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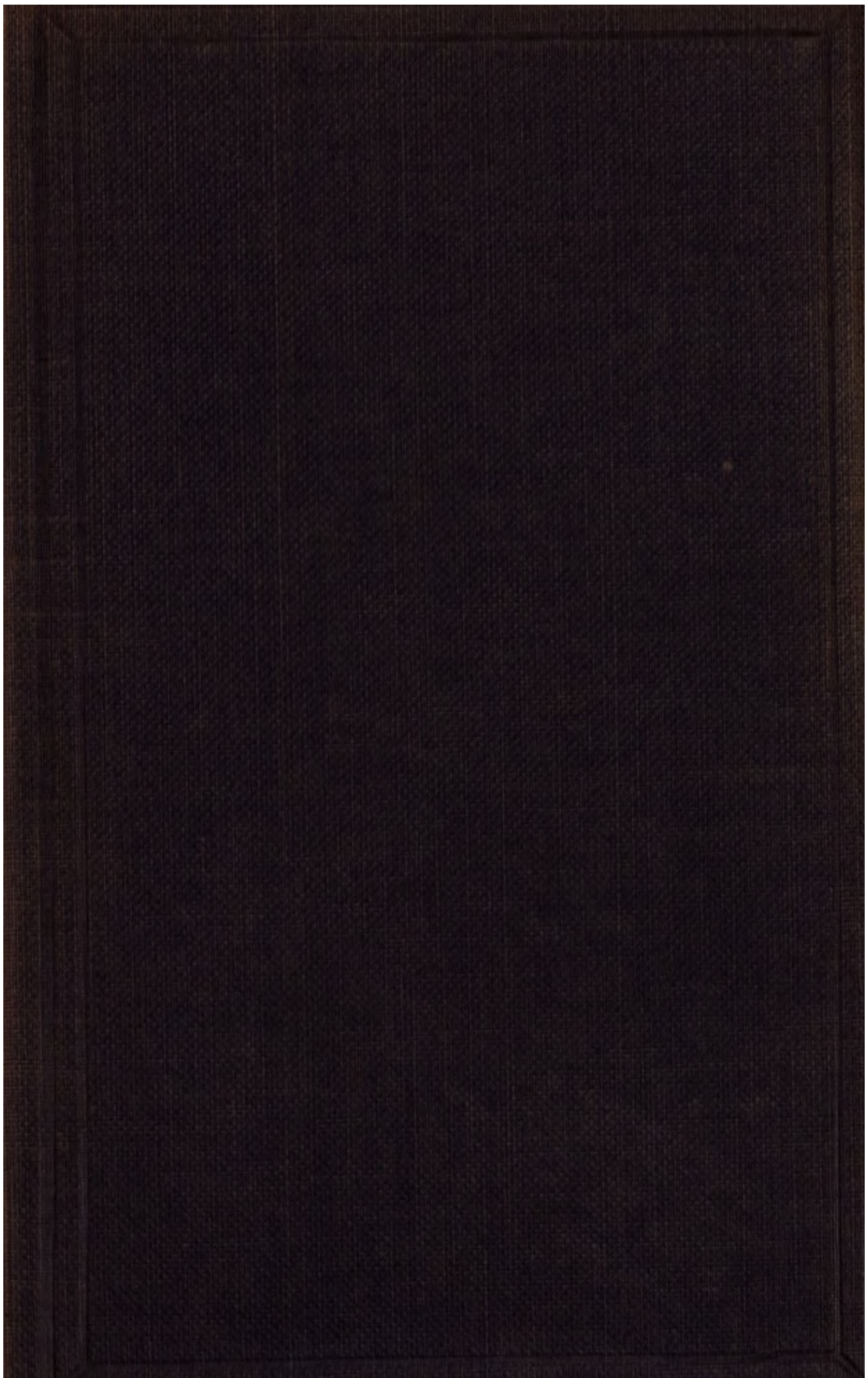
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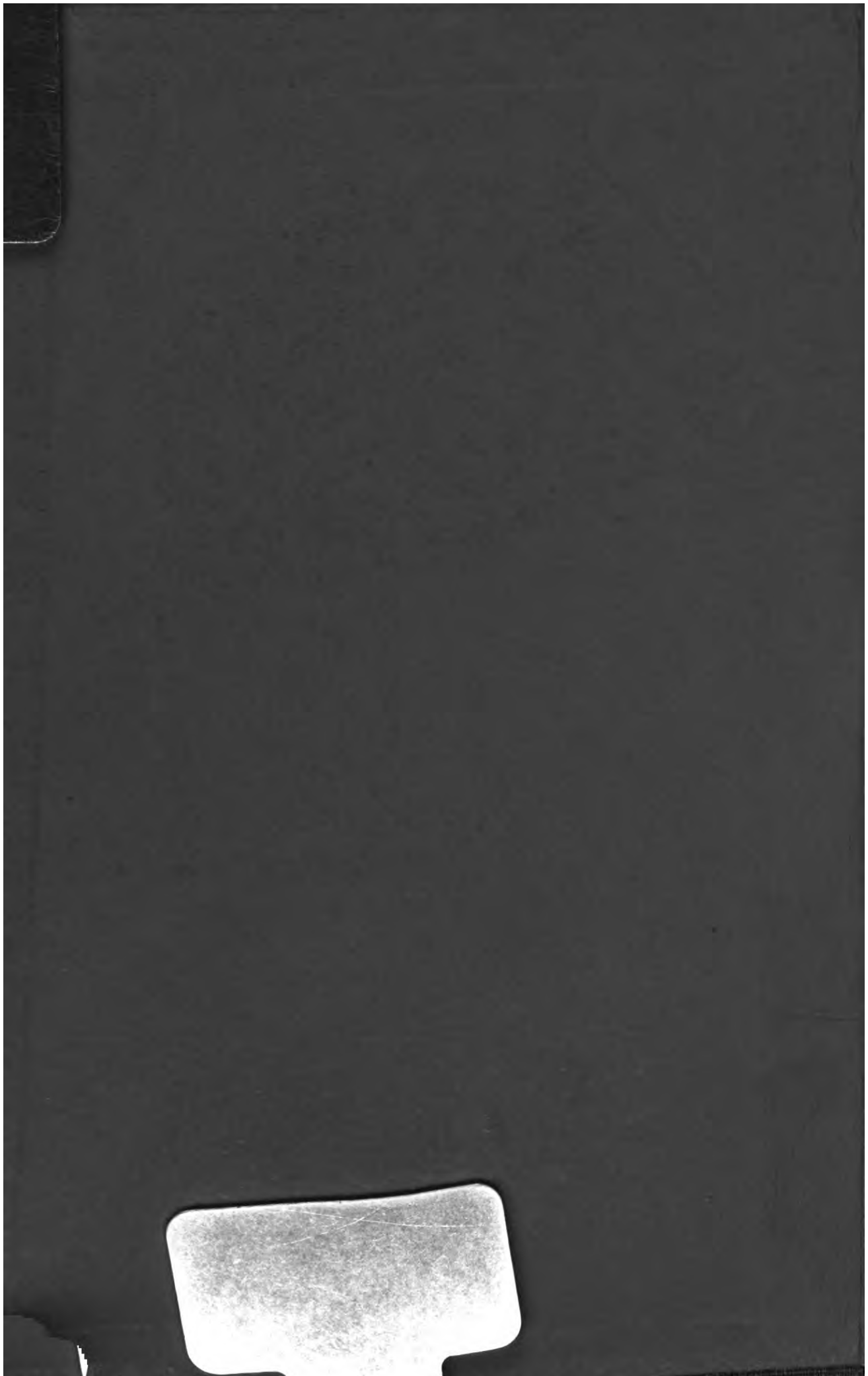
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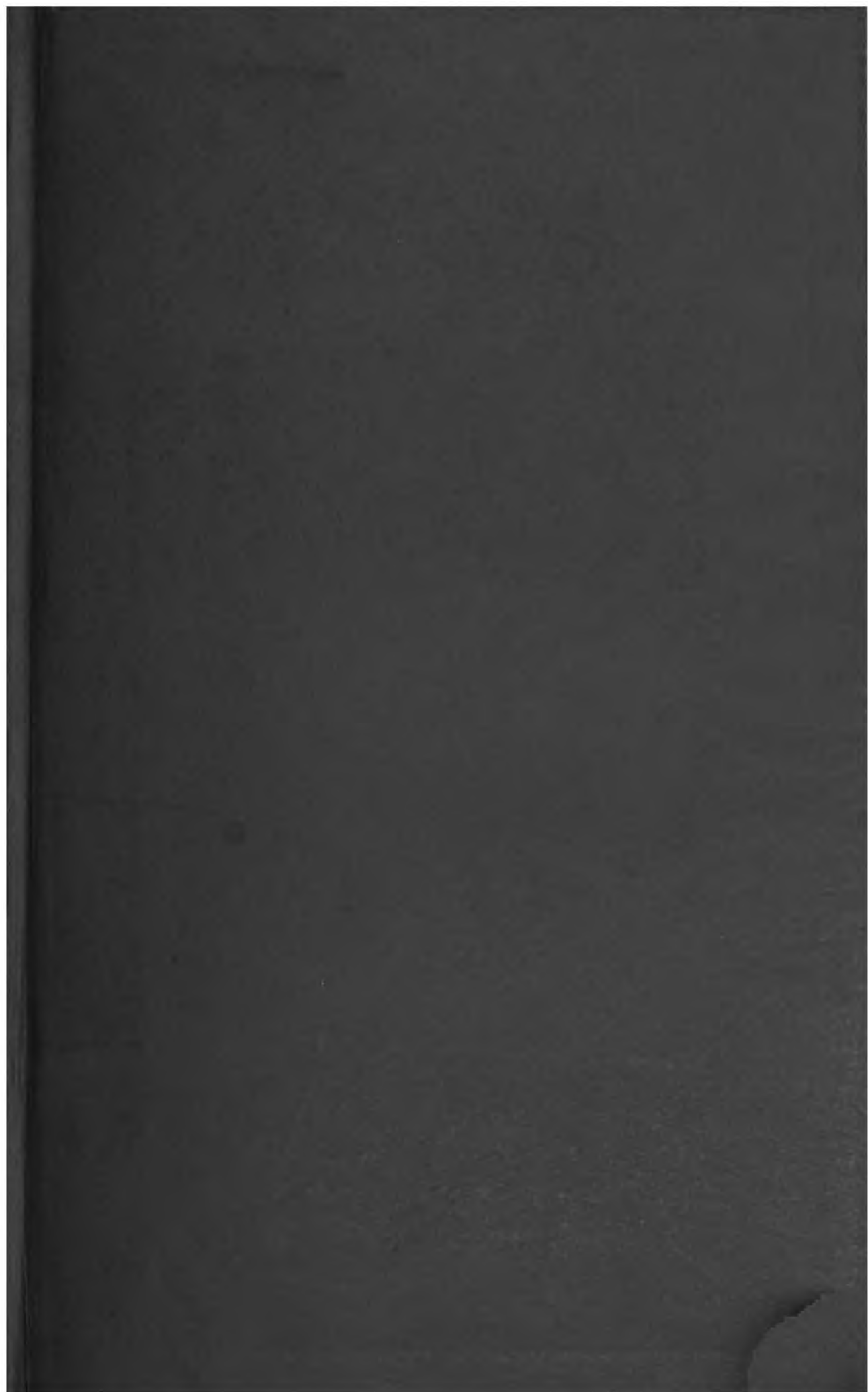
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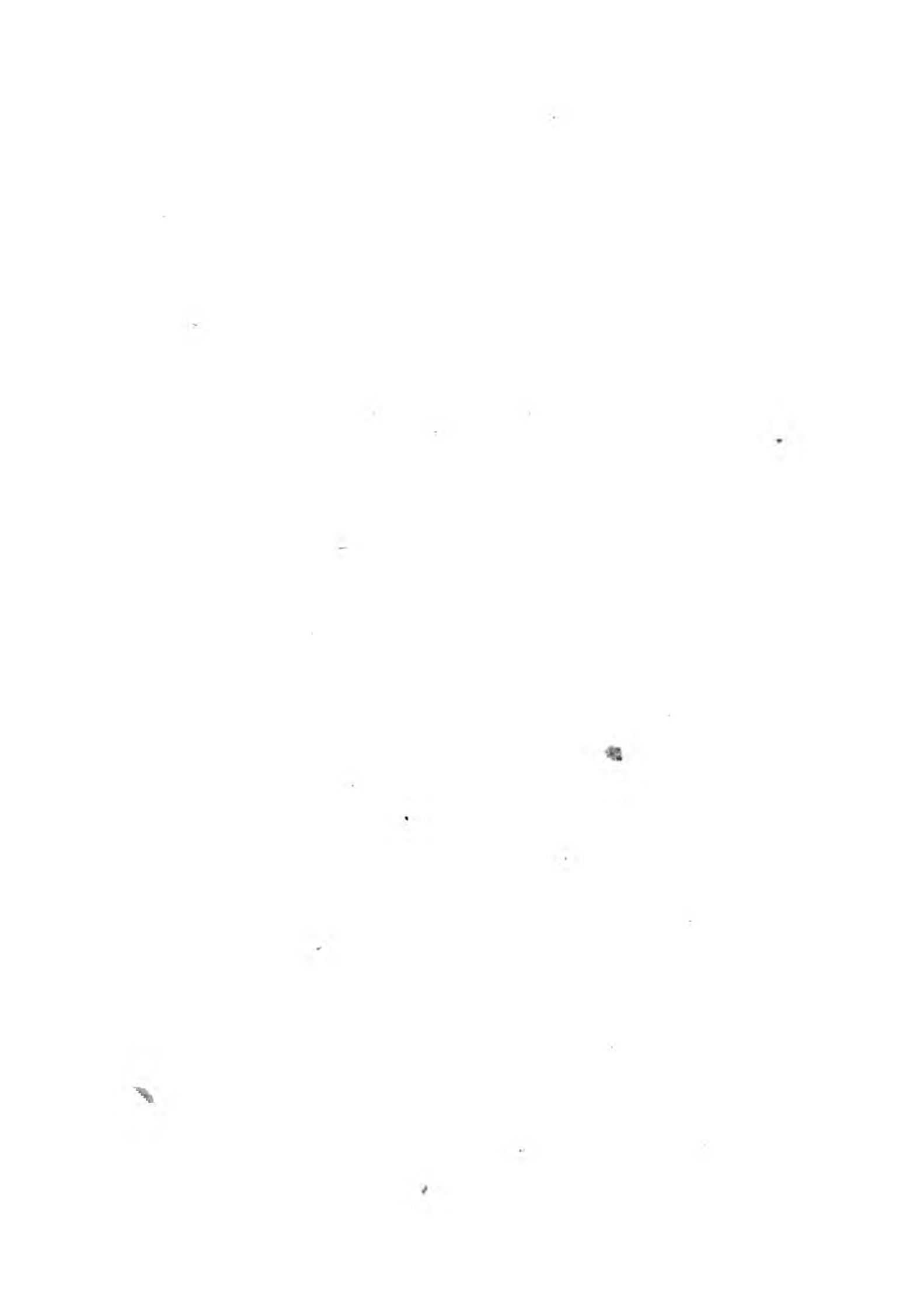


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THE GOSPEL OF THE PENTATEUCH.

[The Author reserves the right of Translation.]

THE GOSPEL OF THE PENTATEUCH.



A SET OF PARISH SERMONS,

BY THE
REV. C. KINGSLEY, F.L.S., F.G.S.,
ETC.

WITH A PREFACE.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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P R E F A C E.

TO THE REV. CANON STANLEY.

MY DEAR STANLEY,

I dedicate these sermons to you, not that I may make you responsible for any doctrine or statement contained in them, but as the simplest method of telling you how much they owe to your book on the Jewish Church, and of expressing my deep gratitude to you for publishing that book at such a time as this.

It has given to me (and I doubt not to many other clergymen) a fresh confidence and energy in preaching to my people the Gospel of the Old Testament as the same with that of the New; and without it, many of these sermons would have been very different from, and I am certain

very inferior to, what they are now, by the help of your admirable book.

Brought up, like all Cambridge men of the last generation, upon Paley's 'Evidences,' I had accepted as a matter of course, and as the authoritative teaching of my University, Paley's opinions as to the limits of Biblical criticism,* quoted at large in Dean Milman's noble preface to his last edition of the 'History of the Jews;' and especially that great dictum of his, 'that 'it is an unwarrantable, as well as unsafe rule, 'to lay down concerning the Jewish history, that 'which was never laid down concerning any other, 'that either every particular of it must be true, 'or the whole false.'

I do not quote the rest of the passage; first because you, I doubt not, know it as well as I; and next, in order that if any one shall read these lines who has not read Paley's 'Evidences,' he may be stirred up to look the passage out for himself, and so become acquainted with a great book and a great mind.

A reverent and rational liberty in criticism (within the limits of orthodoxy) is, I have al-

* 'Evidences,' Part III., Cap. iii.

ways supposed, the right of every Cambridge man: and I was therefore the more shocked, for the sake of free thought in my University, at the appearance of a book which claimed and exercised a licence in such questions, which I must (after careful study of it) call anything but rational and reverent. Of the orthodoxy of the book it is not, of course, a private clergyman's place to judge. That book seemed dangerous to the University of Cambridge itself, because it was likely to stir up from without attempts to abridge her ancient liberty of thought; but it seemed still more dangerous to the hundreds of thousands without the University, who, being no scholars, must take on trust the historic truth of the Bible.

For I found that book, if not always read, yet still talked and thought of on every side, among persons whom I should have fancied careless of its subject and even ignorant of its existence, but to whom I was personally bound to give some answer as to the book and its worth. It was making many unsettled and unhappy; it was (even worse) pandering to the cynicism and frivolity of many who were already too cynical

and frivolous; and, much as I shrank from descending into the arena of religious controversy, I felt bound to say a few plain words on it, at least to my own parishioners.

But how to do so, without putting into their heads thoughts which need be in no man's head, and perhaps shaking the very faith which I was trying to build up, was difficult to me, and, I think, would have been impossible to me, but for the opportune appearance of your admirable book.

I could not but see that the book to which I have alluded, like most other modern books on biblical criticism, was altogether negative; was possessed too often by that fanaticism of disbelief, which is just as dangerous as the fanaticism of belief; was picking the body of the Scripture to pieces so earnestly, that it seemed to forget that Scripture had a spirit as well as a body; or, if it confessed that it had a spirit, asserting that spirit to be one utterly different from the spirit which the Scripture asserts that it possesses.

For the Scripture asserts that those who wrote it were moved by the Spirit of God; that it is a record of God's dealings with men, which certain

men were inspired to perceive and to write down : whereas the tendency of modern criticism is, without doubt, to assert that Scripture is inspired by the spirit of man ; that it contains the thoughts and discoveries of men concerning God, which they wrote down without the inspiration of God ; which difference seems to me (and I hope to others), utterly infinite and incalculable, and to involve the question of the whole character, honour, and glory of God.

There is, without a doubt, something in the Old Testament, as well as in the New, quite different in kind, as well as in degree, from the sacred books of any other people ; an unique element, which has had an unique effect upon the human heart, life, and civilization. This remains, after all possible deductions for 'ignorance of physical science,' 'errors in numbers and chronology,' 'interpolations,' 'mistakes of transcribers,' and so forth, whereof we have read of late a great deal too much, and ought to care for them and for their existence, or non-existence, simply nothing at all ; because, granting them all—(though the greater part of them I do not grant, as far as I can trust my critical faculty)—there

remains that unique element, beside which all these accidents are but as the spots on the sun, compared to the great glory of his life-giving light. The unique element is there; and I cannot but still believe, after much thought, that it—the powerful and working element, the inspired and Divine element, which has converted, and still converts millions of souls—is just that which Christendom in all ages has held it to be—the account of certain ‘noble acts’ of God’s, and not of certain noble thoughts of man: in a word, not merely the moral, but the historic element; and that, therefore, the value of the Bible teaching depends on the truth of the Bible story. That is my belief. Any criticism which tries to rob me of that, I shall look at fairly, but very severely indeed.

If all that a man wants is a ‘religion,’ he ought to be able to make a very pretty one for himself, and a fresh one as often as he is tired of the old. But the heart and soul of man wants more than that, as it is written, ‘My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God.’ Those whom I have to teach want a living God, who cares for men, works for men, teaches men, punishes men, forgives men, saves men from their sins;—and Him

I have found in the Bible, and nowhere else, save in the facts of life which the Bible alone interprets.

In the power of man to find out God I will never believe. The 'religious sentiment,' or 'God-consciousness,' so much talked of now-a-days, seems to me (as I believe it will to all practical common-sense Englishmen), a faculty not to be depended on; as fallible and corrupt as any other part of human nature; apt (to judge from history) to develop itself into ugly forms, not only without a revelation from God, but too often in spite of one,—into polytheisms, idolatries, witchcrafts, Buddhist asceticisms, Phœnician Moloch-sacrifices, Popish inquisitions, American spirit-rappings, and what not. The hearts and minds of the sick, the poor, the sorrowing, the truly human, all demand a living God, who has revealed himself in living acts; a God who has taught mankind by facts, not left them to discover him by theories and sentiments; a Judge, a Father, a Saviour, an Inspirer; in a word, their hearts and minds demand the historic truth of the Bible,—of the Old Testament no less than of the New.

What I needed, therefore, for my guidance was a book which should believe and confess all this, without condemning or ignoring free criticism and its results; which should make use of that criticism not to destroy but to build up; which employed a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament history, the manners of the Jews, the localities of the sacred events, to teach men not what might not be in the Bible, but what was certainly therein; which dealt with the Bible after the only fair and trustful method; that is, to consider it at first according to the theory which it sets forth concerning itself, before trying quite another theory of the commentator's own invention; and which combined with a courageous determination to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, that Christian spirit of trust, reverence, and piety, without which all intellectual acuteness is but blindness and folly.

All this, and more, I found in your book, enforced with a genius which needs no poor praise of mine; and I hailed its appearance at such a crisis as a happy Providence, certain that it would be, what I now know by experience it has been, a balm to many a wounded spirit, and a check to

many a wandering intellect, inclined, in the rashness of youth, to throw away the truth it already had, for the sake of theories which it hoped that it might possibly verify hereafter.

With your book in my hand, I have tried to write a few plain sermons, telling plain people what they will find in the Pentateuch, in spite of all present doubts, as their fathers found it before them, and as (I trust) their children will find it after them, when all this present whirlwind of controversy has past,

‘ As dust that lightly rises up,
‘ And is lightly laid again.’

I have told them that they will find in the Bible, and in no other ancient book, that living working God, whom their reason and conscience demand; and that they will find that he is none other than Jesus Christ our Lord. I have not apologized for, or explained away, the so-called ‘Anthropomorphism’ of the Old Testament. On the contrary, I have frankly accepted it, and even gloried in it, as an integral, and I believe invaluable, element of Scripture. I have deliberately ignored many questions of great interest and difficulty, because I had no satisfactory solution of

them to offer: but I have said at the same time that those questions were altogether unimportant, compared with those salient and fundamental points of the Bible history on which I was preaching. And therefore I have dared to bid my people relinquish biblical criticism to those who have time for it; and to say of it with me, as Abraham of the planets, ‘Oh, my people, I am clear of all these things! I turn myself to him who made heaven and earth.’

I do not wish, believe me, to make you responsible for any statement or opinion of mine. I am painfully conscious, on reviewing for the press sermons which would never have been published save by special request, how imperfect, poor, and weak they seem to me—how much worse, then, they will appear to other people; how much more may be said which I have not the wit to say! But the Bible can take care of itself, I presume, without my help: all I can do is, to speak what I think, as far as I see my way; to record the obligation toward you under which I, with thousands more, now lie; and to express my hope that we shall be always found together fellow-workers in the cause of Truth, and that to you and in you may be fulfilled those

noble and tender words, in which you have spoken of Samuel, and of those who work in Samuel's spirit:—

‘ In later times, even in our own, many names
‘ spring to our recollection, of those who have
‘ trodden or (in different degrees, some known,
‘ and some unknown) are treading the same
‘ thankless path in the Church of Germany, in the
‘ Church of France, in the Church of Russia, in
‘ the Church of England. Wherever they are,
‘ and whosoever they may be, and howsoever they
‘ may be neglected, or assailed, or despised, they,
‘ like their great prototype and likeness in the
‘ Jewish Church, are the silent healers, who bind
‘ up the wounds of their age in spite of itself;
‘ they are the good physicians who bind together
‘ the dislocated bones of a disjointed time; they
‘ are the reconcilers who turn the hearts of the
‘ children to the fathers, or of the fathers to the
‘ children. They have but little praise and re-
‘ ward from the partisans who are loud in indis-
‘ discriminate censure and applause. But, like
‘ Samuel, they have a far higher reward, in the
‘ Davids who are silently strengthened and nur-
‘ tured by them in Naioth of Ramah,—in the

‘glories of a new age, which shall be ushered in
‘peacefully and happily, after they have been
‘laid in the grave.’*

That such, my dear Stanley, may be your work
and your destiny, is the earnest hope of

Yours affectionately,

C. KINGSLEY.

Eversley Rectory,

July 1, 1863.

* Lectures on the Jewish Church, Lect. xviii. p. 401.

CONTENTS.

SERMON	PAGE
I. GOD IN CHRIST	I
II. THE LIKENESS OF GOD	18
III. THE VOICE OF THE LORD GOD	33
IV. NOAH'S FLOOD	47
V. ABRAHAM	59
VI. JACOB AND ESAU	72
VII. JOSEPH	84
VIII. THE BIBLE THE GREAT CIVILIZER	96
IX. MOSES	109
X. THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT	123
XI. THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THE GOD OF THE NEW	137
XII. THE BIRTHNIGHT OF FREEDOM	149

SERMON	PAGE
XIII. KORAN, DATHAN, AND ABIRAM	159
XIV. BALAAM	172
XV. DEUTERONOMY	184
XVI. NATIONAL WEALTH	197
XVII. THE GOD OF THE RAIN	210
XVIII. THE DEATH OF MOSES	222

SERMON I.

GOD IN CHRIST.

(*Septuagesima Sunday.*)

GENESIS i. 1.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

WE have begun this Sunday to read the book of Genesis. I trust that you will listen to it as you ought—with peculiar respect and awe, as the oldest part of the Bible, and therefore the oldest of all known works—the earliest human thought which has been handed down to us.

And what is the first written thought which has been handed down to us by the Providence of Almighty God?

‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.’

How many other things, how many hundred other things, men might have thought fit to write down for those who should come after ; and say—This is the first knowledge which a man should

have ; this is the root of all wisdom, all power, all wealth.

But God inspired Moses and the Prophets to write as they have written. They were not to tell men that the first thing to be learnt was, how to be rich ; nor how to be strong ; nor even how to be happy : but that the first thing to be learnt was, that God created the heaven and the earth.

And why first ?

Because the first question which man asks—the question which shows he is a man and not a brute—always has been, and always will be—Where am I ? How did I get into this world ; and how did this world get here likewise ? And if man takes up with a wrong answer to that question, then the man himself is certain to go wrong, in all manner of ways. For a lie can never do anything but harm, or breed anything but harm ; and lies do breed, as fast as the blight on the trees, or the smut on the corn : only being not according to nature, or the laws of God, they do not breed as natural things do, after their kind : but, belonging to chaos, the kingdom of disorder and misrule, they breed fresh lies unlike themselves, of all strange and unexpected shapes ; so that when a man takes up with one lie, there is no saying what other lie he may not take up with beside.

Wherefore the first thing man has to learn is

truth concerning the first human question, Where am I? How did I come here; and how did this world come here? To which the Bible answers in its first line—

‘In the beginning God created the heaven and
‘the earth.’

How God created, the Bible does not tell us. Whether he created (as doubtless he could have done if he chose) this world suddenly out of nothing, full grown and complete; or whether he created it (as he creates you and me, and all living and growing things now) out of things which had been before it—that the Bible does not tell us.

Perhaps if it had told us, it would have drawn away our minds to think of natural things, and what we now call science, instead of keeping our minds fixed, as it now does, on spiritual things, and above all on the Spirit of all Spirits; Him of whom it is written ‘God is a Spirit.’

For the Bible is simply the revelation, or unveiling, of God. It is not a book of natural science. It is not merely a book of holy and virtuous precepts. It is not merely a book wherein we may find a scheme of salvation for our souls. It is the book of the revelation, or unveiling, of the Lord God, Jesus Christ; what he was, what he is, and what he will be for ever.

Of Jesus Christ? How is he revealed in the

text, 'In the beginning God created the heaven
' and the earth?'

Thus:—If you look at the first chapter of Genesis and the beginning of the second, you will see that God is called therein by a different name from what he is called afterwards. He is called God, Elohim, The High or Mighty One or Ones. After that he is called the Lord God, Jehovah Elohim, which means properly, The High or Mighty I Am, or Jehovah, a word which I will explain to you afterwards. That word is generally translated in our Bible, as it was in the Greek, 'The Lord;' because the later Jews had such a deep reverence for the name Jehovah, that they did not like to write it or speak it; but called God simply Adonai, the Lord.

So that we have three names for God in the Old Testament.

First El, or Elohim, the Mighty One: by which, so Moses says, God was known to the Jews before his time, and which sets forth God's power and majesty—the first thing of which men would think in thinking of God.

Next, Jehovah. The I Am, the Eternal, and Self-existent Being, by which name God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush—a deeper and wider name than the former.

And lastly, Adonai, the Lord, the living Ruler

and Master of the world and men, by which he revealed himself to the later Jews, and at last to all mankind in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I need not to trouble your mind, or my own, with arguments as to how these three different names got into the Bible.

