

# SELECT SERMONS

BY

The late Metropolitan of Moscow,

PHILARET.

*TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN.*

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## A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

OF THE LATE

METROPOLITAN OF MOSCOW, PHILARET.<sup>1</sup>

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**B**ASIL Drosdow, later known by the name of Philaret, was born on the 26th of December, 1782, in Kolomna, one of the district towns of the government of Moscow, where his father lived as parish priest. The family Drosdow was poor, poor even among their own class, who are generally so needy in Russia. This clerical class has, through a series of administrative measures and other circumstances, acquired the character of a caste, yet without being one in reality, or rather in principle. The ecclesiastical career, although actually open to all, has become through custom the almost exclusive lot of the children of the clergy. Exceptions to this rule seem to exist but to bear testimony to that fundamental principle of the Church, which has been almost entirely obliterated by custom. At seventeen years

<sup>1</sup> The historical details of the present notice have been borrowed from a book published in Moscow in 1868, by Mr. Souchkow, under the title of "Memoirs of the Life and Time of Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow."

of age Drosdow was placed by his father at the Seminary of Troïtza, founded and supported by the celebrated monastery of that name,<sup>1</sup> where he occupied from the beginning among his fellow-students a prominent place. Platon, at that time Metropolitan of Moscow, took the youth into notice, and placed him henceforth under his special protection.

In 1803 Drosdow was appointed Professor of the Greek and Hebrew languages, and of Rhetoric, in the same Seminary in which he had but recently completed his studies. To be able to justify the election of the former professors, the student of yesterday turned with redoubled energy to his books, and in a few years he became a profound scholar in all those sciences which are so necessary to an ecclesiastical career.

In 1806, at twenty-four years of age, he preached his first sermon. The Metropolitan Platon, himself the most eloquent preacher of his time, was so satisfied with the oratorical talent and solid knowledge displayed by the young man, that he conferred upon him the honorary title of Preacher to the Monastery of Troïtza, an honour which the young layman shared together with the Archimandrite of that illustrious house.

In the year 1808, Drosdow bade farewell to the world, and took the triple vow of monastic life—the vow of chastity, poverty, and obedience—in the presence of his Metropolitan, who did not hesitate to transgress in his behalf the canonical law, which forbids the taking of the final vow

<sup>1</sup> *Troïtza* means *Trinity*. The monastery bears also the name of *S. Sergius*, in honour of its founder. It is situated about forty-seven miles from Moscow, and is as much revered for the sake of its holy patron as for the many glorious and patriotic deeds of its inmates during many centuries.

of monastic life before the age of thirty. Henceforth Basil Drosdow bore the name of Philaret.

In 1809 there came an order from the Holy Synod for the monk Philaret to be sent to the monastery of S. Alexander Nevsky in S. Petersburg. To exchange the place where he had passed his youth, where he was appreciated and had distinguished himself, for a town entirely unknown to him, a life among strangers, who might perhaps be ill-disposed towards the new comer, and in whose breasts his rising reputation might excite envy; all this offered a prospect in no wise cheering to the young scholar, utterly ignorant of the ways of the world.

The Metropolitan Platon, grieved to see himself deprived of his favourite pupil, who promised to reward so amply his paternal care, wrote to the Synod thus:—"Philaret has manifested his unwillingness to go to Petersburg in the tears he has shed." And again, further;—"Above all, I beseech the Holy Synod concerning the monk Philaret, that he may be sent back to the monastery of Troïtza . . . Having watched over his education with the anxiety of a father, I should consider his return a great comfort to my old age."

Notwithstanding the request of the influential prelate, Philaret was obliged to go to S. Petersburg, and it was not until many years after the death of his illustrious patron that he returned to his beloved monastery as Archbishop of Moscow.

Here commences the second epoch, so to speak, of the life of Philaret, whom we see at twenty-seven years of age entering upon that active and glorious career of public duty, which was to end but with his life.

