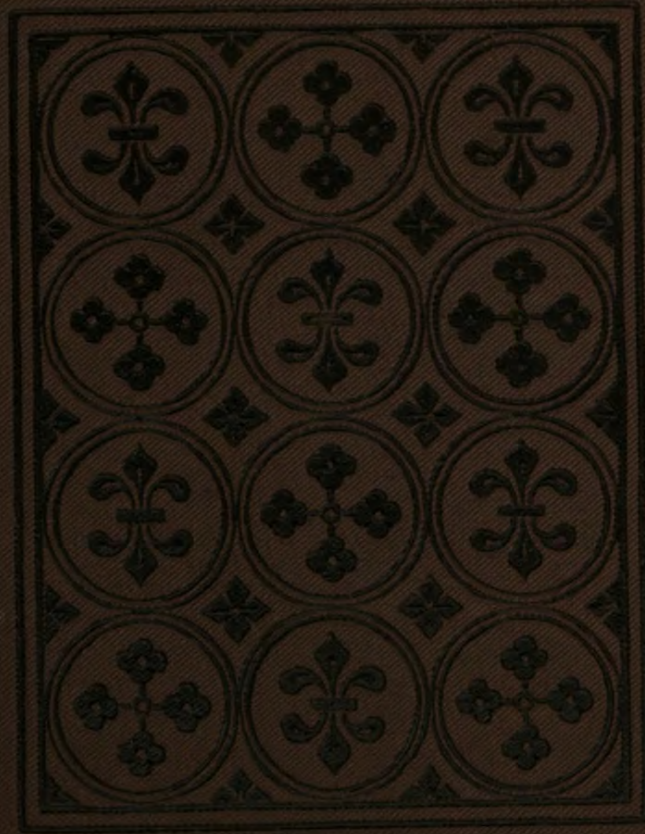
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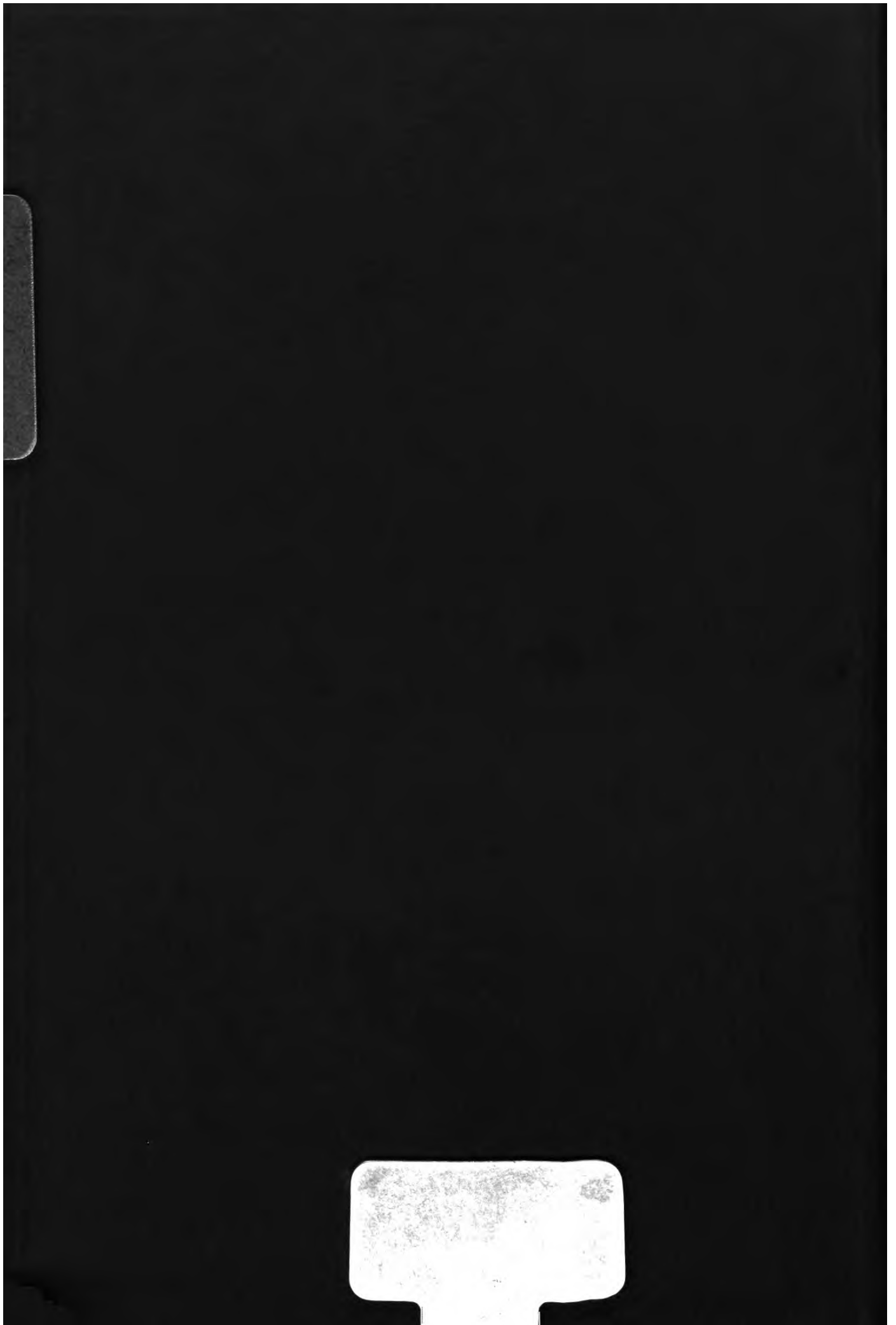
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DAVID WRIGHT, M.A.





THOUGHTS UPON SOME
WORDS OF CHRIST.

*'HE WHOM GOD HATH SENT SPEAKETH THE
WORDS OF GOD.'*

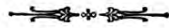
BY
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P R E F A C E.



THESE "Thoughts" are really sermons. At one time or other they have all been preached. For what reason, it may be asked, are they now published? They are concerned with words of Christ not of the most obvious interpretation, and may seem therefore to ask for more leisurely reflection than a single or even double hearing will allow. In giving this reason for the publication of these thoughts, the author is not free of all doubt if the reason is sufficient. He cannot be sure that the treatment here attempted of certain words of Christ may justly claim the attention which publication seems to expect. He is, however, sure that no effort has been spared of which he is capable to set forth the true interpretation of

these “words.” If the thoughts upon them have in any degree effected this, then their aim is accomplished. If they have failed in this, then they are without worth and forfeit all claim to notice. The book has no other aspiration than to bring into their own light and leave in it one or two of those words which He whom God hath sent spake—and still speaketh. In the mercy of God, may this aspiration be fulfilled!

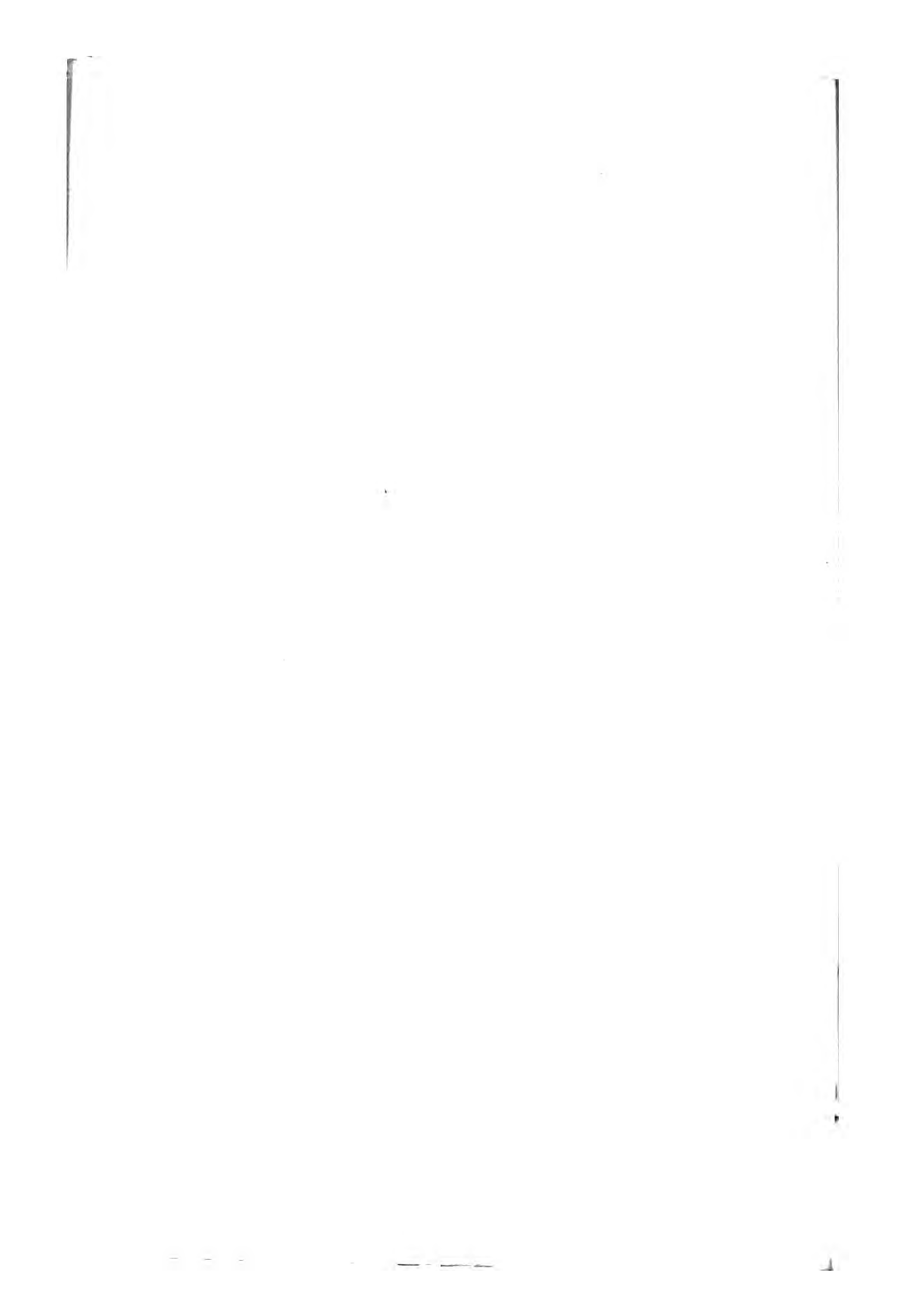
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I.
SODOM.



THOUGHTS UPON SOME WORDS OF
CHRIST.



I.

SODOM.

“If the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.”—*St. Matt. xi. 23.*

THIS was addressed to Capernaum, and we understand by it that if Sodom had seen the works which Capernaum had seen—if Jesus had walked the streets of that wicked city and had done there the mighty things which He did in Capernaum—then Sodom would never have been destroyed. This city of the plain would have been standing then—a witness surviving the generations of two thousand years, of the grace which is given to repentance.

We take our position this morning, as it were, on that raised ground upon which Abra-

ham stood when he "looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." We take our place beside the patriarch, and we look upon the smoke of the country. But our eye pierces the smoke, and we discern a light which shines in the distance beyond. Perhaps *his* eye also pierced the smoke, and discerned a light in the distance beyond. The man who had stood in converse with the Lord, and who was living a life of communion with the Lord, could scarcely look upon an act of His and see in it vengeance, and only vengeance. There was an opening through the smoke to the eye of Abraham. There was the refuge at least of his own noble thought, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And we also have in that the refuge of Abraham—but another also more particular and more defined. For we have about this a word of the Son of Man—of Him whose spirit within Him was the very candle of the Lord, searching through and through all human things—and His word redeems from a hopeless despair the doom of the cities of the plain. For, bad as the people were who dwelt in those cities then (and judging from our histories any exaggeration of this

badness would be hard), His word declares that there was good in the midst of that people still—powers at least and capabilities for good which, under other supposed conditions, would have ripened to such an issue, that no fire of the Lord should have fallen, no force of destruction should have laid that fair land waste. The ancient cities should have kept their place by the Dead Sea shore; they should have “remained until this day.”

But we are here in the face of a mystery; and if for a few moments we try to look into it, let our earnest prayer ascend to the Spirit of all grace, that He will keep our thought within the limits of His sacred truth, and that He will give to our meditation on these strange events its just and rightful influence upon our heart and life.

I have said that this word of Jesus is a refuge to us from thoughts despairingly dark as we take our place by the side of Abraham and look upon the smoke of the country. But the question immediately arises, In what way is this word of Jesus a refuge to us? How is the dread colouring of the story softened or mitigated by it? We read the history. We learn that two flourishing towns mentioned by name, and other smaller towns or villages around, of

which no name is mentioned, are suddenly overwhelmed in a tremendous ruin, swallowing up every living thing within the range of its consuming fury, three persons only excepted. And we further know that the moral condition of this people thus in a moment swept out of life was excessively bad, that the lowest and most debasing forms of vice throve in the midst of them as current and common things. And we find as we pass down those old records, that Sodom and Gomorrah are representative words for all base and licentious and degrading conditions, until at length we come to the days of the Son of Man, the fulness of the time in which Jesus lived and did His mighty works and spake His marvellous words. And in the course of His speech we find the mention of Sodom, and we judge from what He then said that there were people in the earth—people indeed in the midst of whom He was Himself then living—who were of lower spiritual tone even than the people of Sodom ; for that, if the people of Sodom could only have seen what this people saw, so great and so transforming would the effect of it upon their lives have been, that the threatened catastrophe would have passed away, as it did from Nineveh at a later day, and Sodom, so far at least as

account could be laid against that generation, might have lived and been prosperous still.

Then from the watch-tower of our observation, overlooking the ruin which did actually fall upon the doomed cities, we cannot forbear to ask, Why was the privilege withheld from Sodom which by Christ's own word would have had upon her such healing and hallowing influence? There was no Jesus to gather round Him the crowds of Sodom, to give to the blind their sight, and to the deaf their hearing, and to the sick their soundness. There was no Jonah even to walk the streets of Sodom and say, "Within forty days and Sodom shall be overthrown." There was Lot only, who, righteous man though he was, and vexed though his righteous soul may have been from day to day with the evil things which he saw and the evil speech which fell upon his ear, does not yet seem to have been endowed with the spirit of an apostle or a martyr of God, or to have aimed at anything further than to lead his own quiet and tranquil life, separate as far as might be from the sin of the place. A great thing no doubt—the silent testimony of one righteous household against the ways and doings of the crime-stained city—but still not enough for the

reformation of Sodom. Would it have been enough if an authorized messenger could have traversed the thoroughfares of the place and proclaimed everywhere aloud, as Jonah did, the sentence of coming doom? That we do not know. But would it have been enough if one of large resource and secret mystery of power, and aspect loving and gentleness Divine, had sojourned for a time in Sodom, and entering a house here where was a woman sick of a fever had taken her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever had left her; and a house there where was a palsied man lying on a bed and having said to him "Arise and walk," straightway the man had arisen and walked; and again another house, in a chamber of which cries of real or of hired grief bewailed the death that hour of a young maiden child, and at His voice of command the life had returned to this young child; and if over and beyond these separate and particular cases, "at even, when the sun did set," they had brought to the man of this grace and power all that were diseased and them that were possessed with devils (and we think there must have been many such in Sodom), and if all the city had been gathered at the door of the house where this man was living, and if all, every stricken

person that touched but the hem of His garment should have been made perfectly whole—would *this* have been enough for the reformation of Sodom? Jesus says it would. If works like these had been done in Sodom it would have remained until that day. Sodom, that is, would have repented of her great wickedness and her doom would have been reversed. But those very works were done in Capernaum, and Capernaum remained for all that as hard, as world-sunken, as self-bound as ever. Then why is it? The question must have arisen to many minds, and however short of a fully satisfying answer the limits of our knowledge may still leave us, we do not well to evade it: Why is it that the conditions were not changed? that forces of reformation were lavished upon a people whom they did not reform and whom they therefore more heavily condemned, and were withheld from a people whom they would have reformed, and in doing so would have saved from the condemnation which did fall upon them?

