

SERMON IV.

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION, REPRESENTATIVE.

SECOND CORINTHIANS, V. 20.

"Now, then, we are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to us."

Whether an angelic ministry, such as was vouchsafed under the patriarchal dispensation, could it have continued, or the commission of supernatural messengers, such as was desired by "the rich man of the Parable" in the behalf of his brethren, could they have been allowed, would have been more successful in the accomplishment of those Divine purposes of mercy for which "the ministry of reconciliation" was given, (being often admitted into the questionings of the curious,) are points which may be definitely decided by a reference to the principle of adaptation which is seen to pervade the dispensations of grace, and which, moreover, is so clearly declared also in the

revelations of "the condescending Will." From the habit of personal, sensible intercourse, (for example,) which was granted to Adam in Paradise, when unfallen purity fitted him for such communion with his Maker, we pass through the gradually descending modes of angelic visitation, of auricular denunciation, of prophetic commission, of the visible manifestation of the Divine glory over the mercy seat, as the measure of human deterioration increased, to that final system of wisdom and mercy combined, which makes the Divine and only-begotten Son, the "One Mediator" of the "better covenant," by means of a representative ministry of mere human agents, declaring concerning them, "If they hear not these, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Were it possible, now, we would not undertake, by processes of abstract reasoning, whether of synthesis or analysis, brethren, to enable you to comprehend this truth. It is evident, indeed, that in some sense, it has been admitted of all men—as the ritual religious observances even of the heathen prove. But tradition was adequate to this, so that we cannot claim, as the result of independent perception, a sentiment originally revealed, which had become in its connection with universal mind, as much a matter of transmission from father to son, as the natural body, still created in the image and after the likeness of God.

We claim it as revealed. In the spirit, therefore, of a cheerful obedience only, and under a sense of need, perceiving wisdom in all holy arrangements, perhaps indistinctly at first, but yet strengthening by use, its faculties of spiritual perception, until the measure of a perfect fitness shall be developed in all its connection with spiritual things, must we come to the consideration of it. Then the "new creature in Christ," reconciled to God under the ministry of His word, and recognizing "all things" as of God, will rejoice in that ministry as a part of His plan of reconciliation, receiving it also as an evidence of His protecting sovereignty, and an abiding witness of his presence, in the exercise of His sanctifying power over the body of his Church. So far as man only is concerned, no doubt it is to be regarded as an instrument simply, such as was indicated by the Apostle, as when he says in one place, "It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe," and in another, asking of Paul and of Apollos, who they are, "but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?"

So far as God, however, who employs them, is concerned, a much higher estimate is to be put upon the agency, as of Him, requiring, as in all cases where acts of sovereignty are deputed, and an inferior is commissioned to represent a superior, that the mind should be elevated to a con-

templation of the Giver through the gift, forming such abstract conceptions of Him as the gift itself warrants, and the purposes of grace for which it was made, and not at all by the mere instrument through whom it comes.

It may be thought by some, that this preaching about the ministry—its authority, and dignity, and divinity—its endowment with supernatural graces, and its deposit of all spiritual gifts—has its origin in self, and so is to be received by you, with those requisite allowances which are to be made for human infirmity, in the spirit of self-seeking which is begotten of it. In the age especially in which we live, is this result to be apprehended, and as one of the excesses also of our Protestant liberty.

Whilst the need of its correction lies, not so much or so immediately either, in the rejected authority of Him whose messengers we are, as in the refusal to the soul itself of those gifts of sanctifying grace, of healing and sustaining virtue, which were most highly valued in the ancient Church, and with the aid of which, the saints of God were ever most anxious to be securely provided, both for the ordinary trials of life, and that final issue which was to cast them for all future dependence upon things spiritual and unseen. How little thought is there of such things now! "The fear of death" has its power undiminished in the minds of men. Many even of

those who are avowedly Christian are kept by it "all their life time in bondage."

They sigh to be relieved, but know not how; and possibly, if pointed to the means which were ever effectual in the ancient Church, the Church of the Saints, then the Mother of the Martyrs, who gave up their souls, amid the fire, unto God, with faith confirmed and hope made strong by words of ministerial absolution, might doubt if such claims should be considered, or be ready with Festus, to declare even of Paul, that he was "beside himself," and to charge it upon him that "much learning had made him mad."

The prevalence of a feeling of uncertainty in our own minds, my hearers, with regard to truths of so much importance, which were even deemed *essential* by witnessing saints, sounding to us as novelties, and subjecting those who insist upon them to the imputation of heretical teaching, should suffice to convince us that there is loss, not only to our own souls, in the denial to ourselves of such gifts of grace, but extreme danger also of incurring the denunciation, "He that despiseth you, despiseth Me, and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me."

What we desire is, such an awakening of thoughtfulness as will be productive of the conviction, in the beginning, that nothing under the Gospel, either of its word, of its worship, of its

ministry, or its sacraments, is in such wise ritual, as to be justly accounted of as a form only, in the sense in which that term is most commonly employed, and then, a begetting of the inquiry, afterwards, not to be stayed until it is satisfactorily answered, as to how the spirit is in the form, with the manner of its development, and its influence over us, in all spiritual strengthening, until the soul is fitted for the high duties of the "new creature in Christ," and the yet higher glories of its celestial state. We desire this. It is a lawful object of desire. But, in its accomplishment, there must be such magnifying of our ministry before you, as shall be found in the just exhibition of all that was communicated to us in the words, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." As a representative ministry, acting for Christ, "in Christ's stead," admonishing you with authority from Him, absolving you, in the true exercise of repentance and faith, by His own command, as a reconciling priesthood, offering up to Him your "sacrifices of thanksgiving and of praise," and communicating to you "remission" and increase of grace, by means of His sacramental seals, and as an authorized embassy, set apart by those having authority to ordain in His Church, "as though God did beseech you by us," praying you

to be "reconciled to God," and doing for you as "ambassadors" whatever has been appointed us, in "the washing of regeneration," and the communication to you of "Christ's Body and Blood." Words of St. Paul's using, with all that is necessary to, and consequent upon this. We are to stand before you, realizing to ourselves, if we may, the fearfulness of such a position, and own our utter insufficiency for it, and to you, *as we may*, the Divine wisdom of such an adaptation, and "the riches of mercy," which are comprehended for you in it.

An angelic ministry!—It could be vouchsafed only to a few—to Abraham, to Lot, to Jacob, to the heads of houses, to the Priests of the Patriarchal Church—and through these, the messages of grace, in promise, and in covenant, which were communicated by them, would necessarily remain to be conveyed and assured to the rest. Were this now the established and permanent mode of Divine communication, who does not perceive that its influence would be overawing upon all, except those only who were addicted to a life of Divine contemplation, subjecting them even to the danger of overvaluing the agency of the heavenly messenger, (as was done by the Saints, who were forbidden, with the assurance that angels themselves were but their "fellow-servants,") whilst the rest, the many, would be left after all,

to depend upon interpretations of duty determined by individual impression; exaggerated, even when the mind was most evenly balanced, as the result of universal infirmity, and misapprehended, to the extreme, either of superstition or unbelief, when spiritual discipline, and intellectual fitting should both be found wanting? Capable as we are of estimating, in the light of reason and of a sound understanding, the advantages of a system which is fixed and unchangeable, which is full of the revelations of truth, (as far as the needs of humanity are concerned,) which exhibits God, in his purposes of mercy and condescension, as reconciled to us, and addresses us only through the medium of human agents, whom we may examine, and reverently decide to acknowledge or reject—who of us would prefer to it another—any other—even that which would indicate to us, as individuals, a measure of privilege equal to that of Him, who was known as “the Father of the Faithful?” How prone are we to think that others have been more favored than we, and then to derive from it an excuse for unfaithfulness of which we cannot but be conscious, however reluctant to admit it to ourselves! Yet how, when reflection is awakened, or any realizing sense is had of the true nature and influences of that which we have most desired—are we not often, even now, compelled to say, in spirit at least, with the Israelites

at Sinai, "Speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die!" It is a principle of our nature, brethren; developed it may be in sin, but yet universally attaching to us as sinners, which is so consulted; and we may find wisdom therefore, as much in this rule of adaptation, which has indicated earthly messengers, "men of like passions with ourselves," to act as the media of reconciliation "between God and us," as in the selection of earthly elements—water and Bread and Wine, to represent the true nature of spiritual cleansing and spiritual nourishment in our relations to God, which can only be spiritual.