That is a matter of criticism, of scholarship, with which you have nothing to do: and you may thank God that you have not, in such days as these. Your business is, not how the names got there, which is a matter of criticism, but why they have been left there by the providence of God, which is a matter of simple religion; and you may thank God, I say again, that it is so. For scholarship is Martha's part, which must be done, and yet which cumpers a man with much serving: but simple heart religion is the better part which Mary chose; and of which the Lord has said, that it shall not be taken from her, nor from those who, like her, sit humbly at the feet of the Lord, and hear his voice, without troubling their souls with questions of words, and endless genealogies, which eat out the hearts of men.

Therefore all I shall say about the matter is, that the first chapter of Genesis, and the three first verses of the second, may be the writing of a prophet older than Moses, because they call God Elohim, which was his name before Moses's time;

and that Moses may have used them, and worked them into the book of Genesis; while he, in the part which he wrote himself, called God at first by the name Jehovah Elohim, The Lord God, in order to show that Jehovah and El were the same God, and not two different ones; and after he had made the Jews understand that, went on to call God simply Jehovah, and to use the two names, as they are used through the rest of the Old Testament, interchangeably: as we say sometimes God, sometimes the Lord, sometimes the Deity, and so forth; meaning of course always the same Being.

That, I think, is the probable and simple account which tallies most exactly with the Bible. As for the five first books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, having been written by Moses, or at least by far the greater part of them, I cannot see the least reason to doubt it.

The Bible itself does not say so; and therefore it is not a matter of faith, and men may have their own opinions on the matter, without sin or false doctrine. But that Moses wrote part at least of them, our Lord and his Apostles say expressly. The tradition of the Jews (who really ought to know best) has always been that Moses wrote either the whole or the greater part. Moses is by far the most likely man to have written

them, of all of whom we read in Scripture. We have not the least proof, and, what is more, never shall or can have, that he did not write them. And, therefore, I advise you to believe, as I do, that the universal tradition of both Jews and Christians is right, when it calls these books, the books of Moses.*

But now no more of these matters: we will think of a matter quite infinitely more important, and that is, *Who* is this God whom the Bible reveals to us, from the very first verse of Genesis?

At least, he is one and the same Being. Whether he be called El, Jehovah, or Adonai, he is the same Lord.

It is the Lord who makes the heavens and the earth, the Lord who puts man in a Paradise, lays on him a commandment, and appears to him in visible shape.

It is the Lord who speaks to Abraham: though Abraham knew him only as El-Shaddai, the Almighty God. It is the Lord who brings the Israelites out of Egypt, who gives them the law

* I must say that all attempts to put a later date on these books seem to me to fail simply from want of evidence. I must say, also, that all attempts to distinguish between 'Jehovistic' and 'Elohistic' documents (with the exception, perhaps, of the first chapter of Genesis) seem to me to fail likewise; and that the theory of an Elohistic and a Jehovistic sect has received its *reductionem ad absurdum* in a certain recent criticism of the Psalms.

on Sinai. It is the Lord who speaks to Samuel, to David, to all the prophets, and appears to Isaiah, while his glory fills the Temple. In whatever 'divers manners' and 'many portions,' as St. Paul says in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he speaks to them, he is the same Being.

And Psalmists and Prophets are most careful to tell us that he is the God, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles; of all mankind—as, indeed, he must be, being Jehovah, the I Am, the one Self-existent and Eternal Being; that from his throne he is watching and judging all the nations upon earth, fashioning the hearts of all, appointing them their bounds, and the times of their habitation, if haply they may seek after him and find him, though he be not far from any one of them; for in him they live and move and have their being.

This is the message of Moses, of the Psalmists and the Prophets, just as much as of St. Paul on Mars' Hill at Athens.

So begins and so ends the Old Testament, revealing throughout The Lord.

And how does the New Testament begin?

By telling us that a Babe was born at Bethlehem, and called Jesus, the Saviour.

But who is this blessed Babe? He, too, is The Lord.

‘A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’ And from thence, through the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, the Revelation of St. John, he is the Lord. There is no manner of doubt of it. The Apostles and Evangelists take no trouble to prove it. They take it for granted. They call Jesus Christ by the name by which the Jews had for hundreds of years called the El of Abraham, the Jehovah of Moses. The Babe who is born at Bethlehem, who grows up as other human beings grow, into the man Christ Jesus, is none other than the Lord God who created the universe, who made a covenant with Abraham, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt, who inspired the prophets, who has been from the beginning governing all the earth.

It is very awful. But you must believe that, or put your Bibles away as a dream—New Testament and Old alike. Not to believe that fully and utterly, is not to believe the Bible at all. For that is what the Bible says, and has been sent into the world to say. It is, from beginning to end, the book of the revelation, or unveiling, of Jesus Christ, very God of very God.

But some may say, ‘Why tell us that? Of course we believe it. We should not be Christians ‘if we did not.’

Be it so. I hope it is so. But I think that it is not so easy to believe it as we fancy.

We believe it, I think, more firmly than our forefathers did five hundred years ago, on some points; and therefore we have got rid of many dark and blasphemous superstitions about witches and devils, about the evil of the earth and of our own bodies, of marriage, and of the common duties and bonds of humanity, which tormented them, because they could not believe fully that Jesus Christ had created, and still ruled, the world and all therein.

But we are all too apt still to think of Jesus Christ merely as some one who can save our souls when we die, and to forget that he is the Lord, who is and has been always ruling the world and all mankind.

And from this come two bad consequences. People are apt to speak of the Lord Jesus—or at least to admire preachers who speak of him—as if he belonged to them, and not they to him; and, therefore, to speak of him with an irreverence and a familiarity which they dared not use, if they really believed that this same Jesus, whose name they take in vain, is none other than the Living God himself, their Creator, by whom every blade of grass grows beneath their feet, every planet and star rolls above their heads.

And next—they fancy that the Old Testament speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ, only in a few

mysterious prophecies—some of which there is reason to suspect they quite misinterpret. They are slow of heart to believe all that the Scriptures have spoken, of him of whom Moses and the Prophets did write, not in a few scattered texts, but in every line of the Old Testament, from the first of Genesis to the last of Malachi.

And therefore they believe less and less, that Jesus Christ is still the Lord in any real practical sense—not merely the Lord of a few elect or saints, but the Lord of man and of the earth, and of the whole universe. They think of him as a Lord who will come again to judgment—which is true, and awfully true, in the very deepest sense: but they do not think of him—in spite of what he himself and his apostles declared of him—as The Living Working Lord, to whom all power is given in heaven and earth, and not merely over the souls of a few regenerate; as the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, of whom St. Paul says, that ‘the mystery of Christ ‘has been hid from the beginning of the world in ‘God, who created all things by Jesus Christ’* * * ‘That, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, ‘he might gather together in one all things in ‘Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in ‘earth.’ They fill their minds with fancies about the book of Revelation, most of which there is

reason to fear, are little else but fancies: while they overlook what that book really does say, and what is the best news that the world ever heard, that he is the Prince of the kings of the earth.

Therefore they have fears for Christ's Bible, fears for Christ's Church, fears for the fate of the world, which they could not have if they would recollect who Christ is, and believe that he is able to take care of his own kingdom, and power, and glory, better than man can take care of it for him. Surely, surely, faith in the living Lord who rules the world in righteousness is fast dying out among us; and many who call themselves Christians seem to know less of Christ, and of the work which he is carrying on in the world, than did the old Psalmist, who said of him, 'The Lord shall endure for ever; he hath also prepared his seat for judgment. For he shall judge the world in righteousness, and minister true judgment among the people.' He fashioneth 'the hearts of all of them, and understandeth all their works.'

Who can say that he believes that, who holds that this world is the devil's world, and that sinful man and evil spirits are having it all their own way till the day of judgment?

Who can say that he believes that, who falls

into pitiable terror at every new discovery of science or of scholarship, for fear it should destroy the Bible and the Christian faith, instead of believing that all which makes manifest is light, and that all light comes from the Father of lights, by the providence of Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, who is the light of men, and the inspiration of his Spirit, who leadeth into all truth?

And how, lastly, can those say that they believe that, who will lie, and slander, and have recourse to base intrigues, in order to defend that truth, and that Church, of which the Lord himself has said that he has founded it upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it?

But if you believe indeed the message of the Bible, that Jesus Christ is the Lord who made heaven and earth, then it shall be said of you, as it was of St. Peter, 'Blessed art thou: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father which is in heaven.'

Yes. Blessed indeed is he who believes that; who believes that the same person who was born in a stable, had not where to lay his head, went about healing the sick and binding up the broken heart, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven—ascended thither that he might fill all things; and is none other

than the Lord of the earth and of men, the Creator, the Teacher, the Saviour, the Guide, the King, the Judge, of all the world, and of all worlds past, present, and to come.

For to him who thus believes shall be fulfilled the promise of his Lord: 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

He will find rest unto his soul. Rest from that first and last question, of which I said that all men, down to the lowest savage, ask it, simply because they are men, and not beasts. Where am I? How came I here? How came this world here likewise?

For he can answer:

'I am in the kingdom of the Babe of Bethlehem. He put me here. And he put this world here likewise: and that is enough for me. He created all I see or can see—I care little how, provided that HE created it; for then I am sure that it must be very good. He redeemed me and all mankind, when we were lost, at the price of his most precious blood. He the Lord is King, therefore will I not be moved, though the earth be shaken, and the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. Yea, though the sun were turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, and the stars fell from heaven, and all power and order, all belief and custom of

‘mankind, were turned upside down, yet there
‘would still be One above who rules the world in
‘righteousness, whose eye is on them that fear
‘him and put their trust in his mercy, to deliver
‘their soul from death, and to feed them in the
‘time of dearth. Darkness may cover the land for
‘awhile, and gross darkness the people. But while
‘I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be my light, till
‘the day when he shall say once more, “Let there
‘be light,” and light shall be.’

Yes. To the man who is a good man and true ; who has any hearty Christian feeling for his fellow-men, and is not merely a selfish superstitious person, caring for nothing but what he calls the safety of his own soul,—to the man, I say, who has anything of the loving spirit of Christ in him, what question can be more important than this, Is the world well made or ill? Is it well governed or ill? Is it on the whole going right, or going wrong? And what can be more comforting to such a man, than the answer which the Bible gives him at the outset?—

This world is well made, in love and care ; for Christ the Lord made it, and behold it was very good.

This world is going right, and not wrong, in spite of all appearances to the contrary ; for Christ the Lord is King. He sitteth between the cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet. He is too

strong, and too loving, to let the world go any way but right. Parts of it will often go wrong here, and go wrong there. The sin and ignorance of men will disturb his order, and rebel against his laws; and strange and mad things, terrible and pitiable things will happen, as they have happened ever since the day when the first man disobeyed the commandment of the Lord. But man cannot conquer the Lord; the Lord will conquer man. He will teach men by their neighbours' sins. He will teach them by their own sins. He will chastise them by sore judgments. He will make fearful examples of wilful and conceited sinners; and those who seem to escape him in this life, shall not escape him in the life to come. But he is trying for ever every man's work by fire; and against that fire no lie will stand. He will burn up the stubble and chaff, and leave only the pure wheat for the use of future generations. His purpose will stand. His word will never return to him void, but will prosper always where he sends it. He has made the round world so sure that it cannot be moved, either by man or by worse than man. His everlasting laws will take effect in spite of all opposition, and bring the world and man along the path, and to the end, which he purposed for them in the day when God made the heavens and the earth,

and in that even greater day, when he said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,' and man arose upright, and knew that he was not as the beasts, and asked who he was, and where? feeling with the hardly opened eyes of his spirit after that Lord from whom he came, and to whom he shall return, as many as have eternal life, in the day when Christ the Lord of life shall have destroyed death, and put all enemies under his feet, and given up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all.

SERMON II.

THE LIKENESS OF GOD.

(Trinity Sunday.)

GENESIS i. 26.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

THIS is a hard saying. It is difficult at times to believe it to be true.

If one looks not at what God has made man, but at what man has made himself, one will never believe it to be true.

When one looks at what man has made himself; at the back streets of some of our great cities; at the thousands of poor Germans and Irish across the ocean bribed to kill and to be killed, they know not why; at the abominable wrongs and cruelties going on in Poland at this moment—the cry whereof is going up to the ears of the God of Hosts, and surely not in vain; when one thinks of all the cries which have gone up in all ages from the victims of man's greed, lust, cruelty, tyranny, and shrillest of all from the tortured victims of his superstition and fanaticism, it is difficult to answer

the sneer—‘ Believe, if you can, that this foolish, ‘ unjust, cruel being called man, is made in the ‘ likeness of God. Man was never made in the ‘ image of God at all. He is only a cunninger sort ‘ of animal, for better for worse—and for worse as ‘ often as for better.’

Another says, not quite that. Man was in the likeness of God once; but he lost that by Adam’s fall, and now he is only an animal with an immortal soul in him, to be lost or saved.

There is more truth in that latter notion than in the former: but if it be quite right; if we did lose the likeness of God at Adam’s fall, how comes the Bible never to say so? How comes the Bible never to say one word on what must have been the most important thing which ever happened to mankind before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?

And how comes it also, that the New Testament says distinctly, that man is still made in the likeness of God? For St. Paul speaks of man, as ‘ the likeness and glory of God.’ And St. James says of the tongue: ‘ Therewith bless we God, even ‘ the Father; and therewith ’ (to our shame) ‘ curse ‘ we men, which are made in the likeness of God.’

But the great proof that man is made in the image and likeness of God, is the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ; for if human nature had been, as some think, something utterly brutish and

devilish, and utterly unlike God, how could God have become man without ceasing to be God? Christ was man of the substance of his mother. That substance had the same human nature as we have. Then if that human nature be evil, what follows? Something which I shall not utter, for it is blasphemy. Christ has taken the manhood into God. Then if manhood be evil, what follows again? Something more which I shall not utter, for it is blasphemy.

But man is made in the image of God; and therefore God, in whose image he is made, could take on himself his own image and likeness, and become perfect man, without ceasing to be perfect God.

Therefore, my friends, it is a comfortable and wholesome doctrine, that man is made in the image of God, and one for which we must thank the Bible. For it is the Bible which has revealed that truth to us, in its very beginning and outset, that we might have, from the first, clear and sound notions concerning man and God. The Bible, I say; for the sacred books of the heathen say most of them nothing thereof.

Man has, in all ages, been tempted, when he looks at his own wickedness and folly, not only to despise himself—which he has good reason enough to do—but to despise his own human nature, and to cry to God, ‘Why hast thou made

‘me thus?’ He has cursed his own human nature. He has said, ‘Surely man is most miserable ‘of all the beasts of the field.’ He has said, ‘I ‘must get rid of my human nature—I must give ‘up wife, family, human life of all kinds, I ‘must go into the deserts and the forests, and ‘there try to forget that I am a man, and become ‘a mere spirit or angel.’ So said the Buddhists of Asia, the deepest thinkers concerning man and God of all the heathens, and so have many said since their time. But so does the Bible not say. It starts by telling us that man is made in God’s likeness, and that therefore his human nature is originally and in itself not a bad, but a perfectly good thing. All that has to be done to it, is to be cured of its diseases; and the Bible declares that it can be cured. Howsoever man may have fallen, he may rise. Howsoever the likeness may be blotted and corrupted, it can be cleansed and renewed. Howsoever it may be perverted and turned right round and away from God and goodness to selfishness and evil, it can be converted, and turned back again to God. Howsoever utterly far gone man may be from original righteousness, still to original righteousness he can return, by the grace of baptism, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

And what in us is the likeness of God? That is a deep question.

Only one answer will I make to it to-day. Whatever in us is, or is not, the likeness of God, at least the sense of right and wrong is; to know right and wrong. So says the Bible itself: 'Behold 'the man is become as one of us, to know good and 'evil.' Not that he got the likeness of God by his fall, of course not, but that he became aware of his likeness, and that in a very painful and common way—by sinning against it; as St. Paul says in one of his deepest utterances, 'By sin is the knowledge of the law.'

And you may see for yourselves how human nature can have God's likeness in that respect, and yet be utterly fallen and corrupt.

For a man may—and indeed every man does—know good and yet be unable to do it, and know evil, and yet be a slave to it, tied and bound with the chains of his sins till the grace of God release him from them.

To know good and evil, right and wrong—to have a conscience, a moral sense—that is the likeness of God of which I wish to preach to-day. Because it is through *that* knowledge of good and evil, and through it alone, that we can know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. It is through our moral sense that God speaks to us; through our sense of right and wrong; through that I say, God speaks to us, whether in reproof or encourage-

ment, in wrath or in love ; to teach us what he is like, and to teach us what he is not like.

To know God.—That is the side on which we must look at this text on Trinity Sunday. If man be made in the image of God, then we may be able to know something at least of God, and of the character of God. If we have the copy, we can guess at least at what the original is like.

From the character, therefore, of every good man, we may guess at something of the character of God. But from the character of Jesus Christ our Lord, who is the very brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person, we may see perfectly—at least perfectly enough for all our needs in this life, and in the life to come—what is the character of God, who made heaven and earth.

I beseech you to remember this—I beseech you to believe this, with your whole hearts, and minds, and souls, and especially just now.

For there are many abroad now, who will tell you, man can know nothing of God.

Answer them : ‘ If your God be a God of whom
‘ I can know nothing, then he is not my God,
‘ the God of the Bible. For he is the God who
‘ has said of old, “ They shall not teach each man
‘ his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall
‘ know Me, from the least unto the greatest.” He

‘ is the God, who, through Jesus Christ our Lord,
‘ accused and blamed the Jews because they did
‘ *not* know him, which if they *could not* know him
‘ would have been no fault of theirs. Of doctrines,
‘ and notions, and systems, it is written, and most
‘ truly, “I know in part, and I prophesy in part,” and
‘ again, “If a man thinketh that he knoweth any-
‘ thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to
‘ know.” But of God it is written, “This is life
‘ eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and
‘ Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.’”

But they will say, man is finite and limited, God is infinite and absolute, and how can the finite comprehend the infinite?

Answer: ‘ Those are fine words: I do not under-
‘ stand them; and I do not care to understand them.
‘ I do not deny that God is infinite and absolute,
‘ though what that means I do not know. But I
‘ find nothing about his being infinite and absolute
‘ in the Bible. I find there that he is righteous,
‘ just, loving, merciful, and forgiving; and that he
‘ is angry, too, and that his wrath is a consuming
‘ fire, and I know well enough what those words
‘ mean, though I do not know what infinite and
‘ absolute mean. So that is what I have to think
‘ of, for my own sake and the sake of all mankind.’

But, they will say, you must not take these words to the letter; man is so unlike God, and God so

unlike man, that God's attributes must be quite different from man's. When you read of God's love, justice, anger, and so forth, you must not think that they are anything like man's love, man's justice, man's anger; but something quite different, not only in degree, but in kind: so that what might be unjust and cruel in man, would not be so in God.

My dear friends, beware of that doctrine; for out of it have sprung half the fanaticism and superstition which has disgraced and tormented the earth. Beware of ever thinking that a wrong thing would be right if God did it, and not you. And mind, that is flatly contrary to the letter of the Bible. In that grand text where Abraham pleads with God, what does he say? Not, 'Of course if Thou choolest to do it, it must be right,' but 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do RIGHT?' Abraham actually refers the Almighty God to his own law; and asserts an eternal rule of right and wrong common to man and to God, which God will surely never break.

Answer: 'If that doctrine be true, which I will never believe, then the Bible mocks and deceives poor miserable sinful man, instead of teaching him. If God's love does not mean real actual love, —God's anger, actual anger,—God's forgiveness, real forgiveness,—God's justice, real justice,—

‘ God’s truth, real truth,—God’s faithfulness, real
‘ faithfulness, what do they mean? Nothing which
‘ I can understand, nothing which I can trust in.
‘ How can I trust in a God whom I cannot under-
‘ stand or know? How can I trust in a love or a
‘ justice which is not what *I* call love or justice,
‘ or anything like them?

‘ The saints of old said, *I know* in whom I have
‘ believed. And how can I believe in him, if there
‘ is nothing in him which I can know; nothing
‘ which is like man,—nothing, to speak plainly,
‘ like Christ, who was perfect man as well as
‘ perfect God? If that be so,—if man can know
‘ nothing really of God, he is indeed most miserable
‘ of all the beasts of the field, for I will warrant
‘ that he can know nothing really of anything else.
‘ And what is left for him, but to remain for this
‘ life, and the life to come, in the outer darkness of
‘ ignorance and confusion, misrule and misery,
‘ wherein is most literally—as one may see in the
‘ history of every heathen nation upon earth—
‘ wailing and gnashing of teeth.

‘ If God’s goodness be not like man’s goodness,
‘ there is no rule of morality left, no eternal
‘ standard of right and wrong. How can I tell
‘ what I ought to do; or what God expects of me;
‘ or when I am right and when I am wrong, if you
‘ take from me the good, plain, old Bible rule, that

‘ man *can* be, and *must* be, like God? The Bible
‘ rule is, that everything good in man must be ex-
‘ actly like something good in God, because it is in-
‘ spired into him by the Spirit of God himself. Our
‘ Lord Jesus, who spoke, not to philosophers or
‘ Scribes and Pharisees, but to plain human beings,
‘ weeping and sorrowing, suffering and sinning, like
‘ us,—told them to be perfect, as our Father in
‘ heaven is perfect, by being good to the unthankful
‘ and the evil. And if man is to be perfect, as his
‘ Father in heaven is perfect, then his Father in
‘ heaven is perfect as man ought to be perfect. He
‘ told us to be merciful as our Father in heaven is
‘ merciful. Then our Father in heaven is merciful
‘ with the same sort of mercy as we ought to show.
‘ We are bidden to forgive others, even as God for
‘ Christ’s sake has forgiven us: then if our forgive-
‘ ness is to be like God’s, God’s forgiveness is like
‘ ours. We are to be true, because God is true:
‘ just, because God is just. How can we be that, if
‘ God’s truth is not like what men call truth,
‘ God’s justice not like what men call justice?

‘ If I give up that rule of right and wrong, I
‘ give up all rules of right and wrong whatsoever.’

No, my friends; if we will seek for God where
he may be found, then we shall know God, whom
truly to know is everlasting life. But we must
not seek for him where he is not, in long words

and notions of philosophy spun out of men's brains, and set up as if they were real things, when words and notions they are, and words and notions they will remain. We must look for God where he is to be found, in the character of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who alone has revealed and unveiled God's character, because he is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person.

What Christ's character was we can find in the Holy Gospels ; and we can find it too, scattered and in parts, in all the good, the holy, the noble, who have aught of Christ's spirit and likeness in them.

Whatsoever is good and beautiful in any human soul, that is the likeness of Christ. Whatsoever thoughts, words, or deeds are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report ; whatsoever is true virtue, whatsoever is truly worthy of praise, that is the likeness of Christ ;—the likeness of him who was full of all purity, all tenderness, all mercy, all self-sacrifice, all benevolence, all helpfulness ; full of all just and noble indignation, also, against oppressors and hypocrites who bound heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, but touched them not themselves with one of their fingers ; who kept the key of knowledge, and neither entered in themselves, or let those who were trying enter in either.

The likeness of an all-noble, all-just, all-gracious,

all-wise, all-good human being ; that is the likeness of Christ, and that, therefore, is the likeness of God who made heaven and earth.

All-good ; utterly and perfectly good, in every kind of goodness which we have ever seen, or can ever imagine—that, thank God, is the likeness and character of Almighty God, in whom we live and move, and have our being. To know that he is that—all-good, is to know his character as far as sinful and sorrowful man need know ; and is not that to know enough ?

The mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity, as set forth so admirably in the Athanasian Creed, is a mystery ; and it we cannot *know* : we can only believe it, and take it on trust : but the *character* of the ever-blessed Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we can know : while by keeping the words of the Athanasian Creed carefully in mind, we may be kept from many grievous and hurtful mistakes which will hinder our knowing it. We can know that they are all good, for such as the Father is such is the Son, and such the Holy Ghost. That goodness is their one and eternal substance, and majesty, and glory, which we must not divide by fancying, with some, that the Father is good in one way and the Son in another. That their goodness is eternal and unchangeable ; for they themselves are eternal, and have neither parts nor passions.

That their goodness is incomprehensible, that is, cannot be bounded or limited by time or space, or by any notions or doctrines of ours, for they themselves are incomprehensible, and able to do abundantly more than we can ask or think.

This is our God, the God of the Bible, the God of the Church, the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ our Lord. And him we can believe utterly, for we know that he is faithful and true; and we know what *that* means, if there is any truth or faithfulness in us. We know that he is just and righteous; and we know what *that* means, if there is any justice and uprightness in ourselves. Him we can trust utterly; to him we can take all our cares, all our sorrows, all our doubts, all our sins, and pour them out to him, because he is condescending; and we know what *that* means, if there be any condescension and real high-mindedness in ourselves. We can be certain, too, that he will hear us, just because he is so great, so majestic, so glorious; because his greatness, and majesty, and glory is a moral and spiritual greatness, which shows itself by stooping to the meanest, by listening to the most foolish, helping the weakest, pitying the worst, even while it is bound to punish. Him we can trust, I say, because him we can know, and can say of him, Let the Infinite and the Absolute mean what they may,

I know in whom I have believed—God the Good. Whatever else I cannot understand, I can at least ‘understand the lovingkindness of the Lord;’ however high his dwelling may be, I know that he humbleth himself to behold the things in heaven and earth, to take the simple out of the dust, and the poor out of the mire. Whatever else God may or may not be, I know that gracious is the Lord, and righteous, yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple, for *I* was in misery, and He helped *me*. Whatsoever fine theories, or new discoveries, I cannot trust, I can trust him, for with him is mercy, and with the Lord is plenteous redemption; and he shall redeem his people from all their sins. However dark and ignorant I may be, I can go to him for teaching, and say, Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee, for thou art my God; let thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness.

The land of righteousness.—The one true heavenly land, wherein God the righteous dwelleth from eternity to eternity, righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, and therefore adorable in all his ways, and glorious in all his works, with a glory even greater than the glory of his Almighty power. On that glory of his goodness we can gaze, though afar off in degree, yet near in kind, while the glory of his wisdom and power is far, far beyond

my understanding. Of the intellect of God we can know nothing; but we can know what is better, the heart of God. For *that* glory of goodness we can understand, and *know*, and sympathize with in our heart of hearts, and say, If *this* be the likeness of God, he is indeed worthy to be worshipped, and had in honour. Praise the Lord, oh my soul, for the Lord is *good*. Kings and all people, princes and all judges of the world, young men and maidens, old men and children, praise the name of the Lord, for his name only is excellent, because his name is *good*. Lift up your eyes, and look upon the face of Christ the God-man, crucified for you; and behold therein the truth of all truths, the doctrine of all doctrines, the gospel of all gospels, that the 'Unknown,' and 'Infinite,' and 'Absolute' God, who made the universe, bids you know him, and know this of him, that he is *good*, and that his express image and likeness is—Jesus Christ, his Son, our Lord.

SERMON III.

THE VOICE OF THE LORD GOD.

(Preached also at the Chapel Royal, St. James. Sexagesima Sunday.)

GENESIS iii. 9.

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

THESE words would startle us, if we heard them for the first time. I do not know but that they may startle us now, often as we have heard them, if we think seriously over them. That God should appear to mortal man, and speak with mortal man. It is most wonderful. It is utterly unlike anything that we have ever seen, or that any person on earth has seen, for many hundred years. It is a miracle, in every sense of the word.

When one compares man as he was then, weak and ignorant, and yet seemingly so favoured by God, so near to God, with man as he is now, strong and cunning, spreading over the earth, and replenishing it; subduing it with railroads and steamships, with agriculture and science, and all strange and crafty inventions, and all the while never visited by any Divine or heavenly appearance, but seemingly left utterly to himself by

God, to go his own way and do his own will upon the earth, one asks with wonder, Can we be Adam's children? Can the God who appeared to Adam, be our God likewise, or has God's plan and rule for teaching man changed utterly?

No. He is one God; the same God yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His will and purpose, his care and rule over man, have not changed.

That is a matter of faith. Of the faith which the holy Church commands us to have. But it need not be a blind or unreasonable faith. That our God is the God of Adam; that the same Lord God who taught him teaches us likewise, need not be a mere matter of faith: it may be a matter of reason likewise; a thing which seems reasonable to us, and recommends itself to our mind and conscience as true.

Consider, my friends, a babe when it comes into the world. The first thing of which it is aware is its mother's bosom. The first thing which it does, as its eyes and ears are gradually opened to this world, is to cling to its parents. It holds fast by their hand, it will not leave their side. It is afraid to sleep alone, to go alone. To them it looks up for food and help. Of them it asks questions, and tries to learn from them, to copy them, to do what it sees them doing, even in play; and the parents in return lavish care and

tenderness on it, and will not let it out of their sight. But after a while, as the child grows, the parents will not let it be so perpetually with them. It must go to school. It must see its parents only very seldom, perhaps it must be away from them weeks or months. And why? Not that the parents love it less: but that it must learn to take care of itself, to act for itself, to think for itself, or it will never grow up to be a rational human being.

And the parting of the child from the parents does not break the bond of love between them. It learns to love them even better. Neither does it break the bond of obedience. The child is away from its parents' eye. But it learns to obey them behind their back; to do their will of its own will; to ask itself—What would my parents wish me to do, were they here? and so learns, if it will think of it, a more true, deep, honourable spiritual obedience, than it ever would if its parents were perpetually standing over it, saying do this, and do that.