This is no mere curious question. That which concerns the relations between God and man can never be a merely curious question. For those relations are constant; they are at least world-lasting. They bind in one common

interest the generation of this nearly-closing century, the nineteenth after Christ, with that one which was living on the earth when Sodom and Gomorrah fell, and that one over which Jesus mourned because of the waste upon it of His mighty works. We can never fathom these things indeed throughout. There must come a point at which all further thought is arrested, and we can but say as St. Paul said : “ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out ! ”

But we are still to remember that St. Paul had been searching deeply, by the light that was given him, into the relations between God and man, and had written about them some very surprising words before he broke forth into that exclamation. It was the cry of an exhausted spirit, not the weak refuge of an unenquiring spirit ; and so we look into the mystery of this narrative, and we find it not solved indeed and clear without a cloud (let us not say that) but in a degree as we think illuminated by this word of Jesus, which warrants us in saying three things about it. And the first is this :

Surely the probation of the men of those

wicked cities was not for ever past when the powers of destruction swept over the plain and extinguished as in a moment the life of man and beast. That susceptibility to good, that adaptation to better things which Jesus said existed in this people, and would have shown itself if only the opportunities had been theirs which others enjoyed but did not profit by, was it effaced out of being and made wholly and for ever ineffective and worthless because the people who possessed it lived in an age of the world when this embryo of good was not as favoured as it would have been in other ages by surrounding circumstances?

This very word of Christ in suggesting the question answers it. It suffers our thought to do no such wrong—I will not say to the mercy, but to the justice of God. The people of Sodom reappear to us, under the light of this word, in the realms of spirit. The material overthrow—that was a tremendous judgment; a witness passing down from age to age of the terrors of Divine wrath upon grievous and hateful sin. St. Jude points to this witness. He mentions the doomed cities by name, and says they are set forth for an example—suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. His word is **age-long**, not in our sense eternal. And it is

undoubtedly (as we judge) the material image which he has in his mind—that extinguished indeed but all-conquering all-desolating fire—the burned cities its prey for ever—no walls and towers again or ever again to rise out of those ashes. This is the force of St. Jude's word. We are carried by it to the desolate waste around and near the mouth of Jordan. But the word of Jesus bears our thought to the realm of spirit. It speaks indeed of a material city ("would have remained until this day"), but of a material city the existence of which is bound up with some supposed spiritual conditions. And what these were we learn from the directly answering word about Tyre and Sidon. "If Tyre and Sidon had seen the works which Capernaum saw, they would have *repented*," our Lord said, "in sackcloth and ashes." And to say that Sodom if it had seen those works would have remained until that day, is only another way of saying that Sodom also would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. But this repentance—this sackcloth and ashes of a contrite soul—are the spirits of the people of Sodom shut out for ever from all possibility of that, because the raging fire cut them off with all their sins upon their head, but under conditions not favourable to this repentance in

sackcloth and ashes? Or at least by the word of the Lord Himself not so favourable as they might have been; and if they had been, would have borne the blessed fruit of this repentance in sackcloth and ashes?

If it were so this word of Jesus, instead of showing itself as we think it does as a light in a dark place, would have left us in perplexity more hopeless and distressing than if it had never been spoken. If it were so, St. Peter is writing very rash words when he speaks in his epistle of Jesus by the Spirit going and preaching unto the spirits in prison which sometime were disobedient, and doing this St. Peter says in order that though judged according to men in the flesh, they might live according to God in the spirit. There is a river, we are told, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God—the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. St. John in his visions saw this river—a pure river of water of life clear as crystal—proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb; and on either side of the river was the tree of life, and the leaves of it were for the healing of the nations. But the prophet Ezekiel had a vision of this river long before, and its flow was from the holy city, and from beneath the threshold of the sacred house;

and its waters went forth toward the east country, and down into the desert or the plain and so into the sea, which was the salt sea. And being brought forth into the sea, the waters of that sea—*he* said who was speaking to the prophet—the waters of that sea shall be healed. Much more is said about this river, all which you may find in the forty-seventh chapter of the book of that prophecy. The river with its healing waters ran forth into the region of the old cities of the plain. This is vision indeed and allegory. But truths of Divine love and great and blessed hopes lie buried in that allegory. And when you read in the sixteenth chapter of that same Book of Ezekiel of the restored captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the return to their former estate of Sodom and her daughters; when you read of Sodom, Samaria, and Jerusalem, sisters in grievous sin, but Jerusalem far more grievous than the other two, all brought again within the range of the covenant of mercy—then some higher thoughts perhaps will enter our mind than we have known hitherto of the far-spreading virtues of that river of God which is flowing evermore through the dark habitations of human sin.

I cannot say more on this subject to-day. This word of Christ stretches far and deep.

We have sought only so far to throw if it might be the ray of its more hopeful light upon the lurid scene of this history. It will remain that we think hereafter on the fruit and issue to ourselves of those mighty works of Christ which fell dead upon Capernaum, but which would if only she had seen them have regenerated Sodom.

II.

THE MIGHTY WORKS OF CHRIST.



II.

THE MIGHTY WORKS OF CHRIST.

“If the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.”—*St. Matt.* xi. 23.

THE place then which Sodom held in the ages was so far accountable for its doom, that if this place had been different the doom would not have fallen upon Sodom. The crisis of the Incarnation could occur only once in time, and counsels past our finding out determined that period. When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son made of a woman. Only the mind of the Eternal God could discern and decide this fulness of time. But if it had occurred in the age when Sodom was sinning so grievously instead of the age when Herod the Great reigned over Judea, and if the mighty works of the Incarnation had been done in the Sodom of that day instead of the Capernaum of Herod's day, then Sodom

would have turned from the sin which was her ruin, and the ruin would not have fallen.

So speaks the Saviour of the world in this text which we have read. And because therefore of this accident of time, if we may describe it so, shall it be that as to all the issues of the everlasting future the doom of the people of that wicked city is irreversible, incapable of modification or change? This was the subject of our thought when we had this text under our notice before. We turn to-day from the old age to the later age, from the Sodom of Lot to the Capernaum of Jesus, from what might have happened and under certain expressed conditions would have happened in Sodom, to what did under those conditions happen in Capernaum. But neither is it our purpose to linger over Capernaum. Capernaum is very old to us—for all interests of personal concern as old as Sodom—and the very site of the place is not more sure. Capernaum as a dwelling-place of men has disappeared out of existence as effectually as Sodom. It would profit us little to resuscitate Capernaum for the purpose of taking measure, as it were, of the spiritual condition of this obliterated Galilean town in the time of Christ, as compared with the spiritual condition

of a town more wicked but not so hard in times that were very ancient then. We might watch the scale falling against Capernaum, and take narrow and searching account of this unfavourable turn in the balances, and still be none the better for all this observation but rather the worse, if it were not to us as a reflecting mirror, throwing back to us things which very closely concern ourselves.

And this we notice at once. The power for good which failed in Capernaum but would not have failed in Sodom, is called by Jesus "mighty works." "If the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." For "mighty works" our word is "miracles." The word is a settled word with us, but it is not a good word. When the children of our schools are asked the meaning of the word "miracle," they answer at once "a marvellous work," and the answer is exact. If they are asked to give a little further account of what a miracle is, they will perhaps say that it is a work beyond the power of man. And this is true as describing the miracles of Jesus, but it is going beyond the meaning of the word. You have exhausted that when you have said that it is a marvellous work, a thing that people

wonder at. But we shall see at once that this is a most poor and inadequate account of the mighty works of Jesus; and if we add to the marvel of them their beneficence also, their goodness, their loving tenderness—if we observe that through and by means of them not only wonder seized the multitudes, but the virtue of a blessed healing ran through the veins of many a stricken sufferer, the weight of a great sorrow fell from many a burdened spirit, the gladness of a great joy or at least the balm of a great peace was carried into many a mourning home—when we have got all this into our mind, shall we then have pierced in very truth to the heart of the mighty works of Christ and searched their meaning and their fulness out? I think that when Jesus said this word to Capernaum which we are considering now, the mighty works of which He spake had more in them to His mind than the mightiness which came forth from Him, or the grace which went forth out of them to men. There is another word of His and said by Him more than once, which discovers to us what His own thought was about these mighty works, and the word is this: “I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I

do bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me.” And the moral mission (if we may term it so) of these works of Christ is set forth by Him in yet stronger language at a later time—at a time indeed when they were over and no more of them were to be done by Him on earth: “If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin;” and what He then meant by sin the words explain which follow: “But now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father.” His works, the works which He had done, these works had shown to the people *Him*. In showing Him they had shown the Father. “Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father.”

So this was Capernaum’s sin. Capernaum saw the works of Jesus. In seeing them Capernaum saw the Father. They were the witness of the Father’s presence in that town. But having seen the works and taken the benefit of their outward service, Capernaum turned its back upon Him by whom they were done. Saw Him, saw the works which He did, and having seen them hated Him, and in hating Him hated the Father also. And the consequence of this upon Capernaum is here

declared by the Saviour in language of tremendous force: "Thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell." It is perhaps hardly necessary for me to say that the thought which the word "hell" brings to our mind does not belong to this word of Christ. His word indeed is Hades, and the whole expression is taken from the prophet Isaiah, who in a lurid but very sublime passage foretells under those terms the fate of Babylon by the name of Lucifer, son of the morning. This Capernaum, the most eminent then of the Galilean cities, shall fall from that height and greatness into utter extinction. This is what Jesus said, and the question now for long ages unanswered and unanswerable, where *was* Capernaum? stamps upon His word its terrible truth.

But we turn from this to take our own place beside the mighty works that were done in Capernaum, and to ask of ourselves whether their fruit to us is that which it was to Capernaum, or that which it would have been to Sodom if only Sodom could have seen them.

At once the thought arises: but we have not seen them any more than Sodom did. There is only one answer to that, and it is:

the record of these mighty works is interwoven with our histories of the life of Christ, and with those histories it stands or falls. But still and notwithstanding, our level and Capernaum's level is not the same in this. The difference between seeing with our own eye a strange, let us say a supernatural circumstance, and only hearing or reading of it, is very great indeed. But yet—and here we come at length to the point at issue—the witness of a marvellous thing can do no more than persuade us that it was. If the testimony as to that same marvellous thing which is come down in writing shall persuade us that it was, then any just influence which may belong to it will depend on the voluntary action of our own mind, for which we are responsible. But in the case of the mighty works of Christ, what is the just influence which belongs to them? Let us consider the name which for the most part they bear in these Gospels. *We* call them miracles, but the Evangelists generally (St. John exclusively) call them *signs*. Our word for them expresses their effect upon the mind of those who saw or believed them; St. John's word expresses their own inward significance. It was for want of drawing out of the mighty works this their significance, that Capernaum,

having seen them, hated Him who did them. It is perhaps for this same want that the disposition is in these days so strong to under-rate the miracles of Jesus, to attenuate their wonder, to surrender out of them the miraculous element, and point by point to yield up the ground, until the level is nearly reached of that now reigning tyranny which, among other feats of sinister omen, has with tongue of dogmatism and tone of scorn turned miracles over to the credulity of fools.

But we have been thinking too much of the marvel of these things; we have not studied enough their meaning. We have asked, for instance, in suspense and doubtfulness, about those two thousand swine rushing headlong into the lake. We have not looked with sufficient intentness at the man who sat by Jesus' side, clothed and in his right mind.

“From whence hath this man these things? What is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are wrought by His hands?” Is this electricity which goes forth from Him, this healing virtue? Are His exorcisms done through some magnetic agency? or by what other power? or have well-meaning but half-taught memorialists exaggerated natural incidents into prodigies? There will be less of

this harassing sort of question abroad than there now is when that word of Jesus, and any other like word found in the Gospels, shall have the hold upon our mind which of right belongs to it. "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."

The unclothed maniac among the tombs, the man of untamable ferocity, the terror of the country round, the self-mangler—what was he? A sign of the powers of evil, call them by what name you will, in the midst of men and over men. The same man—calm, docile, right-minded, trustful, only wanting one thing and that to be with Jesus—what was he? A sign of God among men and in men. Let the swine go. The difference of climes and centuries will largely account for the strangeness of that part of the business. Let them go and consider this man as he *was* and as he *is*. The power over him as he *was* of malignant evil, let its source be what it may; the power over him as he *is*, of the loving Father. And the force which did this thing, do not think of it as a miracle. It was that. But this feature of it, the marvel of it, is not the arresting fact. Think of it as a sign—the sign of the kingdom of God here in the earth. And the sign is

eternal. The mighty works of Jesus, as miracles, belonged to an era, an era of the far past, compassed by three or a little more of these years of time. But the mighty works of Jesus, as signs, are lasting as time itself. His own speech about them would never have been so strong, so eager, so impassioned even as we find it to be, if their purpose were over when they had triumphed over every form of human malady, and brought wholeness to multitudes that were sick and stricken ; or if their purpose were over when they had satisfied certain intellects all down the ages since that Christ's religion was Divine.

“ If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.”

“ Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the very works' sake. The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.”

We shall find in the mighty works of Christ that infinite power of good which unhappily Capernaum did not care to seek, but which Sodom would have cared to seek and would have found if only they had been done in

Sodom. We shall find it when once this language of Christ about those mighty works is the very truth to us—when they are in the sureness of our faith—as He said they were, in fact—the witness of the Father in the earth, the sign that He is in the midst of men, that His place is by the side of human need and at the very right hand of human sin.

And here our final word will touch the point as to that power of good which Jesus mourned that His mighty works had not done for Capernaum. What is it? This word of Christ about Sodom is so far an answer to that question that it discovers to us a marvellous effect of it—that power for good. He tells us what it would have done for Sodom, if the chance of laying hold upon it had only been offered to Sodom. The catastrophe which overwhelmed that guilty city would have been averted. Sodom would not have been destroyed; she would have remained until that day.