Supernatural visitation! How easy is it to imagine, how natural, that "if one could come to us from the dead, we would believe!" And how easy also, how natural, to stand justified in our own esteem, when this desire of our hearts is not gratified, and this demand for sensible evidence is not allowed us!

Stay for a moment, my hearers, to consider what it is you wish. With what it is you so profess that you would be satisfied? Must the messenger come to *you* or to others? Will it suffice that the pure, the true, the holy, in past time, shall have seen and conversed with "the dead made alive again," shall have "eaten and drank with them," shall have "handled them," to be as-

sured of a bodily reality, a physical subsistence, and then, have attested to us in the arena of martyrdom, at the stake of suffering for this very cause, and in the most solemn hour of dissolution; the fact of such visitation; or must we see for ourselves, saying with the self-sufficient disciple, "Unless I put my finger in the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe?" Why, it were enough only to analyze this condition, this test of faith, to be persuaded of its fallacy, though the example of Saul the son of Kish, the King of Israel, were not here before us as a warning, lest if we should be met in our vain wishes, it should be with denunciations of punishment for our unbelief, when the hope of remedy was past. No, it were better, far better, because more real, and more convincing if supernatural demonstration were needed, that it should come, in its higher forms, with an angel's glory and an angel's power, and not as when King Saul stood with the woman of Endor, at the grave of Samuel, with the ceremonies of the sepulchre and the wan visage of death. Oh! we know not what we ask; we know not either, how in our rejection of the real, the convincing, the true, we cast ourselves upon the unreal, the fallacious, the deceiving; all the while too, eschewing the spiritual and charging as superstition any dependence upon it, when we so seek to be put upon terms of

communication with "the unseen" which belonged to other dispensations, and so can have no connexion with this. And words, my hearers, cannot measure the infatuation of refusing, because it is human, the appointment of a human instrumentality, as the best adapted, by reason of its very humanity, its community of interest, its assimilating nature, for the solemn embassy of Divine grace, of heavenly mercy, of spiritual and sanctifying blessing unto men.

Give me not, we will say then, each one for himself, to depend for conviction and the acceptance of holy truth, upon other or better modes of intervention than have been vouchsafed to us here. Christ Himself came on His visitation of mercy as a man. He assumed not a seraph's nor an angel's form. He could not have lived with men as man, if He had—and this being His purpose, that purpose must have been defeated if so He had not "made Himself of no reputation" in the judgments of His blinded people, by taking upon Him "the form of a servant," and the flesh of man, in which to teach, to suffer, and to die for man.

In this only can we be assimilated to Him. In this only can we listen without surprise or distraction to Him. An angel, a messenger from the dead would not be adapted to us—and even if we could bear it at first, by continuance it would be-

come so common as to lose its effectiveness, and we should be deprived also of that holy solemnity, of that restraining and impressive influence which now attaches to whatever intimations are made to us of ministerial agency in its connexion with "the unseen," as it acts for and upon us in all those matters which affect the soul, in its connexion with its own, the things as well as the beings of the invisible and spiritual world.

In some form, thus, a ministerial, spiritual intervention is demanded by us. Let us not lose sight of this. Irrelevant, as in some respects, what has so far been said may appear to you, brethren, it has all been directed to this—and then, when this first great principle has been settled, as settled it should be by all that has transpired in the past history of man—his impressions, his expectations, his hopes; the next great question relates to the mode only of its appointment for us—change being effected in the form, but not in the substance of the Divine determination. What was the angel, the prophet, the Son Himself, but "the messenger of the covenant," each in his measure, each in his place, acting for God and with authority from Him, in His work of reconciling mercy, unfolding and perfecting His plan of redeeming love? We apprehend this. We have no doubt whatever respecting it. From this point of advantage, then, from the place

where the incipient designs of mercy were all consummated, and the great sacrifice itself was slain—look onward to the development of a system which was to have perfection in it; in which the types and the shadows were past—which for seers, had apostles; for sacrifices, sacraments; for blood, the ministrations of blessing; and which was to continue until the end should be. And then ask, in what respect, in what single essential particular, “the ministry of reconciliation” was to be less than the ministry of the law, less a priesthood, less an evidence of protecting sovereignty, less an abiding witness of the Divine presence, in the exercise of His sanctifying power, by the Spirit of His grace, increasing holiness to the end of the Divine acceptance in the day of Christ?

How otherwise now, if we act for you in spiritual matters at all—and you must have some so to act for you, because you are spiritual—can we appear before you, than with this claim of the Apostle: “Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, praying you, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God?” And how, being recognised in this character, with authority to preach, to teach, to admonish, do not our acts become sacramental, so as that what we do, in a ministerial way, is of God, in the name of God, obliging God, (we speak it by permission and because of your infirmity,) to the fulfilment of His

covenant, as it obliges you to repentance and faith towards Him; and in all your life, to implicit dependence upon Him? It is man that ministers. What of that, if it be God's appointment? And how, are you not bound as much, to look beyond the man ministering, to Him for whom he ministers, as if it were an angel, or a delegated agent of any character, from the world of "the Unseen?" Surely, we may submit to be guided by reason here. If you have need, if the world in which you live is a province of the universe of God, revolted from its allegiance and ready to be reclaimed; or if it enters into the Divine determination even forcibly to reclaim it, a message to that effect, may as well be sent by the hands of a fellow-man, with due authentication, as by the hands of any prince or servant of His own. If, moreover, the message be of grace; if it be one of pardon and of love, of pardon bought by a sacrifice of infinite worth, of love which can have no parallel, because it is the love of God; how could wisdom magnify itself more, than in the selection for such a purpose, of those who could testify of that grace, who could avouch to the certainty and truth of the message which they brought, who could exhibit themselves as evidences of the great mercy of God, who could even say, in the most affecting language of St. Paul, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, put-

ting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious"—"Of like passions with others," that they may be examples in the great work of self-subjugation: "keeping under the body and bringing it into subjection, lest that by any means having preached to others, they themselves should be cast away"—"Fellow-heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ, by the Gospel;" that they may be witnesses of the power of Christ—"A treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us!"