It was now the early part of the reign of Alexander I., a time which abounded in beneficent reforms, proceeding from

the noble and saintly aspirations of the heart of the Sovereign, and in which reforms he was supported by the counsels of his youthful friends.

In 1812 we see Philaret Rector of the Ecclesiastical Academy of S. Petersburg, one of the most influential members of the Committee for the reform of the religious schools, already a renowned preacher, a profound divine, the friend and counsellor of the Procurator of the Holy Synod, Prince Alexander Galitzine.<sup>1</sup>

But this notice would become a voluminous biography if we were to detail here the activity of this monk, who, having renounced every personal pursuit in life, devoted himself with the whole might of an ardent spirit, of a superior intellect, and of an indomitable will grounded on strong religious convictions, to the service of God and his country.

Throwing but a rapid glance on this part of his life, it will be sufficient to say that during the interval between 1812 and 1821 he took a most active part in all measures concerning the welfare of the Church of Russia. Particularly interested in the reform of the clergy, he was commissioned to inspect the religious Academy of Moscow, and the Seminaries of seven great towns. As a member of the Bible Society he was its very soul, and undertook the translation of the Gospel of S. John from the Greek into the Russian, and corrected the translation of all the other Books of the New Testament.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prince A. Galitzine was at the same time Minister of Public Instruction.

<sup>2</sup> Until then there existed but the Slavonic translation of the Holy Bible, of which the language had grown somewhat different from the actual Russian, and was therefore no longer easily understood by the people.

About this time he wrote his *Commentaries on the Book of Genesis*, and a *History of the Bible*, which even to this day is exclusively used in all religious and secular schools. He wrote also some very remarkable *Tracts* on the separation of the Roman from the Universal Church, on the dissenters from the Russian Church, who style themselves "Starovery," or "Believers in the old faith," and a *Catechism*, which serves as the medium of religious instruction to the whole Russian youth. This book has been translated into English by Blackmore,<sup>1</sup> and it is said to be used as a catechism in many American schools.

To this time belong also some of his best sermons, in which he comments on the Scriptures after the manner of the Greek fathers, whose writings he had studied in the original, imitating even their style. We are often struck, in reading his sermons, by the length of the periods and the peculiarities of the phraseology, which are owing to the influence on the mind of the learned Bishop of the writings of the Greek Fathers. His sermons are rather meditations, addressing the mind, explaining the mystical sense of the symbols, of the prophecies, of the prayers and of the rites of the Church. He seems to have set himself the peculiar task of revealing the true meaning of the Scriptures and of the rites of the Church, that stronghold of CHRIST, where Divine revelation, inspiration, and human experience sanctified by faith, have from the beginning of the world accumulated treasures of spiritual wisdom.

In 1817 Philaret was raised to the dignity of Bishop, and occupied successively the Sees of Reval, Twer and Jaroslaw,

<sup>1</sup> Published by J. Masters, London.

till at last, in 1821, he became Archbishop of Moscow. Henceforth his attention, divided between the affairs of the Holy Synod and the duties of his important diocese, became inadequate to this double task. He then solicited and obtained, in 1823, the permission to leave S. Petersburg, and to remain for two years in Moscow.

About this time Alexander I., having lost the hope of seeing the birth of a direct heir to his crown, and the Grand Duke Constantine, his next brother, having married a private lady, whom he was permitted to espouse but under the condition of renouncing his right to the crown, the Emperor saw himself obliged to form some decision concerning the succession to the throne. The Grand Duke Constantine wrote a letter, by which he renounced his rights in favour of his brother, the Grand Duke Nicholas; and Alexander, having consulted his mother, the Empress Marie Fedorowna, widow of Paul I., resolved to state his will in a testament. Desirous of keeping this decision secret, the Czar spoke of it but with two persons, Count Arakchew and Prince A. Galitzine, commissioning the latter to communicate it to the Archbishop of Moscow, commanding him to draw up this Decree, and to keep it strictly secret. Having obeyed the will of his sovereign, the prelate expressed his doubts concerning the advisability of the deep mystery in which so important an act was to be shrouded. He counselled that at least sealed copies of the original should be deposited in the Senate of S. Petersburg and in that of Moscow, in the Holy Synod, and in the Council of the Empire.