But this word tells us only the *consequence* of that power for good. It does not tell us what it *is*. We must go for that to the exactly corresponding word about Tyre and Sidon—corresponding in all points except this, that it is the good thing not in its effects but in its own

self, which is mentioned in that case. Tyre and Sidon were existing still when Jesus spake, are existing now. They did not indeed exist in their former pride and glory, Tyre especially. But it would yet have been quite incorrect to say that they *would* have remained until that day, for they did remain. So the word of Jesus fixes itself, not upon the outward condition of those places, but upon an inward spiritual fact relating to them. Tyre is but a small fishing-town now; but when Jesus spake, though sitting no longer as a queen upon the waters, Tyre was a large and prosperous seaport. But she was subject and had been subject to various dominions for some hundreds of years. Prophets had warned Tyre of this, and what had Tyre done when prophets warned her of it?

This at least she had not done—she had not repented. But if Tyre could have seen the works of Jesus He says that she would have repented, and how thorough this repentance would have been an image expresses which they understood well to whom He was speaking—sackcloth and ashes. “If the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”

Here then face to face one against the other are the mighty works of Christ, and the good which they were meant to do—the good which if they did not, then as far as concerned those who witnessed them, they were a failure. Their mission was unfulfilled. The sick would have been laid in the streets of Tyre if the world's Redeemer had been incarnate then, and He had walked those streets of Tyre—the sick would have been laid in the streets, as they were laid in the streets of Capernaum, and Tyre would have wondered as Capernaum wondered when virtue went forth from the hem of His garment and as many as touched were made perfectly whole. But Tyre would not have been satisfied with wonder, as Capernaum was satisfied. An effect beyond wonder would have thrilled the soul of that voluptuous and imperial city. Those mighty works would have been to Tyre the Presence of the Lord God, and under the sacred consciousness of that Presence Tyre would have said, as a patriarch had said long before, “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Here in literal repetition is the very word of Christ. The mighty works are done; Sodom

never saw them, nor Tyre, nor Sidon. If Sodom had seen them, or Tyre, or Sidon, the word that was in them would have reached the heart of those towns: "The kingdom of God is come unto you." So speaks the Lord Christ. Has the word that was in them not reached since the heart of the dwellers in those towns, and done for them the work which it would have done if their place on the earth had been by a few ages changed? We ask the question and leave it. The mighty works are done; we are living as far down after them in time as Sodom had lived before. But our position with regard to them is not that of Sodom. They *may* be as real to us as they were to Capernaum; and if our spirit be only awake through the quickening grace of the Divine Spirit, then we shall hear that word of theirs which unhappily Capernaum would not hear, "The kingdom of God is come unto you." And *this* is the power of repentance: the Father's recollected Presence is the great transforming agency. It is that which alters the posture of things in our eye, and our posture towards the things. They are not to us as they were; they are weighed by altered measures. In the recollection of the Father's Presence sin is the one hateful thing of the

universe ; the world has dwindled from its pre-eminence. Pleasing our own self is no longer our life. The veil is down ; goodness shows its loveliness. To have something of it, more of it daily, and in measure thus continually growing to be more like to God—this desire possesses the whole being, and moderates and dwarfs all desires besides. It will be a happy and a blessed thing if by the mercy of God fruit like this shall flow forth to us from these reflections of ours upon the mighty works of Christ.

III.

THE CREATION SABBATH

III.

THE CREATION SABBATH.

“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”—*St. John*
v. 17.

THIS profound word of Christ carries our thoughts back to the sublime Creation Sabbath. He said to the man who lay by the pool of Bethesda, with an infirmity upon him of thirty and eight years standing, “Rise, take up thy bed and walk.” The day on which He said that was the Sabbath. The Jews, St. John says (by which term he never means the multitude but always people in authority) the Jews said to this man when they saw him carrying his bed, “It is the Sabbath-day; it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.” They were justified in this objection; the law forbade the carrying of burdens on the Sabbath-day. So at least Nehemiah understood it—an unprejudiced and most noble man—and he set some of his servants to watch the gates of Jerusalem

that there should no burden be brought in on the Sabbath-day. Jeremiah also had said before that time : " Thus saith the Lord, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath-day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem ; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath-day." So perhaps it was not altogether a captious thing to say to this man, " It is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed." But he was doing only that which he had been told to do. The very word of healing was, " Rise, take up thy bed and walk." He that said the word, as soon as He had said it, passed among the crowd and was lost to the sight of the recovered man. That is what St. John's word really means about Jesus conveying Himself away ; He had no purpose of concealing Himself that we read of here. And they soon found Him ; and with a fury against Him in which something beyond zeal for the Sabbath may be detected, it is said they persecuted Jesus and sought to slay Him because He had done these things on the Sabbath-day. It was to the Jews, scribes and chief priests or whoever else were gathered against Him in this their anger, that Jesus said this calm and majestic word : " My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

I said that this word carries our thoughts back to the Creation Sabbath—to the rest of God after the creation. But it does more than this; it declares that the Creation Sabbath was not over then when Jesus spake. “Hitherto” encloses a period, from such a time to this time. “My Father worketh *hitherto*.”

Let me explain this. They charged Him with breaking the Sabbath by doing a work upon it or directing another to do a work upon it, which was the same thing. His reply to that was: “My Father worketh *hitherto*.” There is only one possible way of understanding this. It has been and it is My Father’s Sabbath, and yet He has worked upon it and still He worketh. There is but one Sabbath of God about which we ever read—that which followed the Creation: “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.” Our Lord’s word in the text is a revelation to us about that seventh day. It tells us, if indeed it tells us anything at all, that the evening and the morning had not yet completed that seventh day; its rest and the work which did not interfere with its rest were proceeding still. Till now, “*hitherto*, My Father worketh.” Does He break *His* Sabbath because He worketh?

Two things must here be said, and the first is: This word of Christ is, we do think, in some most important sense an interpreting word as to the history of the Creation. The Sabbath of God called in Genesis the seventh day, was not over when Jesus spake, all those thousands of years forward in time. It was even then the day of rest to God, notwithstanding that He worked upon it, even then the seventh day. The statement made by Christ says this absolutely. If then the seventh day of the Book of Genesis be not just one revolution of the earth as our word "day" denotes, but a period of long ages, what shall we understand about those six days in which the first chapter of Genesis records the creation of earthly things to have taken place? Must we bind them any more than the seventh day, each within the circumscribed limit of our day, with its twenty-four hours? But then God's word which is written in the Bible can never have cause for alarm at God's word which is written in the *rocks*. Each of them is a revelation of Him and one cannot contradict the other. But the subject of these revelations is different. One tells the story of Creation, and the other tells the story of Redemption. The one closes its account with

God's last work in Creation, and describes the whole with minutest accuracy. The other begins its account *from* that point—God's last work in Creation. But it deals with creation itself in a very summary and compendious way. It does not profess to give a *history* of Creation. That first chapter in Genesis asserts to itself no such claim. It would be trifling with the tremendous subject to say that all its marvels and all its courses might be compressed into an account which it takes us hardly three minutes to read slowly. Except for the sake of completeness to that work of God which the Bible relates, perhaps His previous work in the creation of things might not have been mentioned. The history of man's redemption did however demand just a notice at least of the fact of His Creation. That we may perceive more clearly how and to what we are to be recovered, let us hear first from what it is that we are fallen; and therefore the word which the earliest author of the books about redemption is instructed to write is this: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." This it was requisite to know and therefore it is stated. It was also requisite to know that whatever existed besides—whatever had form,

substance, property, or being—God was the creator thereof, and the statement of this is therefore made but in a most condensed form; nothing of detail, nothing of delineation, only the bare facts. The course of the creation is sketched—the gradual progression from the lower to the higher orders—till the work culminates in man. This is the testimony of that grand record in Genesis which bears so plainly the stamp of God upon it; and they that are most competent to decipher the writing on the rocks find their discoveries in strict harmony with this account. But their discoveries are not in harmony with that interpretation which supposes the six days in Genesis to be just those six days of ours which pass between the Sunday and the Sunday. We are rather thankful to science than jealous of it for making necessary some other construction of the six Creation days differing from that of the six of our days, from sunrise to sunrise. We would bow reverentially before the Word of God wheresoever it is written; and if there had been no other Word of His about Creation except this which is written in the Book of Genesis, then according to the literal import of its terms so we should suppose it ought to be literally received.

But inasmuch as these later times have brought to light another word of God about creation, the record of His acts therein graven indelibly on substances imperishable at least in time, we ask from the skilled readers of those records for a transcript of what they read, not fearful of any clashing between this Word of God and that Word of God, but expecting that the larger and the fuller shall help to explain the shorter and the more concise—that the minute and circumstantial history shall interpret the summary. And it is a relief to us to find that we have not understood rightly that all the marvels of Creation were cramped into a period which may be counted by hours, but that they did really extend over unknown ages scarcely to be measured by thousands of years. It is a relief to us because this view of God's manner of working in the times beyond our observation is in far closer agreement than the old interpretation allows with His manner of working here in the midst of our observation, where the order of things proceeds in a manner gradual, solemn, and slow. And if an uncomfortable feeling should come upon some minds because of the long settled thoughts about Creation being touched, if some impatience and disquietude should arise because of the intrusion

of this new interpreter upon the old and hallowed ground—with his far more elaborate story and his confident assertion that those days of God of which Genesis speaks are to be understood very differently from the common days of man—I think that troubled spirit might find relief by reflecting on the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, who did say, or did most surely imply, that the day of God which is called the seventh day was not a common day. Commencing when the Creation was finished, it was proceeding still when Jesus spake, “My Father worketh *hitherto*.” Have *I* broken the Sabbath? Then My Father hath broken His Sabbath. For He worketh upon it “*hitherto*.” And so we think that we find this word of Christ in comforting agreement with those messages which are now delivered to us from the everlasting rocks, that the work of Creation went on step by step through prolonged and vastly extended periods of time.

That is the first particular which we draw from this word of Christ—“My Father worketh *hitherto*”—and the second, and the only other particular which we shall be able to consider now, relates to that very work itself which Jesus said His Father did. What was that work?

Perhaps the expression has seemed strange to most of us—"And God *rested* on the seventh day." To our childish thought there was the idea of a weary person resting after labour; and as riper reflection has convinced us that any such thought as this was all out of keeping with just views of God, we have perhaps left the expression under the shelter of that convenient resource, a way of speaking accommodated to our ignorance and other infirmities. But there is a verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews which gives to it I think its true meaning: "He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His." This rest of God was a ceasing only from the work of Creation. Is that rest inactivity? Our Lord says not. "My Father worketh hitherto." The universe says not. This is the hymn of the universe: "Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving, sing praise upon the harp unto our God: who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He sendeth the springs into the rivers which run among the hills; all beasts of the field drink thereof, the wild asses quench their thirst. He divideth a watercourse for the overflowing of waters and a way for the light-

ning of thunder. He satisfieth the desolate and waste ground, and causeth the bud of the tender herb to spring forth. He bringeth food out of the earth and wine that maketh glad the heart of man. The trees of the Lord are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted. The young lions roar after their prey and seek their meat from God. He giveth to the beast his food and to the young ravens which cry. The eyes of all wait upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing." The hand of God in Creation is at rest; the hand of God in providence is ever and ever at work. He sustaineth that which He hath made. In Him we live and *move*. You go forth from your house and return to it; you are hungry and food revives you; you lie down weary and sleep refreshes you; you awake and stand upon your feet, ready for the day with its duties. The preservation of every man and every child of man every hour, and of all the myriads in life besides—this is the work of God upon the Creation Sabbath. "My soul hangeth upon Thee" is the great fact of the universe. But it is not the sustaining only of animal life. His Spirit is always moving upon the face of the waters of

human sin. He putteth forth the power of His grace, and leadeth multitudes of sinners in this fallen world out of their sin into remorse, out of their remorse into penitence, and from penitence on to faith, and from faith on to hope, and from hope on to struggles with temptation and conquests over sin and measures of holiness, and from these up to salvation. So God worketh on His Creation Sabbath. The sun of that Sabbath is not yet gone down. It was the fact when Jesus spake; it is the fact still that the Father "worketh hitherto." He upholdeth the animal life of the universe, and quickeneth the spiritual life of the redeemed.

But as we now close our view of the Creation Sabbath, there is one word only that we say further, rising out from the truth which is in it—that inactivity is an ungodlike thing. God in Creation was working; God on His Sabbath is working. Rest is a holy and a blessed word; but rest in its highest sense is not cessation from labour. It is passing from one kind of labour to another. The rest which remaineth for the people of God is not inactivity. It is the keeping of a Sabbath. We have seen how God keeps His Sabbath. There is a voice from before the throne which tells us how the blest shall keep their Sabbath: "They rest not

day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” With us in common life activity is God’s own law. Rest from fatigue by sleep, that is lawful for God hath appointed it. Rest from wear and tear of body and mind by recreation, that is lawful. “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.” Neither of these is inactivity. Each of them rather when kept within the restraints of moderation is a girding of the loins for work, and work is the ordinance of God. The faculties and the powers employed and in exercise—not for self-indulging but for *good*—for some person or object, by some means, in some shape or manner, work for good—this is the ordinance of God. And this is the example of God. And no life-rule short of this is worthy the children of the Father who finished Creation’s marvelous works, and that He might fill with plenteousness all the living things which He had made, did begin to work from the dawn of Creation’s Sabbath, and worketh upon it “hitherto.”

IV.

THE REDEMPTION SABBATH.

IV.

THE REDEMPTION SABBATH.

“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”—*St. John*
v. 17.

IN our thoughts on this verse so far, we have touched upon the still uncompleted Sabbath of God, and upon the nature of the work which He has worked and is yet working thereupon. “My Father worketh hitherto.” It remains that we now look forth and see the reflection of God’s Sabbath in the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment, and that we try to learn our duty herein from the word and example of Him who was Lord of the Sabbath that was made for man. “My Father worketh hitherto, *and I work.*” And may the blessed Spirit of the Father and the Son vouchsafe His guidance and instruction to us!

These are the three points to each of which some brief notice must be given. The Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment, the Sabbath of

the New Testament, and the Christian Sabbath of this day; though part of this perhaps may still have to be reserved for later notice. The Fourth Commandment says: "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day." The Fourth Commandment forbids all manner of work upon the Sabbath-day; and the Fourth Commandment rests its obligation upon the Creation fact in these words: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it." Thus then the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment is a reflection of the Creation Sabbath. The rest of God after the Creation is the basis and the sanction of it. When given first of all, as in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, this reason only is stated: "God made heaven and earth and rested." But do the facts of science, as at least they are read and declared to us, and with every consistent probability it must be at once acknowledged, do they seem to jar with that statement, "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth"?

The earlier part of the word of Christ in the text, "My Father worketh hitherto," has been already under our notice: and we gave

it as our view that by this word the Sabbath age, called the seventh day, was proceeding when He spake; and that the Father's Sabbath work beginning from the Creation was still being done upon it. If that interpretation be accepted, the six Creation days come to us on Christ's own authority, by the most obvious analogy, under a freedom and expansion which set them beyond the embarrassment of any restraint.