"God beseeching you to be reconciled to Him!" Did ever such thought take possession of the mind of man? Had it not been revealed, how could it ever have been apprehended by us? Oh, let the intervening instrument be forgotten by you. Take simply the message of grace which is here delivered to you, and realize, strive to realize, that it is God who speaks, that it is Jesus who implores. You need not the "Thunderings of Sinai," you need not the testimony of angels, you need not a messenger from the dead. Here in the Church of His "new creation," here in His begetting of "the new creature in Christ," here, in the "word of reconciliation which he has committed to us," here in His "sacraments of grace," which are constantly dispensed, are so many witnesses for Him. Yes, and if these will not do, by the power

of memory which we now invoke, by the holy affection which you have for the dead, by the blessed hope, which has been begotten in you of a reunion with them, all testifying of God and for God in this; by all these in the office of ministry which is theirs, "we beseech you to be reconciled to God." Our embassy is for time: when this ceases, that must cease also. The messenger must *die*. But the message! oh, that is of God, unchanging, everlasting, true!



SERMON V.

THE SIN OFFERING WHICH IS TO BE PROCLAIMED
BY THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION.

SECOND CORINTHIANS, V. 21.

For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

The words, as you perceive from their construction, brethren, are part of an argument, upon which they depend, and so incapable of being understood, except by a reference to the context, and a general apprehension of the whole system of mercy and of truth which is involved in them. The leading idea in the mind of the Apostle has been that of human transgression and its consequent, in the order of mercy, Divine mediation.

The "new creature in Christ," the essence of the Divine Life, as actually begotten of God in the work of His new creation, and manifested in the "passing away of old things," and in "the begetting of all things new," implying an entire transformation of the moral character, is therefore necessarily declared, as the result of the "re-

conciling power of God in Christ," who, for the accomplishment of His most gracious designs, hath given unto us both His "ministry and word of reconciliation;" the one with its assurances of a free remission of trespasses to us, the other as an authorized embassy, with its principle of continuance, "beseeching as of God, and praying us in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God."

But it is an offer made to Reason. The soul in its ruin even is measurably gifted with its first highest endowment. So far, even "the tempter" spoke truth, when he declared that "Likeness to God" should be found in the "knowledge of good and evil." And the great gift of infinite mercy to a condemned world still is the privilege of election, offered to reason as to faith—to man, in other words, as man, sinful and accursed though he be—assured in the declaration, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." It is an instrumentality to an end; it is also adequate to that end. It contemplates an appropriation of Christ—a re-appropriation "into Christ"—such reconciliation, such regeneration of whatsoever is "old," as to constitute a new creation, which shall be divine, "of God," Christ Himself being offered for us to this end, the sinless for the sinful, that taking us "into himself," we might be acceptable to God in Him, be justified for His

sake freely, and "made" as one with Him "in Him," "the righteousness of God."

Oh, that I might speak to you worthily upon such a subject! Oh, that you all had the faculties of a spiritual understanding to receive even what may be here spoken!

We cannot look upon this from above—angels do it and adore—but we must contemplate it from beneath, in its effusions upon us, in its manifestations to us, and so in part only, to speculate about it, to offer it to reason, to press it upon our sense of need, to determine its value, as if it were a thing of the shambles, to be bought and sold for a less or a greater price, to be accepted reluctantly, perhaps—perhaps denied. What more should be required to prove to us our wretchedness, to make us sensible of the extreme misery of the state in which we are, to awaken anxiety as to our condition and prospects for the future, and to beget in us the desire that we may be fitted to look also upon this from above, to be with the angels, and if so may be, like the angels as they wonder and adore? Yet, we are they who have the most interest in it, to whom it most nearly comes; for "He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham, being made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation," as the

Apostle has declared, "for the sins of the people." Though it be, therefore, for the present, only from beneath that we can contemplate it in its effusions upon us, in its manifestations to us, and otherwise "in part," let us seek to realize it, so as by grace we may, in its adaptation to us, in its influence over us, in the fulness of mercy with which it has so been sent, in the efforts of a Divine condescension, that the sinful might be made holy, the earthly, heavenly, in that work of the "new creation," the human, divine. Not in the sense of transcendental elevation merely, which is the dream of the age, the bantling of a false philosophy, "the pillow for the arm-holes" of the "wise in their own esteem," but in the sense of assimilation to God, of "engrafting into Christ," of being made one with Him, even as the Apostles and the Saints of old were, that His love may be our love, and His aims our aims, even to self-sacrifice and death, should it be required for Him; and such infusion of His spirit into us, and pouring out of His grace upon us, as can be experienced only by the faithful in the "life of faith," as the earnest of those measureless communications of blessing which shall be had in "the kingdom which has been prepared for us."

Made sin—made righteous. The expressions are peculiar, and can find their interpretation only in those provisions of grace, and forms of blessing

which were of old divinely ordained upon the expulsion from Paradise, authoritatively repeated at every renewal of covenanted mercy, and accepted by human reason, as necessarily incident to Divine communion; full of the most gracious intimations, and pointing to a period in which what is here partial and imperfect, shall be done away, and these "darkly" shadowings forth of glory, as the Apostle apprehended them, be terminated in the substance and bliss of the most perfect and satisfying vision.

"Made sin"—a sin offering—"Who knew no sin," Who was innocent, Whose conscience acquitted Him of all wrong—in thought, in word, in deed—as He stood with the knowledge of God in the presence of God. What provisions are there which are found so earnestly insisted on, so particularly specified, and so carefully observed in all the Levitical dispensation, and under all the forms of an administrative law? And, as the eye wanders too, along the track of ages, and over the face of the earth, what indications are those of a universal sentiment which are furnished by the religious ritual observances of all people and of every name? The altar is everywhere erected—the fire in all ages has been kindled upon it—the priest passes not from between it and God, and victims, the most numerous and the most costly, bloody and unbloody, are, even to this day, un-

ceasingly offered as means of propitiation for averting the apprehended anger of an avenging God. Sin is "laid upon them;" it is an act of substitution, an "offering" of the sinner "for sin," so a sin offering, accepted by mediation, which is the office of the priest, the act being accounted as of God, and its benefit passing over to him who is acceptable through it. There has been much of human invention, superadded to an original institution which was divine, in all the forms under which the truth has been developed, from the most ancient times, showing the licentiousness of fancy and the increasing alienation of the heart; and much, too, of human infirmity and sin, in the perversions which have been passed upon it. But in all, the truth has been acknowledged, that "sin offerings" were needed, that man was a sinner, that God was incensed against him, that, in condescension, He could be appeased, and that atonements, all pointing to an ultimate act, which was to give them value, and in which their efficacy lay, had been provided as instruments of reconciliation and effectual means of grace. "A lamb, without blemish and without spot, a male of the first year," such was the simplicity of the Levitical ordinance—An offering for each family, poverty alone constituting an exemption, for which provision was made, such was the comprehensiveness of the Levitical atonement—A feast upon

a sacrifice, indicating that life came to the body and the soul alike, through the medium of mercy, such was the speaking character of the divine requirement. What floods of light come to us from all this! and how, under the better revelations of the Gospel, and the more impressive memorials of the Sacraments of grace, does not only instruction but sanctification also work in us, to that increase of holiness, which, as the principle of the divine life, shall compel in us such an estimate of the means, as will make them essential with us, to the end for which they were appointed, even though expecting them to be "done away, when that which is perfect is come!" And then, too, now that they have subserved their purpose, now that with "the types and shadows" of an ancient and initiatory dispensation, they may be no longer needed, how profitable may we not find it to inquire into the principle of their institution, the philosophy, as the world calls it, of their appointment to us, so learning their efficacy as well as their place, and being made thankful for the greater blessing, as well as the surer foundation of our Christian hope!