The Emperor, approving of the redaction of the Decree by the Archbishop, accepted his advice, and commanded copies to be deposited in the above-named places, while he wrote



with his own hand on the original,—“To be kept in the Cathedral of the Assumption in Moscow,<sup>1</sup> until I claim it. In case of my death, the Archbishop and the Governor-General of Moscow are commanded to open this before they proceed further.” The letter of the Grand Duke Constantine was also laid there, and the whole was sealed with the Imperial Seal.

Thus, as the bearer of his sovereign's testament, did the Archbishop arrive at Moscow, where he deposited the important charge in the place designated.

In November, 1825, Alexander I. died on the frontier of his Empire, at Taganrog . . . . It would be out of place to enumerate here the events which darkened the first days of the reign of Nicholas I. ; but the anxieties of Philaret concerning the mystery in which the will of the late sovereign was shrouded, proved but too well founded. The Archbishop of Moscow, sole depositor of the imperial secret, acted on this difficult occasion with the utmost wisdom and prudence: it is owing to him that the ancient capital was saved from the troubles which threatened to convulse the Empire.

We are come now to the end of the second part of the life of the illustrious prelate.

From 1809 till 1825, Philaret had grown more and more known, and had at last attained the highest dignity in the Church of Russia. His personal importance is best proved by the part assigned to him in so important a transaction as that which we have just related.

In 1826 he became Metropolitan of Moscow, and resided

<sup>1</sup> The principal church of the Kremlin in Moscow, where the Emperors are crowned.

alternately in his diocese and in S. Petersburg, where the affairs of the Holy Synod required his presence.

His extensive knowledge of the History of the Church and of her present condition, the justness and clearness of his judgment, his abilities and laboriousness, his logic, his eloquence, made him the most active and influential member of the sacred college; while his deep theological studies gave to his opinion in religious matters particular authority. It was but natural that such a position should excite the hate and calumnies of envious men; and moreover, his powerful influence in the Holy Synod had often roused the anger of fanatics and narrow-minded zealots. These and other circumstances, rendered at length the illustrious prelate an object of distrust to those with whom he considered it useless to contest. He asked and easily obtained leave to quit S. Petersburg, and henceforth, that is, from 1841, he took up his residence in Moscow, and remained there till his death.

Suddenly deprived of a vast sphere of action, the Prelate found himself in the full vigour of manhood confined to the limited circle of his diocese. Having during many years governed the Church and felt himself the instrument of God in the work of her advancement, he saw himself thrown aside and powerless to serve her. . . . Having renounced earth with all its joys, to consecrate his life entirely to the higher interests of faith and religion, he became devoted to them with that almost passionate love, which a human heart will feel for self-renunciation itself. He loved his Church and his country with an almost earthly love, proud and jealous in their service; and we may understand how awful was the struggle of his spirit, at the moment of renouncing this long-cherished ambition. We

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find some faint traces of this inward strife in one or two sermons which he then preached, where amidst the austere teachings of the minister of God, we catch the half-stifled cry of anguish from a human heart, suddenly bereft of all that made life lovely to it. Albeit, his grief manifested itself in no other way, and the tumult of his soul was overcome in the silence of his cell under the eye of God alone. . . .