But whether it be accepted or not we should deem it a servile bondage to the letter if we bound down the days of God in the old Creation eras even before the existence of the sun and the moon to the limit defined by each revolution of this earth. That indeed is the measure of the days of man; and God's word to Israel in the Fourth Commandment is that as He Himself ceased from His work in Creation when His sixth day was expired and upon *His* seventh day did no more the work of Creation, so let Israel cease from his ordinary work at the end of his six days and upon every seventh day not do that work at all. It is modelling the life of man after the method of his Creator—the six days' work and the seventh day's rest. It is referring man to God for the order and system after which he should distribute his

time. The Fourth Commandment is indeed a law of the Sabbath. But let it not be narrowed to that. It is a law of *life*—the six days' work not less than the seventh day's rest. The Israelite who lounged over his six days in listless inactivity did not keep the Fourth Commandment, with whatever strictness and precision he may have observed the seventh day. His life was not fashioned after that pattern of God which this commandment sets forth, unless he fulfilled the labour of the six days before taking the rest of the seventh. As it were, the rest was not earned till the labour was done; and it is this feature in the Commandment which gives to it its human character, which does seem to distinguish and establish it, not as a temporary enactment but as a universal law. We can hardly suppose that the Eternal God should set forth Himself in His own personal relations to this world as an example for the arrangements of life to one nation only and for one period. We should rather conclude it to be for man, and for all time. And although the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment did bear in itself a character that was distinctively and exclusively Jewish (as many passages like this bear witness: "Verily, My Sabbath ye shall keep; for it is

a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you: it is a *sign between Me and the Children of Israel* for ever"); still and notwithstanding, this sign of the temporary covenant between God and a particular race did rest upon a sanction and appeal to an original, which affected that race not more than it affected the rest of mankind.

With this general form and description of the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment in our thoughts, let us come now to the Sabbath of the New Testament, by which I would be understood to mean that interpretation of the Sabbath which we are to gather from the words of Christ and from the writings of the Apostles.

And this we observe at once: Jesus Christ was born a *Jew*, and lived a Jew. He was subject to the law as given by Moses. He observed the Jewish ceremonies and kept the Jewish feasts and respected even (except when they ran counter to some Divine ordinance or some human right) respected Jewish prejudices. But this we always find, that His word whensoever it touches the Sabbath softens down the rigour of the law of it as by the teachers of Israel that law was defined.

He seems to be aiming always to raise the Sabbath out of the lower domain of casuistry into the upper regions of principle. He seems to be asserting its claim to the august place which it holds among the obligations of the everlasting law. Is the Sabbath law the only one of the Ten Commandments which does not find its direct answer in the conscience of man? Is this the only one that seems positive and arbitrary, while all the rest are moral and eternal? Beyond all question so it is. And this distinction between the Sabbath law and the other laws could never be removed so long as the *terms* of the enactment were the points insisted upon, and the eternal principle which it enclosed remained undiscovered. But when the Israelitish purpose of the Sabbath was about to disappear, we think that we find the Mediator of the new covenant, though bound Himself by the old law, taking off from the Sabbath its circumscribed purport and service and raising it up into a pledge and witness of the everlasting covenant now to be sealed and ratified between God and man. It would degrade the Sabbath, under this its new dignity, to entangle it with questions as to the lawfulness of a man's carrying his bed or of walking through cornfields

and gathering ears of corn. The Sabbath of the Second Man was to be emancipated from all that. It was to draw out and affirm and consecrate the old Sabbath law's inner truth—that man's time is not his own but God's. He gave to the people their six days and laid His hand upon the seventh. Now with all its burdens and restrictions, this seventh day was a day of joy and privilege to Israel. No gloom belonged of right to the Jewish Sabbath. It was a type of unknown joy in the future and was intended to be itself a day of joy. And when the fulness of the time was come and God sent forth His Son, then was the true joy of the new Sabbath and the emblematic joy of the old enshrined upon this fact, that all man's time was holy to God—that man himself was holy to God—for that man himself was redeemed. And in the light of this glorious fact that bold word was said that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

We sometimes hear it said that Christ's example and Christ's word about the Sabbath instruct us that works of necessity and mercy may be done upon the Sabbath-day, and the old strict law of the Sabbath is considered to be modified accordingly. But we do venture to think that the word and example of Christ

pass much deeper than this. If this be all, the question will still remain in all its old perplexity and will only have a wider field to travel over, whether this or that act be or be not a breaking the Sabbath. It will still be a question of scruples, not yet of principle. Who shall give to that term "works of necessity" its fixed and definite measure? It is an elastic term. Necessity and indulgence will find it a very difficult thing to settle the border-line between them. And if a man does it to his own satisfaction it is not by any means probable that his neighbour will be of the same mind also. There will be a constant oscillation as to the rights of the case. The claims and the concessions will be vibrating continually. It may be needful to glance again at this when we come hereafter to the Christian Sabbath of this day. But let me now say that the word of Christ about the Sabbath did, I think, pass into a region far higher than this. The man who was cured was carrying his bed upon the Sabbath-day. Jesus had told him to carry his bed. The Jews came and said it was not lawful; and because He had told the man to do this thing and because He had done this cure they sought to slay Him. And what was our Lord's defence? He did not as sometimes refute them by their own acts: they led their

ox or their ass to watering—they drew the sheep out of the pit—they circumcised a man on the Sabbath-day: were those things lawful and was this not lawful? But He did not take that line now: He did not make it a question of cases. But He said this word: “My Father worketh hitherto, *and I work.*” The Father kept in plenteousness the things which He had made. The Father was ever raising His fallen creature from the ruins of sin into communion with Himself. That was the Father’s Sabbath work, “*and I work.*” But I shall be describing that work of Christ but poorly indeed if I say it was a work of mercy according to our view of a work of mercy. It was a work of *redemption*.

There was a woman who had been bowed down by an infirmity for eighteen years; Jesus laid His hands on her and she was made straight. That was on a Sabbath-day; and the ruler of the synagogue spake with indignation because He had done this on a Sabbath-day. The Lord answered with a higher indignation: “Thou hypocrite!” But what I would have you notice is the description which He gives of that poor woman’s infirmity: “Ought not this woman, whom *Satan hath bound*, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this

bond on the Sabbath-day?" All human disease was *that* and *is* that. It is a binding of Satan. Not that the diseased are more under the dominion of Satan than the whole—often much less—but all the maladies of men mark the presence of evil in the earth and the power of the Evil One. The Son of God came to rescue man not less his body than his soul out of the power of the Evil One. This is redemption. And every act of healing which He did, each putting forth of the virtue that was in Him to make the stricken whole, did testify of, prefigure, and in its measure express, that work of His, to be so soon finished and perfected, the redemption of the body. Of this kind was the work that He was doing when He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, *and I work.*"

Satan had bound that man for thirty and eight years. Jesus loosed him from this bond on the Sabbath-day—one case of His passing up and down among the prison-houses of humanity, and striking off a fetter here and there before the consummating act was done which opened all the prison-doors and set the whole race free. And this was *His* Sabbath work. But what then was His Sabbath-day? Was it the seventh day only of the Fourth Commandment? He kept that seventh day much

as the Jews kept it; for He was "under the law." But, setting the forms and punctillios of observance aside, did He not now say that to redeem the body of man from the power of Satan was His Sabbath work? And in this were the days different to Him? Was He occupied in this manner on the seventh day and in another on the third day or the fifth? "Thus and thus My Father worketh upon His Sabbath, and thus I work upon My Sabbath; yes, and upon *your* Sabbath, ye Jews! But is it only on your Sabbath-day? and not upon your six days also?" But it was all Sabbath to Him. All His work was Sabbath work; for it was all holy. And that work of His was the salvation of humanity. Man through that work of Christ is a holy thing dedicated to God, even as the Sabbath of the Jews was a holy thing dedicated to God. That was the type and shadow of the hallowing of all things which would be done by Christ. There *was* the consecrated day. There *is* now the consecrated world. The law of the Fourth Commandment separated the day *for* God. The work of Christ hath recovered man *to* God. As the day was God's ceremonially, so man is God's essentially and absolutely. And because the shadow must yield before the substance, because images of

things are lower than the very things themselves, we take that word of Christ to be truth not for Himself only but for man redeemed in Him: "the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day."

Is then the one day in seven, as a day of holy observance, obliterated from the earth? or is it a matter of indifference and unimportance whether it be observed as a specially holy day or not? Let me at once answer that I do not believe any such thing. But the subject is too large to be considered now: we must reserve it to our next and concluding notice of the whole question. Let this day's closing word be one of profound and loving thankfulness to Him who made the redemption of man the work of all His days, the six days as well as the seventh; who consecrated the whole of His time to that end; and did thereby make all time a consecrated thing; and who did not moreover cease from His work when the days of His earthly life were spent. For truly it was in death itself that He came to the very crisis and agony of Redemption. "My Father worketh, and I work." But that Sabbath work of His came only to its close as the High Passover Sabbath began to dawn towards the first day of the week. Then were sin and death both

conquered for man and man was redeemed to God. And now that the Redeemer is entered into His rest, hath He ceased from His work? After the same manner as the Father hath ceased from His work, but not more. The Father ceased from the work of Creation; but by the constant operation of His power and the ceaseless action of His grace He doth sustain and bless the things which He has made. That was and is His Sabbath work. The Son hath ceased from the work of Redemption. It is a completed thing. The Resurrection finished it. There is and there can be in it nothing more to be done. But the Sabbath work of the Son goes on. The Spirit of the Son goes forth and lifts up to His own life those whom He hath redeemed. And the Son is not alone in this—the Father is always with Him. “*The Father worketh, and I work.*” It is one work. The Son is the Saviour of the world; but the Father sent the Son. And the Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son: “When the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father.” And the Comforter is doing in the midst of men the Sabbath work which follows upon redemption. He is showing to them sin and righteousness and the Father’s boundless love. And in this way He is quickening and re-

generating and saving them. But let us earnestly ask for His constant help. On this battle-ground of our own strong sin, let us ask for the might of Him who is stronger than the strong. No power weaker than His can ever raise our sin-bound souls to God, or make us safe in that salvation, which has been since He rose and shall be till He comes again, the work of Christ on His Redemption Sabbath.

V.

THE SABBATH OF MAN.

V.

THE SABBATH OF MAN.

“The Sabbath was made for man.”—*St. Mark* ii. 27.

PERHAPS most thoughtful persons have sometimes said doubtfully after the Fourth Commandment that prayer of the Church: “Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.” Perhaps some are in the habit of saying it doubtfully. Perhaps it is not clear to their minds what is the offence for the commission of which they ask for pardon or what is the duty for the fulfilling of which they ask for grace. They know that they do not mean, “Have mercy upon us for not keeping holy the seventh day,” or “incline our hearts to keep holy the seventh day,” because no one now—the Jews only excepted—thinks it a duty to keep holy the seventh day. And if they are able to satisfy themselves with the argument that this is but a technical point, and that one day in seven is the principle of

the law, and so that our first day in the week takes naturally its high ground of preference over the seventh day of the Jews, then the question will fall upon the "no manner of work"—"thou shalt do no manner of work" upon this day; and they will find it difficult to decide in what measure or by what right this rigorous condition of the old law is to be modified and softened down.

It must be an offence to God to pray to Him without sincerity; and that we may pray with sincerity it is necessary that we should pray with intelligence. We must have some clear thought what it is that we are praying for. And now that the prayer which we are ever saying after the Fourth Commandment may not be to any of us a form of unmeaning words, but verily and truly a prayer, let us come once more to the subject which we have been considering and take our final notice of it.

In observing the example of Christ as regards the Sabbath we have noticed that He did Himself keep in its strictness the Jewish Sabbath; He observed the seventh day with all the rules that bound it. The Jews' Messiah was born and lived—a Jew. In His earliest days the parents of Jesus brought the child

into the Temple to do for Him after the custom of the law; and it was the law's chief feast that He was keeping when His last day came. "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" He could say to the most austere of those who held that every breach of the ceremonial law was sin. As to the Jewish Sabbath therefore, in such measure as it was Jewish only, the example of Christ does not bind us, any more than His keeping the Jewish Passover binds us. But His word touches the *Sabbath*; it passes over particulars and rests upon the great word itself. They accused Him many times of breaking the Sabbath; He refutes them by their own acts. Was watering the ox a breach of the Sabbath? He would not say so by any means. Then neither was healing a palsied man a breach of the Sabbath. He kept the Fourth Commandment as well as they. But His word rises higher. He asserts that work might be done on the Sabbath, that the Father was always working upon the Sabbath, and that *He* worked; and He sets the word, as it were, purposely against the letter of the old law, "Thou shalt do no manner of *work*." "My Father *worketh*, and I *work*;" and in this work we found that all the days were spent—the other six days and the seventh, the seventh day and

the other six. And because by this work of Christ all the days were hallowed to God, and through this work of Christ man himself was hallowed to God and all that belonged to man—his time with all the rest,—hallowed to God, therefore that the Son of man was Lord even of the Sabbath-day.

And then the question arose, Is the one day in seven as a day divinely ordered for holy observance passed away from us? Let us look now reverentially upon this. One thing is certain, that the old law of the Mosaic covenant is superseded in Christ, and not the ceremonial only but the moral law. St. Paul¹ is saying this continually: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." "But now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held." These two quotations will do as well as a great many. They declare to us the great fact of the New Testament, that the law is no longer the footing upon which man stands before God. That expression of the mind of God has yielded to another and a higher.

Thou shalt do this ; thou shalt not do that—so God spake to men of old. But God does not speak so to men now. His word was

formerly: "These are My commands; obey them." His word is now: "Thou art Mine, for I have redeemed thee." It is not now that service is claimed of a man, but that the man himself is claimed. For the Father's hand is laid upon our race in the person of the Son, who hath entered into our humanity, hath lifted it up from its fall, and presenting it now to the Father as a redeemed and consecrated thing, announces His right and proprietorship over it to be established absolutely and for ever. So man is to serve God because he is God's, and not because God has given him a law. Is then the ancient law of God, the law of the Ten Commandments, annulled? As a law it is not indeed annulled but superseded; a higher revelation has taken its place. But the obligation of the law can never be touched, because the law declares the right, and that is eternal even as God is eternal. The *law* of the Ten Commandments is older, far older, than the *date* of the Ten Commandments; it is the primeval witness of the fact that God made man in His own image; it is the verdict of man's conscience—that voice of God in man's soul against sin, old at least as sin itself. And so, because no man can be God's in truth who purposely transgresses that original law of

the human heart which the Ten Commandments afterwards expressed, that law is binding upon Christians, not because of its proclamation from the mount which burned with fire, but because of the response given to it by the spirit which God formed in man from everlasting to everlasting. But there is one of the Ten Commandments as to which this cannot be said. The Fourth Commandment stands on a different ground from all the others. It is a prescribed ordinance not an eternal principle. The conscience of man does not respond to it one way or the other. The word of Christ relating to it we have briefly considered already. But those who were Christ's witnesses and messengers afterwards, who taught the full truth which had lain so much in shadow before the death and the resurrection had thrown their light upon it, what did they say? The inspired Apostles and St. Paul especially, who wrote much more than all the other Apostles together (so far, at least, as the records remain to us) what did St. Paul say?