In after life that child may settle far away from his father's home. He may go up into the temptations and bustle of some great city. He may cross to far lands beyond the sea. But need he love his parents less? need the bond between them be broken, though he may never set eyes on them

again? God forbid. He may be settled far away, with children, business, interests of his own; and yet he may be doing all the while his father's will. The lessons of God which he learnt at his mother's knee may be still a lamp to his feet and a light to his path. Amid all the bustle and labour of business, his father's face may still be before his eyes, his father's voice still sound in his ears, bidding him be a worthy son to him still; bidding him not to leave that way wherein he should go, in which his parents trained him long, long since. He may feel that his parents are near him in the spirit, though absent in the flesh. Yes, though they may have passed altogether out of this world, they may be to him present and near at hand; and he may be kept from doing many a wrong thing and encouraged to do many a right one, by the ennobling thought, My father would have had it so, my mother would have had it so, had they been here on earth. And though in this world he may never see them again, he may look forward steadily and longingly to the day when, this life's battle over, he shall meet again in heaven those who gave him life on earth.

My friends, if this be the education which is natural and necessary from our earthly parents, made in God's image, appointed by God's eternal

laws for each of us, why should it not be the education which God himself has appointed for mankind? All which is truly human (not sinful or fallen) is an image and pattern of something Divine. May not therefore the training which we find, by the very facts of nature, fit and necessary for our children, be the same as God's training, by which he fashioneth the hearts of the children of men?

Therefore we can believe the Bible when it tells us that so it is. That God began the education of man by appearing to him directly, keeping him, as it were, close to his hand, and teaching him by direct and open revelation. That as time went on, God left men more and more to themselves outwardly: but only that he might raise their minds to higher notions of religion,—that he might make them live by faith, and not merely by sight; and obey him of their own hearty free will, and not merely from fear or wonder. And therefore, in these days, when miraculous appearances have, as far as we know, entirely ceased, yet God is not changed. He is still as near as ever to men; still caring for them, still teaching them; and this very stopping of all miracles, so far from being a sign of God's anger or neglect, is a part of his gracious plan for the training of his Church.

For consider—Man was first put upon this earth,

with all things round him new and strange to him ; seeing himself weak and unarmed before the wild beasts of the forest, not even sheltered from the cold, as they are ; and yet feeling in himself a power of mind, a cunning, a courage, which made him the lord of all the beasts by virtue of his *mind*, though they were stronger than he in body. All that we read of Adam and Eve in the Bible is, as we should expect, the history of *children*,—children in mind, even when they were full-grown in stature. Innocent as children, but, like children, greedy, fanciful, ready to disobey at the first temptation, for the very silliest of reasons ; and disobeying accordingly. Such creatures— with such wonderful powers lying hid in them, such a glorious future before them ; and yet so weak, so wilful, so ignorant, so unable to take care of themselves, liable to be destroyed off the face of the earth by their own folly, or even by the wild beasts around,—surely they needed some special and tender care from God to keep them from perishing at the very outset, till they had learned somewhat how to take care of themselves, what their business and duty were upon this earth. They needed it before they fell ; they needed it still more, and their children likewise, after they fell : and if they needed it, we may trust God that he afforded it to them.

But again. Whence came this strange notion, which man alone has of all the living things which we see, of *Religion*? What put into the mind of man that strange imagination of beings greater than himself, whom he could not always see; but who might appear to him? What put into his mind the strange imagination that these unseen beings were more or less his *masters*? That they had made laws for him which he must obey? That he must honour and worship them, and do them service, in order that they might be favourable to him, and help, and bless, and teach him? All nations, except a very few savages, (and we do not know but that their forefathers had it like the rest of mankind,) have had some such notion as this; some idea of religion, and of a moral law of right and wrong.

Where did they get it?

Where, I ask again, did they get it?

My friends, after much thought I answer, there is no explanation of that question so simple, so rational, so probable, as the one which the text gives.

‘And they heard the voice of the Lord God.’

Some, I know, say that man thought out for himself, in his own reason, the notion of God; that he by searching found out God. But surely that is contrary to all experience. Our experience

is, that men left to themselves forget God ; lose more and more all thought of God, and the unseen world ; believe more and more in nothing but what they can see and taste and handle, and become as the beasts that perish. How then did man, who now is continually forgetting God, contrive to remember God for himself at first ? How, unless God himself showed himself to man ? I know some will say, that mankind invented for themselves false gods at first, and afterwards cleared and purified their own notions, till they discovered the true God. My friends, there is a homely old proverb which will well apply here. If there had been no gold guineas, there would be no brass ones. If men had not first had a notion of a true God, and then gradually lost it, they would not have invented false gods to supply his place. And whence did they get, I ask again, the notion of gods at all ? The simplest answer is in the Bible ;—God taught them. I can find no better. I do not believe a better will ever be found.

And why not ?

Why not ? I ask. To say that God cannot appear to men is simply silly ; for it is limiting God's almighty power. He that made man and all heaven and earth, cannot he show himself to man, if he shall so please ? To say that God will not

appear to man because man is so insignificant, and this earth such a paltry little speck in the heavens, is to limit God's goodness; nay, it is to show that a man knows not what goodness means. What grace, what virtue is there higher than condescension? Then if God be, as he is, perfectly good, must he not be perfectly condescending—ready and willing to stoop to man, and all the more ready and the more willing, the more weak, ignorant, and sinful this man is? In fact, the greater need man has of God, the more certain is it that God will help him in that need.

Yes, my friends, the Bible is the revelation of a God who condescends to men, and therefore descends to men. And the more a man's reason is spiritually enlightened to know the meaning of goodness, and holiness, and justice, and love, the more simple, reasonable, and credible will it seem to him that God at first taught men in the days of their early ignorance, by the only method by which (as far as we can conceive) he could have taught them about himself; namely, by appearing in visible shape, or speaking with audible voice; and just as reasonable and credible, awful and unfathomable mystery though it is, will be the greater news, that that same Lord at last so condescended to man that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary; suffered

under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; and rose the third day, and ascended into heaven. Credible and reasonable, not indeed to the natural man, who looks only at nature, which he can see, and hear, and handle; but credible and reasonable enough to the spiritual man, whose mind has been enlightened by the Spirit of God, to see that the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal; even justice and love, mercy and condescension, the divine order, and the kingdom of the Living God.

And now one word on a matter which is tormenting the minds of many just now. It is often said that all that I have been saying is contrary to science. That this science and understanding of the world around us, which has improved so marvellously in our days, proves that the apparitions and miracles spoken of in the Bible cannot be true; that God, or the angels of God, can never have walked with man in visible shape.

Now, my friends, I do not believe this. I believe the very contrary. I entreat you to set your minds at rest on this point; and to believe (what is certainly true) there is nothing in this new science to contradict the good old creed, that the Lord God of old appeared to his human children. It would take too much time, of

course, to give you my reasons for saying this : and I must therefore ask you to take on trust from me when I tell you solemnly and earnestly that there is nothing in modern science which can, if rightly understood, contradict the glorious words of St. Paul, that God at sundry times and in divers manners spake to the fathers by the prophets, and hath at last spoken unto us by a Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things : by whom also he made the worlds, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholdeth all things by the word of his power : even Jesus Christ, God blessed for ever. Amen.

What, then, shall we think of these things ? Shall we say—‘How much better off were our forefathers than we ! Ah, that we were not left to ourselves ! Ah, that we lived in the good old times when God and his angels walked with men !’

My friends, what says Solomon the Wise?—‘Inquire not why the former times were better than these, for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.’

It is very natural for us to think that we could become more easily good men, more certain of going to heaven, if we saw divine apparitions and heard divine voices. A very natural thought. But *natural* things are not always the best or wisest

things. Spiritual things are surely higher and deeper than natural things. It is natural to wish to see Christ, or some heavenly being, with our natural eyes and senses. But it is spiritual, and therefore better for our souls, to be content to see him by faith, with the spiritual eyes of our heart and mind, to love him with all our heart and mind and soul, to worship him, to put our whole trust in him, to call upon him, to honour his holy name and his word, and to serve him truly all the days of our life.

Natural, indeed, to wish that we were back again in the old times. But we must recollect that these old times were not good times, but bad times, and for that very reason the Lord took pity on them. That they were times of darkness, and therefore it was that the people who sat in great darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death, were allowed to see a great light. And that after that, the fulness of time, the very time which the Lord chose that he might be incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and came down upon this earth in human form, was not a good time. On the contrary, the fulness of time, 1863 years ago, was the very wickedest, most faithless, most unjust time that the world had ever seen,—a time of which St. Paul said that there were none who did good, no, not one; that adders' poison

was under all lips, and all feet swift to shed blood, and that the way of peace none had known.

Better, far better, to live in times like these, in which there is (among Christian nations at least) no great darkness, even though there be no great light; times in which the knowledge of the true God and his Son Jesus Christ is spreading, slowly but surely, over all the earth; and with it, the fruit of the knowledge of the Lord, justice, mercy, charity, fellow-feeling, and a desire to teach and improve all mankind, such as the world never saw before. These are the fruits of the Scriptures of the Lord, and the Sacraments of the Lord, and of the Holy Spirit of the Lord; and if that Holy Spirit be in our hearts, and we yield our hearts to his gracious motions and obey them, then we are really nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ than if we saw him, as Adam did, with our bodily eyes, and yet rebelled against him, as Adam did, in our hearts, and disobeyed him in our actions. Of old the Lord treated men as babes, and showed himself to their bodily eyes, that so they might learn that he was, and that he was near them. But us he treats as grown men, who know that he is, and that he is with us to the end of the world. And if he treats us as men, my friends, let us behave ourselves like men, and not like silly children, who cannot be trusted by

themselves for a moment lest they do wrong or come to harm. Let us obey God, not with eye-service, just as long as we fancy that his eye is on us, but with the deeper, more spiritual, more honourable obedience of faith. Let us obey him for obedience' sake, and honour him for very honour's sake, as the young emigrant in foreign lands obeys and honours the parents whom he will never see again on earth; and let us look forward, like him, to the day when him whom we cannot see on earth we may, perhaps, be permitted to see in heaven, as the reward—and for what higher reward can man wish?—of faith and obedience.

SERMON IV.

NOAH'S FLOOD.

(*Quinquagesima Sunday.*)

GENESIS ix. 13.

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

WE all know the history of Noah's flood. What have we learnt from that history? What were we intended to learn from it? What thoughts should we have about it?

There are many thoughts which we may have. We may think how the flood came to pass; what means God used to make it rain forty days; what is meant by breaking up the fountains of the great deep. We may calculate how large the ark was; and whether the Bible really means that it held all kinds of living things in the world, or only those of Noah's own country, or the animals which had been tamed and made useful to man. We may read long arguments as to whether the flood spread over the whole world, or only over the country where Noah, and the rest of the sons of Adam, then lived. We may puzzle ourselves

concerning the rainbow of which the text speaks. How it was to be a sign of a covenant from God. Whether man had ever seen a rainbow before. Whether there had ever been rain before in Noah's country. Or whether he did not live in that land of which the second chapter of Genesis says, that the Lord had not caused it to rain upon the earth, but there went up a mist from the earth and watered the face of the ground, as it does still in that high land in the centre of Asia, in which old traditions put the garden of Eden, and from which, as far as we yet know, mankind came at the beginning.

We may puzzle our minds with these and a hundred more curious questions, as learned men have done in all ages. But—shall we become really the wiser by so doing? More learned we may become. But being learned and being wise are two different things. True wisdom is that which makes a man a better man. And will such puzzling questions and calculations as these, settle them how we may, make us *better* men? Will they make us more honest and just, more generous and loving, more able to keep our tempers and control our appetites? I cannot see that. Will it make us better men merely to know that there was once a flood of waters on the earth? I cannot see that. If we look at the hills of sand

and gravel round us, a little common sense will show us that there have been many floods of waters on the earth, long, long before the one of which the Bible speaks: but shall we be better men for knowing that either? I cannot see why we should. Now the Bible was sent to make us better men. How then will the history of the flood do that?

Easily enough, my friends, if we will listen to the Bible, and thinking less about the flood itself, think more about him who, so the Bible tells us, sent the flood.

The Bible, I have told you, is the revelation of the living Lord God, even Jesus Christ; who, in his turn, reveals to us The Father. And what we have to think of is, how does this story of the flood reveal, unveil, to us, the living Lord of the world, and his living government thereof? Let us look at the matter in that way, instead of puzzling ourselves with questions of words and endless genealogies which minister strife. Let us look at the matter in that way, instead of (like too many men now, and too many men in all ages) being so busy in picking to pieces the shell of the Bible, that we forget that the Bible has any kernel, and so let it slip through our hands. Let us look at the matter in that way, as a revelation of the living God, and then we shall find the history of

the flood full of godly doctrine, and profitable for these times, and for all times whatsoever.

God sent a flood on the earth.

True; but the important matter is, that *God* sent it.

God set the rainbow in the cloud, for a token.

True. But the important matter is that *God* set it there.

Important? Yes. What more important than to know that the flood did not come of itself, that the rainbow did not come of itself, and therefore that no flood comes of itself, no rainbow comes of itself; nothing comes of itself, but all comes straight and immediately from the one Living Lord God?

A man may say—But the flood must have been caused by clouds and rain; and there must have been some special natural cause for their falling at that place and that time?

What of that?

Or that the fountains of the great deep must have been broken up by natural earthquakes, such as break up the crust of the earth now.

What of that?

Or that the rainbow must have been caused by the sun's rays shining through rain-drops at a certain angle, as all rainbows are now. What of that? Very probably it was: but if not—What of that?

What we ought to know, and what we ought to care for is, what the Bible tells us without a doubt, that however they came, God sent them. However they were made, God made them. Their manner, their place, their time was appointed exactly by God for a *moral* purpose. To do something for the immortal souls of men; to punish sinners; to preserve the righteous; to teach Noah and his children after him a moral lesson, concerning righteousness and sin—concerning the wrath of God against sin—concerning God, that he governs the world and all in it, and does not leave the world, or mankind, to go on of themselves and by themselves.

You see, I trust, what a message this was, and is, and ever will be for men; what a message and good news it must have been especially for the heathen of old time.

For what would the heathen, what actually did the heathen think about such sights as a flood, or a rainbow?

They thought of course that some one sent the flood. Common sense taught them that.

But what kind of person must he be, thought they, who sent the flood? Surely a very dark, terrible, angry God, who was easily and suddenly provoked to drown their cattle and flood their lands.

But the rainbow, so bright and gay, the sign of

coming fine weather, could not belong to the same God who made the flood. What the fancies of the heathen about the rainbow were, matters little to us: but they fancied, at least, that it belonged to some cheerful, bright, and kind God. And so with other things. Whatever was bright, and beautiful, and wholesome in the world, like the rainbow, belonged to kind gods; whatever was dark, ugly, and destroying, like the flood, belonged to angry gods.

Therefore, those of the heathen who were religious, never felt themselves safe. They were always afraid of having offended some god, they knew not how; always afraid of some god turning against them, and bringing diseases against their bodies; floods, drought, blight, against their crops; storms against their ships, in revenge for some slight or neglect of theirs.

And all the while they had no clear notion that these gods made the world; they thought that the gods were parts of the world, just as men are, and that beyond the gods there was some sort of Fate, or necessity, which even the gods must obey.

Do you not see now what a comfort—what a spring of hope, and courage, and peace of mind, and patient industry—it must have been to the men of old time to be told, by this story of the flood, that the God who sends the flood sends the rain-

bow also? There are not two gods, nor many gods, but one God, of whom are all things. Light and darkness, storm or sunshine, barrenness or wealth, come alike from him. Diseases, storm, flood, blight, all these show that there is in God an awfulness, a sternness, an anger if need be—a power of destroying his own work, of altering his own order; but sunshine, fruitfulness, peace, and comfort, all show that love and mercy, beauty and order, are just as much attributes of his essence as awfulness and anger.

They tell us he is a God whose will is to love, to bless, to make his creatures happy, if they will allow him. They tell us that his anger is not a capricious, revengeful, proud, selfish anger, such as that of the heathen gods: but that it is an orderly anger, a just anger, a loving anger, and therefore an anger which in its wrath can remember mercy. Out of God's wrath shineth love, as the rainbow out of the storm; if it repenteth him that he hath made man, it is only because man is spoiling and ruining himself, and wasting the gifts of the good world by his wickedness. If he see fit to destroy man out of the earth, he will destroy none but those who deserve and need destroying. He will save those whom, like Noah, he can trust to begin afresh, and raise up a better race of men to do his work in the world. If God send a

flood to destroy all living things, any when or anywhere, he will show, by putting the rainbow in the cloud, that floods and destruction and anger are not his rule; that his rule is sunshine, and peace, and order; that though he found it necessary once to curse the ground, once to sweep away a wicked race of men, yet that even that was, if one dare use the words of God, against his gracious will; that his will was from the beginning peace on earth, and not floods, and good will to men, and not destruction; and that in his *heart*, in the abyss of his essence, and of which it is written, that God is Love—in his heart I say, he said, ‘I will not again curse the ground
‘ any more for man’s sake, even though the imagi-
‘ nation of man’s heart is evil from his youth.
‘ Neither will I again smite everything living, as I
‘ have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-
‘ time and harvest, summer and winter, and day
‘ and night, shall not cease.’

This is the God which the book of Genesis goes on revealing and unveiling to us more and more,—a God in whom men may *trust*.

The heathen could not trust their gods. The Bible tells men of a God whom they can trust. That is just the difference between the Bible and all other books in the world. But what a difference! Difference enough to make us say—Sooner

that every other book in the world were lost, and the Bible preserved, than that we should lose the Bible, and with the Bible lose faith in God.

And now, my friends, what shall we learn from this?

What shall we learn? Have we not learnt enough already? If we have learnt something more of who God is—if we have learnt that he is a God in whom we can trust through joy and sorrow, through light and darkness, through life and death—have we not learnt enough for ourselves? Yes, if even those poor and weak words about God which I have just spoken, could go home into all your hearts, and take root, and bear fruit there, they would give you a peace of mind, a comfort, a courage among all the chances and changes of this mortal life, and a hope for the life to come, such as no other news which man can tell you will ever give. But there is one special lesson which we may learn from the history of the flood, of which I may as well tell you at once. The Bible account of the flood will teach us how to look at the many terrible accidents, as we foolishly call them, which happen still upon this earth. There are floods still, here and there, earthquakes, fires, fearful disasters, like that great colliery disaster of last year, which bring death, misery, and ruin to thousands. The Bible tells us

what to think of them, when it tells us of the flood.

Do I mean that these disasters come as punishments to the people who are killed by them? That is exactly what I do *not* mean. It was true of the flood. It is true, no doubt, in many other cases. But our blessed Lord has specially forbidden *us* to settle when it is true to say that any particular set of people are destroyed for their sins: forbidden *us* to say that the poor creatures who perish in this way are worse than their neighbours.

'Thinkest thou,' he says, 'that those Galilæans
' whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices,
' were sinners above all the Galilæans? Or those
' eighteen, on whom the tower in Siloam fell, and
' killed them; think you that they were sinners
' above all who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay.'

'Judge not,' he says, 'and ye shall not be
' judged,' and therefore we must not judge. We have no right to say, for instance, that the terrible earthquake in Italy, two years ago, came as a punishment for the sins of the people. We have no right to say that the twenty or thirty thousand human beings, with innocent children among them by hundreds, who were crushed or swallowed up by that earthquake in a few hours, were sinners above all that dwelt in Italy. We must not say that, for the Lord God himself has forbidden it.

But this we may say (for God himself has said it in the Bible), that these earthquakes, and all other disasters, great or small, do not come of themselves—do not come by accident, or chance, or blind necessity; but that he *sends* them, and that they fulfil his will and word. He sends them, and therefore they do not come in vain. They fulfil his will, and his will is a good will. They carry out his purpose, but his purpose is a gracious purpose. God may send them in anger; but in his anger he remembers mercy, and his very wrath to some, is part and parcel of his love to the rest. Therefore these disasters must be meant to do good, and will do good, to mankind. They may be meant to teach men, to warn them, to make them more wise and prudent for the future, more humble and aware of their own ignorance and weakness, more mindful of the frailty of human life, that remembering that in the midst of life we are in death, they may seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. They may be meant to do that, and to do a thousand things more. For God's ways are not as our ways, or his thoughts as our thoughts. His ways are unsearchable, and his paths past finding out. Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him, or even settle what the Lord means by doing this or that?

All we can say is,—and that is a truly blessed thing to be able to say,—that floods and earthquakes, fire and storms, come from the Lord whose name is Love; the same Lord who walked with Adam in the garden, who brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, who was born on earth of the Virgin Mary, who shed his lifeblood for sinful man, who wept over Jerusalem even when he was about to destroy it so that not one stone was left on another, and who, when he looked on the poor little children of Judæa, untaught or mistaught, enslaved by the Romans, and but too likely to perish or be carried away captive in the fearful war which was coming on their land, said of them, ‘It is not the will of your Father in heaven, that one of these little ones shall perish.’ Him at least we can trust, in the dark and dreadful things of this world, as well as in the bright and cheerful ones; and say with Job, ‘Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. I have received good from the hands of the Lord, and shall I not receive evil?’

SERMON V.

ABRAHAM.

(First Sunday in Lent.)

GENESIS xvii. 1, 2.

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

I HAVE told you that the Bible reveals, that is, unveils, the Lord God, Jesus Christ our Lord, and through him God the Father Almighty. I have tried to show you how the Bible does so, step by step. I go on to show you another step which the Bible takes, and which explains much that has gone before.

From whom did Moses and the holy men of old whom Moses taught get their knowledge of God, the true God?

The answer seems to be—from Abraham.

God taught Moses more, much more than he taught Abraham. It was Moses who bade men

call God Jehovah, the I Am : but who hundreds of years before taught them to call him the Almighty God ?

The answer seems to be—Abraham. God, we read, appeared to Abraham, and said to him, ‘Get thee out of thy country, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I shall show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation.’ And again the Lord said to him, ‘I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be thou perfect, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.’

‘And Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God.’

But from what did Abraham turn to worship the living God ? From idols ? We are not certain. There is little or no mention of idols in Abraham’s time. He worshipped, more probably, the host of heaven, the sun and moon and stars. So say the old traditions of the Arabs, who are descended from Abraham through Ishmael, and so it is most likely to have been. That was the temptation in the East. You read again and again how his children, the Jews, turned back from God to worship the host of heaven ; and that false worship seems to have crept in at some very early time. The sun, you must remember, and the moon are far more brilliant and powerful in the East than

here,—their power of doing harm or good to human beings and to the crops of the land is far greater; while the stars shine in the East with a brightness of which we here have no notion. We do not know, in this cloudy climate, what St. Paul calls the glory of the stars; nor see how much one star differs from another star in glory; and therefore here in the North we have never been tempted to worship them as the Easterns were. The sun, the moon, the stars, were the old gods of the East, the Elohim, the high and mighty ones, who ruled over men, over their good or bad fortunes, over the weather, the cattle, the crops, sending burning drought, pestilence, sun-strokes, and those moon-strokes which we never have here; but of which the Psalmist speaks when he says ‘The sun shall not smite thee by day, neither the moon by night.’ And them the old Easterns worshipped in some wild confused way.

But to Abraham it was revealed that the sun, the moon, and the stars were not Elohim: the high and mighty Ones. That there was but one Elohim, one high and mighty One, the Almighty maker of them all. He did not learn that, perhaps, at once. Indeed the Bible tells us how God taught him step by step, as he teaches all men, and revealed himself to him again and again, till he had taught Abraham all that he was to know.

But he did teach him this; as a beautiful old story of the Arabs sets forth. They say how (whether before or after God called him, we cannot tell) Abraham at night saw a star: and he said, 'This is my Lord.' But when the star set, he said, 'I like not those who vanish 'away.' And when he saw the moon rising, he said, 'This is my Lord.' But when the moon too set, he said, 'Verily, if my Lord direct me not in 'the right way, I shall be as one who goeth astray.' But when he saw the sun rising, he said, 'This is 'my Lord: this is greater than star or moon.' But the sun went down likewise. Then said Abraham, 'Oh my people, I am clear of these things. I 'turn my face to him who hath made the heaven 'and the earth.'

And was this all that Abraham believed—that the sun, and moon, and stars were not gods, but that there was a God besides, who had made them all? My friends, there have been thousands, and tens of thousands, I fear, since, who have believed as much as that, and yet who cannot call Abraham their spiritual father, who are not justified by faith with faithful Abraham.

For merely to believe that, is a dead faith, which will never be counted for righteousness, because it will never make man a righteous man, doing righteous and good deeds as Abraham did.

Of Abraham it is written, that what he knew he did. That his faith wrought with his works. And by his works his faith was made perfect. That when he gained faith in God, he went and acted on his faith. When God called him he went out, not knowing whither he went.

His faith is only shown by his works. Because he believed in God he went and did things which he would not have done if he had not believed in God. Of him it is written, that he obeyed the voice of the Lord, and kept his charge, his commandments, his statutes, and his laws.

In a word, he had not merely found out that there was one God, but that that one God was a good God, a God whom he must obey, and obey by being a good man. Therefore his faith was counted to him for righteousness, because it *was* righteousness, and made him do righteous deeds.

He believed that God was helping him; therefore he had no need to oppress or overreach any man. He believed that God's eye was on him; therefore he dared not oppress or overreach any man.

His faith in God made him brave. He went forth he knew not whither: but he had put his trust in God, and he did not fear. He, and his three hundred slaves, born in his house, were not afraid to set out against the four Arab

kings who had just conquered the five kings of the vale of Jordan, and plundered the whole land. Abraham and his little party of faithful slaves follow them for miles, and fall on them, and defeat them utterly, setting the captives free, and bringing back all the plunder; and then, in return for all that he has done, Abraham will take nothing—not even, he says, ‘a thread or a shoe-latchet—lest men should say we have made ‘Abraham rich.’ And why?

Because his faith in God made him high-minded, generous, and courteous; as when he bids Lot go whither he will with his flocks and herds. ‘Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me. If thou wilt take the left hand, I will go to the right.’ He is then, as again with the king of Sodom, and with the three strangers at the tent door, and with the children of Heth, when he is buying the cave of Machpelah for a burying-place for Sarah—always and everywhere the same courteous, self-restrained, high-bred, high-minded man.

It has been said that true religion will make a man a more thorough gentleman than all the courts in Europe. And it is true: you may see simple labouring men as thorough gentlemen as any duke, simply because they have learned to fear God; and fearing him, to restrain themselves, and to think of other people more than of themselves,

which is the very root and essence of all good breeding. And such a man was Abraham of old—a plain man, dwelling in tents, helping to tend his own cattle, fetching in the calf from the field himself, and dressing it for his guests with his own hand; but still, as the children of Heth said of him, a mighty prince—not merely in wealth of flocks and herds, but a prince in manners and a prince in heart.

But faith in God did more for Abraham than this: it made him a truly pious man—it made him the friend of God.

There were others in Abraham's days who had some knowledge of the one true God. Lot his nephew, Abimelech, Aner, Eshcol, Mamre, and others, seem to have known whom Abraham meant when he spoke of the Almighty God. But of Abraham alone it is said that he believed God; that he trusted in God, and rested on him; was built up on God; rested on God as a child in the mother's arms—for this, we are told, is the full meaning of the word in the Bible—and looked to God as his shield and his exceeding great reward. He trusted in God utterly, and it was counted to him for righteousness.

And of Abraham alone it is said that he was the friend of God; that God spoke with him, and he with God. He first of all men of whom we

read, at least since the time of Adam, knew what communion with God meant; knew that God spoke to him as a friend, a benefactor, a preserver, who was teaching and training him with a father's love and care; and felt that he in return could answer God, could open his heart to him, tell him not only of his wants, but of his doubts and fears.

Yes, we may almost say, on the strength of the Bible, that Abraham was the first human being, as far as we know, who prayed with his heart and soul; who knew what true prayer means—the prayer of the heart, by which man draws near to God, and finds that God is near to him. This—this communion with God, is the especial glory of Abraham's character. This it is which has given him his name through all generations, The friend of God. Or, as his descendants the Arabs call him to this day, simply, “The Friend.”

This it is which gained him the name of the Father of the Faithful; the father of all who believe, whether they be descended from him, or whether they be, like us, of a different nation. This it is which has made a wise man say of Abraham, that if we will consider what he knew and did, and in what a dark age he lived, we shall see that Abraham may be (unless we except Moses) the greatest of mere human beings—that

the human race may owe more to him than to any mortal man.

But why need we learn from Abraham? we who, being Christians, know and believe the true faith so much more clearly than Abraham could do.

Ah, my friends, it is easier to know than to believe, and easier to know than to do. Easier to talk of Abraham's faith than to have Abraham's faith. Easier to preach learned and orthodox sermons about how Abraham was justified by his faith, than to be justified ourselves by our own faith.

And say not in your hearts, 'It was easy for Abraham to believe God. I should have believed of course in his place. If God spoke to me, of course I should obey him.' My friends, there is no greater and no easier mistake. God has spoken to many a man who has not believed him, neither obeyed him, and so he may to you. God spoke to Abraham, and he believed him and obeyed him. And why? Because there was in Abraham's heart something which there is not in all men's hearts—something which *answered* to God's call, and made him certain that the call was from God—even the Holy Spirit of God.

So God may call you, and you may obey him, if only the Spirit of God be in you; but not else. *May* call you, did I say? God *does* call you and

me, does speak to us, does command us, far more clearly than he did Abraham. We know the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was *not* made known to the sons of men as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his *Son*, Jesus Christ our Lord, and told us our duty, and the reward which doing our duty will surely bring, far more clearly than ever he did to Abraham.

But do we listen to him? Do we say with Abraham, ‘Oh, my people, I am clear of all these ‘things which rise and set, which are born and die, ‘which begin and end in time, and turn my face to ‘him that made heaven and earth!’ If so, how is it that we see people everywhere worshipping not idols of wood and stone, but other things, all manner of things beside God, and saying, ‘These are ‘my Elohim. These are the high and mighty ones ‘whom I must obey. These are the strong things ‘on which depend my fortune and my happiness. ‘I must obey *them* first, and let plain doing right ‘and avoiding wrong come after as it can.’

One worships the laws of trade, and says, ‘I ‘know this and that is hardly right: but it is in ‘the way of business, and therefore I must do it.’