But that the text is a motive, as well as a reason, what has so far been said might be considered as, in a measure, irrelevant and of little use. Even then, however, we have the indication of a higher ground from which to address you, if not a

more effective position, when so it shall come to be understood, that all which is peculiar in religion, whether of the true or the false, actually contemplates this fact of infinite condescension—the assumption of our nature into union with the Godhead, and the offering up of the humanity so sanctified, as an atonement, upon the altar of justice, for the sins of the world, giving hope, in the most blessed assurance, that “the Sinless has died,” “the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God,” “that we might be made,” in the judgment of wisdom, “the righteousness of God in Him.”

It is the great point of Christian ministration, that around which all the whole system of truth and of mercy revolves, and independently of which, no adequate conception can be formed, either of human condition or the greatness of Divine love towards a ruined world. As a reason, it is sufficient for that to which it is directed, the confirmation of faith and the assurance of hope, in the efficacy of the great atonement. As a motive, it is comprehensive of all that was intended by the Redeemer, when he said, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life; for God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

“Begotten His Son”—“Made a Sin Offer-

ing." Unbelief may regard it as a play upon words, but faith, (and we have faith, brethren, though it should be only as "the least of seeds,") will contemplate it in its distinctions as of the most vital importance, and as indicating to reason, too, a measure of essential truth, so far above reason as to make it, in human apprehension, the behest of infinite wisdom, and inseparable from that encouragement of hope, which can be found only in the Catholic confession of "the generation of the Messiah," as when he is declared to be "God of God—begotten not made." It is the divinity of His mysterious nature which is so owned, my hearers, as the subject of supreme adoration; whilst the greatness of His ineffable love is shown in His condescension to be "made" what by nature he was not, "man," an offering for the sins of man, that man, the sinner, might be raised into communion with God. Surely there is motive in it—there is encouragement and grace.

"An offering for sin." It must be provided of God, His gift, given to us before we can give; the simple rendering to Him of His own, as a matter of acknowledged subjection, submission and love, made acceptable by his own appointment and not by intrinsic value, excepting only as it is the offering of gratitude and faith—in type, under the old law, of the sacrifice of the Cross—in confession, under the new, of a covenant ful-

filled. In whatsoever, therefore, is commemorative of this, we take of His own to give Him, as "of Bread and of Wine," in the Eucharist; and the best we have, as of "our own souls and bodies," in the Oblation, which are also His, made His by the reconciliation of His Cross; and in so giving, we give Him "Christ," His own, in a figure—a victim of ineffable price, "the Lamb," which He provided for Himself, perceived, as by the faith of Abraham, but needing to be illustrated and enforced in these days of indistinct perception, of indifference and rebuke. Were it an abstraction, merely, a thing of the mind, a vision, an idea, unreal and unconstraining, as such things generally are, we might speak differently of it, and consent, as the many do, to simple speculation about it. But no, it is more than this; so much more, that the faculties of the soul, expand them as we may, will never be able, in this state of feeble exertion and of indistinct apprehension, to estimate it aright. Yet we must feel that it is real, that God gave without any doubt, that Christ was "made" by the act of God, with His own consent, what is declared of Him in the text, and that, as He was "made," in reality, not represented, "a sin offering for us," so we must be "made" in reality and not conventionally, by profession only or simple alliance with His Church, "the righteousness of God in Him." Who shall explain to us the full

force of all this ? To be constituted is one thing ; it is in figure, a mere supposition or conjecture of the mind. To be "made" is another thing, as different, as far removed from the former, as light is from darkness, as heaven is from earth. To have been accounted merely *as* a sacrifice, without having been "made a sin offering for us, when He knew no sin," without actual suffering and an actual death, would never have propitiated the justice of God, or have availed to an actual reconciliation with Him. To be accounted then, merely as a Christian, as righteous in God's sight, under the operation of mere conventional usage, such as the adoption of a Christian nomenclature, the customary attendance upon Christian ceremonial, and an outward connection even with the Christian Church, without that impression of the "new creature" which alone can fit us for the "new creation," in its higher and diviner forms, as they shall be found in heaven—what can it avail, more than the unreal in its other contingencies, or than to the mere production of the body of righteousness, without the soul ? Such an object, too, might have been accomplished by a much smaller effort, and at a much smaller price. Nor can it be consistent to judge the object at so disproportioned an estimate to the effort which has been made to effect it, and the price which it has cost to secure it, especially when infinite wisdom

state, a condition of life, of being, which is of nature, to a state, a condition of being, which is of grace—which is higher and more holy, described even as being the “righteousness of God,” and creating, also, an actual identity with the Divine nature and assimilation to it, because it is “in Him.” The act is of God, as in His condescension to us, so in our elevation to Him, for he hath made Him to be sin, who knew no sin, that we might be made by Him also “righteous in Him.” It is an effect upon the moral being, the inner, the spiritual man, reproducing it after its original creation, sanctifying it according to the likeness, and for the service of God. And then, it is to an end, which Omniscience only could contemplate, the preparation for which became the subject of astonishment in heaven, and in the issues of which, the praises of redemption shall be awakened, never to fail. It is an act, it is an effect, it is an end, for us. You and I alike are included in it, in the reach of its mercy, in the fulness of its grace; nor can we ever apprehend, as we should do, the nearness of its approaches to us, the measure of our interest in it, until, in the consciousness of our unspeakable need, we are compelled to look away from earth, and all that is of earth, to that which is here declared; finding in God, in His benevolence and love, just what we want, and all we want, “a righteousness in Him,” as being of Him, His own.

As a reason addressed to reason, then, or as a motive, addressed to the heart, what more could be expected than is included in it? And how, in all the experience of the Christian life, is not its sufficiency as a reason, approved, and its constraining power, as a motive, felt? "In Christ—New Creatures"—it is meant to be the description of us all, for "God," too, it is added, "was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself;" yet we do not realize it, and it is language uninfluential, because unappropriated by us. "The experience of the Christian life!" Ah, that is it which alone can explain to us the reason, which alone can bring home to us the motive, of God's mercies to us in Christ, or raise us to such contemplation of the God-head, as will make the plan of redemption, more than an unapprehended mystery, and the assurance of salvation by it, more than a flattering promise, which may be held out to hope, but in the end denied, as unreal, to the soul! "That we might be"—A possibility of being is intimated by it, with all the blessedness and glory of being, if its happiness should be attained to. A possibility of *not* being is intimated also, showing, in such terms, the difficulty of being, as to make the latter possibility probable, in that order of events which is the result of a moral operation, having its laws and its determinations as certain as any other part of that

moral government, by which the Divine and all-controlling Will reaches and decides the final condition of the soul. Oh, this it is which makes life so fearful, and its responsibilities so terrible to the mind. If the life were Christian! if its obligations were met! and if, upon the soul, in all the vividness of that impression which the spirit makes, the lineaments of grace were drawn, the deep and indelible lines of the character of God, denoting it as "righteous" before Him, as righteous in Him, it would be different, it would be felt to be blessed even so as to make the course of a "Christian experience" the full-flood tide of inexhaustible mercy to the soul, and the responsibilities of the Christian life, the richest instrumentalities of grace, by reason of the reciprocal agency of holy obedience, and perfect love, upon the daily increasing sanctification of a holy heart. Oh that it were so! that by trial, by bereavement even, it might be made so! for then, in that teaching also which comes by Providence, taking the world from us, that He may give us Himself, and all in Himself, we shall find that this was the end, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

SERMON VI.