Some years later, we see on the episcopal throne of Moscow, a saintly old man surrounded by the reverence of the whole nation. His intellect shines as brightly as ever, his word is as powerful, and the whole Church hearkens to it with veneration. The authority of his writings is almost equal to that of the Fathers; his enlightened experience rules the Church of Russia. Thus for instance the relations between the Russian Church and the Patriarchs of the East, are tacitly entrusted to him. Let us quote here some lines of the Patriarch of Constantinople to General Ignatieff, our Ambassador in Turkey, which show how worthily the Metropolitan acquitted himself of that task. In a despatch of the 5th (17th) of April, 1866, the Patriarch says concerning the answer of the Holy Synod, relative to a dispute which had arisen between himself and Prince Couza: "The answer of the Holy Synod has deeply moved me and I must avow, that the Church of Russia is better acquainted with our history than ourselves; the arguments contained in the Note of the Holy Synod are much stronger and much more decisive than those advanced by the Great Church, concerning our bounden duty to keep unaltered the unity of the Eastern Church. This remarkable document opens a new era in the annals of the Church of the East, and throws a vivid light on the points of dispute between the Patriarchate

of Constantinople and the ex-Hospodar, whose sophistries are thereby victoriously overthrown."<sup>1</sup>

The illustrious Prelate had the joy, in 1863, to see the interrupted work of his youth, the translation of the Bible into Russian, which had been prohibited by the Government in 1817, again undertaken. The New Testament partly translated, partly corrected almost fifty years ago by the aged Bishop, was printed in many thousands of copies, and the translation of the Old Testament was zealously undertaken by the Academy of Troïtza, under his superintendence.

During the twenty-five years which he passed constantly in Moscow, the Metropolitan formed and ordained a whole phalanx of Bishops, who now occupy the greater part of the Sees of Russia. He wrote many sermons and books, which enrich our religious literature, and in their totality contain the whole doctrine of the Orthodox Church. He lent also his eloquent pen to the religiously patriotic feelings of his countrymen, writing the inspired prayers pronounced on the 25th of December, in commemoration of the deliverance of Russia, in 1812; those offered to God in the anniversaries, of the seven hundred years of the existence of Moscow, of the thousand years' existence of Russia, and on many other occasions too numerous to mention. These prayers, full of majestic symbols, clothed in the simple and sublime language of the Bible, breathing the spirit of the primitive Church,

<sup>1</sup> That Note was as usually written by the Metropolitan Philaret, and is a solemn protest against the presumption of a secular prince to claim the sovereignty of the Church. Such a protest, coming from Russia, is an impressive refutation of the calumny which ascribes this sacrilegious assumption to the Russian Emperor.

are so like the prayers bequeathed to us by the Prophet-King and the Fathers, that it is difficult to distinguish them.

It was also Philaret, who by his charity and wisdom, restored to the Church the numerous sect of the "*Starovery*." Enlightening their errors, condescending to their innocent prejudices, he acquired among them by the austere saintliness of his life the same authority which he enjoyed among his own people.

The English and American travellers, who, during these last twenty years have visited Moscow, in order better to acquaint themselves with Orthodoxy, will remember the kindness with which the venerable Prelate welcomed them to his house, whenever they wished to visit him. He conversed with them for hours, answering gladly their questions by means of an interpreter, for although he understood many modern languages he did not speak them.

The esteem enjoyed by the Metropolitan, not in virtue of his Episcopal dignity, but because of a life entirely devoted to the service of God,—the respect for his personal merits, for his rare intellect increased tenfold by study and meditation, were shown on the occasion of his jubilee.

On the 5th of August, 1817, the Archimandrite, Philaret, thirty-four years of age, was ordained Bishop; on the 5th of August, 1867, the Church, the Sovereign and the Nation, joined unanimously to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his blessed Episcopate.

On this day the Metropolitan, leaving his favourite summer place of retirement,—an humble cottage amidst the woods surrounding Troitza,—came to his palace in the monastery. There he received first of all Count Tolstoi, the Procurator-General of the Holy Synod, who presented him in the

name of the Emperor with the insignia of the old Patriarchs of Russia.<sup>1</sup> The Tsar sent him also, as a token of his personal friendship, his portrait along with those of Nicholas I. and Alexander I., richly set in diamonds, the three Sovereigns, whose reigns the Prelate had adorned.