One worships public opinion, and follows after

the multitude to do evil, doing what he knows is wrong, simply because others do it, and it is the way of the world.

One worships the interest of his party, whether in religion or in politics; and does for their sake mean and false, cruel and unjust things, which he would not do for his own private interest.

Too many, even in a free country, worship great people, and put their trust in princes, saying, 'I am sorry to have to do this. I know it is rather mean; but I must, or I shall lose such and such a great man's interest and favour.' Or, 'I know I cannot afford this expense; but if I do not I shall not get into good society, and this person and that will not ask me to his house.'

All, meanwhile, except a few, rich or poor, worship money; and believe more or less, in spite of the Lord's solemn warning to the contrary, that a man's life does consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

These are the Elohim of this world, the high and mighty things to which men turn for help instead of to the living God, who was before all things, and will be after them; and behold they vanish away, and where then are those that have put their trust in them?

But blessed is he whose trust is in God the Almighty, and whose hope is in the Lord Jehovah,

the eternal I Am. Blessed is he who, like faithful Abraham, says to his family, 'My people, I am clear of all these things. I turn my face from them to him who hath made earth and heaven. I go through this world, like Abraham, not knowing whither I go; but, like Abraham, I fear not, for I go whither God sends me. I rest on God; he is my defence, and my exceeding great reward. To have known him, loved him, obeyed him, is reward enough, even if I do not, as the world would say, succeed in life. Therefore I long not for power and honour, riches and pleasure. I am content to do my duty faithfully in that station of life to which God has called me, and to be forgiven for all my failings and shortcomings for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, and that is enough for me; for I believe in my Father in heaven, and believe that he knows best for me and for my children. He has not promised me, as he promised Abraham, to make of me a great nation; but he has promised that the righteous man shall never be deserted, or his children beg their bread. He has promised to keep his covenant and mercy to a thousand generations with those who keep his commandments and do them; and that is enough for me. In God have I put my trust, and I will not fear what man, or earth, or heaven, or any created thing, can do unto me.'

Blessed is that man, whether he inherit honourably great estates from his ancestors, or whether he make honourably great wealth and station for himself; whether he spend his life quietly and honestly in the country farm or in the village shop, or whether he simply earn his bread from week to week by plough and spade. Blessed is he, and blessed are his children after him. For he is a son of Abraham; and of him God hath said, as of Abraham, ‘I know him that he will command his children and household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring on him the blessing which he has spoken.’

Yes; blessed is that man. He has chosen his share of Abraham’s faith; and he, and his children after him, shall have their share of Abraham’s blessing.

SERMON VI.

JACOB AND ESAU.

(*Second Sunday in Lent.*)

GENESIS xxv. 29—34.

And Jacob sod pottage : and Esau came from the field and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage ; for I am faint : therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die : and what profit shall this birthright do to me ? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day ; and he sware unto him : and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles ; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way : thus Esau despised his birthright.

I HAVE been telling you of late that the Bible is the revelation of God. But how does the story of Jacob and Esau reveal God to us ? What further lesson concerning God do we learn therefrom ?

I think that, if we will take the story simply as it stands, we shall see easily enough. For it is all simple and natural enough. Jacob and Esau, we shall see, were men of like passions with

ourselves ; men as we are, mixed up of good and evil, sometimes right and sometimes wrong : and God rewarded them when they did right, and punished them when they did wrong, just as he does with us now.

They were men, though, of very different characters : we may see men like them now every day round us. Esau, we read, was a hunter—a man of the field ; a bold, fierce, active man ; generous, brave, and kind-hearted, as the end of his story shows : but with just the faults which such a man would have. He was hasty, reckless, and fond of pleasure ; passionate, too, and violent. Have we not seen just such men again and again, and liked them for what was good in them, and been sorry, too, that they were not more sober and reasonable, and true to themselves ?

Jacob was the very opposite kind of man. He was a plain man—what we call a still, solid, prudent, quiet man—and a dweller in tents : he lived peaceably, looking after his father's flocks and herds ; while Esau liked better the sport and danger of hunting wild beasts, and bringing home venison to his father.

Now Jacob, we see, was of course a more thoughtful man than Esau. He kept more quiet ; and so had more time to think : and he had plainly thought a great deal over God's promise to his

grandfather Abraham. He believed that God had promised Abraham that he would make his seed as the sand of the sea for multitude, and give them that fair land of Canaan, and that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed; and that seemed to him, and rightly, a very grand and noble thing. And he set his heart on getting that blessing for himself, and supplanting his elder brother Esau, and being the heir of the promises in his stead. Well,—that was mean, and base, and selfish perhaps: but there is somewhat of an excuse for Jacob's conduct, in the fact that he and Esau were twins; that in one sense neither of them was older than the other. And you must recollect, that it was not at all a regular custom in the East for the eldest son to be his father's heir, as it is in England. You find that few or none of the great kings of the Jews were eldest sons. The custom was not kept up as it is here. So Jacob may have said to himself, and not have been very wrong in saying it:—

‘I have as good a right to the birthright as
‘Esau. My father loves him best because he brings
‘him in venison; but I know the value of the
‘honour which is before my family. Surely the
‘one of us who cares most about the birthright
‘will be most fit to have it, and ought to have it;
‘and Esau cares nothing for it, while I do.’

So Jacob, in his cunning bargaining way, took advantage of his brother's weak hasty temper, and bought his birthright of him, as the text tells.

That story shows us what sort of a man Esau was; hasty, careless, fond of the good things of this life. He had no reason to complain if he lost his birthright. He did not care for it, and so he had thrown it away. Perhaps he forgot what he had done; but his sin found him out—as our sins are sure to find each of us out. The day came when he wanted his birthright, and could not have it, and found no place for repentance—that is, no chance of undoing what he had done—though he sought it carefully with tears. He had sown, and he must reap: he had made his bed, and he must lie on it. And so must Jacob, in his turn.

Now this, I think, is just what the story teaches us concerning God. God chooses Abraham's family to grow into a great nation, and to be a peculiar people. The next question will be: If God favours that family, will he do unjust things to help them?—will he let them do unjust things to help themselves? The Bible answers positively, No. God will not be unjust, or arbitrary in choosing one man and rejecting another. If he chooses Jacob, it is because Jacob is fit for the work which God wants done. If he rejects Esau, it is because Esau is not fit.

It is natural, I know, to pity poor Esau ; but one has no right to do more. One has no right to fancy for a moment that God was arbitrary or hard upon him. Esau is not the sort of man to be the father of a great nation, or of anything else great. Greedy, passionate, reckless people like him, without due feeling of religion or of the unseen world, are not the men to govern the world, or help it forward, or be of use to mankind, or train up their families in justice, and wisdom, and piety. If there had been no people in the world but people like Esau, we should be savages at this day, without religion or civilization of any kind. They are of the earth, earthy ; dust they are, and unto dust they will return. It is men like Jacob whom God chooses,—men who have a feeling of religion and the unseen world ; men who can look forward, and live by faith, and form plans for the future,—and carry them out, too, against disappointment and difficulty, till they succeed.

Look at one side of Jacob's character—his perseverance. He serves seven years for Rachel, because he loves her. Then when he is cheated, and Leah given him instead, he serves seven years more for Rachel,—‘and they seemed to him a ‘short time, for the love he bore to her ;’ and then he serves seven years more for the flocks and herds. A slave, or little better than a slave, of his

own free will, for one-and-twenty years, to get what he wanted. Those are the men whom God uses, and whom God prospers. Men with deep hearts and strong wills, who set their minds on something which they cannot see, and work steadfastly for it—till they get it; for God gives it to them in good time—when patience has had her perfect work upon their characters, and made them fit for success.

Esau, we find, got some blessing—the sort of blessing he was fit for. He loved his father, and he was rewarded. ‘And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.’

He was a brave, generous-hearted man, in spite of his faults. He was to live the free hunter’s life which he loved; and we find that he soon became the head of a wild powerful tribe, and his sons after him. Dukes of Edom they were called for several generations; but they never rose to any solid and lasting power; they never became a great nation, as Jacob’s children did. They were just what one would expect—wild, unruly, violent people. They have long since perished utterly off the face of the earth.

And what did Jacob get, who so meanly bought the birthright, and cheated his father out of the blessing? Trouble in the flesh; vanity and vexation of spirit. He had to flee from his father's house; never to see his mother again; to wander over the deserts to kinsmen, who cheated him as he had cheated others; to serve Laban for twenty-one years; to crouch miserably, in fear and trembling, as a petitioner for his life before Esau whom he had wronged—and to be made more ashamed than ever, by finding that generous Esau had forgiven and forgotten all. Then to see his daughter brought to shame, his sons murderers, plotting against their own brother, his favourite son; to see his grey hairs going down with sorrow to the grave; to confess to Pharaoh, after 120 years of life, that few and evil had been the days of his pilgrimage.

Then did his faith in God win no reward? Not so. That was his reward, to be chastened and punished, till his meanness was purged out of him. He had taken God for his guide; and God did guide him accordingly; though along a very different path from what he expected. God accepted his faith, delivered his soul, gave him rest and peace at last in his old age in Egypt, let him find his son Joseph again in power and honour: but all along God punished his own inventions—

as he will punish yours and mine, my friends, all the while that he may be accepting our faith and delivering our souls, because we trust in him. So God rewarded Jacob by giving him more light: by not leaving him to himself, and his own darkness and meanness, but opening his eyes to understand the wondrous things of God's law, and showing him how God's law is everlasting, righteous, not to be escaped by any man; how every action brings forth its appointed fruit; how those who sow the wind will reap the whirlwind. Jacob's first notion was, like the notion of the heathen in all times, 'My God has a special favour for me, therefore I may do what I like. He will prosper me in doing wrong; he will help me to cheat my father.' But God showed him that that was just not what he would do for him. He would help and protect him; but only while he was doing RIGHT. God would not alter his moral laws for him or any man. God would be just and righteous; and Jacob must be so likewise, till he learnt to trust, not merely in a God who happened to have a special favour to him, but in the righteous God who loves justice, and wishes to make men righteous even as he is righteous, and will make them righteous, if they trust in him.

That was the reward of Jacob's faith—the best reward which any man can have. He was taught

to know God, whom truly to know is everlasting life. And this, it seems to me, is the great revelation concerning God which we learn from the history of Jacob and Esau. That God, how much soever favour he may show to certain persons, is still, essentially and always, a *just* God.

And now, my friends, if any of you are tempted to follow Jacob's example, take warning betimes. You will be tempted. There are men among you—there are in every congregation—who are, like Jacob, sober, industrious, careful, prudent men, and fairly religious too; men who have the good sense to see that Solomon's proverbs are true, and that the way to wealth and prosperity is to fear God, and keep his commandments.

May you prosper; may God's blessing be upon your labour; may you succeed in life, and see your children well settled, and thriving round you, and go down to the grave in peace.

But never forget, my good friends, that you will be tempted as Jacob was—to be dishonest. I cannot tell why; but professedly religious men, in all countries, in all religions, are, and always have been, tempted in that way—to be mean, and cunning, and false at times. It is so, and there is no denying it: when all other sins are shut out from them by their religious profession, and their care for their own character, and their fear of hell, the sin of lying,

for some strange reason, is left open to them ; and to it they are tempted to give way. For God's sake—for the sake of Christ, who was full of grace and truth—for your own sakes—struggle against that. Unless you wish to say at last, with poor old Jacob, 'Few and evil have been the days of my 'pilgrimage;' struggle against that. If you fear God, and believe that he is with you, God will prosper your plans and labour : but never make that an excuse for saying in your hearts, like Jacob, 'God intends that I should have these 'good things ; therefore I may take them for myself by unfair means.' The birthright is yours. It is you, the steady, prudent, godfearing ones, who will prosper on the earth, and not poor wild hotheaded Esau. But do not make that an excuse for robbing and cheating Esau, because he is not as thoughtful as you are. The Lord made him as well as you ; and died for him as well as for you ; and wills his salvation as well as yours ; and if you cheat him the Lord will avenge him speedily. If you give way to meanness, covetousness, falsehood, as Jacob did, you will rue it ; the Lord will enter into judgment with you quickly, and all the more quickly because he loves you. Because there is some right in you—because you are on the whole on the right road—the Lord will visit you with disappointment and affliction, and

make your own sins your punishment. If you deceive other people, other people shall deceive you, as they did Jacob. If you lay traps, you shall fall into them yourselves, as Jacob did. If you fancy that because you trust in God, God will overlook any sin in you, as Jacob did, you shall see, as Jacob did, that your sin shall surely find you out. The Lord will be more sharp and severe with you than with Esau. And why? Because he has given you more, and requires more of you; and therefore he will chastise you, and sift you like wheat, till he has parted the wheat from the tares. The wheat is your faith, your belief that if you trust in God he will prosper you, body and soul. That is God's good seed, which he has sown in you. The tares are your fancies that you may do wrong and mean things to help yourselves, because God has an especial favour for you. That is the devil's sowing, which God will burn out of you by the fire of affliction, as he did out of Jacob, and keep your faith safe, as good seed in his garner, for the use of your children after you, that you may teach them to walk in God's commandments, and serve him in spirit and in truth. For God is a God of truth, and no liar shall stand in his sight, let him be never so religious; he requires truth in the inward parts, and truth he will have; and whom

he loves he will chasten, as he chastened Jacob of old, till he has made him understand that honesty is the best policy; and that whatever false prophets may tell you, there is not one law for the believer and another for the unbeliever; but whatsoever a man sows, that shall he reap, and receive the due reward of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil.

SERMON VII.

JOSEPH.

(Preached on the Sunday before the Wedding of the Prince of Wales.) March 8th, third Sunday in Lent.

GENESIS xxxix. 9.

How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

THE story of Joseph is one which will go home to all healthy hearts. Every child can understand, every child can feel with it. It is a story for all men, and all times. Even if it had not been true—and not real fact, but a romance of man's invention, it would have been loved and admired by men; far more then, when we know that it is true, that it actually did so happen; that it is part and parcel of the Holy Scriptures.

We all, surely, know the story—How Joseph's brethren envy him, and sell him for a slave into Egypt—how there for a while he prospers—how his master's wife tempts him—how he is thrown into prison on her slander—how there again he prospers—how he explains the dreams of Pharaoh's servants—how he lies long forgotten in the prison—how at last Pharaoh sends for him to interpret

a dream for him, and how he rises to power and great glory—how his brothers come down to Egypt to buy corn, and how they find him lord of all the land—how subtilly he tries them to see if they have repented of their old sin—how his heart yearns over them in spite of all their wickedness to him—how at last he reveals himself, and forgives them utterly, and sends for his poor old father Jacob down into Egypt. Whosoever does not delight in that story, simply as a story, whenever he hears it read, cannot have a wholesome human heart in him.

But why was this story of Joseph put into Holy Scripture, and at such length, too? It seems, at first sight, to be simply a family history—the story of brothers and their father; it seems, at first sight, to teach us nothing concerning our redemption and salvation; it seems, at first sight, not to reveal anything fresh to us concerning God; it seems, at first sight, not to be needed for the general plan of the Bible history. It tells us, of course, how the Israelites first came into Egypt, and that was necessary for us to know. But the Bible might have told us that in ten verses. Why has it spent upon the story of Joseph and his brethren, not ten verses, but ten chapters?

Now we have a right to ask such questions as

these, if we do not ask them out of any carping, fault-finding spirit, trying to pick holes in the Bible, from which God defend us and all Christian men. If we ask such questions in faith and reverence; that is, believing and taking for granted that the Bible is right, and respecting it, as the Book of books, in which our own forefathers, and all Christian nations upon earth for many ages, have found all things necessary for their salvation—if, I say, we question over the Bible in that childlike, simple, respectful spirit, which is the true spirit of wisdom and understanding, by which our eyes will be truly opened to see the wondrous things of God's law,—then we may not only seek as our Lord bade us, but we shall find, as our Lord prophesied that we should. We shall find some good reason for this story of Joseph being so long, and find that the story of Joseph, like all the rest of the Bible, reveals a new lesson to us concerning God, and the character of God.

I said that the story of Joseph looks, at first sight, to be merely a family history. But suppose that that were the very reason why it is in the Bible, because it is a family history. Suppose that families were very sacred things in the eyes of God. That the ties of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, were ap-

pointed, not by man, but by God. Then would not Joseph's story be worthy of being in the Bible? Would it not, as I said it would, reveal something fresh to us concerning God, and the character of God?

Consider now, my friends. Is it not one great difference—one of the very greatest—between men and beasts, that men live in families, and beasts do not? That men have the sacred family feeling, and beasts have not? They have the beginnings of it, no doubt. The mother, among beasts, feels love to her children, but only for a while. God has implanted in her something of that deepest, holiest, purest of all feelings—a mother's love. But as soon as her young ones are able to take care of themselves, they are nothing to her—among the lower animals, less than nothing. The fish or the crocodile will take care of her eggs jealously, and as soon as they are hatched, turn round and devour her own young.

The feeling of a *father* to his child, again, you find is fainter still among beasts. The father, as you all know, not only cares little for his offspring, even if he sometimes helps to feed them at first, but is often jealous of them, hates them, will try to kill them when they grow up.

Husband and wife, again: there is no sacredness between them among dumb animals. A lasting

and an unselfish attachment, not merely in youth, but through old age, and beyond the grave—what is there like this among the animals, except in the case of certain birds, like the dove and the eagle, who keep the same mate year after year, and have been always looked on with a sort of affection and respect by men for that very reason.

But where, among beasts, do you ever find any trace of those two sacred human feelings—the love of brother to brother, or of child to father? Where do you find the notion that the tie between husband and wife is a sacred thing, to be broken at no temptation, but in man?

These are *the* feelings which man has alone of all living animals.

These then, remember, are the very family feelings which come out in the story of Joseph. He honours holy wedlock when he tells his master's wife, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' He honours his father, when he is not ashamed of him, wild shepherd out of the desert though he might be, and an abomination to the Egyptians, while he himself is now in power, and wealth, and glory, as a prince in a civilized country. He honours the tie of brother to brother, by forgiving and weeping over the very brothers who have sold him into slavery.

But what has all this to do with God?

Now man, as we know, is an animal with an immortal spirit in him. He has, as St. Paul so carefully explains to us, a flesh and a spirit—a flesh like the beasts which perish; a spirit which comes from God.

Now the Bible teaches us that man did not get these family feelings from his flesh, from the animal, brute part of him. They are not carnal, but spiritual. He gets them from his spirit, and they are inspired into him by the Spirit of God. They come not from the earth below, but from the heaven above; from the image of God, in which man alone of all living things was made.

For if it were not so, we should surely see some family feeling in the beasts which are most like men. But we do not. In the apes, which are, in their shape and fleshly nature, so strangely and shockingly like human beings, there is not as much family feeling as there is in many birds, or even insects. Nay, the wild negroes, among whom they live, hold them in abhorrence, and believe that they were once men like themselves, who were gradually changed into brute beasts, by giving way to detestable sins; while these very negroes themselves, heathens and savages as they are, *have* the family feeling—the feeling of husband for wife, father for child, brother for brother; not, indeed, as strongly and purely as we, or at least

those of us who are really Christian and civilized, but still they have it; and that makes between the lowest man and the highest brute a difference which I hold is as wide as the space between heaven and earth.

It is man alone, I say, who has the idea of family; and who has, too, the strange, but most true belief, that these family ties are appointed by God—that they are a part of his religion—that in breaking them, by being an unfaithful husband, a dishonest servant, an unnatural son, a selfish brother, he sins, not only against man, and man's order and laws, but against God.

Parent and child, brother and sister.—Those ties are not of the earth earthy, but of the heaven of God, eternal. They may begin in time; of what happened before we came into this world we know nought. But having begun, they cannot end. Of what will happen after we leave this world, that at least we know in part.

Parent and child; brother and sister; husband and wife likewise; these are no ties of man's invention. They are ties of God's binding; they are patterns and likenesses of his substance, and of his being.—Of the eternal Father, who says for ever to the eternal Son, 'This day have I begotten thee.' Of the Son who says for ever to the Father, 'I come to do thy will, O God.' Of the Son of God,

Jesus Christ, who is not ashamed to call us his brethren; but like a greater Joseph, was sent before by God to save our lives with a great deliverance when our forefathers were but savages and heathens. Husband and wife likewise—are not they two divine words—not human words at all? Has not God consecrated the state of matrimony to such an excellent mystery, that in it is signified and represented the mystical union between Christ and his church? Are not husbands to love their wives, and give themselves for them as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it? That, indeed, was not revealed in the Old Testament, but it is revealed in the New; and marriage, like all other human ties, is holy and divine, and comes from God down to men.

Yes. These family ties are of God. It was to show us how sacred, how Godlike they are—how eternal and necessary for all mankind—that Joseph's story was written in Holy Scripture.

They are of God, I say. And he who despises them, despises not man but God; who hath also given us his Holy Spirit to make us know how sacred these bonds are.

He who looks lightly on the love of child to parent, or brother to brother, or husband to wife, and bids each man please himself, each man help himself, and shift for himself, would take away

from men the very thing which raises them above the beasts which perish, and lower them again to the likeness of the flesh, that they may of the flesh reap corruption.

They who, under whatever pretence of religion, part asunder families; or tell children, like the wicked Pharisees of old, that they may say to their parents Corban—‘I have given to God the service and help which, as your child, I should have given to you,’ shall be called, if not by men, at least by God himself,—hypocrites, who draw near to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, while their heart is far from him.

I think now we may see that I was right when I said—Perhaps the history of Joseph is in the Bible because it *is* a family history. For see—it is the history of a man who loved his family, who felt that family life was holy and God-appointed; whom God rewarded with honour and wealth, because he honoured family ties; because he refused his master’s wife; because he rewarded his brothers good for evil; because he was not ashamed of his father, but succoured him in his old age.

It is the history of a man who—more than four hundred years before God gave the ten commandments on Sinai, saying,

Honour thy father and mother,
Thou shalt not commit adultery,
Thou shalt not kill in revenge,

Thou shalt not covet aught of thy neighbours—
It is the history, I say, of a man who had those laws of God written in his heart by the Holy Spirit of God; and felt that to break them was to sin against God. It is the history of a man who, sorely tempted and unjustly persecuted, kept himself pure and true; who, while all around him, beginning with his own brothers, were trampling under foot the laws of family, felt that the laws were still there round him, girding him in with everlasting bands, and saying to him, Thou shalt and thou shalt not; that he was not sent into the world to do just what was pleasant for the moment, to indulge his own passions or his own revenge; but that if he was indeed *a man*, he must prove himself a man, by obeying Almighty God. It is the history of a man who kept his heart pure and tender, and who thereby gained strange and deep wisdom; that wisdom which comes only to the pure in heart; that wisdom by which truly good men are enabled to see farther, and to be of more use to their fellow-creatures than many a cunning and crooked politician, whose eyes are blinded, because his heart is defiled with sin.

And now, my friends, if we pray—as we are bound to pray—for that great Prince who is just entering on the cares and the duties, as well as the joys and blessings of family life—what better prayer can we offer up for him, than that God would put into his heart that spirit which he put into the heart of Joseph of old—the spirit to see how divine and God-appointed is family life? God grant that that spirit may dwell in him, and possess him more and more day by day. That it may keep him true to his wife, true to his mother, true to his family, true, like Joseph, to all with whom he has to deal. That it may deliver him, as it delivered Joseph, from the snares of wicked women, from selfish politicians, if they ever try to sow distrust and opposition between him and his kindred, and from all those temptations which can only be kept down by the Spirit of God, working in men's hearts, as he worked in the heart of Joseph.

For if that spirit be in the Prince—and I doubt not that that spirit is in him already—then will his fate be that of Joseph; then will he indeed be a blessing to us, and to our children after us; then will he have riches more real, and power more vast, than any which our English laws can give; then will he gain, like Joseph, that *moral* wisdom, better than all worldly craft, which cometh

from above—first pure, then gentle, easy to be entreated, without partiality, and without hypocrisy ; then will he be able, like Joseph, to deliver his people in times of perplexity and distress ; then will he by his example, as his noble mother has done before him, keep healthy, pure, and strong, our English family life—and as long as *that* endures, Old England will endure likewise.

SERMON VIII.

THE BIBLE THE GREAT CIVILIZER.

(*Fourth Sunday in Lent*).

PHILIPPIANS iv. 8.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things.

IT may not be easy to see what this text has to do with the story of Joseph, which we have just been reading, or with the meaning of the Bible of which I have been speaking to you of late.

Nevertheless, I think it has to do with them; as you will see if you will look at the text with me.

Now the text does not say 'Do these things.' It only says '*think* of these things.'

Of course St. Paul wished us to do them also: but he says first *think* of them; not once in a way, but often and continually. Fill your mind with good and pure and noble thoughts; and then you will do good and pure and noble things.

For out of the abundance of a man's heart, not only does his mouth speak, but his whole body and soul behave. The man whose mind is filled with low and bad thoughts will be sure when he is tempted to do low and bad things. The man whose mind is filled with lofty and good thoughts will do lofty and good things.

For thoughts are the food of a man's mind; and as the mind feeds, so will it grow. If it feeds on coarse and foul food, coarse and foul it will grow. If it feeds on pure and refined food, pure and refined it will grow.

There are those who do not believe this. Provided they are tolerably attentive to the duties of religion, it does not matter much, they fancy, what they think of out of church. Their souls will be saved at last, they suppose, and that is all that they need care for. Saved? They do not see that by giving way to foul, mean, foolish thoughts all the week they are losing their souls, destroying their souls, defiling their souls, lowering their souls, and making them so coarse and mean and poor that they are not worth saving, and are no loss to heaven or earth, whatever loss they may be to the man himself. One man thinks of nothing but money—how he shall save a penny here and a penny there. I do not mean men of business; for them there are great excuses; for it is by continual

saving here and there that their profits are made. I speak rather of people who have no excuse, people of fixed incomes—people often wealthy and comfortable, who yet will lower their minds by continually thinking over their money. But this I say, and this I am sure that you will find, that when a man in business or out of business accustoms himself, as very many do, to think of nothing but money, money, money from Monday morning to Saturday night, he thinks of money a great part of Sunday likewise. And so, after a while, the man lowers his soul, and makes it mean and covetous. He forgets all that is lovely and of good report. He forgets virtue—that is manliness; and praise—that is the just respect and admiration of his fellow-men; and so he forgets at last things true, honest, and just likewise. He lowers his soul; and therefore when he is tempted, he does things mean, and false, and unjust, for the sake of money, which he has made his idol.

Take another case, too common among men and women of all ranks, high and low.

How many there are who love gossip and scandal; who always talk about people, and never about things—certainly not about things pure, and lovely, and of good report, but rather about things foul, and ugly, and of bad report; who do not talk, because they do not think, of virtue,

but of vice; or of praise either, because they are always finding fault with their neighbours. The man who loves a foul story, or a coarse jest,—the woman who gossips over every tittle tattle of scandal which she can pick up against her neighbour,—what do these people do, but defile their own souls afresh, after they have been washed clean in the blood of Christ? Foul their souls are, and therefore their thoughts are foul likewise, and the foulness of them is evident to all men by their tongues. Out of their hearts proceed evil thoughts about their neighbours, out of the abundance of their hearts their mouths speak them.

Now let such people, if there be any such here, seriously consider the harm which they are doing to their own characters. They may give way to the habits of scandal, or of coarse talk, without any serious bad intention; but they will surely lower their own souls thereby. They will grow to the colour of what they feed on; and become foul and cruel, from talking cruelly and foully; till they lose all purity and all charity, all faith and trust in their fellow-men, all power of seeing good in any one, or doing anything but think evil; and so lose the likeness of God and of Christ, for the likeness of some foul carrion bird, which cares nothing for the perfume of all the roses in the

world, but if there be a carcase within miles of it, will scent it out eagerly and fly to it ravenously.

The truth is, my friends, that these souls of ours, instead of being pure and strong, are the very opposite; and the article speaks plain truth when it says, that we are every one of us of our own nature inclined to evil. That may seem a hard saying; but if we look at our own thoughts we shall find it true. Are we *not* inclined to take, at first, the worst view of everybody and of everything? Are we *not* inclined to suspect harm of this person and of that? Are we *not* inclined too often to be mean and cowardly? to be hard and covetous? to be coarse and vulgar? to be silly and frivolous? Do we not need to cool down, to think a second time, and a third time likewise; to remember our duty, to remember Christ's example, before we can take a just, and kind, and charitable view? Do we not want all the help which we can get from every quarter, to keep ourselves high-minded and refined; to keep ourselves from bad thoughts, mean thoughts, silly thoughts, violent thoughts, cruel and hard thoughts? If we have not found out that, we must have looked a very little way into ourselves, and know little more about ourselves than a dumb animal does of itself.

How then shall we keep off coarseness of soul?

How shall we keep our souls *refined*? that is, true and honest, pure, amiable, full of virtue, that is, true manliness; and deserve praise, that is, the respect and admiration of our fellow-men? By thinking of those very things, says St. Paul. And in order to be able to think of them, by reading of them.

There are very few who can easily think of these things of themselves. Their daily business, the words and notions of the people with whom they have to do, will run in their minds, and draw them off from higher and better thoughts; that cannot be helped. The only thing that most men can do, is to take care that they are not drawn off entirely from high and good thoughts, by reading, were it but for five minutes every day, something really worth thinking of, something which will lift them above themselves.

Above all, it is wise, at night, after the care and bustle of the day is over, to read, but for a few minutes, some book which will compose and soothe the mind; which will bring us face to face with the true facts of life, death, and eternity; which will make us remember that man doth not live by bread alone; which will give us, before we sleep, a few thoughts worthy of a Christian man, with an immortal soul in him.