THE CONCLUDING APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION.

SECOND CORINTHIANS, VI. 1.

"We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

PAST considerations will have explained to you, my hearers, with no little distinctness, the two points more especially exhibited in these words of the text—the fact of the Divine condescension, and the nature of that instrumentality by which its purposes of grace are accomplished in you. With the mind awakened, now, to any proper sense of the great things which have been secured to us in the redemption which is by Jesus Christ, it cannot be apprehended that a sufficient interest will not be felt in such courses of reflection, or needed even that the heart should be solicited for the bestowment of its affections upon the Almighty giver of such infinite grace. But, is the mind so awakened? Under the influence of Apostolic preaching was it so awakened, in the Corinthians

even, as to make the writing of a second epistle needless for the perfecting of a work which had been originated in them? "O ye Corinthians," the earnest preacher is heard exclaiming in the context; "our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged; ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels." And then, when such motives as the Gospel only can offer have been presented to them, it is added, "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Is there no need, then, of its application also to us? And may it be said, without the irony of its first writing, "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us?"

Oh that we did realize it, as we might do! for then would all which has so been brought before us, the fact of a new creation, the condescension of God in effecting it, the gift of reconciliation in Christ, the promises of grace, the ministry of reconciliation, with whatsoever is consequent upon these, be united for the most certain accomplishment of an object, capable of interesting us, if we were but willing to receive it, and indicating a character of probation the most wonderful that could ever have been imagined. To oblige us to realize it, by all the powers of a moral suasion, and by all the most affecting manifestations of

grace, is the very compass and end of what is declared to us in the text, in which the ministry of reconciliation is again represented to us as a work, God, and those whom he ordains being co-laborers in it; the human soul, the ground upon which this joint labor is expended; Divine grace, the seed mercifully placed within it; and holiness, capable of increase, that upon which all labor is to be bestowed, in the hope that, by grace, it may be "perfected in the fear of God."

But for what is so indicated to us, we might doubt of the Divine accuracy of such application of natural laws to the administration of grace, as is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as when the Apostle says, "For the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh upon it, and bringeth forth herbs, meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, "we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation."

In the light, however, of such illustration, it will be impossible to doubt, and that of which assurance is most needed, the great peril of our moral condition, will be effectually impressed upon us, to the end of *awakening* even, and such sense of responsibility and divine obligation, as will exhibit us, to our own apprehensions, as the possess-

ors of a gift, secured, if improved, but, misimproved, wasted and lost.

"I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." It is the language of prophecy, quoted by the Apostle, to show us that what Isaiah spoke for the comfort and assurance of his people, is that which is realised to us in this gift, so that though they were to regard it though not yet as theirs, and to receive it in faith as a thing their own, became included in the unchangeable promise as much as if it then had been. This advantage nevertheless is ours, that in the existence of a "reconciling ministry," we have the living witness of the prophecy fulfilled, and evidence of the responsibility which lies in such gifts of grace as are found in the true audience of God, in a present salvation, in the sufficiency of Divine succor, and in a conscious acceptance, which is incipient here, and which we may make "in vain." With what carefulness, then, in our appropriation of all the truth, should we note this, my brethren, that no measure of Christian perfection even can release us, whilst here, from those duties of Christian devotion which, as they have holiness for their beginning, are directed also to holiness as their end! And when motive is called for, to excite consideration and arouse to

more vigorous action the flagging energies of the awakened mind, how shall we not find it in this, the united and importunate appeal to faithfulness, addressed by God and his ministry alike to a whole Church of primitive believers, "beseeching them" that they would improve the gift which had been bestowed upon them, so that what they had "received," what was then actually theirs, the grace of Baptism, the grace of the Eucharist, the grace of sanctification, whatever grace had been appointed to be conveyed to them through "the word and ministry of reconciliation," and by "the sin-offering" of Him "who knew no sin," making us "the righteousness of God in Him," "the grace of God" might not be in vain!" I would make it as strong as I can, not for the purpose of combating that flimsiest of all heretical dogmas, the doctrine of "Irresistible Grace," the hinge of a system which makes God a "respector of persons," and man a machine, and which the text alone is more than sufficient to explode, for it is addressed to a Church—a whole Church—but for the higher and more practical purpose of inducing in you and in myself, what most we need, in this age of the world, and under the relations which we sustain, a feeling, abiding conviction of the necessity which is upon us of using our gift, of living as "the righteousness of God," as righteous in God, of becoming "witnesses for God,"

in the very spirit of the context, as when it is charged upon the Corinthians, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord," encouraged by the promise, "and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty!"

There is a reason for the connection of this exhortation against the spirit of mere worldly alliance, with the admonition of the text, which will fail to impress us, unless, as Christian disciples earnestly engaged in the work of "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," we first look into our own condition, and ask what our dispositions are, and what our danger is. When, to the ancient martyr or confessor for Christ, who suffered "the spoiling of goods" rather than dishonor the name of Christian, and renounced life itself rather than Christ, the choice was presented of perseverance or the flames, there was not a moment's doubt, the glorious reply of the old Bishop of Smyrna was ever with them, "Eighty and six years have I served Him and He never did me wrong, and how can I now blaspheme my King that has saved me?" Perhaps, if the conditions were the same, it would be so still. But a more gentle trial, involving, we are at least too prone to think, a much smaller amount of self-renunciation, has been appointed to us, and well worthy is

it of best consideration, whether the great error of our Christian judgment, after all, is not this very conclusion, that we may live secure, under the ministries of grace, as Providence has appointed them to us, without making it a principle of living to improve our gifts of grace, whatever they may be, so as by curtailing our worldly desires, and counteracting our evil inclinations, to have the means of contributing to our "better portion," adding daily to our measures of holiness, in thought, in word, in deed, and so making more secure the grace and mercy of God which we have already received. We may "rejoice," surely in our privileges, my hearers, but it must be "with trembling." We should seek to feel this—the very appointments of grace should be sufficient to enable us to feel it; "God beseeching," by means of an instrumental ministry; the whole work of the "new creation" directing the attention to it; the "washing of regeneration" telling of "the new creature in Christ" whenever an infant is submitted to it; "the confirmation of baptismal engagement," assuring its personal and well-considered recognition; the constantly recurring Eucharist, by which we are continually renewed, being the witness of its prolonged necessity; and the last offices of blessing with which the body is committed to the ground, having included in them the hope of a joyful resurrection, when "both body

and soul shall have their perfect consummation and bliss in God's eternal and everlasting glory." From the cradle to the grave, thus, every thing is testamentary to us, declaring God's will to be "our sanctification," and showing us how, in all our improvement of the means of grace, we may obtain grace, "adding to our faith knowledge, virtue, temperance, patience, godliness," the perfect issue of which shall be "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given to us." And so the life is developed, not as "consisting in the abundance of the things which a man possesseth," or in his capabilities of mere sensual enjoyment, but in "the answer of a good conscience towards God," in "the hidden man of the heart, which is not corruptible," in "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." This life is divine; it is a life of God; it is a life designed to illustrate God, and we do not live, in fact, we do not live to purpose, "we are but dead, whilst we live," when we do not realize this. "The righteousness of God!" We have received this, we have "been made" this. It was the very purpose of Christ's dying for us, the "Just for the unjust;" of His being "a sin-offering," that we might "be made" this, and now, "being righteous, "our life is hid with Christ in God," it is a life of God.