Then came the deputies from the Patriarchs of the East, from the Holy Synod, from the Metropolitan of Servia, from the monasteries of Mount Athos and from all the Russian Sees. He received also deputations from all the learned Societies of which he was a member, as well as from the nobility and from the city of Moscow.

Twelve Metropolitans, Archbishops and Bishops, were present at the solemnity, as well as many Archimandrites of celebrated monasteries, and the most distinguished priests of the so called white clergy.<sup>2</sup>

Learned men, celebrated writers, dignitaries of the state, noblemen of the most illustrious families, filled the palace, whilst a numerous crowd thronged the vast space contained within the walls of the monastery.

The venerable Prelate listened standing to all the addresses, while the assembly marked admiringly that his answers were as free from repetition, as they were varied and fitting to the Society or person to whom they were given.

<sup>1</sup> Peter I. apprehending the growing influence of the Patriarch of Russia, had, with the consent of the whole Eastern Church, substituted this dignitary by the Holy Synod, investing it with the authority which belonged until then to the Patriarch.

<sup>2</sup> The parish priests in the Eastern Church are always married men, and form the *white clergy*, so named in distinction to the *black clergy*, to which belong the Bishops. A canonical law, passed in the sixth century, ordains that the Bishops shall be elected from among the monks or black clergy.

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This solemnity in which Church and Nation united to pay their tribute of veneration to the illustrious Metropolitan, was to be the crowning event of his life.

A month later, on the 17th of September, he saw in a dream his father, warning him to observe particularly the date of the nineteenth. On awakening he resolved to take the Holy Communion on the nineteenth of every month. Keeping this vow, he celebrated the Liturgy on the 19th of November, in his chapel in Moscow, partook of the Holy Sacrament in the fulness of bodily and spiritual strength, and returned to his apartment at eleven o'clock. At two in the afternoon, his servant entering to announce that dinner was served, found him dead in his chamber.

He fell asleep as expires a torch, which shining on brightly to the last, forebodes its approaching end but by projecting rays of more intense and vivid light. His peaceful death was truly the worthy reward of a laborious and saintly life.

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Let me be allowed here to add something of my personal remembrance of this great man. I became acquainted with him fourteen years before his decease, and however my life may yet be prolonged, his image will never fade from my memory.

Being admitted to visit him, while listening for hours together to his conversations and wondering at his splendid intellect—as complete in its gifts, as varied as they were exquisitely cultivated,—I compared him in my thoughts to the diamond, whose many coloured sparklings flash forth in luminous rays from each of its faces, and whose firm and

dense aggregate can be neither modified nor cut by any other substance than its own. He was one of those natures, who bear in themselves the germ of the most diverse elements and which can be controlled or ruled but by their own strong will. Endowed with superior abilities, which raise them above their fellow-men ; desirous of great works as of their native element ; understanding men and knowing how to rule them ; these natures are more than others open to ambition and pride. Happy are they, when divine Truth throws on their path a ray of its eternal light, dispelling the illusions of earthly desires and showing the vanity of pride.

While looking on this dignified old man, so calm, so subdued, I traced up mentally the long and laborious career of his past life, exploring with him the deep track which he had made, the path through which he had passed, sown with thorns, darkened by the bereavement of earthly afflictions,—and I blessed that beautiful sunset, in whose mellow and serene light was dying away the ardent heat of that long day, so full of toil and strife.

The Metropolitan, as I knew him, was of small stature and thin, but strikingly dignified in his manners by the thorough control which he exercised over himself. His features were delicate and regular ; his eyes clear and piercing ; his complexion was pale ; his beard gray and scanty ; his demeanour highly polite and even elegant. His voice was low and he spoke slowly ; his language,—concise and refined to a degree, rarely equalled by the most elaborate writings,—was impressive, eloquent, and obedient to the lightest shades of his deeply meditated thoughts.