And, thank God, no one need go far to look for

such books:—I do not mean merely religious books, excellent as they are in these days: I mean any books which help to make us better, and wiser, and soberer, and more charitable persons; any books which will teach us to despise what is vulgar and mean, foul and cruel, and to love what is noble and high-minded, pure and just. We need not go far for them. In our own noble English language we may read by hundreds, books which will tell us of all virtue and of all praise. The stories of good and brave men and women; of gallant and heroic actions; of deeds which we ourselves should be proud of doing; of persons whom we feel to be better, wiser, nobler than we are ourselves.

In our own language we may read the history of our own nation, and whatsoever is just, honest, and true. We may read of God's gracious providences toward this land. How he has punished our sins, and rewarded our right and brave endeavours. How he put into our forefathers the spirit of courage and freedom, the spirit of truth and justice, the spirit of loyalty and order; and how, following the leading of that spirit, in spite of many mistakes and failings, we have risen to be the freest, the happiest, the most powerful people on earth, a blessing and not a curse to the nations around.

In our own English tongue, too, we may read such poetry as there is in no other language in the world;—poetry which will make us indeed see the beauty of whatsoever things are lovely and of good report. Some people have still a dislike of what they call foolish poetry books. If books are foolish, let us have nothing to do with them. But poetry ought not to be foolish; for God sent it into the world to teach men not foolishness, but the highest wisdom. He gave man alone, of all living creatures, the power of writing poetry, that by poetry he might understand, not only how necessary it was to do right, but how beautiful and noble it was to do right. He sent it into the world to soften men's rough hearts, and quiet their angry passions, and make them love all which is tender and gentle, loving and merciful, and yet to rouse them up to love all which is gallant and honourable, loyal and patriotic, devout and heavenly. Therefore whole books of the Bible—Job, for example, Isaiah, and the Psalms, are neither more nor less than actual poetry, written in actual verse, that their words might the better sink down into the ears and hearts of the old Jews, and of us Christians after them. And therefore also, we keep up still the good old custom of teaching children in school as much as possible by poetry, that they may learn not only to know,

but to love and remember, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report.

Lastly, for those who cannot read, or have really no time to read, there is one means left of putting themselves in mind of what every one must remember, lest he sink back into an animal and a savage. I mean by pictures ; which, as St. Augustine said 1500 years ago, are the books of the unlearned. I do not mean grand and expensive pictures ; I mean the very simplest prints, provided they represent something holy, or noble, or tender, or lovely. A few such prints upon a cottage-wall may teach the people who live therein much, without their being aware of it. They see the prints, even when they are not thinking of them ; and so they have before their eyes a continual remembrancer of something better and more beautiful than what they are apt to find in their own daily life and thoughts.

True,—to whom little is given, of them is little required. But it must be said, that more—far more,—is given to labouring men and women now, than was given to their forefathers. A hundred, or even fifty years ago, when there was very little schooling ; when the books which were put even into the hands of noblemen's children, were far below what you will find now in any village school ; when the only pictures which a poor woman

could buy to lay on her cottage-wall were equally silly and ugly;—then there were great excuses for the poor, if they forgot whatsoever things were lovely and of good report; if they were often coarse and brutal in their manners, and cruel and profligate in their amusements.

But even in the rough old times, there always were a few at least, men and women, who were *above* the rest; who, though poor people like the rest, were still true gentlemen and ladies, of God's making. People who kept themselves more or less unspotted from the world; who thought of what was honest and pure, and lovely and of good report; and who lived a life of simple, manful, Christian virtue, and received the praise and respect of their neighbours, even although their neighbours did not copy them. There were always such people, and there always will be—thank God for it, for they are the salt of the earth.

But why have there always been such people?—and why do I say, confidently, that there always will be?

Because they have had the Bible; and because, once having got the Bible in a free country, no man can take it from them.

The Bible it is which has made gentlemen and ladies of many a poor man and woman.

The Bible it is which has filled their minds

with pure and noble, ay, with heavenly and divine thoughts.

The Bible has been their whole library. The Bible has been their only counsellor. The Bible has taught them all they know. But it has taught them enough.

It has taught them what God is, and what Christ is. It has taught them what man is, and what a Christian man should be. It has taught them what a family means, and what a nation means. It has taught them the meaning of law and duty, of loyalty and patriotism. It has filled their minds with things honest, and just, and lovely, and of good report; with the histories of men and women like themselves, who sinned, and sorrowed, and struggled like them in this hard battle of life, but who conquered at last, by trusting and obeying God.

This one story of Joseph, which we have been reading again this Sunday, I do not doubt that it has taught thousands who had no other story-book to read; who could not even read themselves, but had to listen to others' reading;—that it has taught them to be good sons, to be good brothers; that it has taught them to keep pure in temptation, and patient and honest under oppression and wrong; that it has stirred in them a noble ambition to raise themselves in life; and taught them at the same time, that the only safe and sure way of

rising is to fear God and keep his commandments ; and so has really done more to civilize and refine them—to make them truly civilized men and gentlemen, and not vulgar savages—than if they had known a smattering of a dozen sciences. I say that the Bible is the book which civilizes and refines, and ennobles, rich and poor, high and low, and has been doing so for 1500 years ; and that any man who tries to shake our faith in the Bible, is doing what he can—though, thank God, he will not succeed—to make such rough and coarse heathens of us again as our forefathers were five hundred years go.

And I tell you, labouring people, that if you want something which will make up to you for the want of all the advantages which the rich have, —go to your Bibles and you will find it there.

There you will find, in the history of men like ourselves—and, above all, in the history of a man unlike ourselves, the perfect Man—perfect Man and perfect God together—whatsoever is true, whatsoever is honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report ; every virtue, and every just cause of praise which mortal man can desire. Read of them in your Bible, think of them in your hearts, feed on them with your souls, that your souls may grow like what they feed on ; and above all, read and study the story and character of Jesus Christ him-

self, our Lord, that, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, you may be changed into his likeness, from grace to grace, and virtue to virtue, and glory to glory.

. And that change and that growth are as easy for the poor as for the rich, and as necessary for the rich as for the poor.

SERMON IX.

MOSES.

(*Fifth Sunday in Lent*).

EXODUS iii. 14.

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM.

AND now, my friends, we are come, on this Sunday, to the most beautiful, and the most important story of the whole Bible; excepting, of course, the story of our Lord Jesus Christ; the story of how a family grew to be a great nation. You remember that I told you that the history of the Jews, had been only, as yet, the history of a family.

Now that family is grown to be a great tribe, a great herd of people, but not yet a *nation*; one people, with its own God, its own worship, its own laws; but such a mere tribe, or band of tribes, as the gipsies are among us now; a herd, but not a nation.

Then the Bible tells us how these tribes, being

weak, I suppose because they had no laws, nor patriotism, nor fellow-feeling of their own, became slaves, and suffered for hundreds of years under crafty kings and cruel taskmasters.

Then it tells us how God delivered them out of their slavery, and made them free men. And how God did that (for God, in general, works by means), by the means of a man, a prophet and a hero, one great, wise, and good man of their race—Moses.

It tells us, too, how God trained Moses, by a very strange education, to be the fit man to deliver his people.

Let us go through the history of Moses; and we shall see how God trained him to do the work for which God wanted him.

Let us read from the account of the Bible itself. I should be sorry to spoil its noble simplicity, by any words of my own:—‘And the children of
‘Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly,
‘and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty;
‘and the land was filled with them. Now there
‘arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew
‘not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold,
‘the people of the children of Israel are more and
‘mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with
‘them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass,
‘that, when there falleth out any war, they join

‘ also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and
‘ so get them up out of the land. Therefore they did
‘ set over them taskmasters to afflict them with
‘ their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh trea-
‘ sure cities, Pithon and Raamses. . . . And
‘ Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every
‘ son that is born ye shall cast into the river,
‘ and every daughter ye shall save alive. And
‘ there went a man of the house of Levi, and
‘ took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the
‘ woman conceived, and bare a son: and when
‘ she saw him that he was a goodly child, she
‘ hid him three months. And when she could
‘ no longer hide him, she took for him an
‘ ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime
‘ and with pitch, and put the child therein;
‘ and she laid it in the flags by the river’s
‘ brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit
‘ what would be done to him. And the daugh-
‘ ter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself
‘ at the river; and her maidens walked along by
‘ the river’s side; and when she saw the ark
‘ among the flags; she sent her maid to fetch it.
‘ And when she had opened it, she saw the child:
‘ and behold, the babe wept. And she had com-
‘ passion on him, and said, This is one of the
‘ Hebrews’ children. Then said his sister to
‘ Pharaoh’s daughter, Shall I go and call to thee

‘ a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may
‘ nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh’s
‘ daughter said to her, Go. And the maid
‘ went and called the child’s mother. And
‘ Pharaoh’s daughter said unto her, Take this
‘ child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give
‘ thee thy wages. And the woman took the child,
‘ and nursed it. And the child grew, and she
‘ brought him unto Pharaoh’s daughter, and he
‘ became her son. And she called his name
‘ Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out
‘ of the water.’

Moses,—the child of the water. St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, says that Moses was called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; that is, adopted by her. We read elsewhere that he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, of which there can be no doubt from his own writings, especially that part called Moses’ law.

So that Moses had from his youth vast advantages. Brought up in the court of the greatest king of the world, in one of the greatest cities of the world, among the most learned priesthood in the world, he had learned, probably, all statesmanship, all religion, which man could teach him in those old times.

But that would have been little for him. He might have become merely an officer in Pharaoh’s

household, and we might never have heard his name, and he might never have done any good to his own people, and to all mankind after them, as he has done, if there had not been something better and nobler in him than all the learning and statesmanship of the Egyptians.

For there was in Moses the spirit of God; the spirit which makes a man believe in God, and trust God. 'And therefore,' says St. Paul, 'he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; esteeming the reproach of *Christ* better than all the treasures in Egypt.'

And how did he do that? In this wise.

The spirit of God and of Christ is also the spirit of justice; the spirit of freedom; the spirit which hates oppression and wrong; which is moved with a noble and Divine indignation at seeing any human being abused and trampled on.

And that spirit broke forth in Moses.—'And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.'

If he cannot get justice for his people, he will

do some sort of rough justice for them himself, when he has an opportunity.

But he will see fair play among his people themselves. They are, as slaves are likely to be, fallen and base; unjust and quarrelsome among themselves.

‘ And when he went out the second day, behold,
‘ two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he
‘ said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore
‘ smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made
‘ thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest
‘ thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?
‘ And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing
‘ is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing,
‘ he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from
‘ the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of
‘ Midian’—the wild desert between Egypt and the
Holy Land.

So he bore the reproach of Christ; the reproach which is apt to fall on men in bad times, when they try, like our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver the captive, and let the oppressed go free, and execute righteous judgment in the earth. He had lost all, by trying to do right. He had been powerful and honoured in Pharaoh’s court. Now he was an outcast and wanderer in the desert. He had made his first trial, and failed. As St. Stephen said of him after, he supposed

that his brethren would have understood how God would deliver them by his hand; but they understood not. Slavish, base, and stupid, they were not fit yet for Moses and his deliverance.

And so forty years went on, and Moses was an old man eighty years of age. Yet God had not had mercy on his poor countrymen in Egypt.

It must have been a strange life for him. The adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter; brought up in the court of the most powerful and highly civilized country of the old world; learned in all the learning of the Egyptians; and now married into a tribe of wild Arabs, keeping flocks in the lonely desert, year after year: but, no doubt, thinking, thinking, year after year, as he fed his flocks alone. Thinking over all the learning which he had gained in Egypt, and wondering whether it would ever be of any use to him. Thinking over the misery of his people in Egypt, and wondering whether he should ever be able to help them. Thinking, too, and more than all, of God,—of God's promise to Abraham and his children. Would that ever come true? Would *God* help these wretched Jews, even if *he* could not? Was God faithful and true, just and merciful?

That Moses thought of God, that he never lost

faith in God for that forty years, there can be no doubt.

If he had not thought of God, God would not have revealed himself to him. If he had lost faith in God, he would not have known that it *was* God who spoke to him. If he had lost faith in God, he would not have obeyed God at the risk of his life, and have gone on an errand as desperate, dangerous, hopeless—and, humanly speaking, as wild as ever man went upon.

But Moses never lost faith or patience. He believed, and he did not make haste. He waited for God; and he did not wait in vain. No man will wait in vain. When the time was ready; when the Jews were ready; when Pharaoh was ready; when Moses himself, trained by forty years' patient thought, was ready; then God came in his own good time.

And Moses led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And there he saw a bush—probably one of the low copses of acacia—burning with fire; and behold the bush was not consumed. Then out of the bush God spoke to Moses with an audible voice as of a man; so the Bible says, plainly, and I see no reason to doubt that it is literally true.

‘ Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father,

‘ the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the
‘ God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face ; for he
‘ was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord
‘ said, I have surely seen the affliction of my
‘ people which are in Egypt, and have heard their
‘ cry by reason of their task-masters ; for I know
‘ their sorrows ; and I am come down to deliver
‘ them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to
‘ bring them up out of that land unto a good land
‘ and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and
‘ honey ; unto the place of the Canaanites, and
‘ the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Periz-
‘ zites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.’

Then followed a strange conversation. Moses was terrified at the thought of what he had to do, and reasonably : moreover, the Israelites in Egypt had forgotten God. ‘ And Moses said unto
‘ God, Behold, when I come unto the children of
‘ Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your
‘ fathers hath sent me unto you ; and they shall
‘ say to me, What is his name ? what shall I say
‘ unto them ? And God said unto Moses, I Am
‘ that I Am : and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto
‘ the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto
‘ you.’

I Am ; that was the new name by which God revealed himself to Moses. That message of God to Moses was the greatest gospel, and

good news which was spoken to men, before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ay, we are feeling now, in our daily life, in our laws and our liberty, our religion and our morals, our peace and prosperity, in the happiness of our homes, and I trust that of our consciences, the blessed effects of that message, which God revealed to Moses in the wilderness thousands of years ago.

And Moses took his wife, and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and returned into the land of Egypt, to say to Pharaoh, 'Thus saith the Lord, 'Israel is my son, even my first-born. Let my son 'go that he may serve me, and if thou let not my 'first-born go, then I will slay thy first-born.'

A strange man ; on a strange errand. A poor man eighty years old, carrying all that he had in the world upon an ass's back, going down to the great Pharaoh, the greatest king of the old world, the great conqueror, the Child of the Sun (as his name means), one of the greatest Pharaohs who ever sat on the throne of Egypt ; in the midst of all his princes and priests, and armies, with which he had conquered the nations far and wide ; and his great cities, temples, and palaces, on which men may see at this day (so we are told) the face of that very Pharaoh painted again and again, as fresh, in that rainless air, as on the day

when the paint was laid on ; with the features of a man terrible, proud, and cruel, puffed up by power till he thought himself, and till his people thought him, a god on earth.

And to that man was Moses going, to bid him set the children of Israel free ; while he himself was one of that very slave-race of the Israelites, which was an abomination to the Egyptians, who held them all as lepers and unclean, and would not eat with them ; and an outcast too, who had fled out of Egypt for his life, and who might be killed on the spot, as Pharaoh's only answer to his bold request. Certainly, if Moses had not had faith in God, his errand would have seemed that of a madman. But Moses *had* faith in God ; and of faith it is said, that it can remove mountains, for all things are possible to them who believe.

So by faith Moses went back into Egypt ; how he fared there we shall hear next Sunday.

And what sort of man was this great and wonderful Moses, whose name will last as long as man is man ? We know very little. We know from the Bible, and from the old traditions of the Jews, that he was a very handsome man ; a man of a noble presence, as one can well believe ; a man of great bodily vigour ; so that when he died at the age of one hundred and twenty, his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. We know,

from his own words, that he was slow of speech ; that he had more thought in him than he could find words for—very different from a good many loud talkers, who have more words than thoughts, and who get a great character as politicians, and demagogues, simply because they have the art of stringing fine words together, which Moses, the true demagogue, the leader of the people, who led them indeed out of Egypt, had not. Beyond that we know little. Of his character one thing only is said : but that is most important. ‘Now ‘the man Moses was very meek.’

Meek : we know that that cannot mean that he was meek in the sense that he was a poor, cowardly, abject sort of man, who dared not speak his mind, dared not face the truth, and say the truth. We have seen that that was just what he was not ; brave, determined, outspoken, he seems to have been from his youth. Indeed, if his had been that base sort of meekness, he never would have dared to come before the great King Pharaoh. If he had been that sort of man he never would have dared to lead the Jews through the Red Sea by night, or out of Egypt at all. If he had been that sort of man, indeed, the Jews would never have listened to him. No ; he had—the Bible tells us that he had—to say and do stern things again and again ; to act like the general

of an army, or the commander of a ship of war, who must be obeyed, even though men's lives be the forfeit of disobedience.

But the man Moses was very meek. He had learned to keep his temper. Indeed, the story seems to say that he never lost his temper really but once; and for that God punished him. Never man was so tried, save One, even our Lord Jesus Christ, as was Moses. And yet by patience he conquered. Eighty years had he spent in learning to keep his temper; and when he had learnt to keep his temper, then, and not till then, was he worthy to bring his people out of Egypt. That was a long schooling, but it was a schooling worth having.

And if we, my friends, spend our whole lives, be they eighty years long, in learning to keep *our* tempers, then will our lives have been well spent. For meekness and calmness of temper need not interfere with a man's courage or justice, or honest indignation against wrong, or power of helping his fellow-men. Moses' meekness did not make him a coward or a sluggard. It helped him to do his work rightly instead of wrongly; it helped him to conquer the pride of Pharaoh, and the faithlessness, cowardice, and rebellion of his brethren, those miserable slavish Jews. And so meekness, an even temper, and a gracious tongue, will help us

to keep our place among our fellow-men with true dignity and independence, and to govern our households, and train our children in such a way that while they obey us, they will love and respect us at the same time.

SERMON X.

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT.

(*Palm Sunday.*)

EXODUS ix. 13, 14.

Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.

YOU will understand, I think, the meaning of the ten plagues of Egypt better, if I explain to you in a few words what kind of a country Egypt is, what kind of people the Egyptians were. Some of you, doubtless, know as well as I, but some here may not: it is for them I speak.

Egypt is one of the strangest countries in the world; and yet one which can be most simply described. One long straight strip of rich flat land, many hundred miles long, but only a very few miles broad. On either side of it, barren rocks and deserts of sand, and running through it from end to end, the great river Nile—‘The

River' of which the Bible speaks. This river the Egyptians looked on as divine : they worshipped it as a god ; for on it depended the whole wealth of Egypt. Every year it overflows the whole country, leaving behind it a rich coat of mud, which makes Egypt the most inexhaustibly fertile land in the world ; and made the Egyptians, from very ancient times, the best farmers of the world, the fathers of agriculture. Meanwhile, when not in flood, the river water is of the purest in the world ; the most delightful to drink ; and was supposed in old times to be a cure for all manner of diseases.

To worship this sacred river, the pride of their land, to drink it, to bathe in it, to catch the fish which abound in it, and which formed then, and forms still, the staple food of the Egyptians, was their delight. And now I have told you enough to show you why the plagues which God sent on Egypt, began first by striking the river.

The river, we read, was turned into blood. What that means—whether it was actual animal blood—what means God employed to work the miracle—are just the questions about which we need not trouble our minds. We never shall know : and we need not know. The plain fact is, that the sacred river, pure and life-giving, became a detestable mass of rotteness—and with

it all their streams and pools, and drinking water in vessels of wood and stone—for all, remember, came from the Nile, carried by canals and dykes over the whole land. ‘And the fish that were in the river died, and the river stunk, and there was blood through all the land of Egypt.’

The slightest thought will show us what horror, confusion, and actual want and misery, the loss of the river water, even for a few days or even hours, would cause.

But there is more still in this miracle. These plagues are a battle between Jehovah, the one true and only God Almighty, and the false gods of Egypt, to prove which of them is master.

Pharaoh answers: ‘Who is Jehovah (the Lord) that I should let Israel go?’ I know not the Jehovah. I have my own god, whom I worship. He is my father, and I his child, and he will protect me. If I obey any one it will be him.

Be it so, says Moses in the name of God. Thou shalt know that the idols of Egypt are nothing, that they cannot deliver thee nor thy people. Thus saith Jehovah, Thou shalt know which is master, I or they. ‘Thou shalt know that I am the Lord.’

So the river was turned into blood. The sacred river was no god, as they thought. Jehovah was the Lord and Master of the river on which the

very life of Egypt depended. He could turn it into blood. All Egypt was at his mercy.

But Pharaoh would not believe that. 'The magicians did likewise with their enchantments'—made we may suppose water seem to turn to blood by some juggling trick at which the priests in Egypt were but too well practised; and Pharaoh seemed to have made up his mind that Moses' miracle was only a juggling trick too. For men will make up their minds to anything, however absurd, when they choose to do so: when their pride, and rage, and obstinacy, and covetousness, draw them one way, no reason will draw them the other way. They will find reasons, and make reasons, to prove, if need be, that there is no sun in the sky.

Then followed a series of plagues, of which we have all often heard.

Learned men have disputed how far these plagues were miracles. Some of them are said not to be uncommon in Egypt, others to be almost unknown. But whether they—whether the frogs, for instance, were not produced by natural causes, just as other frogs are; and the lice and the flies likewise; that I know not, my friends, neither need I know. If they were not,—they were miraculous, and if they were, they were miraculous still. If they came as other vermin come, they

would have still been miraculous: God would still have sent them; and it would be a miracle that God should make them come at that particular time in that particular country, to work a truly miraculous effect upon the souls of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, on the one hand, and of Moses and the Israelites on the other. But if they came by some strange means, as no vermin ever came before or since, all I can say is—Why not?

And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.’

Whether that was meant only as a sign to the Egyptians, or whether the dust did literally turn into lice, we do not know, and what is more, we need not know; if God chose that it should be so, so it would be. If you believe at all that God made the world, it is folly to pretend to set any bounds to his power. As a wise man has said ‘If you believe in any real God at all, you must believe that miracles can happen.’ He makes you and me and millions of living things, out of the dust of the ground continually by certain means. Why can he not make lice, or anything else out of the dust of the ground, without those

means? I can give no reason, nor any one else either.

We know that God has given all things a law which they cannot break. We know, too, that God will never break his own laws. But what are God's laws by which he makes things? We do not know.

Miracles may be—indeed must be—only the effect of some higher and deeper laws of God. We cannot prove that he breaks his law, or disturbs his order by them. They may seem contrary to some of the very very few laws of God's earth which we do know. But they need not be contrary to the very many laws which we do not know. In fact, we know nothing about the matter, and had best not talk of things that we do not understand. As for these things being too wonderful to be true,—that is an argument which only deserves a smile. There are so many wonders in the world round us already, all day long, that the man of sense will feel that nothing is too wonderful to be true.

The truth is, that, as a wise man says, *custom* is the great enemy of Faith, and of Reason likewise; and one of the worst tricks which custom plays us is, making us fancy that miraculous things cease to be miraculous by becoming common.

What do I mean ?

This: which every child in this church can understand.

You think it very wonderful that God should cause frogs to come upon the whole land of Egypt in one day. But that God should cause frogs to come up every spring in the ditches, does not seem wonderful to you at all. It happens every year; therefore, forsooth, there is nothing wonderful in it.

Ah, my dear friends, it is custom which blinds our eyes to the wisdom of God, and the wonders of God, and the power of God, and the glory of God, and hinders us from believing the message with which he speaks to us from every sunbeam and every shower, every blade of grass and every standing pool. 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?'

If any man here says that anything is too hard for the Lord, let him go this day to the nearest standing pool, and look at the frog-spawn therein, and consider it till he confesses his blindness and foolishness. That spawn seems to you a foul thing, the produce of mean, ugly, contemptible creatures. Be it so. Yet it is to the eyes of the wise man a yearly *miracle*; a thing past understanding, past explaining; one which will make him feel the truth of that great 139th

Psalm : ‘ Thou hast beset me behind and before,
‘ and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge
‘ is too wonderful for me ; it is high, I cannot
‘ attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy
‘ spirit ? or whither shall I flee from thy presence ?
‘ If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there :
‘ if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art
‘ there also.’

That every one of those little black spots should have in it *life*—What is life ? How did it get into that black spot ?—or, to speak more carefully, is the life *in* the black spot at all ? Is not the life in the Spirit of God, who is working on that spot, as I believe ? How has that black spot the power of *growing*, and of growing on a certain and fixed plan, merely by the quickening power of the sun’s heat, and then of feeding itself, and of changing its shape, as you all know, again and again, till — and if that is not wonderful, what is ?—it turns into a frog, exactly like its parent, utterly unlike the black dot at which it began ? Is that no miracle ? Is it no miracle that not one of those black spots ever turns into anything save a frog ? Why should not some of them turn into toads or efts ? Why not even into fishes or serpents ? Why not ? The eggs of all those animals, in their first and earliest stage, are exactly alike ; the microscope shows no differ-

ence. Ay, even the mere animal and the human being, strange and awful as it may be, *seem*, under the microscope, to have the same beginning. And yet one becomes a mere animal, and the other a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. What causes this but the power of God, making of the same clay one vessel to honour and another to dishonour? And yet people will not believe in miracles! Why does each kind turn into its kind? Answer that. Because it is a law of nature? Not so! There are no laws *of* nature. God is a law *to* nature. It is his *will* that things so should be; and when it is his will they will not be so, but otherwise.

Not *laws* of nature, but the *Spirit* of God, as the Psalms truly say, gives life and breath to all things. Of him and by him is all. As the greatest chemist of our time says, 'Causes are the acts of God—creation is the will of God.'

And he that is wise and strong enough to create frogs in one way in every ditch at this moment, is he not wise and strong enough to create frogs by some other way, if he should choose, whether in Egypt of old, or now, here, this very day?

Whatsoever means, or no means at all, God used to produce those vermin, the miracle remains the same. He sent them to do a work, and they

did it. He sent them to teach Egyptian and Israelite alike that he was the Maker, and Lord, and Ruler of the world, and all that therein is; that he would have his way, and that he *could* have his way.

Intensely painful and disgusting these plagues must have been to the Egyptians, for this reason, that they were the most cleanly of all people. They had a dislike of dirt, which had become quite a superstition to them. Their priests (magicians as the Bible calls them) never wore any garments but linen, for fear of their harbouring vermin of any kind. And this extreme cleanliness of theirs the next plague struck at; they were covered with boils and diseases of the skin, and the magicians could not stand before Pharaoh by reason of the boils. They became unclean and unfit for their office; they could perform no religious ceremonies, and had to flee away in disgrace.

After plagues of thunder, hail, and rain, which seldom or never happen in that rainless land of Egypt; after a plague of locusts, which are very rare there, and have to come many hundred miles if they come at all; of darkness, seemingly impossible in a land where the sun always shines; then came the last and most terrible plague of all. After solemn warnings of what was coming,

the angel of the Lord passed through the land of Egypt, and smote all the first-born in Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh upon his throne to the first-born of the captive in the dungeon; and there arose a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house in which there was not one dead. A terrible and heart-rending calamity in any case, enough to break the heart of all Egypt; and it did break the heart of Egypt, and the proud heart of Pharaoh himself, and they let the people go.

But this was a *religious* affliction too. Most of these first-born children, probably all the first-born of the priests and nobles, and of Pharaoh himself, were consecrated to some god. They bore the name of the god to whom they belonged; that god was to prosper and protect them, and behold he could not. The Lord Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, was stronger than all the gods of Egypt; none of them could deliver their servants out of his hand. He was the only Lord of life and death; he had given them life, and he could take it away, in spite of all and every one of the gods of the Egyptians.

So the Lord God showed himself to be the Master and Lord of all things. The Lord of the sacred river Nile; the Lord of the meanest vermin which crept on the earth; the Lord of the

weather—able to bring thunder and hail into a land where thunder and hail was never seen before; the Lord of the locust swarms—able to bring them over the desert, and over the sea, to devour up every green thing in the land; and then to send a wind off the Mediterranean Sea, and drive the locusts away to the eastward; the Lord of light, who could darken even in that cloudless land the very sun, whom Pharaoh worshipped as his god and his ancestor; and lastly, the Lord of human life and death, able to kill whom he chose, when he chose, and as he chose. The Lord of the earth, and all that therein is; before whom all men, even proud Pharaoh, must bow and confess, ‘Is anything too hard for the Lord?’

And now, I always tell you that each fresh portion of the Old Testament reveals to men something fresh concerning the character of God. You may say—These plagues of Egypt reveal God’s mighty power, but what do they reveal of his character? They reveal this: that there is in God that which, for want of a better word, we must call anger; a quite awful sternness, and severity; not only a power to punish, but a determination to punish, if men will not take his warnings—if men will not obey his will.

There is no use trying to hide from ourselves that awful truth—God is not weakly indulgent.

Our God can be, if he will, a consuming fire. Upon the sinner he will surely rain fire and brimstone, storm and tempest, of some kind or other. This shall be their portion too surely. Vengeance is his, and vengeance he will take. But upon whom? On the proud and the tyrannical, on the cruel, the false, the unjust. So say the Psalms again and again, and so says the history of these plagues of Egypt. Therefore his anger is a loving anger, a just anger, a merciful anger, a useful anger, an anger exercised for the good of mankind. See in this case why did God destroy the crops of Egypt—even the first-born of Egypt? Merely for the pleasure of destroying? God forbid. It was to deliver the poor Israelites from their cruel taskmasters; to force these Egyptians, by terrible lessons, since they were deaf to the voice of justice and humanity—to force them, I say—to have mercy on their fellow-creatures, and let the oppressed go free. Therefore God was, even in Egypt, a God of love, who desired the good of man, who would do justice for those who were unjustly treated, even though it cost his love a pang; for none can believe that God is pleased at having to punish, pleased at having to destroy the works of his own hands, or the creatures which he has made. No; the Lord was a God of love even when he sent his sore plagues on Egypt

and therefore we may believe what the Bible tells us, that that same Lord showed, as on this day, a still greater proof of his love, when, as on this day, he entered into Jerusalem, meek and lowly, sitting on an ass, and going, as he well knew, to certain death. Before the week was over he would be betrayed, mocked, scourged, crucified, by the very people whom he came to save; and yet he did it, he endured it. Instead of pouring out on them, as on the Egyptians of old, the cup of wrath and misery, he put out his hand, took the cup of wrath and misery to himself, and drank it to its very dregs. Was not that, too, a miracle? Ay, a greater miracle than all the plagues of Egypt. They were physical miracles; this a moral miracle. They were miracles of nature; this of grace. They were miracles of the Lord's power, these of the Lord's love. Think of that miracle of miracles which was worked in this Passion Week,—the miracle of the Lord Jehovah stooping to die for sinful man, and say after that there is anything too hard for the Lord.