Surely they are high words—they will be felt

to be so, but differently, as the mind of each one stands differently related to them. The Christian will feel them to be high words, as he experiences in them the truth of his own increasing assimilation to God in the duties of holiness to which his life obliges him, and the sinner, in the contrariety of all that he accounts life—the world, its pleasures, its honors, its wealth, to that which is so declared. But these are not all; not that, in reality, other classes can be admitted as existing between these two, for Christ has declared the contrary, but that sometimes “the sinful,” whose hearts are not sanctified, so approximate in moral virtue to spiritual uprightness, as to be looked upon by Jesus even, with love, whilst, oftener, alas, that it should be so! much oftener the Christian, in whom the light of truth has shone, obscurely, because of unbelief, whose heart the spirit has touched, but partially, because of its love of the world, and over whom Jesus laments, as in those words to the Church of the Laodiceans, “I would that thou wert cold or hot,” and threatens, “so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will cast thee out of my mouth,” so nearly approximating to “the sinner,” as to be undistinguishable from him in any thing but in an outward profession, comes each with his claim of judgment, pronouncing them words inadmissible to the condition of being in which he is placed.

We believe it to be so. But then, if the words of God be true, and if the saintly experience of the "holy men of old," "the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs," whose deeds live with us, and whose memorial is amongst ourselves, are to be admitted as of any value, what is it with "the sinner" and "the lukewarm Christian," but a plea of inexperience, which can be nothing worth, showing, with greater certainty, that "the grace of God may be received in vain," the blessing of heaven upon that whose end is to be burned?

It was testified of Jesus, in the days of His humiliation, that "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not," but that, "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." He was "the Grace of God," the richest manifestation of His love to men, that, without which all other love here, had been expended in vain, for, "without shedding of blood, there can be no remission," and we are "the purchase of His blood." Still, this grace "came;" it was "life, the light of men;" it was "a light shining in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." In the mighty exercise of that power alone, which said, "Let there be light, and there was light," can we look for the begetting of

that "new creation" in which such manifestations of grace shall be, because, as the evangelist hath testified, this is "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" it is His own work, it is Divine, and then too it is a work in its incipency, as far as we are concerned; it is a work of probation; it is a work of progression; it is a moral impression upon the moral creature; a spiritual impression upon "the new creature in Christ;" the image of God in the soul, the impress of God upon the whole nature of man; having its witness in itself, and by the power of sonship, showing that we are "sons, sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ of an everlasting inheritance," which may yet be lost, as Esau sold his birth-right, leaving us, in our moral agency, with the fearful ability to dispose of ours for a price as little, when there shall be "no room for repentance, though we should seek it carefully with tears."

High thoughts—but most fearful and awakening truths—God Himself testifying of them by the very position which he declares Himself as assuming, in His relations to us as a reconciled Parent, through the mediating agency of Christ, and an instrumental ministry, attesting even, that "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

Why should we be mistaken, then, in our

judgment of our condition, brethren, or in the estimate which we form of those spiritual mercies which are vouchsafed to us in Christ, as very means of communicating to us, and increasing upon us, the benefits of His death? Why should we not know, that as "in Christ," we are "new creatures," that "old things are passed away," that "all things are become new," and that "all things are of God?" And why, above all, should it be so needed, that "means of grace," which were appointed for us in the infancy of our spiritual being, which were "for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness," should be required to be continued, now that the consciousness of increase in grace should place us with those whom the Evangelist addressed as "strong," in whom "the word of God abideth, and who have overcome the wicked one?" Why, but because we are willing to be, as we were in our beginning, like the Hebrews, of whom the Apostle said, that "when, for the time, they ought to be teachers, they had need that one teach them again which be the first principles of the oracles of God?" Oh, it is wretched, thus to be subject to the spirit of indifference and unconcern, which so keeps us under "the bondage of discipline, shutting us up from the liberty wherewith Christ would make us free."

More wretched is it to be in doubt of that

"new creation," for which so many provisions of grace have been made, as to leave it but possible only that we should fail in it of covenanted mercy, obliging us to "keep under the body and bring it into subjection, lest we should be cast away." But most of all wretched is it, to find in the course of that judgment which is passed upon self, when conscience is awakened to the perception of unpardoned guilt, and Providence reveals to us the insufficiency of all human dependence, that we have no interest in Christ; that when He "came to us" we "received Him not," and that His richest "grace" has been bestowed upon us but in vain. Yet is there no need that it should be so. It is not the consequent of our condition as Christians. "Grace, mercy and peace" are the sure portion of those who have been made one with Christ; the earnest of our inheritance is included in it, and better, much better would it be to abandon altogether our professions as Christians, than so live as to make it inevitable in the last day, when we say, "Lord, Lord," that it should be declared to us, "I never knew you—depart from Me, ye that work iniquity!"

"As workers together with Him, we beseech you," not to "repentance," the address is to the Church, and "repentance" is among the "principles of the doctrine of Christ;" not to "faith," for that too was included in the apostolic exhortation.

tation, "Leaving *these*, let us go on unto perfection, but that ye "receive not the grace of God in vain," that grace which He has so manifested to you in your "ingrafting into Christ," in your "fellowship with the saints," in your communication of His blood, in your "confidence of faith," in your "comfort of hope." It is an aiming at something higher, it is the certain contemplation of something which is beyond; it is an application of the means of progression which have been appointed to us here, in the use of which daily, we are constrained to look above us, to feel that we are very "strangers and pilgrims here," and to realize, as in no otherwise we can, the truth of our character of probation, and the fearful nature of the trial which is upon us. What folly is it then, to be lulled into security by the false apprehension of having accomplished as our end, that which is only our beginning! of accounting "faith to be our justification" any further than it puts us upon "good works," which God hath ordained that we should walk in them! of measuring our progression in holiness by our sensibility to outward impressions, rather than by the fixed principles of holiness which are found in conformity to the will of God! and of accounting ourselves safe, in regard to things which God has concluded within those provisions of mercy which he has indicated to us in the text, and concerning which

even St. Paul declared, "I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"

Brethren, if any thing can move us, such considerations must. Oh let it not be in vain then, that God has so condescended to magnify His mercies towards you! Ask why it is that you are where you are; ask for what it is that you are what you are; realize that there is a purpose in providence, as well as in grace, that all things are contributing, in their measure, to the accomplishment of your probation, that you cannot escape from the necessity which holds you, that if faithful, it is but a necessity of holiness, but that, under the relations of holiness, this very duty of ministerial faithfulness arises, as when St. Paul said to the Corinthians, "We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."



DECENNIAL.

ISAIAH LXIII. 7.

"I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses."