Let it be owned at once and frankly stated that St. Paul did not assert the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment to be binding upon Christians — that he asserted rather it was not binding. Being himself a Jew he walked

after the customs and kept the law. But he freely taught the Churches of the Gentiles that they were not to fetter themselves by any merely Jewish bonds, and of these the Sabbath was one. "Let no man judge you," he says to the Colossians, "in meat or in drink or in respect of an holy day or of the new moon or of the Sabbath days." That he spake here of the seventh day Sabbaths of the Jews—and that he classed them with new moon observances and meats and drinks, no fair interpretation can deny. The Church of Christ in Colosse—and if in Colosse then the Church of Christ in all lands—was to hold indifferently any judgments that men might pass as to keeping the Sabbath days. They were a Jewish institution, and with the other Jewish institutions they were gone and passed. Observe them or do not observe them. It is indifferent. "Let no man judge you."

But the question which comes next is this. In setting aside the Jewish Sabbath, did St. Paul assert the obligation of a Christian Sabbath? Did he transfer the sanctity of the seventh day to the first? or is there any trace in the earliest Church of such a transfer having taken place? We have no warrant to say this. There is mention of the disciples coming to-

gether to *break bread* on the first day of the week, the term which is always used for their highest act of worship ; and this is mentioned as a custom. And on that particular occasion of which the historian speaks, " Paul preached to them." And he himself fixes the first day of the week as a suitable day for gathering up and laying by the offerings of charity. But neither of these instances proves or denotes even remotely a first-day Sabbath instead of a seventh-day Sabbath on apostolic authority. In fact we do find St. Paul taking up this question of the observance of particular days, and settling it in a very summary way. " One man," he says, " esteemeth one day above another ; another esteemeth every day alike." And what judgment does he pass upon the persons who mingled up all their days—the seventh, the first and all the rest—in this promiscuous and indiscriminate way ? In truth he does not judge the case at all. He only says this, " Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

And now that we have endeavoured by this briefest survey to set forth the aspect of the Sabbath as it appears under the word and teaching of our Lord and His Apostles, does it seem that we are leaving on perilously in-

secure ground the Sunday of the Christian Church?

Let me now say that the true sacredness of our Christian Sundays rests upon a basis the solidity of which is in the very word of Christ, and in the very word—yes, and in the *silence*—of the Apostles. Let this be noted. Religion in Israel was sunken in apostolic days into a thing of forms. It passed no further. Religion was Judaism in its observances only—the letter and no spirit. Apostles had to struggle against this Judaism. They had their own selves to struggle out of it. The greatest and most energetic of them emerged quickly. He threw the bondage off with vehemence. If he lived as a Jew, it was that he might gain the Jews—for no other reason. Judaism as such was nothing to him. He could readily part with all its rites and all its ceremonies and could exhort others to do so likewise. The Sabbath was one of these and St. Paul therefore made very light of the Jewish Sabbath, and in his jealousy of the deadening power of forms he did not as far as we know separate any other day from the week as a special and particular day. It does not seem that he was instructed to do it and he did not do it of his own accord. He made it a charge against one of the Churches: “Ye observe days

and months and times and years." How is it then that the Christian Sunday is not hurt, but is rather supported as well by the word as by the silence of St. Paul?

What was it that St. Paul did say? He said "Man is Christ's and Christ is God's." That was St. Paul's burning word. "To this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living." "None of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself; whether we live or die we are the Lord's." From this lofty standpoint of the regenerate humanity, what became of days? "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it."

Yes! but take this view of life: Let this *be* life to you. Concentre and gather it up into this one fact—it is all the Lord's—and *you* can then well dispense with "days." Let time be to us what it was to St. Paul—a thing all holy, consecrated to God even as the sacrifice of the altar was consecrated to God—and the keeping of a Sabbath in each week is superfluous then. The week itself is a Sabbath and all the weeks together are a Sabbath. We have no need to perpetuate the sign when the very signified thing is come. The old Sabbath of the Jews—

so far as it was not Jewish only but human—was a shadow of the fact that time is God's; and Christ when He came established the fact. For Christ redeemed man and recovered man with all that belonged to man—his time supremely—recovered all to God. And His Apostles came to know the fact. It was the revelation of the Spirit to them, and their word and instruction stood upon it. And the chiefest among them said what it was thus briefly and thus grandly: "*Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*"

But how does it stand in truth? If this be the fact of Redemption, is it the acknowledged fact? Does Christendom remember it and live by it? Is God's lordship over us in Christ the very inspiration of our being? Do we take our rest that we may work for Him with more vigour, and our recreation that we may serve Him with more freedom and alacrity? Do we only value money as good may be done with it, and influence as holy ends may be attained by it, and power as so much weight in the scale on the side of right and truth and God? Any question about Sabbath-days would fall into merited oblivion if our life were governed thus. But in the face of the *real* fact as we see it to be and as we feel it, what shall we think

about a Sabbath-day and what shall we say? Now let us remember this: The Sabbath of the Jews passed with Christ. No Sabbath in its place is fixed by apostolical decree. But as the fervour of the first days went by, as the expected sign of the Son of Man in the heavens forbore to appear, as the world in the midst of and around all Christian centres took its old course, neither transformed nor deeply leavened by the things which had just taken place in Jerusalem—then the necessity of a specially holy day in the seven came to show itself very clearly. And the observance in the Church of the first day, by gathering for prayer and Holy Communion and the collection of alms, can certainly be traced back to the year after Christ 140. And the mention of the sacred day occurs constantly after that until the time of the first Christian Emperor, who issued his famous edict forbidding the transaction of business in towns upon the day of the Sun—our Sunday, the first day of the week. Yes the *first day*. That is the hallowed day to Christians. The Lord rose upon the first day and showed Himself to the gathered Apostles. And on the next first day again and not before, He showed Himself to the gathered Apostles. The day was spoken of from the very first as “the *Lord’s day*.” It

occurs once in the New Testament. "I was in the Spirit," St. John writes in the Revelation, "on the Lord's day." The term is a marked one. We often read of the "day of the Lord," by which the day of the Lord's return is always meant. But St. John's expression is different. It implies essential property. It was an attribute of the day, of or belonging to the Lord. The word is used once besides, applied to the Holy Supper: "This is not to eat the *Lord's* Supper." The consecration then of this day in the Church grew out of the religious needs of man—yes, of redeemed man. If Redemption had been in the thoughts of all men, as St. Paul would have had it to be and as it was in his thoughts, there would have been no need of one separated day, upon which to recal and bring up the fact, throwing as it were its recollected blessing and setting its measureless claims before all the days of the week. But because this world *is* so strong with us, because sin *has* such might, because the things of faith pass so quickly into unrealities, and because *our* holy day in the seven has from the very first kept before Christians God their Redeemer, even as *their* holy seventh day kept before Jews God their Creator—therefore we do think that our Lord sanctioned if He did not prescribe

the ordinance when He said, "The Sabbath was made *for man*"—not for Israel but for man.

And now then here we take our leave of the whole subject adding this one further word: "Remember to keep holy your Sabbath-day." Is it said to us: You have laid it on human foundations? There is a truth in the answer which we do not attempt to deny. Human it is as to present constitution, Divine as to its principle; human as to the form it now wears, Divine as to its origin. And how shall we understand and limit that word "human"? The same human authority which settled the Canon of the Holy Scriptures appointed the Christian Sunday. As the Sabbath sun went down, Jews of old time passed round bread and wine as a departing honour to the holy day. Christians who had been Jews kept this custom up; but instead of a farewell reverence to the Jewish Sabbath, it was to them the Supper of the Lord. And the evening of the seventh day (as by all Jewish reckoning) was the beginning of the *first* day. But the time of the Supper because of persecution and other causes deepened into the night, and so passed on till it came to the dawn of the first day's morning. And from that time when

Apostles lived on till we know not when, every first day's morning the Church of the Redeemer has held communion with the Lord in this sacrament of His love. And the day was called holy when the sons of those lived to whom Apostles had talked about the Ascension, and the Church has called it holy ever since; and of *that* kind is the human authority on which it stands. We are called to liberty and the Sunday must take its place with other ordinances on the Christian domain of liberty. Man may not judge us about it. It is not for one to cast against another the charge of Sabbath-breaking. That is a Jewish phrase and we are called to liberty. But is this the use of our liberty of which God will approve—a steeping of the soul with this world's secularities all the week and covering with them the Sunday also, except in so far as one or perhaps two Church services shall come across them? Is that an appropriate adaptation of the truth which St. Paul proclaimed, that all days are alike because all days are redeemed to God? I think that the earnest and the honest Christian, looking at the whole question however broadly, will take a different view of it from that. I think that the Sunday of the Christian Church will be to him—not indeed

what the Sabbath was to the Jews—but so truly the word of his God to him, that he will leave it without doubting in the place which the old commandment filled upon the sacred table, and join with all fervour and heartiness in the prayer of the Church: “ Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.”

VI.

MOSES DEVELOPED BY CHRIST

VI.

MOSES DEVELOPED BY CHRIST.

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time.
. . . But I say unto you.”—*St. Matt.* v. 21, 22.

IT is not of any particular thing which was said of old time that we would now speak. Nor is it of any particular thing which in distinction from that of old time *Jesus* said, that we would now speak. It is rather upon the fact that there *is* a distinction between that older and that later word, between the old-time word and the Christ word—a distinction so marked and a difference so decisive, that He should set one against the other—not indeed, in contrary—but as it might seem in contrasted position. *It* says that; but *I* say this.

And it is no question of mere curiosity which will open before us as we look into this. It is a topic bound up with the form and character of the message of God to this world. We would offer one or two suggestions upon it

(for that is all which will be possible) trusting always for guidance and grace from the Divine Spirit of Truth.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time.” The reading of the Revised Version is preferable here: “*To* them of old time.” There on the one part are they to whom the law was given and expounded; here on the other part are ye who are listening to this Sermon on the Mount. And we observe at once that it is the *law* itself which the word of Jesus is touching—the law which God gave to Israel through Moses. A great deal of forced exposition has endeavoured to evade this manifest fact. Did He not say: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled?” And how then should it be that following straight upon that word there should come a tone of expression and a line of speech in seeming disparagement of the law which had been thus exalted? The law hath said; but *I* say. On five different occasions besides that of the text this expression is repeated by Christ: “Ye have heard that it hath been said;” and that which

follows upon it in every case (if not one of the Ten Commandments) is found in literal phrase or at least in precise correspondence of meaning, within the code which those of old time by Divine command gave to the people. We carefully observe this in order that the true force of the contrast which this word of Christ in our text presents may stand upon its own ground. It hath been said—that is, the law of God hath said. But I say.

And now we ask, how should there be—let us not say a contradiction—for there was not that—but a distinction, for certainly there was that, between these authorities? Is not their source one? “Thus saith the Lord”—every statute of the law rests upon that sole sanction. “Whatsoever I speak, as the Father said unto Me, so I speak.” That is the base upon which Jesus founds *His* words. And how should there seem to exist a line of separation between these two? Why are they not mingled? Issuing both from the same fountain, why do their streams run apart? It is one voice. Shall the utterances jar? But we lay down here a principle of interpretation.

In the Gospel of St. Mark we find this verse, “With many such parables spake He the word unto them, *as they were able to bear it.*” St.

Paul says to the Corinthians, "I have fed you with milk and not with meat; for hitherto ye were *not able to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able." Jesus says to the disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye *cannot bear them now*." There lies in these verses the secret of the difference between the Word of God by Moses and the Word of God by Christ. The law that was given, Divine however it be, must of necessity accommodate itself in a measure to the condition with which it had to do, and in doing this did in fact announce its Divinity. To a people hedged in by idolatries on either side—the gods of your fathers beyond the flood on the one part, the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell on the other part—a people touched and tainted (it could not but be) by association and contact with them whose very religion was lust and blood and every supreme abomination: upon the ear of such a people what chance of entrance could there be for the lofty morals of the Sermon on the Mount? Hearing ye may hear, but ye cannot understand. A sound but no sense. Spoken words but without meaning. The soil was unprepared. The commands, "Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal"—these commands stood upon

a ground much higher than the conscience and the customs of surrounding nations. But if to this it had been added: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you;" "Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also;" "If thy right eye offend thee pluck it out," the heart of the people would have turned at once to stone. Such language would have been preposterously beyond their apprehension. It would be foolishness to them—a language foreign and unknown, and He who gave the law would not then have vindicated His great name. He would have encumbered it with intolerable weights, past the condition of the age to bear, and no response would have arisen from the soul of the people. They would not have discerned the voice of God. So the Divine wisdom gave the law and left it in its literal grandeur—its hidden spirit undeveloped—certain maxims indeed accepted even sanctioned which ran not *across* the letter of the law—but in apparent opposition to its hidden spirit when that should be revealed; as for instance: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;" "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." The ground upon which we now say that these maxims of an imperfect morality were announced and proclaimed to

them of old time is affirmed by the Lord Himself, when Pharisees once tried to confound His teaching on the subject of divorce. "Why did Moses command to give a writing of divorcement and to put her away? Moses, because of the hardness of your heart wrote you this precept?" But who was Moses? Moses had no authority of his own. He spake as he was commanded. So the fact is asserted here by Christ Himself and assumed through all the earlier part of the Sermon on the Mount—that there did run through the old times a principle of adjustment and adaptation between the law offered to men and their capacity to receive it. "Because of the hardness of your hearts!" It was not of the hardness of the Pharisees' heart of which He spake then. Moses and those Pharisees were centuries upon centuries apart in time. It was the untrained unspiritual un-instructed Jewish heart of the time of the giving of the law of which Jesus spake. There was to that a Divine concession, and a proof therein of Divine wisdom quite as much as of clemency. And if it were possible for us—which now it is not—to carry this rudimentary principle up to the far back times of Israel's younger life, and watch the operation of it in those transactions and histories which the later

books of Moses and the books of Joshua and the Judges record, how many a dark story would be relieved of the bewilderment and of the distress too, perhaps, which now it wears! Exterminating wars divinely suffered and commanded. Innocent persons sharing by a Divine ordinance in the punishment of the guilty. We hastily pass such things over as painful to contemplate and impossible to explain. And they whose bias lies that way will use them as weapons of offence against all the authority of that old revelation. It needs but a little more robustness of the plain common sense of which objectors in this line claim the monopoly—to see that these difficulties have chiefly arisen out of inaptitude on our part to discern the fitness and proportion between the moral standard of the times and God's Word and law in the face of that moral standard—inaptitude on our part to take in the fact that there *is* proportion in these things and that there *is* progression, and that the best-instructed conscience of men in the days of Moses and Joshua suffered and demanded—not the same treatment as the better taught conscience of them who listened to the word of Jesus—still less of them who are living nineteen hundred years after His word was spoken.

And now here we ascend at once to that

word of His: "It hath been said to them of old time, *But I say unto you.*" And immediately we find that there is no contradiction here. The later word does not run across the older word: Christ is not here effacing Moses. Rather He is drawing Moses forth, and presenting the word that came by Moses under that development which they that lived in the days of Moses could not have borne to look upon.