SERMON XI.

THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THE GOD
OF THE NEW.

(*Palm Sunday.*)

EXODUS ix. 14.

I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.

WE are now beginning Passion Week, the week of the whole year which ought to teach us most theology; that is, most concerning God, his character and his spirit.

For in this Passion Week God did that^e which utterly and perfectly showed forth his glory, as it never has been shown forth before or since. In this week Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, died on the cross for man, and showed that his name, his character, his glory, was love—love without bound or end.

It was to teach us this that the special services, lessons, collects, epistles, and gospels of this week were chosen.

The second lesson, the collects, the epistles, the gospel for to-day, all set before us the patience of Christ, the humility of Christ, the love of Christ, the self-sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb without spot, enduring all things that he might save sinful man.

But if so, what does this first lesson—the chapter of Exodus from which my text is taken—what does it teach us concerning God? Does it teach us that his name is love?

At first sight you would think that it did not. At first sight you would fancy that it spoke of God in quite a different tone from the second lesson.

In the second lesson, the words of Jesus the Son of God are all gentleness, patience, tenderness. A quiet sadness hangs over them all. They are the words of one who is come (as he said himself), not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; not to punish sins, but to wash them away by his own most precious blood.

But in the first lesson how differently he seems to speak. His words there are the words of a stern and awful judge, who can, and who will destroy, whatsoever interferes with his will and his purpose.

‘ I will at this time send all my plagues upon
‘ thine heart, and on thy servants, and all thy

‘ people, that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.’ The cattle and sheep shall be destroyed with murrain; man and beast shall be tormented with boils and blains; the crops shall be smitten with hail; the locusts shall eat up every green thing in the land; and at last all the first-born of Egypt shall die in one night, and the land be filled with mourning, horror, and desolation, before the anger of this terrible God, who will destroy and destroy till he makes himself obeyed.

Can this be he who rode into Jerusalem, as on this day, meek and lowly, upon an ass’s colt; who on the night that he was betrayed washed his disciples’ feet, even the feet of Judas who betrayed him? Who prayed for his murderers as he hung upon the cross, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?’

Can these two be the same?

Is the Lord Jehovah of the Old Testament the Lord Jesus of the New?

They are the same, my friends. He who laid waste the land of Egypt is he who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

He who slew the children in Egypt is he who took little children up in his arms and blessed them.

He who spoke the awful words of the text is he

who was brought as a lamb to the slaughter ; and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

This is very wonderful. But why should it *not* be wonderful? What can God be but wonderful? His character, just because it is perfect, must contain in itself all other characters, all forms of spiritual life which are without sin. And yet again it is not so very wonderful. Have we not seen—I have often—in the same mortal man these two different characters at once? Have we not seen soldiers and sailors, brave men, stern men, men who have fought in many a bloody battle, to whom it is a light thing to kill their fellow-men, or to be killed themselves, in the cause of duty ; and yet most full of tenderness, as gentle as lambs to little children, and to weak women ; nursing the sick lovingly and carefully with the same hand which would not shrink from firing the fatal cannon, to blast a whole company into eternity, or sink a ship with all its crew? I have seen such men, brave as the lion and gentle as the lamb, and I saw in them the likeness of Christ—The Lion of Judah ; and yet the Lamb of God.

Christ is the Lamb of God ; and in him there are the innocence of the lamb, the gentleness of the lamb, the patience of the lamb : but there is more.

What words are these which St. John speaks in the Spirit?—

‘And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is
‘rolled together, and every mountain and island
‘were moved out of their places; and the kings
‘of the earth, and the great, and the rich, and the
‘chief captains, and the mighty men, and every
‘bondman, and every freeman hid themselves in
‘the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and
‘said to the mountains and to the rocks, fall on us,
‘and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on
‘the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;
‘for the great day of his wrath is come, and who
‘shall be able to stand?’

Yes, look at that awful book of Revelation with which the Bible ends, and see if the Bible does not end as it begun, by revealing a God who, however loving and merciful, longsuffering, and of great goodness, still wages war eternally against all sin and unrighteousness of man, and who will by no means clear the guilty; a God of whom the apostle St. Paul, who knew most of his mercy and forgiveness to sinners, could nevertheless say, just as Moses had said ages before him, ‘Our God
‘is a consuming fire.’

Now I think it most necessary to recollect this in Passion Week; ay, and to do more—to remember it all our lives long.

For it is too much the fashion now, and has often been so before, to think only of one side of our Lord's character, of the side which seems more pleasant and less awful. People please themselves in hymns which talk of the meek and lowly Jesus, and in pictures which represent him with a sad, weary, delicate, almost feminine face. Now I do not say that this is wrong. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; as tender, as compassionate now as when he was on earth; and it is good that little children and innocent young people should think of him as an altogether gentle, gracious, loveable being; for with the meek he will be meek: but again, with the froward, the violent, and self-willed, he will be froward. He will show the violent that he is the stronger of the two, and the self-willed that he will have his will, and not theirs, done.

So it is good that the widow and the orphan, the weary and the distressed, should think of Jesus as utterly tender and true, compassionate and merciful, and rest their broken hearts upon him, the everlasting rock. But while it is written, that whosoever shall fall on that rock he shall be broken, it is written too, that on whomsoever that rock shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

It is good that those who wish to be gracious

themselves, loving themselves, should remember that Christ is gracious, Christ is loving. But it is good, also, that those who do *not* wish to be gracious and loving themselves, but to be proud and self-willed, unjust and cruel, should remember that the gracious and loving Christ is also the most terrible and awful of all beings; sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing asunder the very joints and marrow, discerning the most secret thoughts and intents of the heart; a righteous judge, strong and patient, who is provoked every day: but if a man *will* not turn, he will whet his sword. He hath bent his bow and made it ready, and laid his arrows in order against the persecutors. What Christ's countenance, my friends, was like when on earth, we do *not* know; but what his countenance is like now, we all may know; for what says St. John, and how did Christ appear to him, who had been on earth his private and beloved friend?—

‘ His head and his hair were white as snow, and
‘ his eyes were like a flame of fire, and his voice
‘ like the sound of many waters; and out of his
‘ mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his
‘ countenance was as the sun when he shineth in
‘ his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at
‘ his feet as dead.’

That is the likeness of Christ, my friends; and

we must remember that it is his likeness, and fall at his feet, and humble ourselves before his unspeakable majesty, if we wish that he should do to us at the last day as he did to St. John—lay his hand upon us, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, and behold, I am alive for evermore, amen. I have the keys of death and hell.’

Yes, it is good that we should all remember this. For if we do not, we may fall, as thousands fall, into a very unwholesome and immoral notion about religion. We may get to fancy, as thousands do, rich and poor, that because Christ the Lord is meek and gentle, patient and long-suffering, that he is therefore easy, indulgent, careless about our doing wrong, and that we can, in plain English, trifle with Christ, and take liberties with his everlasting laws of right and wrong; and so fancy, that provided we talk of the meek and lowly Jesus, and of his blood washing away all our sins, that we are free to behave very much as if Jesus had never come into the world to teach men their duty, and free to commit almost any sin which does not disgrace us among our neighbours, or render us punishable by the law.

My friends, it is *not so*. And those who fancy that it is so, will find out their mistake bitterly enough.—Infinite love and forgiveness to those

who repent and amend, and do right; but infinite rigour and punishment to those who will not amend and do right. This is the everlasting law of God's universe; and every soul of man will find it out at last, and find that the Lord Jesus Christ is not a Being to be trifled with, and that the precious blood which he shed on the cross is of no avail to those who are not minded to be righteous, even as he is righteous.

‘But Christ is so loving, so tender-hearted that ‘he surely will not punish us for our sins.’ This is the confused notion that too many people have about him. And the answer to it is, that just *because* Christ is so loving, so tender-hearted, therefore he *must* punish us for our sins, unless we utterly give up our sins, and do right instead of wrong.

That false notion springs out of men's selfishness. They think of sin as something which only hurts themselves; when they do wrong they think merely, ‘What punishment will God inflict on *me* ‘for doing wrong?’ They are wrapt up in themselves. They forget that their sins are not merely a matter between them and Christ, but between them and their neighbours; that every wrong action they commit, every wrong word they speak, every wrong habit in which they indulge themselves, sooner or later, more or less, hurts their neighbours—ay, hurts all mankind.

And does Christ care only for *them*? Does he not care for their neighbours? Has he not all mankind to provide for, and govern, and guide? And can he allow bad men to go on making this world worse, without punishing them, any more than a gardener can allow weeds to hurt his flowers, and not root them up? What would you say of a man who was so merciful to the weeds, that he let them choke the flowers? What would you say of a shepherd who was so merciful to the wolves, that he let them eat his sheep? What would you say of a magistrate who was so merciful to thieves, that he let them rob the honest men? And do you fancy that Christ is a less careful and just governor of the world than the magistrate who punishes the thief that honest men may live in safety?

Not so. Not only will Christ punish the wolves who devour his sheep, but he will punish his sheep themselves if they hurt each other, torment each other, lead each other astray, or in any way interfere with the just and equal rule of his kingdom; and this, not out of spite or cruelty, but simply because he is perfect love.

Go, therefore, and think of Christ this Passion-Week as he was, and is, and ever will be. Think of the whole Christ, and not of some part of his character which may specially please your fancy.

Think of him as the patient and forgiving Christ, who prayed for his murderers—‘ Father, forgive ‘ them, for they know not what they do.’ But remember that, in this very Passion-Week, there came out of those most gentle lips—the lips which blessed little children, and cried to all who were weary and heavy laden to come to him and he would give them rest—that out of those most gentle lips, I say, in this very Passion-Week, there went forth the most awful threats which ever were uttered—‘ Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Ye serpents, ye generation of ‘ vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of ‘ hell?’ Think of him as the Lamb who offered himself freely on the cross for sinners. But think of him, too, as the Lamb who shall one day come in glory, to judge all men according to their works. Think of him as full of boundless tenderness and humanity, boundless long-suffering and mercy. But remember that beneath that boundless sweetness and tenderness there burns a consuming fire ; a fire of divine scorn and indignation against all who sin, like Pharaoh, out of cruelty and pride ; against all which is foul and brutal, mean and base, false and hypocritical, cruel and unjust ; a fire which burns, and will burn, against all the wickedness which is done on earth, and all the misery and sorrow which is suffered on earth, till

the Lord has burned it up for ever, and there is nothing but love and justice, order and usefulness, peace and happiness, left in the universe of God.

Oh, think of these things, and cast away your sins betimes, at the foot of his everlasting cross, lest you be consumed with your sins in his everlasting fire!

SERMON XII.

THE BIRTNIGHT OF FREEDOM.

(*Easter Day.*)

EXODUS xii. 42.

This is a night to be much observed unto the Lord, for bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt.

TO be much observed unto the Lord by the children of Israel.

And by us, too, my friends; and by all nations who call themselves *free*.

There are many, and good ways of looking at Easter Day. Let us look at it in this way for once.

It is the day on which God himself set men *free*.

Consider the story. These Israelites, the children of Abraham, the brave wild patriarch of the desert, have been settled for hundreds of years in the rich lowlands of Egypt. There they have been eating and drinking their fill, and growing more weak, slavish, luxurious, fonder and fonder of the flesh-pots of Egypt; fattening literally for the slaughter, like beasts in a stall. They are spiritually dead—dead in trespasses and sins. They do not want to be free, to be a nation.

They are content to be slaves and idolaters, if they can only fill their stomachs. This is the spiritual death of a nation.

I say, they do not want to be free. When they are oppressed, they cry out—as an animal cries when you beat him. But after they are free, when they get into danger, or miss their meat, they cry out too, and are willing enough to return to slavery; as the dog which has run away for fear of the whip, will go back to his kennel for the sake of his food. ‘Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us to carry us out of Egypt?’ And again: ‘Would God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, where we did sit by the flesh-pots, and eat meat to the full!’ *Brutalized*, in one word, were these poor children of Israel.

Then God took their cause into his own hand. I say, emphatically, into his own hand. If that part of the story be not true, I care nothing for the rest. If God did not personally and actually, interfere on behalf of those poor slaves; if the plagues of Egypt are not *true*—if the passage of the Red Sea be not *true*—the story tells me and you nothing; gives us no hope for ourselves, no hope for mankind.

For see. One says, and truly, God is good; God

is love; God is just; God hates oppression and wrong.

But if God be love, he must surely show his love by doing loving things.

If God be just, he must show his justice by doing just things.

If God hates oppression, then he must free the oppressed.

If God hates wrong, then he must set the wrong right.

For what would you think of a man who professed to be loving and just, and to hate oppression and wrong, and yet never took the trouble to do a good action, or to put down wrong, when he had the power?

You would call him a hypocrite; you would think his love and justice very much on his tongue, and not in his heart.

And will you believe that God is like that man? God forbid!

Comfortable scholars, and luxurious ladies, may content themselves with a *dead* God, who does not interfere to help the oppressed, to right the wrong, to bind up the broken-hearted: but men and women who work, who sorrow, who suffer, who partake of all the ills which flesh is heir to—they want a *living* God, an acting God, a God who *will* interfere to right the wrong. Yes—they want

a living God. And they have a living God—even the God who interfered to bring the Israelites out of Egypt with signs and wonders, and a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, and executed judgment upon Pharaoh and his proud and cruel hosts. And when they read in the Bible of that God, when they read in their Bibles the story of the Exodus, their hearts answer: *This* is right. This is the God whom we need. This is what ought to have happened. This is true: for it must be true. Let comfortable folks who know no sorrow, trouble their brains as to whether 60 or 600,000 fighting men came out of Egypt with Moses. We care not for numbers. What we care for is, not how many came out, but who brought them out, and that he who brought them out was *God*. And the book which tells us that, we will cling to, will love, will reverence, above all the books on earth, because it tells of a living God, who works, and acts, and interferes for men; who not only hates wrong, but rights wrong; not only hates oppression, but puts oppressors down; not only pities the oppressed, but sets the oppressed free. A God who not only wills that man should have freedom, but sent freedom down to him from heaven.

Scholars have said, that the old Greeks were the fathers of freedom; and there have been other peoples in the world's history, who have made

glorious and successful struggles to throw off their tyrants, and be free. And they have said, we are the fathers of freedom; liberty was born with us. Not so, my friends! Liberty is of a far older, and far nobler house; Liberty was born, if you will receive it, on the first Easter night, on the night to be much remembered among the children of Israel—ay, among all mankind—when God himself stooped from heaven to set the oppressed free. Then was freedom born.—Not in the counsels of men, however wise; or in the battles of men, however brave: but in the counsels of God, and the battle of God—amid human agony and terror, and the shaking of the heaven and the earth; amid the great cry throughout Egypt, when a first-born son lay dead in every house; and the tempest which swept aside the Red Sea waves; and the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night; and the Red Sea shore covered with the corpses of the Egyptians; and the thunderings and lightnings and earthquakes of Sinai; and the sound as of a trumpet waxing loud and long; and the voice, most human and most divine, which spake from off the lonely mountain peak to that vast horde of coward and degenerate slaves, and said, ‘I am the Lord thy God who brought thee ‘out of the land of Egypt. Thou shalt obey my ‘laws, and keep my commandments to do them.’

Oh! the man who would rob his suffering fellow-creatures of that story—he knows not how deep and bitter are the needs of man.

Then was Freedom born: but not of man; not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man: but of the will of God, from whom all good things come; and of Christ, who is the life and the light of men and of nations, and of the whole world, and of all worlds, past, present, and to come.

From God came freedom. To be used as his gift, according to his laws; for he gave, and he can take away; as it is written, ‘He shall take the kingdom of God from you, and give it to a people bringing forth the fruits thereof.’ ‘For there be many first that shall be last; and last that shall be first.’ It is this which makes the Jews indeed a peculiar people: the thought that the living God had actually and really done for them what they could not do for themselves; that he had made them a nation; and not they themselves. It is this which makes the Old Testament an utterly different book, with an utterly different lesson, to the written history of any other nation in the world.

And yet it is this which makes the history of the Jews the key to every other history in the world. For in it Jesus Christ our Lord, the living

God who makes history, who governs all nations, reveals and unveils himself, and teaches not the Jews only, but us and all nations, that it is he who hath made us, and not we ourselves; that we got not the land in possession by our own sword, nor was it our own strength that helped us, but thou, O Lord, because thou hadst a favour unto us; that not to us, not to us, is the praise of any national greatness or glory, but to God, from whom it comes as surely a free gift as the gift of liberty to the Jews of old.

I say, the history of the Jews is the history of the whole church, and of every nation in Christendom.

As with the Jews, so with the nations of Europe; whenever they have trusted in themselves, their own power and wisdom, they have ended in weakness and folly. Whenever they have trusted in Christ the living God, and said, 'It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves,' they have risen to strength and wisdom. When they have forgotten the living God, national life and patriotism have died in them, as they died in the Jews. When they have remembered that the most high God was their Redeemer, then in them, as in the Jews, have national life and patriotism revived.

And as it was with the Jews in the wilderness, so it has been with them since Christ's resurrec-

tion. They fancied that they were going at once into the promised land. So did the first Christians. But the Jews had to wander forty years in the wilderness; and Christendom has had to wander too, in strange and bloodstained paths, for 1800 years, and more. For why? The Israelites were not worthy to enter at once into rest; no more have the nation of Christ's church been worthy. The Israelites brought out of Egypt base and slavish passions, which had to be purged out of them; so have we out of heathendom. They brought out, too, heathen superstitions, and mixed them up with the worship of God, bearing about in the wilderness the tabernacle of Moloch, and the image of their god Remphan, and making the calf in Horeb; and so, alas! again and again, has the church of Christ.

Nay, the whole generation, save two, who came out of Egypt, had to die in the wilderness, and leave their bones scattered far and wide. And so has mankind been dying, by war and by disease, and by many fearful scourges, beside what is called now-a-days natural decay.

But all the while a new generation was springing up, trained in the wilderness to be bold and hardy; trained, too, under Moses' stern law, to the fear of God; to reverence, and discipline, and obedience, without which freedom is merely brutal

licence, and a nation is no nation, but a mere flock of sheep, or a herd of wolves.

And so, for these 1800 years, have the generations of Christendom, by the training of the Church, and the light of the Gospel, been growing in wisdom and knowledge ; growing in morality and humanity, in that true discipline and loyalty which are the yokefellows of freedom and independence, to make them fit for that higher state, that heavenly Canaan, of which we know not *when* it will come, nor whether its place will be on this earth or elsewhere ; but of which it is written, ‘ And I John ‘ saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down ‘ from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride ‘ adorned for her husband. And I heard a great ‘ voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle ‘ of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, ‘ and they shall be his people, and God himself ‘ shall be with them, and be their God. And God ‘ shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and ‘ there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor ‘ crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for ‘ the former things are passed away. And he that ‘ sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all ‘ things new.

‘ And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord ‘ God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of ‘ it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither

‘ of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God
‘ did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.
‘ And the nations of them which are saved shall
‘ walk in the light of it: and the kings of the
‘ earth do bring their glory and honour into it.
‘ And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by
‘ day: for there shall be no night there. And
‘ they shall bring the glory and honour of the
‘ nations into it. And there shall in nowise enter
‘ into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever
‘ worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they
‘ which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.’

That, the perfect Easter Day, seems far enough
off as yet: but it will come. As the Lord liveth,
it will come: and to it may Christ in his mercy
bring us all, and our children’s children after us.
Amen.

SERMON XIII.

KORAH, DATHAN, AND ABIRAM,

(*First Sunday after Easter, 1863.*)

NUMBERS xvi. 32—35.

And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them : and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them : for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

I WILL begin by saying that there are several things in this chapter which I do not understand, and cannot explain to you. Be it so. That is no reason why we should not look at the parts of the chapter which we can understand and can explain.

There are matters without end in the world round us, and in our own hearts, and in the life of every one, which we cannot explain, and therefore we need not be surprised to find things which we cannot explain in the life and history of the most remarkable nation upon earth,—the na-

tion whose business it has been to teach all other nations the knowledge of the true God, and who was specially and curiously trained for that work.

But the one broad common-sense lesson of this chapter, it seems to me, is one which is on the very surface of it; one which every true Englishman, at least, will see, and see to be true, when he hears the chapter read; and that is, the necessity of *discipline*.

God has brought the Israelites out of Egypt, and set them free. One of the first lessons which they have to learn is, that freedom does not mean licence and discord,—does not mean every one doing that which is right in the sight of his own eyes. From that springs self-will, division, quarrels, revolt, civil war, weakness, profligacy, and ruin to the whole people. Without order, discipline, obedience to law, there can be no true and lasting freedom; and, therefore, order must be kept at all risks, the law obeyed, and rebellion punished.

Now rebellion may be—and ought to be—punished far more severely in some cases than in others. If men rebel here, in Great Britain or Ireland, we smile at them, and let them off with a slight imprisonment, because we are not afraid of them. They can do no harm.

But there are cases in which rebellion must be

punished with a swift and sharp hand. On board a ship at sea, for instance, where the safety of the whole ship, the lives of the whole crew, depend on instant obedience, mutiny may be punished by death on the spot. Many a commander has, ere now, and rightly too, struck down the rebel without trial or argument, and ended him and his mutiny on the spot; by the sound rule, that it is expedient that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

And so it was with the Israelites in the desert. All depended on their obedience. God had given them a law—a constitution, as we should say now—perfectly fitted, no doubt, for them. If they once began to rebel and mutiny against that law, all was over with them. That great foolish ignorant multitude would have broken up, probably fought among themselves—certainly parted company, and either starved in the desert, or have been destroyed piecemeal by the wild warlike tribes, Midianites, Moabites, Amalekites,—who were ready enough for slaughter and plunder. They would never have reached Canaan. They would never have become a great nation. So they had to be, by necessity, under martial law. The word must be, Obey or die. As for any cruelty in putting Korah, Dathan, and Abiram to death, it was worth the death of a hundred such—or

a thousand—to preserve the great and glorious nation of the Jews, to be the teachers of the world.

Now this Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebel. They rebel against Moses about a question of the priesthood. It really matters little to us what that question was,—it was a question of Moses' law, which, of course, is now done away. Only remember this, that these men were princes—great feudal noblemen, as we should say; and that they rebelled on the strength of their rank, and their rights as noblemen to make laws for themselves and for the people; and that the mob of their dependents seem to have been inclined to support them.

Surely if Moses had executed martial law on them with his own hand, he would have been as perfectly justified as a captain of a ship of war, or a general of an army would be now.

But he did not do so. And why? Because *Moses* did not bring the people out of Egypt. *Moses* was not their king. *God* brought them out of Egypt. *God* was their king. That was the lesson which they had to learn,—and to teach other nations also. They have rebelled, not against *Moses*, but against *God*; and not *Moses*, but *God* must punish, and show that he is not a dead *God*, but a living *God*, one who can defend himself, and enforce his own laws, and execute judgment,—and,

if need be, vengeance,—without needing any man to fight his battles for him.

And God does so. The powers of Nature,—the earthquake and the nether fire—shall punish these rebels; and so they do.

‘And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that
 ‘the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for
 ‘I have not done them of mine own mind. If
 ‘these men die the common death of all men, or
 ‘if they be visited after the visitation of all men;
 ‘then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the
 ‘Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her
 ‘mouth, and swallow them up, with all that ap-
 ‘pertain to them, and they go down quick into
 ‘the pit; then ye shall understand that these
 ‘men have provoked the Lord.’

Men have thought differently of the story: but I call it a righteous story, and a noble story, and one which agrees with my conscience, and my reason, and my notion of what ought to be, and my experience, also, of what is,—of the way in which God’s world is governed unto this day.

What then are we to think of the earth opening and swallowing them up? What are we to think of a fire coming out from the Lord, and consuming two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

This first. That discipline and order are so absolutely necessary for the well-being of a nation

that they must be kept at all risks, and enforced by the most terrible punishments.

It seems to me (to speak with all reverence) as if God had said to the Jews,—‘I have set you free. I will make of you a great nation; I will lead you into a good land and large. But if you are to be a great nation, if you are to conquer that good land and large, you must obey: and you shall obey. The earthquake and the fire shall teach you to obey, and make you an example to the rest of the Israelites, and to all nations after you.’

But how hard, some may think, that the wives and the children should suffer for their parents’ sins.

My friends, we do not know that a single woman or child died then, for whom it was not better that he or she should die. That is one of the deep things which we must leave to the perfect justice and mercy of God.

And next,—what is it after all, but what we see going on round us all day long? God does visit the sins of the fathers on the children. There is no denying it. Wives do suffer for their husbands’ sins; children, and children’s children, for whole generations after generations, suffer for their parents’ sins, and become unhealthy, or superstitious, or profligate, or poor, or slavish, because their parents sinned, and dragged down their children

with them in their fall. It is a law of the world ; and therefore it is a law of God. And it is reasonable to be believed, that God might choose to teach the Israelites once and for all, that it *was* a law of his world. For by swallowing up those women and children with the men, God said to the Israelites, it seems to me, in a way which could not be mistaken, ‘ This is the consequence of lawlessness and disorder—that you not only injure yourselves, but your children after you, and involve your families in the same ruin as yourselves.’

But there was another lesson, and a deep lesson, in the earthquake and in the fire.

And that was this : that the earthquake and the fire came out from the Lord.

Earthquakes have swallowed up not hundreds merely, but many thousands, in many countries, and at many times.

Fire has come forth, and still comes forth, from the ground, from the clouds, from the consequences of man’s own carelessness, and destroys beast and man, and the works of man’s hands. Then men ask in terror and doubt,—‘ Who sends the earthquake and the fire? Do they come from the devil—the destroyer? Do they come by chance, from some brute and blind powers of nature?’

This chapter answers, ‘ No. They come from the

‘ Lord, from whom all good things do come ; from
‘ the Lord who delivered the Israelites out of
‘ Egypt ; who so loved the world, that he spared
‘ not his only begotten Son, but freely gave him
‘ for us.’

Now, I say that is a gospel, and good news, which we want now as much as ever men did ; which the children of Israel wanted then, though not one whit more than we.

Many hundreds of years had these Israelites been in Egypt. Storm, lightning, earthquake, the fires of the burning mountains, were things unknown to them. They were going into Canaan—a good land and fruitful, but a land of storms and thunders—a land, too, of earthquakes and subterranean fires. The deepest earthquake crack in the world is the valley of the Jordan, ending in the Dead Sea—a long valley, through which at different points the nether fires of the earth even now burst up at times. In Abraham’s time they had destroyed the five cities of the plain. The prophets mention them, especially Isaiah and Micah, as breaking out again in their own times ; and in our own lifetime, earthquake and fire have done fearful destruction in the north part of the Holy Land.

Now, what were to prevent the Israelites worshipping the earthquake and the fire as gods ?

Nothing. Conceive the terror and horror of

the Jews coming out of that quiet land of Egypt the first time they felt the ground rocking and rolling; the first time they heard the roar of the earthquake beneath their feet; the first time they saw, in the magnificent words of Micah, the mountains molten and the valleys cleft as wax before the fire, like water poured down a steep place; and discovered that beneath their very feet was Tophet, the pit of fire and brimstone, ready to burst up and overwhelm them they knew not when.

What could they do, but what the Canaanites did who dwelt already in that land? What but to say, 'The fire is king. The fire is the great and dreadful God, and to him we must pray, lest he devour us up.' For so did the Canaanites. They called the fire Moloch, which means simply the king; and they worshipped this fire king, and made idols of him, and offered human sacrifices to him. They had idols of metal, before which an everlasting fire burned; and on the arms of the idol the priests laid the children who were to be sacrificed, that they might roll down into the fire, and be burnt alive. That is actual fact. In one case, which we know of well, hundreds of years after Moses' time, the Carthaginians offered two hundred boys of their best families to Moloch in one day. This is that making the children pass through the fire to Moloch,—burning them in the fire to

Moloch,—of which we read several times in the Old Testament; as ugly and accursed a superstition as men ever invented.

What deliverance was there for them from these abominable superstitions, except to know that the fire-kingdom was God's kingdom, and not Moloch's at all; to know with Micah and with David that the hills were molten like wax *before the presence of the Lord*; that it was the blast of his breath which discovered the foundations of the world; that it was *he* who made the sea flee, and drove back the Jordan stream; that it was before *him* that the mountains skipt like rams, and the little hills like young sheep; that the battles of shaking were God's battles, with which he could fight for his people; that it was he who ordained Tophet, and whose spirit kindled it. That it was he—and that too in mercy as well as anger—who visited the land in Isaiah's time with thunder and earthquake, and great noise, and storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. That the earth opened and swallowed up those whom God chose, and no others. That if fire came forth, it came forth from the Lord, and burned where and what God chose, and nothing else. Yes. If you will only understand once and for all that the history of the Jews is the history of the Lord's turning a people from the cowardly slavish wor-

ship of sun and stars, of earthquakes and burning mountains, and all the brute powers of nature which the heathen worshipped, and teaching them to trust and obey him, the living God, the Lord and Master of all, then the Old Testament will be clear to you throughout ; but if not, then not.