He was fond of speaking of past times, and it was truly delightful to listen to his narratives, which unfolded themselves



like the painting of some old master, whose inspired pencil has fixed and endowed with undying beauty, some passing aspect of nature or some still more transient emotion of the human soul. Thus did the memory of the Metropolitan preserve, graven as it were upon it, the events which had impressed him, and his clear and eloquent narrative sketched out rapidly before you a picture of matchless beauty.

His sagacious and acute mind was naturally inclined to causticity, which escaped him almost involuntarily, shooting forth like lightning, yet always couched in the most refined expressions. It was touching in his later years, to note the efforts he made to curb his brilliant wit, careful to blunt the sharpness of its edge, which might give charity a wound.

He never of himself broached a religious subject in conversation; but the readiness with which he profited by the least occasion offered him of speaking of spiritual matters, and the animation of his countenance, bore witness to the heartfelt interest he took therein. It was edifying to see that great man grown gray in the study of the Scriptures, bending his mighty and lucid intellect to the puerilities of a discussion with men who spoke, and often with self-confidence, of matters concerning which they had hardly seriously reflected. But no consideration could deter the saintly Bishop from diffusing the word of life, from sowing its quickening seed and thus accomplishing his duty of enlightening souls.

To a mind peculiarly inquisitive he joined a childlike faith, which drew him to the invisible world as towards his native element: the realm of faith was more *real* to him than this visible world, which he had learned to consider but as a fleeting, transient form. Nevertheless he was mindful of the teaching of the Apostle, commanding to be cautious

in matters of faith, and neither superstition nor fanaticism found any sympathy in him.

To give the finishing touch to this portrait, let me add, that this faithful servant of Orthodoxy, this profound divine, this illustrious Bishop, having borne aloft the banner of his own beloved Church, during half a century, evinced towards the close of his glorious career a sublime spirit of tolerance.

Six days before his death, I heard him develop his firm belief, that divine Mercy, having entrusted the plenitude of Grace to the One Church, had yet bestowed some part of it upon every Christian religion. He spoke lovingly and hopefully of the power of salvation contained in every Christian religion, for such simple souls as know not better. For, said he, in order to be saved, it is sufficient to believe in the HOLY TRINITY and in our Redemption through the merits of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

His purified and blessed soul had already attained those luminous heights, where eternal light shines forth, where there is no longer any shade, and where Truth resplendent and unclouded, liberates us from the multitude of human opinions.

*Moscow, January 21, 1872.*

## INTRODUCTION.

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**T**HE interest which has for some years been manifested by Englishmen and Americans concerning the Orthodox Church, has induced us to translate some chosen Sermons of our best contemporary Divine, and the most eloquent preacher of the Russian Church.

The spiritual meditations here offered to the English reader are from the pen of the late Metropolitan of Moscow, Philaret. He has left, besides many other spiritual writings, a voluminous collection of Sermons, interpreting the significance of the solemnities of the Church, her rites and her customs; teaching her doctrine, and expounding various texts of the Scriptures. These Sermons, treating of all the most important questions of Christian doctrine, may be justly styled a complete and practical course of dogmatic and moral theology. We know not what most to admire in this treasury of spiritual lore,—the extensive knowledge of the Scriptures and profoundness of understanding, the clearness of mind with which he solves the most difficult questions, rendering them accessible to all by his simple and lucid exposition; or the beauty of the language, glowing with poetical images.

His sermons could be more fitly called meditations, being better appreciated by quietly pondering over them, than by listening to them at church. They stir not the feelings, nor do they rouse the imagination, but they deeply convince the mind, and work upon the very soul of the reader.