Consider for one moment the instance connected with our text. "It hath been said, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." This verse may need a single word of explanation. The Jews had three Courts of Judgment. The first which was presided over by three men, had jurisdiction chiefly in money cases. The second, consisting of a Court (some authorities say of seven and others of twenty-three judges) decided capital cases; and the third was the famous Sanhedrin of which we read often in the Acts of the Apostles consisting of seventy-

two judges, before whom all the most important questions were brought as to peace and war and other national matters; also the more heinous offences, such as atheism or blasphemy. There is manifest allusion to these three Courts in the expressions of Jesus in this verse—the judgment, the council, and hell fire. This last expression refers apparently to a defiled and polluted place named Gehenna outside the walls of Jerusalem, in which of old time the worst rites of idolatry had been performed, and into which afterwards there were cast the bodies of them whose offence had been such that after being capitally condemned by decree of the Supreme Council, burial was denied to them; and for the consuming all that was thrown into this place of horrors a fire was kept continually burning. They who heard the Saviour speak would understand the allusions better than we are able to do.

But drawing off His word from all merely local or circumstantial associations, we do find it to say that sustained and unsubdued anger, venting itself in expressions growingly harsh and bitter, has that offence in the Great Father's sight which the letter of His ancient law, "Thou shalt do no murder," forbade and condemned. And so if we take up point after

point which the word of the Saviour touches in this Sermon on the Mount we shall find one and the same thing: that He is developing and bringing forth into full expansion that perfect righteousness of the old law which was always there in seed and in germ, but must needs await a less degraded moral level among men before its manifestations could be borne.

It is but the hint of a mighty topic which we have been able to offer; but for the present we leave the subject here, saying only one further word.

The ancient law—short though it fell of the perfect standard—found by comparison few hearing ears: “Whether ye will hear or whether ye will forbear,” the Lawgiver was saying continually in tones of sorrow. And they that forebore were many more than they that heard. Christ hath declared the *perfect* standard. Prophets had prepared His way. The tone was raised in Israel. It was not as it had been in the of days Moses. A response *was* possible to the *perfect* exposition of the old law of God. There were hearts in Israel that did respond. It is not for us to say or think how few they were—how many found those sayings hard and turned away offended. The centuries are gone by. The age that we live in has its customs

and its maxims. Has the perfect exposition of the law of God leavened them thoroughly? In the course down those centuries, is the "I say unto you" of the Lord Christ passed at length into the customs and maxims of this age, so that it possesses them, permeates and pervades them? It is not in scorn but in grief that we put it thus. No one may reproach another that the maxims of the age and the "I say unto you" of Jesus are so astoundingly apart. Each one has his own responsibility for the tone of the age and its maxims. But this is certain, that to follow the age as though it were in harmony with the "I say unto you" of Christ will be simply ruinous to all true spiritual life. Let our spirit reach up towards Him through the action of His Spirit. By the grace of that same Spirit let the Word which He gave for the government of the lives of men be searched and sought out. The revelation will be appalling. The distances that may never be reached! The heights that may never be scaled! But He that spake before in the tones of that compassionate voice is speaking still: "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." He asketh no more of thee than thou art able to give. He knoweth well, none can know so well, that His Word is

beyond thee. But is thy foot that way set, and thine eye that way bent, stedfastly, and yet more stedfastly? Then, His hand sustains thee; His love is over thee; fear thou never!

VII.

“LET THE DEAD BURY THEIR DEAD.”

VII.

“ Let the dead bury their dead.”—*St. Luke ix. 60.*

THIS is a difficult saying : it sounds like a proverb, and probably was one of the proverbs of those days. But we do not attempt to screen the difficulty of it under that supposition. Whether a proverb or not, it was adopted by Christ, and used by Him for a purpose of His own. He was on His journey to Jerusalem ; and His face was steadfastly set, St. Luke tells us, to go to Jerusalem. The resolution in His mind was fixed, and the purpose intent ; for this was the last journey ; He would traverse the roads between Galilee and Jerusalem never again in the steps of His mortality. The time was come that He should be received up. And there fell back, as it were, upon the path which He trod the shadows of those awful events into the midst of which He should be brought when that journey was done. While this journey was on its course (the par-

particular part of it is not mentioned) there came up to Him a man, and said: "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." St. Matthew, who also relates this story (but out of its order in the history), tells us that this man was a scribe. This adds to the interest of it: that a teacher among the people—as the scribes were—should thus come forth, and spontaneously—and we do not doubt, sincerely—express his devotion to the person of the Lord. But it seems, from the answer of Christ, that this ready disciple did not sufficiently know to what he was committing himself. We shall remember who it was that afterwards said, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee into prison, and to death," and what happened after that. This zealous scribe needed a word of caution; and it was brought to him in a saying of much pathos and beauty: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." The disciple would not be likely to be better off than his Master. Did this scribe know what might be in store for him in following Christ? We are not told how it ended.

But now Jesus turns and speaks to another. The change is to be noticed. One speaks to Him and says, "Lord, I will follow Thee."

He speaks to another and says, “Follow Me.” There is a forwardness in the one which seems to need some check. But there is a backwardness in the other which calls for and receives rebuke. For this second to whom Jesus speaks is already one of His disciples. St. Matthew says this expressly—and it is a very old tradition of the Church, as far back as Clement of Alexandria early in the third century—that this was Philip of Bethsaida. Whether that were so or not, we shall find the force and vigour of this proverb of our text (if indeed it were a proverb, and not the Lord’s own word)—we shall find the force of it resting upon the fact that this was already a disciple to whom Jesus now said, “Follow Me.” This was one who *had* been following. Why did Jesus say to him again, “Follow me”? The narrative is very concise. We put it together with these evident links.

At a place where they were resting in Samaria tidings were come to one of the Lord’s immediate followers which made him wish to leave that company on a business of his own. Signs of this wish, perhaps the preparations to depart were witnessed by Christ, and He said to him, “Follow Me.” The disciple had heard this word certainly

once before—at the time of his first call. *Now* it falls on his ears again, recalling the word as when first spoken; reminding the disciple shortly and perhaps sharply of what he was and to what he was pledged. But the disciple now mentions the reason for which he would then depart; a strong one it seemed and a sufficient one: “Lord suffer me first to go and bury my father.” The news of his father’s death was come to him in that Samaritan village, and he would go home at once. If this were Philip, then it was to Bethsaida that he wished to go. In any case the place was somewhere in Galilee. All the disciples had their home in Galilee. But they were gone from Galilee. The last solemn journey was begun. Interests which concerned themselves must not any longer engross those who have chosen the discipleship of Christ. And His word was short, sad, and it must be added, stern: “Let the dead bury their dead.” But when we say it was stern, let that word be understood. It was not harsh; it was not unsympathetic. No word ever fell from His lips that was unrespectful of the relationships of life or disparaging to what we may call its seemly customs. He who severely rebuked scribes and Pharisees because of a tradition

of theirs which made void the command of God: “Honour thy father and thy mother;” and He who shielded Mary from the wrath of His own disciples because, with His death and burial in view, she had poured upon His head that boxful of most precious ointment, He could certainly say no word that should make the son think lightly of duties to his father, or the living of their offices to the dead. But words like these He could say and did say: “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” And words like these too He could and did say: “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.’, And how was it now? The face of the Lord was steadfastly set to go to Jerusalem. Issues of awful moment hung upon that journey; and disciples were to have their part and office in carrying out the purposes of this journey. And here was one—a qualified disciple for that office—who at this urgent moment wished, for a time at least, to leave the side of Christ and go back to Galilee. He was a qualified disciple; for Jesus says to this man at the end of that brief colloquy, “Go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” He would certainly

not have said this to a person who came at haphazard like that scribe, with words on his lips of honest intention no doubt, but of rash and unconsidered haste, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." This man was not like that. If he were not Philip of Bethsaida he was one of the Twelve, or at all events one of the seventy, who immediately after this were sent two and two before the face of the Lord, and wheresoever they came were to say, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." This disciple wished to go, and what for? It is said "to bury his father." Strictly the act of burial can hardly have been meant. Others must have laid that disciple's father in his tomb. The burial followed so quickly upon the death that even the short distance between Samaria and Galilee could not be crossed in sufficient time. It was for some attending ceremonies of burial that the disciple would now leave the Master and go to his own home; such as those perhaps which, within a few weeks of that time Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus performed on the body of Jesus. Observances and ministries most fit and laudable. He would be right that should observe them; he would seriously err that should neglect them, unless some higher

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engagement came in the way, and then the lower must yield. When the lesser duty clashes with the greater duty, then it ceases to be a duty. The greater has absorbed the less. There may be those who will do that lesser thing, to whose place and position it belongs. Whether or not, *he* must pass on from it before whose kindled soul a stronger claim presents itself and demands his service and help. "Let the dead bury their dead."

And who then are those dead that are to bury their dead? The hospital physician passes from ward to ward and from one sick bed to the other, bearing in the art of his healing science the blessed ministry of life. But he does not stay beside the dead. Offices are needed there which must be discharged by some but not by him. His work is higher.

Christ knew the crisis and the occasion. There was work here to be done which none but disciples could do. The burying ceremonial of this disciple's father—was that a work which only a disciple could do? If not it must yield. Let someone else do it. Let no vacant place be made in the two-and-two of the Seventy, because one of that number desires to go and bury his father. "Go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

But Jesus does not speak to the preachers only. This word of His—(or this adopted proverb whichever it may have been)—“Let the dead bury their dead”—is spoken to every disciple of Christ all down the world’s ages: “Suffer me *first* to go and bury my father.” This falls from a disciple’s lips. But what does *He* say? “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.” There are pleasures—not in themselves disallowed or unbecoming but which have to be abridged or abandoned; there are pursuits—in themselves honest and good which have to be arrested or deferred; there are offices of kindness even and of love which must wait or be left in other care, because of higher and more commanding claims belonging to the kingdom of God.

Those messengers of Christ who are telling in heathen lands the tidings of God’s love—we think it likely there are few of them over whose soul a feeling did not ever pass, when the thought arose of leaving home and country—a feeling answering to that which moved the halting disciple to say: “Suffer me first to go and bury my father.” But the great word of the Lord has prevailed with them as we doubt not it prevailed with him, “Follow Me.” “Let the dead bury their dead.”

And who then we ask again are these dead that bury their dead? Those missionaries, if they had listened to the voice within them which said, “Suffer me first to do this or to do the other”—if they had faltered and given way when the greater voice said within them, “Go thou and preach the kingdom of God,” then whatever their work now may be, it would have answered to that of the dead burying their dead. The greater would have succumbed to the less.

We are not missionaries, and perhaps cannot be (as the word is generally understood) missionaries. We have heard no voice saying in our ear, “Go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” Does this figure of speech then about the dead burying their dead bear to us no message? Let us ask another question. Does that first word of Christ to this hesitating disciple—not a figure of speech but a plain word—“Follow Me,” bear to us no message? If the first word applies to us then does the second also; for they are linked inseparably together. If thou wouldst follow Me, then for thee the dead must bury their dead. The lesser things must not be intruded into the place of the greater things. There is—not to the preachers only but to all the disciples—the

pre-eminent service of the kingdom of God. That word already quoted must be before our mind continually: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." Let us not think of this as one of the sayings belonging to those times, the force of which has to be softened down and fitted in with things as they are now. Every word of Christ is imperishable. We have been alluding to those who in a very literal sense have on Christ's behalf forsaken all that they had. If it be so that in that large imperious form the claim does not fall upon us, yet I think we ought to consider whether some poor and stinted offerings of time of effort or of money for helping on the extension of the kingdom of God—offerings which carry with them no sacrifice and no self-denial—whether these are signs of the true Christ-following, as He spake of it and showed it in those everlasting words of His. His language is very strong, never stronger than in this proverb of the text. There is here in wondrous vigour a dwarfing of the earthly things before the grandeur of the things of the kingdom. And they who will not dwarf them thus, but will put in the foremost place those earthly things—who are these? and what

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are these? They are the dead among the dead.

Is it to us a very discouraging word? In our walk through this busy life, whether buoyant and hopeful in youth, healthy and vigorous in mature age, or failing even and feeble in the decline of years, are there many among us who are holding always in the background as of lighter esteem and care the earthly things, and setting in their foremost place the things of the Kingdom? Are there many among us who hear the world's clamour and fulfil its services and observe with all industry its many claims, but whose way in life is yet a walking always on the brink of the eternal shore, the sound of those waters causing all sound besides to fall upon our ears in faint and distant murmurs? And if it be not so with us, then are we the dead whom this word of Christ in a manner contemptuously leaves to bury their dead? the earthly-minded to do the earthly work? However this may be there is a blessed truth to remember—that the dead are not left by Him in their death to do dead works. He is for ever saying “follow Me,” not once or twice but ever. “Follow Me” had been said before to that disciple who would leave Him then; and that he might not leave

Him then it was said again, "Follow Me." "Follow Me" had been said to Peter by the Jordan in the days of the baptism. As to this following some grievous things happened in Peter's history; but they were not mentioned. One of the Lord's very last words on earth is the saying again to this dear disciple, "Follow thou Me." Every day and every hour, not in Church services only but in all the things of life, He is saying the word to us. If we hear it and with all our heart and soul try to follow Him and do His word, then there will be no leaving us in our death to do the dead works; for He is the power and the energy of life to man. The hour has been and is and shall never pass away when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. He says to us Himself this glorious word: "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Through believing in Him the sinner comes back to the Father; and many a sinner, let us not doubt, who has never believed in Him (for how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?)—many a sinner humbled in heart and obedient in will comes through Him back to the Father, reconciled and restored; and that is the passing from death unto life.

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So then passing from death unto life is for all who will have it. This word of Christ does not leave the dead in their death. It tells the disciple only that the Master's work and claims must be foremost in the disciple's mind. There are those that manage affairs of State, there are those that conduct the transactions of commerce, there are those that instruct the young, and those that labour in the fields, and those that do the work of houses, and those that minister to the wants of the living, and those that tend the sick, and those that bury the dead. Let them bow their soul before the Lord of their redemption. By the grace of His Spirit let the love of Him be supreme in their heart and the claims of His service first in their thought and care. Then He hath laid His hand upon them ; He hath raised them up from their death ; the quickening of His own immortality is theirs. Their work may be secular, their office may be insignificant, and their charge poor ; but this quickening with His own immortality is theirs not less than it is his to whom He says, “ Go thou and preach the kingdom of God.”

VIII.
JUDAS.

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“Friend, wherefore art thou come?”—*St. Matt. xxvi. 50.*

WE shall all remember that this was said to Judas. The question was not asked for information's sake. He knew why Judas came. The tone in which a thing is said determines its character. We did not hear the Lord speak, but we may be very sure that this was not spoken in the tones of inquiry as by one seeking knowledge. It was a voice like that beforetime in the cave of Horeb, “What doest thou here?”—soul-searching and soul-piercing as that voice was. St. Luke puts the form of the question thus: “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?” We judge that he is interpreting the question by its tone. But as to the exact words we follow St. Matthew. He was present, St. Luke was not. There were few words spoken at that crisis. By far the most marked among those few was

the word of Jesus to the traitor. They that stood round about would hear it with a sharp distinctness. St. Matthew as one of the twelve, was very near the person of the Lord when Judas kissed Him. No doubt he has given us the very word that was spoken.