You cannot read your Bibles without seeing how that great lesson was stamped into the very hearts of the Hebrew prophets ; how they are continually speaking of the fire and the earthquake, and yet continually declaring that they too obey God, and do God's will, and that the man who fears God need not fear them—that God was their hope and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore would they not fear, though the earth was moved, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

And we, too, need the same lesson in these scientific days. We too need to fix it in our hearts, that the powers of nature are the powers of God ; that he orders them by his providence to do what he will and when and where he will ; that, as the Psalmist says, the winds are his messengers, and the flames of fire his ministers. And this we shall learn from the Bible, and from no other book whatsoever.

God taught the Jews this, by a strange and miraculous education, that they might teach it in

their turn to all mankind. And they have taught it. For the Bible bids us—as no other book does—not to be afraid of the world on which we live—not to be afraid of earthquake or tempest, or any of the powers of nature which seem to us terrible and cruel, and destroying; for they are the powers of the good, and just, and loving God. They obey our Father in heaven, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who came not to destroy men's lives but to save them. And therefore we need not fear them, or look on them with any blind superstition, as things too awful for us to search into. We may search into their causes; find out if we can the laws which they obey, because those laws are given them by God our Father; try, by using those laws, to escape them, as we are learning now to escape tempests; or to prevent them, as we are learning now to prevent pestilences: and where we cannot do that, face them manfully, saying, 'It is my Father's will. These terrible events must be doing God's work. They may be punishing the guilty; they may be taking the righteous away from the evil to come; they may be teaching wise men lessons which will enable them, years hence, to save lives without number; they may be preparing the face of the earth for the use of generations yet unborn. Whatever they are

‘doing they are and must be doing good ; for they
‘are doing the will of the living Father, who
‘willeth that none should perish, and hateth no-
‘thing that he hath made.’

This, my friends, is the lesson which the Bible teaches ; and because it teaches that lesson it is the book of books, and the inspired word or message, not of men concerning God, but of God himself, concerning himself, his kingdom over this world and over all worlds, and his good will to men.

SERMON XIV.

BALAAM.

NUMBERS xxiii. 19.

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

IF I was asked for any proof that the story of Balaam as I find it in the Bible is a true story, I should lay my hand upon this one only—and that is the deep knowledge of human nature which is shown in it.

The character of Balaam is so perfectly natural, and yet of a kind so very difficult to unravel and explain, that if the story was invented by man, as poems or novels are, it must have been invented very late indeed in the history of the Jews; at a time, when they had grown to be a far more civilized people, far more experienced in the cunning tricks of the human heart, than they were, as far as we can see from the Bible, before the Babylonish captivity. But it was *not* invented late; for no Jew in these later times would have thought of

making Balaam, a heathen, to be a prophet of God, or a believer in the true God at all. The later Jews took up the notion that God spoke to, and cared for, the Jews only, and that all other nations were accursed.

There is no reason, therefore, against simply believing the story as it stands. It seems a very ancient story indeed, suiting exactly, in its smallest details, the place where Moses, or whoever wrote the Book of Numbers, has put it.

We, in these days, are accustomed to draw a sharp line between the good and the bad, the converted and the unconverted, the children of God and the children of this world, those who have God's Spirit and those who have not, which we find nowhere in Scripture ; and therefore when we read of such a man as Balaam we cannot understand him. He is a bad man, but yet he is a prophet. How can that be ? He knows the true God. More, he has the Spirit of God in him, and thereby utters deep and wonderful prophecies ; and yet he is a bad man and a rogue. How can that be ?

The puzzle, my friends, is one of our own making. If, instead of taking up doctrines out of books we will use our own eyes, and ears, and common sense, and look honestly at this world as it is, and men and women as they are, we shall find nothing unnatural or strange in Balaam ; we shall

find him very like a good many people whom we know, very like—nay, probably, too like, ourselves in some particulars.

Now bear in mind, first, that Balaam is no impostor or magician. He is a wise man and a prophet of God. God really speaks to him, and really inspires him.

And bear in mind, too, that Balaam's inspiration did not merely open his mouth to say wonderful words which he did not understand, but opened his heart to say righteous and wise things which he did understand.

'Remember,' says the prophet Micah, 'O my people, what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord. Where with shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.' Why, what deeper or

wiser words are there in the whole Old Testament? This man Balaam had seen down into the deepest depths of all morality, unto the deepest depths of all religion. The man who knew that, knew more than 99 in 100 do even in a Christian country now, and more than 999,999 in a million knew in those days. Let no one, after that speech, doubt that Balaam was indeed a prophet of the Lord: and yet he was a bad man, and came deservedly to a bad end.

So much easier, my friends, is it to know what is right than to do what is right.

What then was wrong in Balaam?

This, that he was double-minded. He wished to serve God. True. But he wished to serve himself by serving God, as too many do in all times.

That was what was wrong with him—self-seeking; and the Bible story brings out that self-seeking with a delicacy, a keenness, and a perfect knowledge of human nature, which ought to teach us some of the secrets of our own hearts.

Watch how Balaam, as a matter of course, inquires of the Lord whether he may go, and refuses, seemingly at first honestly.

Then how the temptation grows on him; how, when he feels tempted, he fights against it in fine-sounding professions, just because he feels that he

is going to yield to it. Then how he begins to tempt God, by asking him again, in hopes that God may have changed his mind. Then when he has his foolish wish granted, he goes. Then when the terrible warning comes to him that he is on the wrong road, that God's wrath is gone out against him, and his angel ready to destroy him, he is full still of hollow professions of obedience, instead of casting himself utterly upon God's mercy, and confessing his sin, and entreating pardon.

Then how, instead of being frightened at God's letting him have his way, he is emboldened by it to tempt God more and more, and begins offering bullocks and rams on altars, first in this place and then in that, in hopes still that God may change his mind, and let him curse Israel; in hopes that God may be like one of the idols of the heathen, who could (so the heathen thought) be coaxed and flattered round by sacrifices to do whatever their worshippers wished.

Then, when he finds that all is of no use; that he must not curse Israel, and must not earn Balak's silver and gold, he is forced to be an honest man in spite of himself; and therefore he makes the best of his disappointment, by taking mighty credit to himself for being honest, while he wishes all the while he might have been allowed

to have been dishonest. Oh, if all this is not poor human nature, drawn by the pen of a truly inspired writer, what is it?

Moreover, it is curious to watch how as Balaam is forced step by step to be an honest man, so step by step he rises. A weight falls off his mind and heart, and the Spirit of God comes upon him.

He feels for once that he must speak his mind, that he must obey God. As he looks down from off the mountain top, and sees the vast encampment of the Israelites spread over the vale below, for miles and miles, as far as the eye can see, all ordered, disciplined, arranged according to their tribes, the Spirit of God comes upon him and he gives way to it, and speaks.

The sight of that magnificent array wakens up in him the thought of how divine is order, how strong is order, how order is the life and root of a nation, and how much more, when that order is the order of God.

‘How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy
‘tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they
‘spread forth, as gardens by the river’s side, as
‘the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath
‘planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters.
‘His king shall be higher than Agag,’ and all his
wild Amalekite hordes. He will be a true nation,

civilized, ordered, loyal and united, for God is teaching him.

Who can resist such a nation as that? 'God has brought him out of Egypt. He has the strength of an unicorn.' 'I shall see him,' he says, 'but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.' . . . And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, 'Amalek was the first of the nation; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.' And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, 'Strong is thy dwelling-place, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock. Nevertheless, the Kenite shall be wasted, till Asshur shall carry thee away captive.' 'Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!'

And then, beyond all, after all the Canaanites and other Syrian races have been destroyed, he sees, dimly and afar off, another destruction still.

In his home in the far east, the fame of the ships of Chittim has reached him; the fame of the new people, the sea-roving heroes of the Greeks, of whom old Homer sang; the handsomest, cunningest, most daring of mankind, who are spreading their little trading colonies along all the isles

and shores, as we now are spreading ours over the world. Those ships of Chittim, too, have a great and glorious future before them. Some day or other they will come and afflict Asshur, the great empire of the East, out of which Balaam probably came, and afflict Eber too, the kingdom of the Jews, and they too shall perish for ever.

Dimly he sees it, for it is very far away. But that it will come, he sees: and beyond that all is dark. He has said his say; he has spoken the whole truth for once. Balak's house full of silver and gold would not have bought him off, and stopped his mouth, when such awful thoughts crowded on his mind. So he returns to his place—to do what?

If he cannot earn Balak's gold by cursing Israel, he can do it by giving him cunning and politic advice. He advises Balak to make friends with the Israelites, and mix them up with his people, by enticing them to the feasts of his idols, at which the women threw themselves away in shameful profligacy, after the custom of the heathens of these parts.

In the next chapter we read how Moses, and Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, put down those filthy abominations with a high hand; and how Balaam's detestable plot, instead of making peace, makes war; and in chapter xxxi. you read the

terrible destruction of the whole nation of the Midianites, and among it this one short and terrible hint: 'Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with 'the sword.'

But what may we learn from this ugly story?

Recollect what I said at first, that we should find Balaam too like many people now-a-days; perhaps too like ourselves.

Too like indeed. For never were men more tempted to sin as Balaam did than in these days, when religion is all the fashion, and pays a man, and helps him on in life; when, indeed, a man cannot expect to succeed without professing some sort of religion or other.

Thereby comes a terrible temptation to many men. I do not mean to hypocrites; but to really well-meaning men. They like religion. They wish to be good; they have the feeling of devotion. They pray, they read their Bibles, they are attentive to services and to sermons, and are more or less pious people. But soon—too soon—they find that their piety is profitable. Their business increases. Their credit increases. They are trusted and respected; their advice is asked and taken. They gain power over their fellow-men. What a fine thing it is, they think, to be pious!

Then creeps in the love of the world; the love of money, or power, or admiration; and they

begin to value religion, because it helps them to get on in the world. They begin more and more to love piety not for its own sake, but for the sake of what it brings; not because it pleases God, but because it pleases the world; not because it enables them to help their fellow-men, but because it enables them to help themselves.

So they get double-minded, unstable, inconsistent, as St. James says, in all their ways; trying to serve God and Mammon at once. Trying to do good—as long as doing good does not hurt them in the world's eyes; but longing oftener and oftener to do wrong, if only God would not be angry. Then comes on Balaam's frame of mind. 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord.'

Oh no. They would not do a wrong thing for the world—only they must be quite sure first that it is wrong. Has God really forbidden it? Why should they not take care of their own interest? Why should they not get on in the world? So they begin like Balaam to tempt God, to see how far they can go; to see if God has forbidden this and that mean, or cowardly, or covetous, or ambitious deed. So they soon settle for themselves what God has forbidden and what he has not; and their rule of life becomes this—that whatsoever is safe, and

whatsoever is profitable, is pretty sure to be right; and after that no wonder if, like Balaam, they indulge themselves in every sort of sin, provided only it is respectable, and does not hurt them in the world's eyes.

And all the while they keep up their religion. Ay, they are often more attentive than ever to religion, because their consciences pinch them at times, and have to be silenced and drugged, by continual churchgoings and chapelgoings, and readings and prayings, in order that they may be able to say to themselves with Balaam: 'Thus saith ' Balaam, he who heard the word of God, and had ' the knowledge of the Most High.'

So they say to themselves, 'I must be right. ' How religious I am; how fond of sermons, and of ' church services, and church restorations, and ' missionary meetings, and charitable institutions, ' and everything that is good and pious. I *must* be ' right with God.'—Deceiving their ownselves, and saying to themselves, 'I am rich and increased ' with goods, I have need of nothing,' and not knowing that they are wretched and miserable, and blind, and naked.

Would God that such people, of whom there are too many, would take St. John's warning, and buy of the Lord gold tried in the fire—the true gold of honesty, that they may be truly rich, and

anoint their eyes with eye-salve, that they may see themselves for once as they are.

But what does this story teach us concerning God? For remember, as I tell you every Sunday, that each fresh story in the Pentateuch reveals to us something fresh about the character of God. What does Balaam's story reveal? Balaam himself tells us in the text:—

‘God is not a man that he should lie, nor the
‘son of man that he should repent. Hath he said,
‘and shall he not do it?’

Yes. Fancy not that any wishes or prayers of yours can persuade God to alter his everlasting laws of right and wrong. If he has commanded a thing, he has commanded it because it is according to his everlasting laws, which cannot change, because they are made in his eternal image and likeness. Therefore if God has commanded you a thing, *do it*, heartily, fully, without arguing or complaining. If you begin arguing with God's law, excusing yourself from it, inventing reasons why *you* need not obey it in this particular instance, though every one else ought, then you will end, like Balaam, in disobeying the law, and it will grind you to powder.

But if you obey God's law honestly, with a single eye and a whole heart, you will find in it a blessing, and peace, and strength, and everlasting life.

SERMON XV.

DEUTERONOMY.

(Third Sunday after Easter.)

DEUT. iv. 39, 40.

Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath : there is none else. Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever.

LEARNED men have argued much of late as to who wrote the book of Deuteronomy. After having read a good deal on the subject, I can only say that I see no reason why we should not believe the ancient account which the Jews give, that it was written, or at least spoken, by Moses.

No doubt, there are difficulties in the book. If there had not been, there would never have been any dispute about the matter ; but the plain, broad, common-sense case is this—

The book of Deuteronomy is made up of several great orations or sermons, delivered, says the work itself, by Moses to the whole people of the

Jews, before they left the wilderness and entered into the land of Canaan ; wherefore it is called Deuteronomy, or the second law. In it some small matters of the law are altered, as was to be expected, when the Jews were going to change their place, and their whole way of life. But the whole teaching and meaning of the book is exactly that of Exodus and Leviticus. Moreover, it is, if possible, the grandest and deepest book of the whole Old Testament. Its depth and wisdom are unequalled. I hold it to be the sum and substance of all political philosophy and morality, of the true life of a nation. The books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, grand as they are, are, as it were, its children ; growths out of the root which Deuteronomy reveals.

Now, if Moses did not write it, who did ?

As for the style of it being different from that of Exodus and Leviticus, the simple answer is—Why not ? They are books of history and of laws. This is a book of sermons or orations, spoken first, and not written, which, of course, would be in a different style. Besides, why should not Moses have spoken differently at the end of forty years' such experience as never man had before or since ? Every one who thinks, writes, or speaks in public, knows how his style alters, as fresh knowledge and experience come to him. Are you

to suppose that Moses gained nothing by *his* experience?

As for a few texts in it being like Isaiah or Jeremiah, they are likely enough to be so; for if (as I believe) Deuteronomy was written long before those books, what more likely than that Isaiah and Jeremiah should have studied it, and taken some of its words to themselves when they were preaching to the Jews just what Deuteronomy preaches?

As for any one else having written it in Moses' name, hundreds of years after his death, I cannot believe it. If there had been in Israel a prophet great and wise enough to write Deuteronomy, we must have heard more about him; for he must have been famous at the time when he did live; while, if he were great enough to write Deuteronomy, he would have surely written in his own name, as Isaiah and all the other prophets wrote, instead of writing under a feigned name, and putting words into Moses' mouth which he did not speak, and laws he did not give. Good men are not in the habit of telling lies: much less prophets of God. Men do not begin to play cowardly tricks of that kind till after they have lost faith in the *living* God, and got to believe that God was with their forefathers, but is not with them. A Jew of the time of the Apocrypha,

or of the time of our Lord, might have done such a thing, because he had lost faith in the living God: but then his work would have been of a very different kind from this noble and heart-stirring book. For the pith and marrow, the essence and life of Deuteronomy is, that it is full of faith in the living God; and for that very reason I am going to speak of it to you to-day.

For the rest, whether Moses wrote the book down, and put it together in the shape in which we now have it, we shall never be able to tell. The several orations may have been put together into one book. Alterations may have crept in by the carelessness of copiers; sentences may have been added to it by later prophets—as, of course, the grand account of Moses' death, which probably was, at first, the beginning of the book of Joshua. And beyond that we need know nothing—even if we need know that.

There the book is; and people, if they be wise, will, instead of trying to pick it to pieces, read and study it in fear and trembling, that the curses pronounced in it may *not* come, and the blessings pronounced in it may come, upon this English land.

Now these Jews were to worship and obey Jehovah, the one true God, and him only.

And why?

Why, indeed? You *must* understand why, or you will never understand this book of Deuteronomy, or any part of the Old Testament, and if you do not, then you will understand very little, if anything, of the New.

You must understand that this was not to be a mere matter of *religion* with the old Jews, this trusting and obeying the true God. Indeed, the word religion, as far as I know, is never mentioned once in the Old Testament at all. By religion we now mean some plan of believing and obeying God, which will save our souls after we die. But Moses said nothing to the Jews about that. He never even anywhere told them that they would live again after this life. We do not know the reason of that. But we may suppose that he knew best. And as we believe that God sent him, we must believe that God knew best also; and that he thought it good for these Jews not to be told too much about the next life; perhaps for fear that they should forget that God was the living God; the God of now, as well as of hereafter; the God of this life, as well as of the life to come. My friends, I sometimes think we need putting in mind of that in these days, as much as those old Jews did.

However that may be, what Moses promised these Jews, if they trusted in the living God, was

that they should be a great nation, they and their children after them ; that they should drive out the Canaanites before them ; that they should conquer their enemies, and that a thousand should flee before one of them ; that they should be blessed in their crops, their orchards, their gardens ; that they should have none of the evil diseases of Egypt ; that there should be none barren among them, or among their cattle. In a word, that they should be thoroughly and always a strong, happy, prosperous people.

This is what God promised them by Moses, and nothing else ; and therefore this is what we must think about, and see whether it has anything to do with us, when we read the book of Deuteronomy, and nothing else.

On the other hand, God warned them by the mouth of Moses, that if they forgot the Lord God, and went and worshipped the things round them, men or beasts, or sun and moon and stars, then poverty, misery, and ruin of every kind would surely fall upon them.

And that this last was no empty threat, is proved by the plain facts of their sacred history. For they *did* forget God, and worshipped Baalim, the sun, moon, and stars ; and ruin of every kind *did* come upon them, till they were carried away captive to Babylon. And this we must think of

when we read the book of Deuteronomy, and nothing else.

If they wished to prosper, they were to know and consider in their hearts that Jehovah was God, and there was none else. Yes—this was the continual thought which a true Jew was to have. The thought of a God who was *his* God; the God of his fathers before him, and the God of his children after him; the God of the whole nation of the Jews, throughout all their generations.

But not their God only. No. The God of the Gentiles also, of all the nations upon the earth. He was to believe that his God alone, of all the gods of the nations, was the true and only God, who had made all nations, and appointed them their times and the bounds of their habitations.

We cannot understand now, in these happier days, all that that meant; all the strength and comfort, all the godly fear, the feeling of solemn responsibility, which that thought ought to have given, and did give, to the Jews—that they were the people of Jehovah, the one true God.

For you must remember that all the nations round them then, and all the great heathen nations afterwards, were, as far as we know, the people of some god or other. Religion and politics were

with them one and the same thing. They had some god, or gods, whom they looked to as the head or king of their nation, who had a special favour to them, and would bless and prosper them according as they showed him special reverence, and after that god the whole nation was often named.

The Ammonites' god was Ammon, the hidden god, the lord of their sheep and cattle. The Zidonians had Ashtoreth, the moon. The Phœnicians worshipped Moloch, the fire. Many of the Canaanites worshipped Baal, the lord, or Baalim, the lords — the sun, moon, and stars. The Philistines afterwards (for we read nothing of Philistines in Moses' time) worshipped Dagon, the fish-god; and so forth. The Egyptians had gods without number,—gods invented out of beasts, and birds, and the fruits of the earth, and the season, and the weather, and the sun and moon and stars. Each class and trade, from the highest to the lowest, and each city and town throughout the land, seems to have had its special god, who was worshipped there, and expected to take care of that particular class of men, or that particular place.

What a thought it must have been for the Jews—all these people have their gods, but they are all wrong. We have the *right* God; the only true

God. They are the people of this god, or of that ; we are the people of the one true God. They look to many gods ; we look to the one God, who made all things, and beside whom there is none else. They look to one god to bless them in one thing, and another in another : one to send them sunshine, one to send them fruitful seasons ; one to prosper their crops, another their flocks and herds, and so forth. We look to one God to do all these things for us ; because he is Lord of all at once, and has made all.

Therefore we need not fear the gods of the heathen, or cry to any of them, even in our utmost distress ; for we belong to him who is before all gods, the God of gods, of whom it is written : ‘Worship him all ye gods ;’ and ‘it is the Lord who ‘made the heaven and the earth, the sea and all ‘that therein is. Him only shalt thou worship, ‘and him only shalt thou serve.’ If we obey him, and keep his commandments ;—if we trust in him, utterly, through good fortune and through bad,—then we must prosper in peace and war, we and our children after us ; because our prosperity is grounded on the real truth, and that of the heathen on a lie ; and all that the heathen expect their false gods to do for them, one here and another there, all that the one real God will do for us, himself alone.

Do you not see what a power and courage that thought must have given to the Jews? Do you not see how worshipping God, and loving God, and serving God, must have been a very different, a much deeper, and a truly holier matter to them, than the miserable selfish thing which is miscalled religion by too many people now-a-days, by which a man hopes to creep out of this world into heaven all by himself, without any real care or love for his fellow-creatures, or those he leaves behind him?

No. An old Jew's faith in God, and obedience to God, was part of his family life, part of his politics, part of his patriotism. If he obeyed God, and clave earnestly to God, then a blessing would come on him in the field and in the house, on his crops and on his cattle, going out and coming in; and on his children and his children's children to a thousand generations. He would be helping, if he obeyed and trusted God, to advance his country's prosperity; to insure her success in war and peace, to raise the name and fame of the Jewish people among all the nations round, that all might say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and an 'understanding people.'

Thus the duty he owed to God, was not merely a duty which he owed his own conscience or his own soul—it was a duty which he owed to his

family, to his kindred, to his country. It was not merely an opinion that there was one God, and not two; it was a belief that the one and only true God was protecting him, teaching him, inspiring him, and all his nation. That the true God would teach their hands to war, and their fingers to fight. That the true God would cause their folds to be full of sheep. That their valleys should stand rich with corn, that they should laugh and sing. That the true God would enable them to sit every man under his own vine and his own fig-tree, and eat the labour of his hands, he and his children after him, to perpetual generations.

This was the message and teaching which God gave these Jews. It is very different from what many people now-a-days would have given them, if they had had the ordering of the matter, and the making of those slaves into a free nation. But perhaps that is one proof that God *did* give it them; and that the Bible speaks truth when it says that not man, but God, gave them their law.

No doubt man would have done it differently. But God's ways are not as man's ways, nor God's thoughts as man's thoughts.

And God's ways have proved themselves to be the right ways. His purpose has come to pass. This little nation of the Jews, inhabiting a country

not as large as Wales, without seaport towns and commerce, without colonies or conquests—and at last, for its own sins, conquered itself, and scattered abroad over the whole civilized world—has taught the whole civilized world, has converted the whole civilized world, has influenced all the good and all the wise unto this day so enormously, that the world has actually gone beyond them, and become Christian by fully understanding their teaching and their Bible, while they have remained mere Jews by not fully understanding it. Truly, if that is not a proof that God revealed something to the Jews, which they never found out for themselves, which was too great for them to understand, which was God's boundless message, and not any narrow message of man's invention—if that does not prove it, I say, I know not what proof men would have.

But now, I have told you that God bade these Jews to look for blessings in *this* life, and blessings on their whole nation, and on their children after them, if they obeyed and served him. Does God *not* bid us to look for any such blessings? The Jews were to be blessed in *this* world. Are we only to be blessed in the next?

To that the Seventh Article of our Church gives a plain and positive answer. For it says that those are not to be heard, who pretend that the old Fathers, *i. e.*, Moses and the Prophets, looked only

for transitory promises, *i. e.*, for promises which would pass away. No. They looked for eternal promises, which could not pass away, because they were according to the eternal laws of God, which stand good both for this world, and for all worlds; for this life, and for the life everlasting.

Yes, my friends, settle in your hearts that the Book of Deuteronomy is meant for you, and for all the nations upon earth, as much as for the old Jews. That its promises and warnings are to you and to your children, as surely as they were to the old Jews. Ay, that they are meant for every nation that is, or ever was, or ever will be upon earth. If you would prosper on the earth, fear God and keep his commandments; and know, and consider it in your heart, that the Lord Jesus Christ he is God in heaven above, and on the earth beneath: there is none else. He it is who gives grace and honour. He it is who delivers out of the hands of our enemies. He it is who blesses the fruit of the womb, and the fruit of the flock, and the fruit of the garden and the field. He is the living God, in whom this world, as well as the world to come, lives, and moves, and has its being; and only by obeying his laws can man prosper, he and his children after him, upon this earth of God.

SERMON XVI.

NATIONAL WEALTH.

(Fifth Sunday after Easter.)

DEUT. viii. 11—18.

Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day : lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein ; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied ; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage ; who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water ; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint ; who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end ; and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God : for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

I TOLD you before that the Book of Deuteronomy was the foundation of all sound politics—as one would expect it to be, if its author were Moses, the greatest lawgiver whom the world ever saw. But here, in this lesson, is a proof of the truth of what I said. For here, in

the text, is Moses' answer to the first great question in politics—what makes a nation prosperous?

To that wise men have always answered, as Moses answered: 'Good government; government according to the laws of God.' That alone makes a nation prosperous.

But the multitude—who are not wise men, nor likely to be for some time to come—give a different answer. They say, 'What makes a nation prosperous is its wealth. If Britain be 'only *rich*, then she must be safe and right.'

To which Moses, being a wise lawgiver, and having, moreover, in him the Spirit of the Lord who knoweth what is in man, makes a reasonable liberal, humane answer.

Moses does not deny that wealth is a good thing. He does not bid them not to try to be rich. He takes for granted that they will grow rich; that the national fruit of their good government will be, that they will increase, in cattle and in crops and in money, and in all which makes an agricultural people rich.

He takes for granted, I say, that these Jews will grow very rich; but he warns them that their riches, like all other earthly things, may be a curse or a blessing to them. Nay, that they are not good in themselves, but mere tools which may be used for good or for evil. He warns them of a very

great danger that riches will bring on them. And herein he shows his knowledge of the human heart; for it is a certain fact, that whenever any nation has prospered, and their flocks and herds, and silver and gold, all that they had, have multiplied, then they have, as Moses warned the Jews, forgotten the Lord their God, and said, 'My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth.'

And it is true, also, that whenever any nation has begun to say that, they have fallen into confusion and misery, and sometimes into utter ruin, till they repented, and turned and remembered the Lord their God, and found out that the strength of a nation did not consist in riches, but in *virtue*.

For it is he that giveth the power to get wealth.

He gives it in two ways.

First, God gives the raw material; secondly, he gives the wit to use it.

You will all agree that God gives the first; that he gives the soil, the timber, the fisheries, the coal, the iron.

Do you believe it? I hope and trust that you do. But I fear that now-a-days many do not; for they boast of the resources of Britain as if we ourselves had made Britain, and not Almighty God; as if we had put the coal and the iron

into the rocks, and not Almighty God ages before we were born.

And if they will not say that openly, at least they will say, 'But the coal, and iron, and all other raw material would have been useless, if it had not been for the genius and energy of the British race.'

Of course not. But who gave them that genius and energy? Who gave them the wit to find the coal and iron?

God; and God gave it to us when we needed it, and not before.

Think of this, I beseech you; for it is true, and wonderful, and a thing of which I may say, 'Come, and I will reason with you of the righteous acts of the Lord.'

Men say, 'As long as England is ahead of the world in coal and iron she may defy the world.' I do not believe it; for if she became a wicked nation all the coal and iron in the universe would not keep her from being ruined.

But even if it were true, which it is not, that the strength of Britain lies in coal and iron, and not in British hearts, what right have we to boast of coal and iron?

Did our forefathers know of them when they came into this land? Did they come after coal and iron?

Not they. They came here to settle as small yeomen; to till miserable little patches of corn, of which we should be now ashamed, and to feed cattle on the moors, and swine in the forests—and that was all they looked to. Then they found that there was iron, principally down south, in Sussex and Surrey; and they worked it, clumsily enough, with charcoal; and for more than 1200 years they were here in England, with no notion of the boundless wealth in iron and coal lying together in the same rocks which God had provided for them; or if they did guess at it, they could not use it, because they could not work deep mines, being unable to pump out the water; for God had not opened their eyes and shown them how to do it.

But just when it was wanted, God did show them. About the middle of the last century the iron in the Weald was all but worked out; the charcoal wood was getting scarcer and scarcer; and there was every chance that England, instead of being ahead of all nations in iron, would have fallen behind other nations; and then where should we have been now?

But—just about 100 years ago—it pleased God to open the eyes of certain men, and they invented steam-engines. Then they could pump the mines, then they could discover and use the

vast riches of our coal-mines. Then, too, sprung up a thousand useful arts and manufactures; while the land, not being wanted for charcoal and firewood, as of old, could be cleared of wood, and thousands of acres set free to grow corn. Population, which had been all but standing still, without increasing, has now more than doubled, and wealth inestimable has come to this generation, of which our forefathers never dreamed.

Now what have we to boast of in that? What, save to confess ourselves a very stupid race, who for 1200 years could not discover, or at least use, the boundless wealth which God had given us, because we had not wit enough to invent so simple a thing as a steam-engine?

All we should do, instead of boasting, is to bless God that he revealed to us just what we needed, and at the very time at which we needed it, and confess that it is *He* that giveth us power to get wealth. It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.

Look, again, at another case, even more extraordinary, which has happened during our own times—indeed, within the last ten years—the discovery of gold in Australia.

There had been rumours and whispers of gold for years before: and yet no one looked for gold,

cared for it, hardly believed in it. God had dulled their understanding and blinded their eyes, for some good purpose of his own. That is what the Bible would have said of such a matter ; and that is what we should say.