TEN years ago this day the first services of religion were performed in this temple, dedicated to the glory of the ever blessed Trinity. He who now addresses you stood in his place as the minister of the altar then, and at this interval of time feels it incumbent upon him to remind you of some things which may not make the determination of the prophet in the text, inappropriate either to himself or you, for the Lord hath bestowed "great goodness" upon us, and much "loving kindness" of which we should be glad, so as to say even with the Psalmist, "O praise the Lord, for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God, yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to

be thankful." We should be willing to be reminded, too, that our being gathered together in the beginning, although it seemed to be the voluntary act of a few, whose views and whose motives differed, was providentially directed for the good of many, in reference to whom we have been made (willingly or unwillingly) the instrument of spiritual blessing; in other words, as an appointment of God, the Church, in its location amongst us, has subserved, in measure, the great purposes of a Divine institution, and now, after the lapse of ten years of experiment or of faith, we can look upon its-working and estimate its results. It may be that there were some even from the beginning, who were prepared to regard it in this light of a Divine connection, and who in all the phases of prosperity and adversity through which it has passed, have steadily looked to the hand of Him, sometimes more and sometimes less distinctly to be seen, who has had the control of its destiny, and whose promise of mercy and of favor was the gift of its inheritance so long as we were able to receive it. To them it has been but a type of the Church in its aggregated character—the collection of faithful men under all the disadvantages of probation in an unfaithful world, submitting themselves, some more, some less, to the instrumentalities of probation, and so spiritually or unspiritually affected, operated upon for good or

for ill as the heart was opened to divine impressions, and faith apprehended the fact that "God was in the world reconciling it unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses, and committing unto us the ministry of reconciliation."

But few of us, I fear, realize, as we should do, the privilege of such a position. The consequence must be, the loss of those higher perceptions of the truth which alone can enable us to own the agency of a Divine power in all that has befallen us here, or to "mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord," under a feeling sense of the bestowment of mercies upon us out of the very fulness and exuberance of grace. An effect will be seen to have been produced, even by these, however, of a peculiar character and of marked results. Though alien even, from the admission of Divine interference and of spiritual agency, the Church cannot be regarded by them as no more than a human institution, a mere voluntary association, employing only moral appliances, and directed to the accomplishment only of moral ends. There is a feeling, a perception in them, of something higher, of something better, and they cannot, though they would, and though the divisions of Christendom and the atheistical tendencies of the age, and even heresies within the Church, all contribute to that issue, and seem to foreshadow its accomplishment;

still they cannot, though they would, be rid of the apprehension that God is somehow, more in one place and with one people than another, and that universal sentiment, independently of Divine monition, suffices to the conclusion, that in manifestation of His presence, He has authorized and honored means as visible tokens of His condescension to us, as ministries of reconciliation and gifts of grace. The outward and public working of such a system may not in all instances be sufficient for this. For the very pressure of that also which is outward, which itself is public, living upon the public favor, may be such as to overshadow, for a season, to circumvent or interrupt the working of a true system, and to give force so to the very forms and embodiments of error, as to make all outward showing in favor only of what is unholy, unchristian, and even bitterly hostile to God. It was so when the prophet of old said, "The prophets of Baal are four hundred and fifty men, but I only remain a prophet of the Lord." It has been so often in those ages of the Church when she consented to lie in the siren bosom of the world. It is so even now in lands where "the kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world," has become so allied with the secular governments of men, as to lessen the rightful power of a spiritual discipline, or to pass over unto Cæsar the honor which belongs only unto God. And here

also, (for humanity is nowhere exempt from the consequences of its probation, and it were wrong to think that the trial is abated, because its measure or its form is changed;) here also, to those "who have gone out from us," or "who were not of us," (from the direction of the public sentiment, which is but too commonly the instrument of Anti-Christ, as when the people said of Jesus, "Away with Him, crucify Him," or in the issues of a providential direction of chastening to His Church, for the sins of a former generation, and for trial of faith, such as our Church has been subjected to since its severance from the Church of England, and which faith only can estimate,) the outward, the public, may not be the rightful criterion of a Christian's judgment, because "the multitude now following Christ for the loaves and fishes," when His miracles seem to be against them, (if only to the destruction of their "swine," that which is "unclean" amongst them, their pleasures or their lusts,) in the very spirit of the Gergasenes, may "pray him to depart out of their coasts." It is that rather which is inward, therefore, which is spiritual, of the soul, which contemplates the closet, the secrets of the heart, the growth of the soul in grace, the secret preparation of the mind for its public engagements, the sanctifying processes of a holy life, and still more "the comfort of a reasonable, religious, and holy

hope" upon the bed of death—that working it is of the system of truth in the Church, and of the Church by this system, to which we must look, and upon which depend, if we would not mistake utterly the object of the Church, or accept as of Divine appointment the mere creature of human invention.

No one should say that what is so spoken is either obtrusive or uncalled for. Were I the representative of an earthly prince to an earthly government, or of a human potentate to a portion of his revolted subjects, credentials would be demanded of me, and the most explicit declarations also of the necessity, the nature, and the ends of my mission to them. Shall not that, therefore, be looked for in the greater, which would most surely be demanded in the least? Or can he be deemed obtrusive even, who, when time calls for the commemoration of mercies which come through an especial act of the most gracious condescension, for the survey of an instrumentality which has even been partially successful, and for an estimate of a system which is of Divine origination, which forms certainly the moral character of the outward man, but reaches yet further to the spiritual condition of the inward, the hidden man, expects you to discriminate, and even does what he can to enable you to discriminate between secular and sacred means, between the appliances of human

invention and those which are divine, so as that, in the successful prosecution of her appointed work, the Church may claim it at your hands that you "mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon you?"

With such views I came; with such intentions have I labored, often discouraged, still more often disquieted, yet always hopeful, for it is my nature to hope, and then too I believed the promise; until now, at the expiration of ten years; I am called upon to consider with you the substance of what has been done, that together we may realize the "great goodness," great as to desert, however small in the judgment of a spiritual avarice, "towards the house of Israel, which the Lord hath bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His loving kindnesses."

The subject of secular difficulties I would rather have refrained from noticing, and should not have done it, otherwise than to thank God for His mercies to me, in showing me the end of ten years' toil for an issue, exemption from debt, the blessedness of which no one can realize who has not felt as I have, the depressing power of such an incubus upon a Church, reaching even to the vitals of its piety, cutting off its channels of spiritual communication, drying up the very

charities of its members, and making, not seldom, its very pastor obnoxious to you, because of the importunity which he is compelled to use in his solicitations for the accomplishment of a moral duty, and the meeting of obligations which he had no agency in begetting. Brethren, but for the failure now, which it grieves me to advert to, in the effort which I had hoped would be successful, and which I cannot but think might have been successful, if every one had done his duty according to his ability and as his conscience prompted, I could have said to you this day, with such joy as you cannot appreciate, the Church in which we worship is paid for—Mammon has no lien upon our altar—our gift to God is now free and entire; great have been His mercies to me—praised be His name. I have not made the collection for the day in its customary place, in the hope that this day may yet be witness to the consummation of a deed so devoutly to be prayed for, by an increased contribution from you all, sufficient to meet the balance requisite to liquidate our debt. To liquidate our debt! Will not these be new words? Will they not be joyful too?

Oh, if you ever engage again in building a church, lay not a stone until it is paid for—incur not the risk of that curse, “Behold, the hire of the laborers crieth, and the cries of them have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.”

But we have more pleasing themes—thank God for them, for they are the evidences of His mercies towards us, and that we have not labored in vain. In the ten years of my ministry amongst you I have baptised thirty-four adults and two hundred and fifty infants; I have presented for Confirmation seventy-four persons, all of whom, excepting some three or four, have come to the Communion; I have entered in the parish register the names of one hundred and seventy-six persons as communicants, and removed thirty-five, leaving a balance of one hundred and forty-one; I have married thirty-one white and seventeen colored couples; I have buried fifty-three persons, twenty-five of them infants. Of the persons removed from the Communion, twenty-five have gone to other places, and with one exception are, as far as I know, still in the communion of the Church; one has been disciplined, one ordained to the priesthood, and eight are in the “bosom of the Lord,” one remaining is a candidate for holy orders; and of the one hundred and forty-one still with us ninety-eight are white persons and forty-three colored. When first we knelt at that altar, eight only communed, one a Methodist; of these eight all are here to-day, and all the children of the Church. God has been with us, of a truth, and these are the evidences of “His loving kindness to us,” “mentioned” not in the spirit of

boasting—God knows this day that we feel but little of that—but as comprehending “the praises of the Lord,” for His “great goodness towards the house of Israel,” and as an incentive of devotion to Him.