A brand is on the name of Judas. But it was a high and glorious name in Israel. This was the name of the ruling tribe. Judah was he whom his brethren should praise. Judah was itself "the praise of God," and out of Judah should Shiloh come. The traitor bore the name of David's tribe, and of *His* tribe who is the root and the offspring of David. It may be with an allusion to this fact that St. Luke, when he comes to the history of the base act itself, describes the traitor as "he that was *called* Judas." It seems as if he would thus protest against *that* man bearing that name. The second name, Iscariot, is taken probably from the town to which he belonged. There was a town in Judah which would give to one who was called after it such a name as that of Iscariot. If the false Apostle came from this place, he was the only one of the twelve who was not a Galilean. But we know nothing certainly about Judas till we find him one of the sacred number. Three evangelists give the

names of the twelve. Judas always comes last on the list. And that which so grievously marked him is always mentioned, "which also was the traitor." St. Luke gives the list a second time in the first chapter of the Acts. But the thing was then done. The blank was made. There were then only eleven. "Judas was gone" (we use the sad word of St. Peter) "to his own place."

But the question does arise as we think of Judas at the earliest days when his name is first mentioned—the question does arise (and I do not know how to answer it) "Why was Judas chosen at all to be one of the twelve Apostles?" We must know more about God and more also about man, before we are in a condition to solve or even search into those strange mysteries which the varying lots of men on earth present. "Good were it," our Lord once said of Judas—"good were it for him if he had never been born!" Perhaps it may have crossed our thoughts that it would have been at least better for him if he had not been chosen as the twelfth Apostle. Reading his history as we do, we find his peril and his ruin in that holy name and that holy relationship. But in our ignorance we may well judge about all this rashly. It is to be observed that Judas

like all the rest, was a disciple before he was an Apostle. "When it was day He called unto Him His disciples, and of them He chose twelve." Of his own free will Judas came to Christ at first and followed Him. His motive can never have been pure or high. But as to this there is not perhaps much to be said for any of the Apostles. The kingdom to Israel, thrones and dominions, temporal state and earthly glory—from first to last, from their calling to the Ascension, these were their thoughts. But ambition is one thing, sordid avarice is another. All the eleven had the first; only the twelfth had both.

Coming then with this mind to Jesus and in this mind following Jesus, why was he chosen to be an Apostle? We touch that mystery and leave it. It only grows as we look into it. All was definitely known beforehand. "Jesus knew from the beginning," it is said, "who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him." When the twelve had been with Him perhaps about a year He says, "Have not I chosen you twelve? and one of you is a devil!" Then why was he chosen? We can only say this: There is susceptibility to good in all hearts. There was in the heart of Judas. Where that might best be touched,

there we doubt not Judas was placed. He lived in close companionship with Jesus—present when He addressed the multitudes, privileged to be near when He spake only to the twelve, sitting at the table with Him, walking with Him by the way, and meeting thus continually checks to the master-passion of his own soul. How many things as to the peril of the love of riches were said in the hearing of Judas! The thorns which choked the seed; the camel before the needle's eye; the blocking of the passage into the kingdom of God, which nothing less than His Almightyness could take away. Is it so that the poison was infecting this man's soul with a deeper and deeper pollution every day? Still he held his forfeited place by the side of Jesus. Still the remedy of inexhaustible virtue was there within the touch of his finger. "Will ye also go away?" Jesus asked of the twelve when He said the words which I have just now quoted. And why we ask in sorrow, did not Judas then go away and take his place among the many disciples who went back and walked no more with Him? Far better to have taken honest and open offence as he must have done in his heart at the high spiritual words which were spoken then, and spent or wasted his days in

any distant country, open there to some compunctious thought and some recalling memory—far better than to stay as he did by the side of Christ, watching with greedy but ever disconcerted hopes for the prize which was still withheld, and the kingdom which did not come.

So *we* think. But yet we observe that Jesus did not warn away from Him the false Apostle. There was still the freedom of will. There was still the pure and altogether lovely life which Christ was living full in the view of Judas. There was still the blessed largeness of that truth, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” And so Judas stayed! Given at the first by the Father to the Son (“those whom Thou *gavest* Me”—Judas was one of that number)—given at the first by the Father to the Son, his place was not disturbed by Jesus. And he did not himself disturb it. He stayed. It is not for us to say that he had better not have stayed. We cannot look into the issues of things. All that we have to do is to observe and learn. And that which we observe is this—the fatal fruit of one master-passion kept in the heart and held. We see it working and we see the end of it—the end at least so far as this mortal vision

goes. When Judas first came to Jesus he might certainly have been described as an avaricious man. The sign of that evil propensity is upon him from the very first. But no more than that. He was then no traitor. There was no such dark purpose as that in his mind when he joined that company. We cannot doubt that at first he loved Jesus. Who should live so near as Judas lived to that pure unselfish nobleness, and not love it or Him in whom it was? But yet he was there for his own ends. He was there for gain to himself. And soon there came the jarring disharmony. The passion at his heart and all surrounding things were in terrible discord. And then, as the discovery grew upon him that he had made a mistake, that his object in taking that discipleship and joining that Apostolic brotherhood was never to be accomplished; that the kingdom promised was a thing of shadowy form, not of this world; that no solid material good was to be grasped by following this Christ—then the soul of the man began to darken. Admiration of the Lord's holiness and gentleness and love lost the softening power it may once have had. This perpetual speech and converse about spiritual things drove back the now dwindling hope into impatience and irri-

tating disappointment. The purloining of the treasurer's bag in that poor company yielded but very slender profits. The waste as he called it of the precious ointment put out of reach the sharing or the embezzling any portions of the three hundred pence, which he judged that ointment worth. And that was the end. The exasperating limit was now reached. The false Apostle could bear it no longer. Judas went to the chief priests. The soul of this unhappy man was possessed of Satan. We read it with awe and dread in St. Luke's Gospel as a simple fact in the history—the next in a course of events: “Then *entered Satan into Judas Iscariot*, being of the number of the twelve.” *That* was a very serious word: “One of you is a devil.” *This* is a much more serious word: “Satan entered into him.” That was the possession threatened. This is the possession taken. That was the presence of the Evil Spirit with the man. This is the whole being of the man Satanized. We cannot wonder at the thing which came next: “What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you.”

The melancholy story speaks to us and says this word: “Let not sin reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts

thereof." A reigning sin—a sin not mortified—apparently not encountered or questioned, and as far as we know *one* sin, was the ruin of Judas. His is no isolated case. We are not to think of him as a monster of iniquity beyond example and therefore beyond fear or caution. He comes before us just as a money-loving man, but with the thoughts and interests and curiosities and it is likely the average amiable tendencies of other men; only that master passion and the surroundings brought about the awful development. These were—not singular only—but without example; and the evil which had entangled itself with them was therefore without example as to the *result*. But not as to its own poisonous action. Let the sin of the heart of Judas be in our heart also (and it is no strange sin to these days), let free course be given to it without the restraint of a counteracting principle, and we shall only not do the act of Judas because the situation of Judas can never be our situation. But we are to remember this inevitable fact: that an evil passion—not avarice only but any other which may find a home in our fallen soul—pride or lasciviousness or world-love or such like—that any such passion, not steadfastly encountered but indulged—not fought against but

fostered, is an allying of our spirit with the spirit of evil; it is a dragging our nature downwards and ever downwards toward that fatal and despairing issue, "Satan entered into him." There only comes after this, "That thou doest do quickly." That is a dreadful word. It seems to say: All is over. The evil has triumphed. Delay the act no further. The thing is done already.

If any wrong or harmful passion has the mastery in our spirit—if no resistance, or only the very feeblest has contended with it yet—what shall we do with regard to it? Let us do as Judas might have done with regard to the love of money which was burning his soul's true nourishment out, as he might have done at any moment of the years which he spent near Jesus. Let us bring it to the presence of the Lord—to the Lord who loveth us with an unsurpassable love, notwithstanding the presence of that evil thing—to the Lord who loved Judas from the beginning to the end—from the Apostolic choice to the betraying kiss. For the Father gave Judas with the rest to Jesus. And the Father would have none to perish that had ever been born. And the Father would fain have turned upon that dark soul (may we not reverently say it?) all the

strength of the goodness and patience and long-suffering which were in His dear Son.

And the strength of this goodness—did we say just now or seem to say that it was worn out altogether when the word was spoken of the Passover chamber: “That thou doest, do quickly.” I think there is trace of it still in this word of the garden: “Friend,”—it means companion, comrade, co-worker; it is a loving word—“wherefore art thou come?” *Had* Satan entered into this man? But who *is* Satan? What is the strong man armed when there is a stronger than he? Jesus was betrayed. But if the traitor had turned upon himself as he heard the tones of that voice and caught the glance of that eye, and at this supreme moment had fallen at the feet of Jesus and poured out from his soul the publican’s prayer, I think we may very surely say that the broken-off branch would have been grafted into the vine again, the new life would have sprung up from the ashes of that profound repentance, and Matthias would not have taken the twelfth Apostle’s place. But it was not so and we can say no more.

Let any master passion which assails and endangers our true life by keeping us aloof from Christ in heart though in our steps we

seem to follow Him, let this unhallowed and unhallowing thing be bared before His holy Presence; and let the genuine longing of our soul go forth to Him for the overcoming of it; and then His strength is ours. Then the passion may not be *dead* within us. But it is not *deadly*. The mastery is broken. It is yielding to the force of the Eternal Spirit working with our spirit. It does not and it never shall, sever us from Christ.

IX.
HUMILITY.

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HUMILITY.

“He that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”—*St. Matt. xxiii. 13.*

WE are not to receive this as a promise. It is simply the statement of a fact. It is the announcement of one of the fundamental laws of life. We might say indeed—the lines of truth will not be transgressed by us if we say—that all the promises of God to man find their source and strength in some fundamental law of life. They are not arbitrary proclamations of good things coming on this and that condition of good things done. They declare rather the inevitable connection between those two. They assert the everlasting law which binds those two together. It is law—it is not ever imperious will, though on the side always of justice truth and mercy, which rules this universe. The will of God is the law of God; He governs His will by His law. To suppose

it otherwise—to rest the anticipation of blessings to come, not upon God's fixed law, but upon His arbitrary will—gracious as that is and loving—this would quickly lead to disorder and misapprehension in the motives of human conduct.

As a witness of this, consider the text: "He that shall humble himself shall be exalted." If we think of this simply as a promise independent of any law-relation between those two estates, then that final exaltation comes before our thought as the desired end. It is God's promise to us dependent on our humility, and in point of fact it would bring us into a state of mind which makes humility impossible. He that looks forward to exaltation as the great boon of his hope and as the very fruit of his humility, has not a trace or vestige of humility belonging to him. If it were ever there, the hope of being lifted up because of it will have driven it altogether away. For what is humility? It will be the chief purpose of this sermon—wherein may the Divine Spirit guide our thought—to answer that question.

"What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" Jesus once asked the disciples. We are told that they held their peace; for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest.

But He took His own way of answering the thought that was in their mind. He called a little child unto Him and set him in the midst of them. This was not an infant—for it was able to walk—but a little child of very tender age, of that age which is more engaging and loveable than the friction and trample of this world make it possible for any other age to be. He called it is said this little child, and someone it is likely led the child by the hand and placed it by the Saviour's side. And there the child stood wondering, but without fear. And He took this little child in His arms and then He said to the disciples, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven: whosoever, therefore, shall *humble himself* as this little child the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

But the little child is still in the midst of the Church, the Saviour's ever-abiding parable—more indeed than a parable—a living and perpetual image of the grace upon which religion stands, ever abiding and ever administering in gentleness and silence Christ's own word of rebuke to the proud, and Christ's own word of comfort to the lowly.

It was by this living picture that Jesus spake

to the disciples. By words He hardly could have spoken or shown them what He meant to say. There was in fact no word of the language in which His speech is come down to us, or indeed of the later but now dead language of the West, to which our word humility thoroughly answers. The Greek word which we should translate humility has for its first meaning pusillanimity, baseness; and so also has the Latin word, unless there be one other word which is frittered down as it were to humility through the vapid idea of moderation. The thing itself was unknown in that old world, and so they might well have no word for it. It was something in their eyes that was at the best tame and soft and spiritless, more generally that was mean and contemptible. When then Jesus said, "Whosoever shall humble himself," using the word (for there was no other) which meant lower himself—whosoever shall lower himself—it was well that He should have in His arms a little child, that He should express what He wished to say by presenting this little child. For no one could despise a little child.

But how does this apply to the grown man or the grown woman? How is it intended that they should bring themselves down to the dimensions of a little child? That which dis-

tinguishes the child is *trust*. It wants power and knowledge and judgment, those resources which come with age and experience and fit the person by degrees to cope with life. Wanting these things itself, the child trusts its father and its mother or any other protector whom it instinctively feels to possess those things. This is only nature. It is not brought about through any process. It is there already. The word of Christ here is—not whosoever shall humble himself as this little child humbles itself, but whosoever shall humble himself as this little child is humble. The property belonged to the child. That trust in another because it cannot have trust in itself, that is humility. And this then is the mark of the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. As with the child so with the man, the marked feature of humility is trust in another.

But the question comes at once, trust in whom? The child trusts to its natural guardian. The natural guardian of the man or woman is God only. That trust in another on the part of the child is the child's humility. Men are for the most part self-trustful, and so they lack humility. Now this will need a moment's thought.

There is a sense in which self-trust is a good

and much needed quality. People should know themselves. They should test and gauge their faculties, and find out how far they may depend upon them, and in that measure trust them. We want this trust for making our way in life and for holding the place and doing the work in this earth of God's which, in the order of His providence, belongs to us. Self-trust of this kind is vigour to a man and activity and a spring of cheerful effort. The absence of it is slothfulness and a casting one's proper share of the world's burden upon other shoulders—a faithless hiding indeed of the committed talent. But that word is to be always remembered. The talent is *committed*. The forces within us which we use in life's work and which we may and ought to rely upon, are not self-derived. They are bestowed upon us. Rather, they are confided to us. This is forgotten; often indeed so completely forgotten that it is disbelieved. It is lordship that we claim in our own small territory. The idea of stewardship is not satisfying to us. We claim possession.

Here then we find the due limits of self-trust—the limits within which it is a staff to rest upon—beyond which, if a man lean upon it, it will go through his hand and pierce it. Within which it may be and is allied with the

trust that marks humility; beyond which it falls back into the vain self-confidence which cuts off him that is afflicted by it from the foundation-law of the kingdom of heaven. If we would keep within those limits there must be the walking always by the side of our Father in His ever-conscious presence—the use and ministry of that which we have as given to us by Him, and the looking to Him in sure dependence for all that we are needing and shall need besides. After the same manner as the child walks by the side of its father or its mother, takes and uses what they give, not doubting ever that it is given by them, nor doubting ever that more will be given as the days go by and the needs arise. This is humility as Jesus taught it when He took the little child in His arms and left it for ever in the midst of His Church. It is God-dependence.