And at last, some man finds lying out upon the downs, a huge lump of gold—by accident (as men call it—by the special providence of God, as they ought to call it) ; and at that every one starts up and awakes, and begins looking for gold. And now that their eyes are opened, behold ! the gold is everywhere. Not merely in lonely forests and unexplored mountains, but on farms where the sheep have been pastured for years past ; ay, even Melbourne streets were full of gold, under the feet of the passengers, and the wheels of the carriages ; there had the gold been all along : but men could not see it, till God opened their eyes. Verily, verily, God is great, and man is small. I do not say that this was a miracle, in the common meaning of the word ; but I do say that this was a striking instance of that everlasting and special providence of the living God, who ordereth all things in heaven and earth, from the rise of a nation to the fall of a sparrow ; and does so, not by breaking his own laws, but by making his laws work exactly as he will, when he will, and where he will ; and I say that it is a fresh proof

of the great saying, that no man can see a thing unless God shows it him. For it is the Lord who gives us power to get wealth. It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves, and in him we live, and move, and have our being.

This, then, was what Moses commanded—to remember that they owed all to God. What they had, they had of God's free gift. What they were, they were by God's free grace. Therefore they were not to boast of themselves, their numbers, their wealth, their armies, their fair and fertile land. They were to make their boast of God, and of God's goodness. He that gloried was to glory in the Lord, and confess that a Syrian ready to perish was their father Jacob, when the Lord had mercy on him, and made him the head of a great tribe, and the father of a great nation; that not themselves, but God, had brought them out of Egypt with signs and wonders; that they got not the land in possession by their own bow, neither was it their own sword that helped them, but that God had driven out before them nations greater and mightier than they.

This they were to remember, because it was true. And this we are to remember, because it is more or less true of us. God has put us where we are. God has made of us a great nation; God has discovered to us the immense riches of this

land. It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.

But more. You will see that Moses warns them that if they forget God, the Lord who brought them out of the land of Egypt, they would go after other gods.

He cannot part the two things. If they forget that God brought them out of Egypt, they will turn to idolatry, and so end in ruin.

Now why was this?

Why should not the Jews have gone on worshipping one God, even if they had forgotten that he brought them out of the land of Egypt?

Some people now-a-days think that they would, and that they might have very well been what is called monotheists, without believing all the story of the signs and wonders in Egypt, and the passage of the Red Sea, and the giving of the law to Moses.

Such men may be very learned; but there is one thing of which they know very little, and that is, human nature. Moses knew human nature; and he knew that if men forgot that God was the living God, the acting God, who had helped them once, and was helping them always, and only believed about there being one God far away in heaven, and not two, that *that* sort of dead faith in a dead God would never keep them

from idols. They would want gods who *would* help them, who *would* hear their prayers, to whom they could feel gratitude and trust; and they would invent them for themselves, and begin to worship things in the heavens above, and the earth beneath, because they had forgotten their true friend and helper, the living God.

And so shall we. If we forget that God is the living God, who brought our forefathers into this land; who has revealed to us the wealth of it step by step, as we needed it; who is helping and blessing us now, every day and all the year round,—then we shall begin worshipping other gods. I do not mean that we shall worship idols—though I do not see why our childrens' children should not do so a few hundred years hence, if we teach them to forget the living God. There are too many Christians at this day who worship saints, and idols of wood and stone; and so may our descendants do—or do even worse.

But we ourselves shall begin—indeed we are doing it too much already—worshipping the so-called laws of nature, instead of God who made the laws; and so honouring the creature above the creator; or else we shall worship the pomps and vanities of this world, pride and power, money and pleasure, and say in our hearts, 'These are our only gods which can help us—these must we

obey.' Which if we do, this land of England will come to ruin and shame, as surely as did the land of Israel in old time.

If we do not believe in the living God, we shall believe in something worse than even a dead god. For in a dead god—a god who does nothing, but lets mankind and the world go their own way—no man nor nation ever will care to believe.

And now, my dear friends, remember that a nation is, after all, only the people in that nation; you, and I, and our neighbours, and our neighbours' neighbours, and so forth; and that therefore, in as far as we are wrong, we do our worst to make the British nation wrong. If we give way to ungodly pride and self-sufficiency, then we are injuring ourselves; and not only that, but injuring our neighbours and our children after us, as far as we can. And therefore our duty is, if we wish well to our nation, not to judge our neighbour, nor our neighbour's neighbour, but to judge ourselves.

If we go on trusting in ourselves, rather than God; if we keep within us the hard self-sufficient spirit, and boast to ourselves (though we may be ashamed to boast to our neighbours), 'My power and the strength of my hands have got me this and that;' and in fact live under the notion, which

too many have, that we could do very well without God's help, if God would let us alone; then we are heaping up ruin and shame for ourselves and for our children after us. Ruin and shame, I say. We are apt to forget how easy and common it is for God to turn the wisdom of men into folly; to frustrate the tokens of the liars, and make the prophets mad. How men blow great bubbles, and God bursts them with the slightest touch. How, when all seems well, and men cry peace and safety, sudden destruction comes upon them unawares. How, when men say, 'Soul, take thine ease, eat, ' drink, and be merry thou hast much goods laid ' up for many years,' God answers, 'Thou fool, ' this night shall thy soul be required of thee.'

My friends, we see God doing thus in these very days, by great nations, by great branches of industry. Look at the American war, look at the Manchester cotton famine, and see how God can confound the strong and cunning, and blind their eyes to the ruin which is coming, till it is come in all its might. And then think, if it be so easy for him to confound such as them, is it less easy for him to confound you and me, if we begin to fancy that we can do without him, and ask, 'Doth God perceive it? Or is there knowledge ' in the Most High? We are they that ought to ' speak. Who is Lord over us?'

Yes, in this sense God is, indeed, a jealous God, who will not give his honour to another. And a blessed thing for men it is that God *is* a jealous God, that he *will* punish us for trusting in anything but him,—will punish us for trusting in ourselves, or in our wisdom, or in wealth, or in science, or in armies and navies, or in constitutions and laws; in anything, in short, save him the living God.

For if he left us alone to go our own way without trusting or fearing him, we should surely go down and down (as the Chinese seem to have gone down), generation after generation, till we became only a mere cunning and spiteful sort of animals, hateful and hating one another. But when we are chastened for our folly, we are chastened by him that we may be partakers of his holiness; that we may be his children, looking up to him as our father, from whom comes every good and perfect gift; the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning; and who therefore will and can give us his children light, more and more to understand those his invariable and eternal laws, by which he has made earth and heaven; who has given us his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and will with him likewise freely give us all things.

SERMON XVII.

THE GOD OF THE RAIN.

(Fifth Sunday after Easter.)

DEUT. xi. 11, 12.

The land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven. A land which the Lord thy God careth for : the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.

I TOLD you, when I spoke of the earthquakes of the Holy Land, that it seems as if God had meant specially to train that strange people the Jews, by putting them into a country where they *must* trust Him, or become cowards and helpless; that so they might learn not to fear the powers of Nature which the heathen worshipped, but to fear him the living God.

In this chapter is another instance of the same. They were to be an agricultural people. Their very worship was (if you can understand such a thing now-a-days) to be agricultural. Pentecost was a feast of the first fruits of the harvest. The Feast of Tabernacles was a great national harvest

home. The Passover itself, though not at first an agricultural festival, became one by the waving of the Paschal sheaf, which gave permission to the people to begin their spring harvest;—so thoroughly were they to be an agricultural and cattle-feeding people. They were going into a good land, a land of milk and honey and oil olive; a land of vines and figs and pomegranates; a rich land: but a most uncertain land; a land which might yield a splendid crop one year, and be almost barren the next.

It was not as the land of Egypt,—a land which was, humanly speaking, sure to be fertile, because always supplied with water, brought out of the Nile by dykes and channels which spread in a network over every field, and where—as I believe is done now—the labourer turned the water from one land to the other simply by moving the earth with his foot.

It was a mountain land, a land of hills and valleys, and drank water of the rain of heaven. A land of fountains of water, which required to be fed continually by the rain. In that hot climate, it depended entirely on God's providence from week to week, whether a crop could grow.

Therefore it was a land which the Lord cared for—a land which needed his special help, and it had it. 'The eyes of the Lord God were always

‘upon it, from the beginning of the year unto the
‘end of the year.’

Beautiful, simple, noble, true words—deeper than all the learned words, however true they may be (and true they are, and to be listened to with respect), which men talk about the laws of Nature and of weather. Who would change them for all the scientific phrases in the world?

The eyes of the Lord were upon the land. It needed his care; and therefore his care it had.

Therefore the Jew was to understand from his first entry into the land, that his prosperity depended utterly on God. The laws of weather, by which the rain comes up off the sea, were unknown to him. They are all but unknown to us now. But they were known to God. Not a drop could fall without his providence and will; and therefore they were utterly in his power.

‘And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken
‘diligently unto my commandments which I com-
‘mand you this day, to love the Lord your God,
‘and to serve him with all your heart and with
‘all your soul, that I will give you the rain of
‘your land in his due season, the first rain and
‘the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy
‘corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will
‘send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou
‘mayest eat and be full. Take heed to your-

‘ selves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye
‘ turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship
‘ them; and then the Lord’s wrath be kindled
‘ against you, and he shut up the heaven, that
‘ there be no rain, and that the land yield not
‘ her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the
‘ good land which the Lord giveth you.’

Now the Bible story is, that this warning came true. More than once we read of drought—long, and severe, and ruinous. In one famous case, there was no rain for three years; and Ahab has to go out to search through the land for a scrap of pasture. ‘Peradventure we shall find grass enough
‘ to save the horses and mules alive.’

And most distinctly does the Bible say, that these droughts came at times when the Jews had fallen into idolatry, and profligacy therewith. That is the Scripture account. And if you believe in the living God, whose providence ordereth all things in heaven and earth, that account will seem reasonable and credible to you.

What special means God used to bring about these great droughts, we cannot know, any more than we can know why a storm or a shower should come one week and not another. And we need not know. God made the world, and God governs the world, and that is enough for us.

Be that as it may, Moses goes down to the very

root and ground, and true cause of the riches of the land, and of the rainfall, and of the prosperity of the Jews, and of the prosperity of any living nation on earth, when he says—Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

Ye shall lay up these my words in your heart and your soul, and teach them your children, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. That is, thou shalt believe continually in a living God—a God who is working everywhere at every moment, about thy path and about thy bed, and spying out all thy ways; and not only about thee, but about all that thou seest. From him comes alike rain and sunshine; from him comes the life of man; from him comes all which makes it possible for man to live upon the earth.

And it is a plain fact, that the Jews for a long time did believe this—at least the prophets, psalmists, and good men among them—to the most intense degree; to a degree in which perhaps no nation has believed it since. With them God is everything, and man nothing. Man finds out nothing: God reveals it to him. Man's intellect does nothing: the Spirit of God gives him under-

standing to do it—even, says Isaiah, understanding to plough, and to sow, and to reap his crops in due season. It is the Spirit of God, according to the prophets and psalmists, which makes the difference between a man and a beast. But upon the beasts too, and the green things of the earth, and on all nature, the Spirit of God works. He is the Lord and giver of life. Take only those four Psalms, viii., xviii., xxix., civ., and learn from them what the old Jews thought of this wonderful world in which we live.—

‘There all wait upon thee’—all living things by land and sea—‘that thou mayest give them meat
‘in due season. When thou givest it them, they
‘gather it. When thou openest thy hand, they
‘are filled with food. When thou hidest thy face,
‘they are troubled. When thou takest away their
‘breath, they die, and are turned again to their
‘dust. When thou lettest thy breath go forth,
‘they shall be made, and they shall renew the
‘face of the earth.’

So again, in the world of man, God is the living Judge, the living overlooker, rewarder, punisher of every man, not only in the life to come, but in this life. His providence is a special providence. But not such a poor special providence as men are too apt to dream of now-a-days, which interferes only now and then on some great occasion,

or on behalf of some very favoured persons, but a special providence looking after every special act of man, and of the whole universe, from the fall of a sparrow to the fall of an empire.

And it is this intense faith in the living God, which can only come by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, which proves the Old Testament to be truly inspired. This it is which makes it different from all books in the world. This it is, I hold, which marks the canon of Scripture. For in the Apocrypha—true, noble, and good as most of it is—you do not find the same intense faith in the living God, or anything to be compared therewith; and that for the simple reason, that the Jews, at the time the Apocrypha was written, were losing that faith very fast. They felt themselves that there was an immense difference between anything that they could write and what the old psalmists and prophets had written. They felt that they could not write Scripture. All they could do was to write commentaries about it, and to carry out in their own fashion Moses' command: 'Thou shalt bind my words for a sign upon your hands, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the doorposts of thine house.' They were right in that; but as they lost faith in the living God, they began to observe the

command in the letter, and neglect it in the spirit.

You know, some of you at least, how these words were misused afterwards; how the Scribes and the Pharisees, in their zeal to carry out the letter of the law, went about with texts of Scripture on their foreheads, and wrists, and the hems of their robes, enlarging their phylacteries, as our Lord said of them. But all the time they did not understand the texts, or love them, or get any good from them; but only made them excuses for hating and scoffing at the rest of the world. They had them written only on their foreheads, not on their hearts—an outside and not an inside religion. They had lost all faith in the living God. God had spoken of course to their forefathers: but they could not believe that he was speaking to them—not even when he spoke by his only begotten Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. God, so they held, had finished his teaching when Malachi uttered his last prophecy. And now it was for them to teach, and expound the law at secondhand. There could be no more prophets, no more revelation; and when one came and spoke with authority, at first hand, out of the depth of his own heart, he was to be persecuted, stoned, crucified. No. They had the key of knowledge; and no man could enter in,

unless they chose to open the door. Nothing new could be true. John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they said, Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. And meanwhile the poor, the ignorant, those whose hearts were really in earnest, were looking out for a prophet and a deliverer—often going after false prophets, with Theudas and Barcochab into the wilderness; but going, too, to be baptized with the baptism of John, and crowding in thousands to hear our Lord preach to them of the living God of whom Moses had preached of old; while the Scribes and Pharisees sat at home, wrapped up in their narrow shallow book-divinity, and said, ‘This people who knoweth not the law ‘is accursed.’ Nothing new could be true. It must be put down, persecuted down, lest the Romans should come and take away their place and nation.

But they did not succeed. Our Lord and his truth, whom they crucified and buried, rose again the third day, and conquered; and the Romans came, after all, and took away their place and nation. And so they failed, as all will fail, who will not believe in the living God.

My friends, all these things were written for our example. As it was then, so may it be again.

There may come a time in this land when people shall profess to worship the word of God; and yet, like those old scribes, make it of none effect by their own commandments and traditions. When they shall command men, like the scribes, to honour every word and letter of the Bible, and yet forbid them to take the Bible simply and literally as it stands, but only their interpretation of the Bible. When they shall say, with the scribes, ‘No-
‘ thing new can be true. God taught the apostles,
‘ and therefore he is not teaching us. God
‘ worked miracles of old; but whosoever thinks
‘ that God is working miracles now is a Pantheist
‘ and a blasphemer. God taught men of old the
‘ thing which they knew not; but whosoever
‘ dares to say that he does so now is bringing
‘ heresy and false doctrine, and undermining the
‘ Christian faith by science falsely so called.’

And all because they have lost faith in the living God — the ever-working, ever-teaching, ever-inspiring, ever-governing God whom our Lord Jesus Christ revealed to men; in whom the Apostles, and the Fathers, and the great middle-age Schoolmen, and the Reformers, believed, and therefore learned more and more, and taught men more and more, concerning God, and the dealings of God, as time went on.

And then, when they see ignorant people run-

ning after quacks and impostors, spirit-rappers and table-turners, St. Simonians and Mormons, and false prophets of every kind, they will have nothing to say but ‘This people which knoweth not ‘the law is accursed.’ While when they see anything like new truth, or new teaching from God appear, instead of welcoming the light, and going to meet the light, and accepting the light, they will say, ‘What shall we do? For all men will ‘believe on him, and then the powers of this world ‘will come and take away our station and our ‘order?’ As if Christ could not take better care of his Church, for which he died, than they can in his stead! And so they will persecute God’s servants, in the name of God, and call upon the law to put down by force the men whom they cannot put down by reason.

From ever falling into that state of stupid lip-belief, and outward religion, and loss of faith in the living God: good Lord deliver us!

From all blindness of heart; from pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness: good Lord deliver us!

From all false doctrine, heresy, and schism; from hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word and commandment: good Lord deliver us!

For if people ever fall into that frame of mind

(as did the Scribes and Pharisees), and the good Lord do not deliver them from it, it will surely happen to them as it is written in the Bible.

The powers of this world will come and take away their place, and their power, and their station : but meanwhile the truth which they think that they have stifled will rise again, for Christ who is the truth will raise it again ; and it shall conquer, and leaven the hearts of men till all be leavened ; and while the Scribes and Pharisees shall be cast into the outer darkness of discontented and hopeless bigotry, the kingdoms of the world, which they fancied were the devil's dominion, shall become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ, and be adopted into that holy and ever-growing Church of which it is written, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, for in it is the Spirit of God, to lead it into all truth.

To which blessed end may God bring us, and our children after us. Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

(First Sunday after Trinity.)

DEUT. xxxiv. 5, 6.

So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor : but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

SOME might regret that the last three chapters of Deuteronomy are not read among our Sunday lessons. There was not, however, room for them ; and I do not doubt that those who chose our lessons knew better than I what chapters they ought to choose. We may, however, read them for ourselves, not only in the daily lessons, but as often as we choose. And well worth reading they are.

For I know no stronger proof of the truth of the book of Deuteronomy, and of the whole Pentateuch, than its ending so differently from what we should have expected, or indeed wished. If things went in this world, as they do in novels and fables, according to man's notion of what is right and

good, then Moses and his history would have had a very different ending.

And if the story of Moses had been of man's invention, we should have heard—I think, from what we know of the fables, 'myths,' as they call them now, which nations have invented about themselves, and their own early history, we may guess fairly what we should have heard—how Moses brought the Jews into the land of Canaan, and established his laws, and reigned over them, and died in honour and great glory—if he died at all, and was not taken up into the skies, and changed into a star, or into a god;—and how he was buried with great pomp; and how his sepulchre did remain among the Jews until that day; and probably how men worshipped at it, and miracles were worked at it, and so forth.

Also, we should have heard how, as soon as the Israelites came into the land of Canaan, they began forthwith to serve the Lord with all their heart and soul, as they never did afterwards, and to keep Moses' law, while it was yet fresh in their minds, more exactly than ever they did afterwards; and, in short, we should have had one of those stories of a 'golden age,' a 'good old time,' a pattern-time of early purity and devotion, of which nations and churches, of all tongues and all creeds, have been so ready to dream in their

own case; and which they have used, not altogether ill, to rebuke vice in their own day, by saying, 'Look how perfect your forefathers were. 'Look how you, their unworthy children, have 'fallen from their faith and their virtue.'

This, I think, is what we should have been told if the Pentateuch had been the invention of man. This is exactly what we are *not* told; but, on the contrary, the very opposite.

What we are told is disappointing, sad, gloomy, full of dark fears and warnings about what the Jews will be and what they will have to endure. But it is far more true to human nature, and to the facts which we see in the world about us, than any story of a good old time would have been.

They are still wandering in the land of Moab, when the time draws near when Moses must die. He is a hundred and twenty years old, but hale and vigorous still. His eye is not dim, nor his natural force abated. But the Lord has told him that his death is near. He gives the command of the army of Israel to Joshua the son of Nun, and then he speaks his last words.

Songs they are, dark and rugged, like all the higher Hebrew poetry; but, like it, full of the very Spirit of God,—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of faith and of the fear of the Lord.

There are three of these songs, which seem to belong to those last days of his.

The Prayer of Moses the man of God—which is our 90th Psalm, our burial Psalm. We all know the sadness of that Psalm; its weariness, as of one who had laboured long and would fain be at rest. Its confession of man's frailty—fading away suddenly like the grass. Its confession of God's strength—God from everlasting, before the mountains were brought forth. Its eternal gospel of hope and comfort, that the strength of God takes pity on the weakness of man—'Lord, thou hast been our refuge, from one generation to another.'

Then comes the Song of the Rock—the song of which (it seems) the Lord said to him, 'Write this song, and teach it the children of Israel, that it may be a witness for me against them.'

And so, Moses writes; and seemingly before all the congregation of Israel, according to the custom of those times, he chants his death song, the Song of the Rock. It is such a song as we should expect from him. God is the Rock. He was thinking, it may be, of the everlasting rocks of Sinai, where God had appeared to him of old. But God is the true, everlasting Rock, on which all things rest; the Eternal, the Self-existent, the I Am, whom he was sent to preach to men. But he is a good and righteous God likewise. His

work is perfect. 'A God of truth, and without
' iniquity, just and right is he.'

In him Moses can trust: but not in the children of Israel; they are a perverse and crooked generation, who have waxen fat and kicked. God has done all for them, but they will not obey him. Even in the wilderness they have worshipped strange gods, and sacrificed to devils, not to God,—and so they will do after Moses is gone; and then on them will come all the curses of which he has so often warned them. 'The sword without, and
' terror within, will destroy both the young man
' and the maiden, the suckling with the man of
' grey hairs. Oh that they were wise, that they
' would understand this! that they would consider
' their latter end! How should one of them chase
' a thousand; and two put ten thousand to flight.'
What a people they might be, and what a future there is before them, if they would but be true to God! But they will not. And so Moses' death-song, like his life's wish, ends in disappointment, and sadness, and dread of the evils which are coming upon his beloved countrymen.

Lastly, he blesses them, tribe by tribe, in strange and grand words; such as dying men utter, who, looking earnestly across the dark river of death, see further than they ever saw amid the cares and temptations of life. And he blesses

them. He will say nothing of them but good. He will speak not of what they will be, but of what they ought to be, and can be. But not in their own strength,—only in the strength of God. Man is to be nothing to the last; and God is all in all.

‘There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who
‘rideth on the heavens, in thy help; and his ex-
‘cellency in the sky. The eternal God is thy
‘refuge, and under thee are the everlasting arms.

‘Happy art thou, oh Israel! Who is like unto
‘thee, oh people saved by the Lord!—the shield
‘of thy help, and the sword of thine excellency;
‘and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee,
‘and thou shalt tread on their high places.’

Those are the last words of Moses. Then he goes up into the mountain top, never to return; and the children of Israel are left alone with God and their own souls, to obey and prosper, or disobey and die.

The time of their schooling is past; and their schoolmaster is gone for ever. They are no more to be under a human tutor. They are come to man’s estate, and man’s responsibility, and they are to work out their own fortunes by their own deeds, like every other soul of man.

For Moses himself must not enter into the promised land. In spite of all his faith, his courage, his endurance, his patriotism, he has sinned against

God, and he must be punished; and punished, too, in kind—in the very thing which he will feel most deeply, in being shut out from the very happiness on which he has set his heart all along.

He who has brought the Jews to the edge of the promised land, must not have the honour and glory of taking them into it. He must have no honour and glory. That must be God's alone. Man must be nothing, and God all in all. Moses must die in faith, not having received the promises, as many another saint of God has died.

And why? To teach him, and the Jews and us, that man *is* nothing, and God is all in all.

Moses had given way to the very temptation which would beset such a man. He had spoken unadvisedly with his lips, and said, 'Hear now, ye rebels, or ye fools, must *we* bring you water out of this rock?' *We*—and not God. He had claimed for himself the power and glory of working miracles. The miracles, he thought for a moment, were his, and not God's. And it may be that this was not the only time that he had so sinned. He may naturally have thought that he had some special power and influence with God. But be that as it may, the Jews were trained to believe that the miracles were God's, God's immediate work, and not performed by the wisdom, or sanctity, or supernatural power, of any saint or prophet whatsoever.

Let the Jews once learn to give the honour and glory to Moses, and not to God, and the whole of their strange education went for nothing. Instead of worshipping God, they would begin to worship saints. Instead of trusting in God, they would begin to trust in men; whether on earth or in heaven matters not. If Moses was to have the honour and glory, the Jews would surely grow into a superstitious, saint-worshipping, miracle-mongering people, and come to ruin and slavery thereby. They were to fear God and nought else. To trust in God and nought else.

So Moses must vanish out of their sight, sadly and mysteriously. All they know of him is, that he is punished for a sin which he committed long ago, as you and I may be. All they know of his death and burial is, that his body was not left foully to the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field. For the Lord buried him. They know not how, and did not need to know. And we need not know. Enough for them and for us to know, that no dishonour was done to the grand old man; that as he died far away on the lonely mountain top, without a child to close his eyes, his last look fixed upon the good land and large which lay spread out below, of entering which he had been dreaming, for forty—it may be for more than forty years—enough for us to know that the

kindly earth received his body again into her bosom, and that the true Moses, the immortal spirit of the man, returned to God who created him, and inspired him, and sustained him to be perhaps the greatest man, save One who was more than man, who ever trod this earth.

So our human feelings—like those of the Jews—are satisfied. But Moses is not to be worshipped, by them or by us. No splendid temple is to rise over his bones. No lamps are to burn, or priests to chant, round his shrine. No miracles are to be worked by his relics. No man is to invoke his patronage and intercession in their prayers. The people whom he has brought out of Egypt are to be free;—free from the slavery of the body; free from the more degrading slavery of the soul.

And so they go on over Jordan to fulfil their strange destiny; to fight their way into the promised land, to root out the Canaanite tribes, whose iniquity was full, whose sins had made them a nuisance not to be suffered on the earth of God. But do they go to establish a golden age; to become a perfect people?

Nothing less. To become, according to the book of Judges, just what Moses foretold, an ignorant, selfish, often profligate and disorderly people, doing each what is right in his own eyes, falling continually into idolatry, civil war, and slavery to

the heathens round about. Nothing more shows the truth of this history than its humility, its continual confession of sin, its readiness to confess the ugly truth that the Jews are a foolish, ignorant, unmanageable, lawless, sensual race, stiffnecked and rebellious, always resisting the Holy Spirit. The immense difference between the Old Testament history and that of all other nations is, that it is a history not of their virtues but of their sins; and a history, on the other hand, of God's punishments and mercies. God in the Old Testament is all, and the Jews are nothing; and one may say that it differs from all other histories in this, that it is not a history of the Jews themselves at all, but a history of God's dealings with them.

If any man chooses to explain that by saying that the story was all invented by priests and prophets afterwards, to rebuke the people for falling into idolatry, he must have his fancy. Thought is free—for the present at least—though it is written that for every idle word that men speak, they shall give account at the day of judgment. But one question I must ask, and I am sure that British common sense and British honesty will ask it too—If these prophets were really good men, fearing God, and wishing to make their countrymen fear him likewise, would it not have

been a rather strange way of showing that they feared God to tell their countrymen a set of fables and lies? Good men are not in the habit of telling lies now, and never have been; for no lie is of the truth, or can possibly help the truth in any way; and all liars have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. And that such men as the prophets of whom we read in the Old Testament did not know that, and therefore invented this history, or invented anything else, is a thing incredible and absurd.

Here we have the Old Testament, an infinitely good book, giving us infinitely good advice and good news, and news too concerning God,—God's laws, God's providence, God's dealings, such as we get nowhere else. And shall we believe that this infinitely good book is founded upon falsehood? or that the good men who wrote it could fancy it necessary to stoop to falsehood, and take the devil's tools, wherewith to do God's work? That they may have been imperfectly informed on some points there is no doubt; for the Bible tells us that they were men of like passions with ourselves, and they may not always have been true to the Spirit of God who was teaching them, even as we are not, though he teaches us. They only knew in part and prophesied in part; and now that which is perfect is come, that which is in

part is done away; the mystery of Christ was not revealed to them as it has been to us by the holy apostles and prophets of the new dispensation, of which St. Paul says, comparing it with the knowledge which the old Jews had when the gospel came, that the glory of the law had no glory, by reason of the more excellent glory of the gospel. They may, I say, have made slight errors in unimportant matters, though it is far more probable, that those errors have crept into the text, as the Scriptures were copied again and again through many centuries, by different scribes, of whose perfect good sense and honesty we cannot be certain. But who that really values his Bible cares for them any more than he cares for the spots on the sun which he can find through a telescope? The sun still shines, and gives light to the whole earth, and the Bible still shines, and gives light to every soul of man who will read it in reverence and faith. But that the prophets ever invented, or ever dared to tamper with truth, is a thing not to be believed of men, whose writings are plainly, by their whole meaning and end, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

One more reason—and a reason which to me is unanswerable—for believing, like our forefathers, that the Old Testament is true. The Old Testament, as well as the New, tells us of the ‘noble

acts' of the Lord—of certain gracious, and merciful, and just things which the Lord did to the children of Israel. But if that be not true, what follows? That God has not done the noble acts which men thought he had; and therefore that God is not as noble as men thought he was; that men have actually fancied for themselves a better God than the God who exists already.

Absurd.

Absurd, truly; and if you choose to call it by a harder name still, you have a right to do so.

Do not you think that God must be better, not worse; more generous, not less; more condescending, not less; more just, not less; more helpful, not less, than man can fancy or describe? Are not the riches of Christ unsearchable, and the mercies of the Lord boundless? Is he not able and willing to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we can ask or think? Did not even St. Paul say that he only knew in part and prophesied in part? And must it not be true of the whole Bible, what the beloved apostle St. John says of his own Gospel—‘And there are many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written?’

Bear that in mind, remembering always that

the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New likewise; and whenever you read, either in the Old or New Testament, of the noble acts of the Lord, say boldly, as millions of hearts have said already, when the good news of the Bible came to them, ‘This is so beautiful that it must be true. The Spirit of God in the Bible, and the judgment of the Church in all ages, bears witness with my spirit that this is true. So ought God to have done, and therefore surely so hath God done. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do RIGHT?’

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