We have reason to be thankful. In the actual contrast of our condition now, with what it was ten years ago, we have reason to be thankful. A debt of ten thousand dollars paid, excepting the small balance which is called for to-day, and an increase in the communion from seven to one hundred and forty-one, (ninety-eight of them white persons,) as indicating an increase of strength, and such stability and means of continuance as should, even humanly speaking, secure the independent establishment of the church, which many, ten years ago, regarded as a problem—even these things should make us thankful, for they are indications of Divine favor, and we may not, we must not mistake them—without impiety, we cannot mistake them; they are of “the loving kindnesses of the Lord,” which we must “mention” with “the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us.” But these are outward things—they belong to that visible organization which may be to the eye “fair as the tombs of the prophets, and the sepulchres of the righteous,” and yet there may be in them nothing but “dead men’s bones, and all un-

cleanness." It is well to look to outward prosperity as an indication of the favor of God, if there be in us the spirit to judge rightly of God's favor, and not to deem that we are forsaken of Him, when that favor is seemingly withdrawn. A true Christian spirit, in other words, is self-possessed and enduring, neither elevated beyond measure, when "God of His goodness makes its mountain strong," nor too deeply depressed under "the hidings of His countenance from it." And this Christian spirit, how can it be cultivated successfully, excepting under those chastenings and subduings of Providence which are found in adversity far more than in prosperity, and which is a greater gain, an inconceivably richer treasure, than the whole world besides?

A multitude at the altar! O it is a goodly sight!—one to cheer and to inspirit a pastor's heart, and then only so much the more, when it is a multitude of his own gathering, from amongst "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and from amongst "the highways and hedges" of the world. But is it a multitude in the spiritual no less than in the visible communion of the Church—inwardly as well as outwardly united to the Lord—sanctified in the spirit of their minds—realizing continually more and more, the great objects and ends of the Communion which is—looking from the visible altar, and the sacrifice which is upon it, to

that "General Assembly and Church of the First-born in heaven," and to that sacrificed Lamb, whose presence there awakens the "new song" of praise—"Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood?" In other words, making it "Christ to live," that they may find it "gain to die?"

Of one thing ye must bear me witness before God this day, my brethren, for I value it more than I do the praise of all eloquent preaching, more than the pomp of all gifts and endowments of reason, more than the credit of having labored assiduously and successfully for your mere temporal gain, more even than the proud name of having convinced the gainsayers, of converting a "Dionysius, the Aeropagite," and making a "Felix to tremble"—witness, since the day of my coming among you, that I have not departed from the spirit of my first message to you, "Not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." I have preached of "the ministry" as that "of reconciliation;" of "the Church," as "the pillar and ground of the truth;" of "the Sacraments," as "certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace, and of God's good will towards us;" but of all, as working only by Christ, and as terminating in Christ. What I have preached, whilst God gives me breath I shall continue to preach, conscious that it is "the truth

of God," and without fear or favor, "witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come, that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles." Works of man's wisdom I cannot even venture to use, and "the novelties which disturb our peace," I would to God that they had been permitted to sleep in the brains which conceived them. The holy offices of the Church, as effectual to the ends of their appointment, I shall continue to administer, not questioning because I cannot see, but obeying in the spirit of humility which owns in the Church a measure of wisdom which may not be mine as an individual, and ever content to follow those bright lights which burned in the ages of persecution, when an Ignatius and a Justyn, a Latimer and a Ridley, were the martyrs of the truth. Though "the child of the Church" be an infant only of days, I shall wash it with the baptismal water, and "thank God that it hath pleased Him to regenerate it with His Holy Spirit:" and believing that "Jesus hath purchased to Himself an universal Church," which is the object of His tenderest solicitude and care, despite the evils which I may think I find in it, and the great work of renewal which I may yet see to be done, I will reverence

"the ministry of Apostolic Succession," and pray Christ to be with it "to the end of the world."

That these are outward manifestations of God's goodness to us forms no abatement, if we judge of them aright, of their claims upon us, and of a continuance in their use, but rather—regarding them as means to an end—present, in their very character of visibility, such an assurance of the "loving kindnesses of the Lord," as, in their adaptedness to our human condition, can alone impress us with the truth of a higher nature, or awaken us to an acknowledgement of "the praises of the Lord." A mystical life may be beautiful in theory, impressing with the notion that it would be well to live separate and in a cloister, but God has appointed us a far different portion, so that liberty, at least of choice, is restrained, and claiming the formation of character for Himself, amid such collisions of the world, and despite its influences of alienating power, so as to show the predominance of a spiritual principle "overcoming the world," and to get for God the glory of His conquest of it. How we can look upon what even is here, upon the Church with its visible appliances, upon the Ministry with its assurances of pardon, upon the Sacraments with their covenanted grace, and not realize this, in such wise as nothing which is not so sensible and present to us can enable us to realize it, it would be difficult

to tell. And then, too, upon such, our commemorative occasions, when such as have been with us, but are now absent, claim from us a consideration of the nature and truth of a higher communion, which is spiritual, which is angelic, (the adaptations of which are to a better and a holier state, upon which we are happy even to contemplate them as having entered,) how the great objects, not only of life, as so certainly indicated, can by possibility escape us; but the loss, also, should be in anywise incurred of those inward and spiritual principles which are to elevate and assimilate us to God, assured in the restoration of a communion which for a season is suspended, it would be more difficult yet to tell. Nevertheless it is so—we know, we feel this day that it is so; we admitted the truth, in so far at least, ten years ago, as to find ourselves compelled to make provision for a spiritual culture, with reference to an end which was assuredly contemplated by us, and we built and consecrated to God this temple of His praise; here, at an interval of ten years, we come to ask of its issues. “The first fruits” have been gathered in heaven—though, *as yet*, we have been but seldom called to commit unto the Lord our dead, only eight, in the long period of a decade of years, but enough if we are true, to enable us to realize the nature of the life which is, and through it, to estimate aright the higher char-

acter of the life to come. To look forward, then, with these convictions upon us, how needful is it, how blessed may it be! To this day, ten years hence! who of you will be here to mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord on that day?—and yet it is but *ten years*! Oh, be wise in your estimate of it! We may acknowledge *this* day “the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies.” But ten years hence! The temple may be here—the altar, the priest, the people—what is fixed and material may remain—but you, my hearers, and I, where shall we be? Ten years! Many are the schemes of life which run through a much longer period than that; and yet, for the work of the soul’s salvation, for the due honor and glory of Him whose praises we own, for the great issues of that change which is before us here, ten years is but the interval of a moment, a mere point of time, which will full quickly pass. Why may we not make, then, that which alone truly is of life, which is its highest and holiest wisdom, the just contemplation of its end, the great object and scheme of life, so as that, if *not here*, yet in the communion of the blessed in Paradise, we may still “mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord,” in that new song of “blessing and glory unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.”