There are graces and virtues which seem good to a man, and which he tries to practise from various motives: as temperance, because it is reputable and health-giving; integrity, because it is honourable and wise; forbearance, because it is convenient. But humility in its true sense no one ever sought, and certainly no one in any faintest measure or degree ever

attained, except in that degree in which God was revealed to him as the source of his life and being, and the Father of his spirit. For let it be remembered that when, through the breath of the Eternal Spirit, there is any revelation of God to the soul of man, then He is seen not as the source of life only, or as the Author and Giver of all good things, but as the infinitely holy also and the infinitely pure—the perfection of all excellency, might, and glory. And so the presence of God to our spirit brings humility, not only because we shall then know ourselves to be dependent upon Him for all things, but because of the measureless distance at which we shall feel that we must lie from His awful purity. Men measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves among themselves. One takes his name or position and compares it with the name or position of others; another takes his wealth, and another his intellect and compares it with the wealth or the intellect, of others. In doing this St. Paul says they are not wise. For supposing the judgment sound (which it may not be always), it is but a pigmy pre-eminence upon which such a person stands. Let it be that he is able to lift his head above the head of someone else or of everyone else. By the only scale of real

greatness, where is he still? An inch or more is of little account by the side of the everlasting hills. He has nursed his pride at the cost of his wisdom. Man is no standard for man whether as to endowments or attainments. We are living in the presence of the Infinite, whether that presence be real to us or not. The estimate of ourselves by that which is bounded and finite may or may not make us proud. The estimate of ourselves by that which is infinite—goodness and holiness infinite—this only will certainly make us humble. Humble yourselves, St. Peter says, under the *mighty hand of God*. That word of St. Peter opens to our view the true well-spring of humility. To think poorly of ourselves is not in itself humility. This may be nothing more than a fretful feeling in our mind that we are not up to others whom we know or hear of in many things, and the feeling fluctuates as circumstance shall make the comparison favourable or otherwise between ourselves and them. Where is the likeness here to the little child in the midst of the Church? But walk ye continually on the shores of the eternal ocean—listen to the murmurs from those waters which breathe into the heavy ear tidings about God. Take up, that is to say, and dwell in constant thought upon the words

of Him who came to man from the bosom of the Father, and told man the things of the Father so as none besides could tell; and in His words discovered Himself and made manifest Himself. But the manifestation of Jesus as the perfect Man is to the last and uttermost degree the manifestation of humility. For one moment before we close the sermon let us look at Him thus.

The Apostle Peter had not been in that part of his life which comes before us in the Gospels remarkable for humility. But he passed through some hard experiences after those days; and in his later years when he came to write an epistle, there are many things found in it and a tone running through it which seem to say to us that he had then learned humility. I have quoted one sentence already. For the purpose before us now I quote here another: "*Be clothed,*" he says, "with humility." There was a memory before the mind of the Apostle when he wrote that. This word "*clothed*" carries the thought in it of fastening with a knot. As used here, we understand the gathering up of the loose garments and girding them together for action. There can be little doubt that St. Peter was thinking as he wrote this word of a girding which he had witnessed and a knot

which had been tied in his presence. It seems that the little child set in the midst of them had not taught the disciples humility. A year after that, or more (it may have been), but whatever the interval it was at the Last Supper—there was again a strife among them which should be accounted the greatest. So the lesson of the little child had failed. And Jesus taught them now by another lesson. He riseth from supper and laid aside His garments and took a towel and girded Himself. We know what followed. But when the aged Apostle Peter, thirty years after this scene was past, came to write an epistle, and at the end of it to say to his fellow-disciples many things about humility—that foundation-law of the kingdom of heaven—we can well suppose that no image so vigorous or impressive should come to his mind as their common Lord and Master girding Himself for that lowliest service. St. Peter had seen this, and he uses the word which shows that he was recalling it.

In the little child humility had shown itself in its *trust*. In the girded Saviour humility showed itself in the spirit of *service*. And this was not a parable merely, any more than the little child was a parable merely. This was the very reflection of the Redeemer's soul. It was

a light thing that He should gird Himself to wash the disciples' feet. The morrow of that very night found Him in the depth beneath which He could not sink. He had "*humbled Himself* and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." In that lowest depth shall we suppose His own word to come to Him, "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"? Not as a promise, if it did come to Him. Still only as a fact. *In* that lowest humiliation there *was* the highest exaltation. The exaltation did not come instead of it, but *in* it. We read of the voice of many angels, the thousand times ten thousand and the thousands of thousands. We read of every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth singing, Blessing and honour and glory and power. This surely is the exaltation. He surely to whom this song is sung is the "highly exalted One, whose name is above every name." But who is He? "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the living creatures and of the elders stood a *Lamb as it had been slain.*" So the humiliation is still there, even to the death of the cross—"a Lamb as it had been slain." The exaltation is not in the place of it, but in it and by reason of it.

Self-humbling is perfected in him who has

perfectly surrendered his will to God. This is the Christ-humility—the perfectly surrendered will—even to the death upon the cross. We are not come to it yet. How far from it still is the lowliest minded among us! But every added measure of it is a nearer place to the Eternal Father's side. And in the light which cometh forth from Him we shall learn the meaning of this word of Christ—here in a degree—in the sinless state more gloriously—“ he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

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X.

A LIFE LOST AND A LIFE SAVED.

X.

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“Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.”—*St. Matt. xvi. 25.*

AS we look into this verse we find upon the authority of our Saviour Christ, that there is a losing of life which is not only a thing not to be shunned, but a thing to be sought and desired—“Whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.” Our first thought in reading this verse is that it refers to times of persecution. We think of the mockings and scourgings, the bonds and imprisonment, the stoning and slaying with the sword. And that the mind of Jesus was indeed passing over those scenes of the near future, that confessing of Him to the death unto which first of that company the Apostle James should so quickly and so nobly attain; this is not to be doubted. He did speak then of persecution unto death to be endured for His name’s sake. And a truth

comes forth from that word of His under this more restricted interpretation of it, which we must not pass over.

There is here a disparaging word said about life—this life with which we are familiar—this life of pulsation and veins and arteries and movement and sensibility and emotion and thought; there is a word said about it so far disparaging that the condition is supposed when it is better voluntarily to yield it up, and altogether to have done with it. We find it hard to imagine that state, and yet it does exist; and a glance below the surface of things will show that there is *reason* in the existence of such a state.

It is quite easy to over-estimate the preciousness of life as we know and observe it. When through an effort of courage and daring, or through the application of superior knowledge and skill, some mortal danger has been averted from a person and (as the expression is) a life has been saved, he that has been the instrument of this rescue is esteemed and justly esteemed a benefactor, to whom all high acknowledgment is due. But it may still be well to consider what that expression means—"a life has been saved." It means that some one is yet breathing the air which surrounds this

earth who had very nearly ceased to breathe it, and who may still cease to breathe it before another week is over. Now a life which has been, as we express it, thus *saved*, is the life of which Jesus here speaks in terms of depreciation. He speaks of it so indeed by its contrast with another life, some glimpse into which is opened to us here under His revealing word: and that will come into our immediate thought. But the fact remains and may stand by itself for a moment. Apart from the greater issues with which it is bound up, the fact remains, single marked and manifest, that an overvaluing of this life that we are now living, this life of men upon earth, is by the word and in the mind of Christ a very possible thing. It might seem by a way of speaking on the subject which is very general, and a way of thinking also (for the two go together) that this fact is hardly accepted. Putting aside the arguments of materialism, which is atheism, and which of course would sacrifice every subordinate interest to the life of man as being the highest known development of matter—putting all this aside, there is among those who with all their soul would abjure that hateful doctrine, an overweening tenderness fondness and solicitude about this human mortal life, which have

grievously misadjusted the balances of things, and given birth to startling wrong and evil. It is indeed a high and sacred thing — this human life. It should be guarded with all just defences. Its maintenance in health and vigour should be cared for with all heedfulness and foresight. Violence done to it should be met with the retribution which God's own law suffers and ordains. But there are bounds still as to this fostering oversight. It is the very sacredness of human life which defines those bounds. Because it is sacred it forbids wrong to be done on its behalf. At this moment a statute deforms and defiles the code of English law which licenses and legitimates acts of measureless cruelty to the lower animals, on the plea of possible service accruing to the life of man therefrom. When the whole mystery of pain and suffering shall be one day solved, when the rights of all God's creatures shall be set one against the other, and all the sacrilege discovered which has been done under the merciless and cowardly shelter of superior strength ; when the times of restitution are come at length for which the yearning and groaning creation still in its agony cries " Lord how long ! " then it will appear if a life that has been saved (if a life ever has been saved) through means like

those which that Act of Parliament permits and prescribes, had not far better have been lost !

This is no digression from our subject, and the transition is now easy and natural to that losing of a life and saving of a life unto which this word of our Saviour in its deepest import reaches. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it." It is in terms distinctly a contradiction. But in the heart and marrow of it there lies the true and only glory of this being of ours, degenerate through sin, but made capable through the grace and mercy of God, of the exaltation of immortality with Him. The word "life" in the text has two senses, and any apparent contradiction of terms will be explained and interpreted by a just weighing of those two senses. When we say that a life saved by wrong is a life lost, and that a life lost by martyrdom is a life saved, do we not in speaking thus say the truth? But it is manifest that we are using this word "life" for the expressing of two different conditions. That Jesus had martyrdom in His thought when He said the word of our text, and that losing and saving of a life which came by martyrdom for His name's sake; this we do not doubt. But His thought went beyond martyrdom—that witness-

ing unto death for the truth, as we commonly receive the word. His thought went beyond this. His eye was upon spaces and states of the future far wider and more expanded than the narrow range of martyrdom could embrace. It was *discipleship* to Him under all its claims and necessities, and through all the ages of its earthly existence, that His word is touching here. This losing a life, it is only under another phrase—taking up the cross ; and this saving a life, it is only under the same phrase—taking up the cross. For in this taking up the cross a life is crucified, and in this taking up the cross a life is found. And they are not the martyrs only who are concerned in this. “ If *any* man,” says the Saviour, “ will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. *For* whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.” So these are answering terms. Taking up the cross is the equivalent phrase. Both clauses of the text are condensed into that. And though it is most true that a life was lost and a life was found when Stephen was stoned, and James the Great was slain with the sword, and Peter was crucified, and Paul was beheaded, and Christians past numbering were tortured, accepting no deliverance, or were slaughtered

by wild beasts in the Roman amphitheatre ; still the word has not stayed or spent itself in such scenes as those ; but has been running through the times and down the centuries, finding its answer of unchanging truth every day and every hour, in mansions and in cottages, in city streets and lanes, in country hamlets and in lonely homesteads, wheresoever the sign of the Cross has passed from the forehead of the little child into the life of the man or the woman, and effort is earnestly and continually made to keep that token pure and true of an unabashed confession of the faith of Christ crucified, and of a manful fighting under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil.

It is but the old, old story—the dying unto sin and self that we may live unto holiness and God ; the day-work and the day-strain of all who would be Christ's indeed. St. Paul testifies of it in lengthened statement in the 6th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Jesus gathers it up into brief and vigorous phrase in this verse of our text. It is the saving a life and losing it, the losing a life and finding it. And He has Himself interpreted this to mean taking up the Cross and following Me. So we look upon this saying of Christ once again, and

we add to what has been said already two suggestions more.

“ If any man *will* come after Me,” “ Whosoever *will* save his life ”—this word “ will ” here is not just another word for *shall*, as though the result of some haphazard contingency were being predicted here. But it expresses an act of willing on the part of a person, an exercise of that faculty which we call the will; and so this is what it says to us. If anyone putting forth this power of will which the Creator’s hand has made part of his mysterious constitution, putting forth this power and looking for the continual help and grace of the Divine Spirit shall take hold of his own inward self, and lay upon it a hand of constant and severe restraint, thwarting impulses which are strong but not kind, checking desires which are spontaneous but not elevating, suppressing passions which are innate but not hallowing or pure, casting forth emotions which are home-sprung but not Christ-like: watching too upon the *outlets* of the spiritual forces within—upon the foot, the hand, the eye, the ear, above all the tongue—constraining and controlling those outward bodily members, so that they shall not be the ministers of wrong, so that the thing shall not be done, the impression shall not be

received, the word shall not be spoken, which an inward power felt and known to be evil is urging and forcing on: what is it that the person is doing who governs himself in this way, or endeavours at least—is in the mind and heart to govern himself in this way—what is it that he is doing? He is strangling a life and his own life; he has his hand upon the throat of an existence which belongs to himself, and is doing all that in him lies to force the breath out of it. This is he of whom Jesus speaks as losing his life for My sake, and whom St. Paul describes as bearing always in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, as crucifying himself with Christ. And the person who is not trying to govern himself in this way at all (for that alternative must have its momentary turn of thought) who lets impulses, desires, passions, emotions, words too and conduct, take the run and license which inclination prompts or custom allows—what is this person doing? He is saving a life and his own life; he is fondling it and cherishing it; he is keeping off from it all hard treatment or violence. And what is it that lies beyond in these cases? We take the last first:

“Whosoever,” says Christ, “will save his life shall lose it.” There is no mystery here. This

does not open the solemn question of the eternal future. It is only saying that the self-life of this earth has nothing immortal about it. It grows and it thrives. It is nourished, fostered, sheltered, and indulged. But it pines at length. It loses its faculty of enjoyment; it fades away and decays, and then it becomes extinct. There is nothing left of it—it is *lost*. We hardly needed the wisdom of Christ to tell us this: only that none other could have told it with such wondrous force of word.

But there is the other case, and here that second thought comes in with which we close the sermon. We observe that life and soul are in the language which Christ used the same word, and perhaps it might have avoided confusion if the word life had been kept and not changed for another word. “Whosoever will lose his life for My sake,” said Christ, “shall find it,” and “what shall a man give in exchange for his *soul*” (we have it, but the word is really *life*). What shall he give in exchange for this life which he has found? What is he profited if he gain the whole world and lose it? Observe, no separate existence is supposed. *The soul is the life*. And it is life which the man has found, or is in the sure way of finding. He does not look on for it into a misty future. He

may look on for the *perfection* of it, but not for the very thing itself in reality and in fact. The perfection of it, that shall only be when the old self-life has been exterminated and destroyed ; and that is not now—is not, perhaps, on earth at all. It is the *dying* here, the *being* crucified. But the dying is not death. The *being* crucified is not the being all at once killed. Then came the soldiers and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him—a measure of savage barbarism to hasten the crucifixion work. The thieves though crucified were not dead. The life which we must lose if we would live indeed, dies very hard. Only—every act of contest in our spirit with evil and with wrong, every struggle to forbid and to crush out the rising impulse of vanity or envy or harshness or impatience or license or covetousness, or any other of that baneful brood of noxious things which the wide word worldliness, or the still wider word selfishness, will cover : what is this ? It is another and another step towards crushing out the life which it is so good to lose, and another and another step towards holding fast the life which it is so good to find. For this is verily and indeed the binding that spirit with God, and endowing it with His life. And this is the only

immortal thing. He only "hath immortality." And this is your soul. There is no other soul. It is the life which Christ says you find when you part for the sake of it with the life of self. And what He means by *finding* it—let us quote another saying of His to show, very like the text, but said at another time, and with one added word: "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto *life eternal*."

THE END.

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