In our choice of the present Sermons, we have been guided by the desire to acquaint the English reader with the questions, in which our respective Churches mostly differ,—as, for instance, the reverence paid by us to the Most Blessed Virgin and to the Saints. In rendering her the honour due to her as to the pure Virgin, who was chosen to become the Mother of our SAVIOUR, the English Church fears to lower the Majesty of God, and, so to say, to divide the devotion which it behoves a Christian to yield to his Redeemer and LORD alone. Whereas our Church, faithful to sacred tradition, firmly believes the holy Virgin Mary to be not an ordinary woman, but the elect and blessed instrument of God in the work of our redemption: the Church believes that she, who bore in her womb the God-Man, who wept tears of motherly love and woe at the foot of the Cross in the solemn hour of the Atonement for the sins of mankind, and in these sacred moments received from the very lips of the divine Sufferer Himself the words of filial love and care, entrusting her to the guardianship of His beloved Disciple, and in his person confided us all to her motherly love; the Church believes that she, the Mother of our LORD, is sacred to us above all women, and holds in the kingdom of her divine Son a place high above all others. She believes firmly both in the willingness and power of the holy and blessed spirit of Mary to pray for us and with us,—she, in the resplendent glory of her heavenly abode before the eternal throne of her Son and

God, for us who, by our faith alone, belong to His immortal Church. We will quote here a few lines from the following Sermons: "If the Virgin Mary is honoured with the highest election by divine grace, then she is equally so by divine justice. She is raised high above all by election, because above all she appeared worthy of election by the qualities and inclinations of her soul, and among other qualities by the purest virginity by which she has ascended like a sun, high above all the ancient, and certainly above all the future world." Therefore also is the Virgin-Mother of God unto the Church the exalted type of virginity. For virginity was unknown, nay even despised among the Jews, anxiously awaiting through the birth of the MESSIAH the redemption of humankind. It was first understood and desired by the pure soul of her, who resolved to embrace life bereft of every earthly tie, that she might the more freely give her whole heart to heavenly things, and whose virginity was crowned by a divine maternity. The pure Virgin, full of faith and love to the invisible God, became the chosen Mother of the God-Man. Her virgin-soul, free from earthly affections, was found worthy to become the tabernacle of God Incarnate. She stands on the brink of the old and of the new world, as the glorious tree of the Old Testament which bore unto heaven the fruit of salvation, which is the New Covenant of God with man.

The aspiration to attain the highest degree of perfection, by imitating the life of angels, through chastity both in soul and body, that aspiration which "all men cannot receive, save they to whom it is given,"<sup>1</sup> as is proclaimed by our LORD, has created a whole sphere of thoughts and feelings, a

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xix. 11.

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whole world of inward life, which has attained its highest development in the Eastern Church. The religious reform of the sixteenth century, so entirely obliterated this side of Christian life from Protestantism, that we do not even find in the English language words in which to render some very expressive and precise definitions of various spiritual conditions, feelings and workings, which abound in the present Sermons, and this has been one of the chief difficulties of our translation. Yet, notwithstanding Protestant or English prejudices, originating in a rightful reaction against the abuses of monasticism in the West, it cannot be denied that asceticism has added to the sum of human experience in spiritual matters, a precious insight which clears and brightly illumines the path leading to the heavenly Jerusalem.

In like manner as the Church acknowledges the honour due to the Mother of the Lord, she believes in the intercession of the Saints and ordains reverence towards them.

As God is not the God of the dead but of the living, as the Church, in her divine universality belongs neither to some peculiar place nor time, but unites in her bosom all the faithful,—those who still live upon earth, and those who dwell already beyond the limits of this life,—therefore, does the communion of love and prayer exist between the Church upon earth and the Church of heaven. How could saintly spirits who during this life have kept the commandment of our Divine Master, to love one another, how could they, once freed from their earthly bonds and from the struggle against human weakness, forget, or rather lose that divine love which has begotten in them life eternal? How could they cease to love men, and loving them, to pray for those who are weak in the spirit and tempted, for those who sin

and for those who repent, for those who are sorely tried and for those who weep, for those even, and perhaps more than all, who ignorant of their own needs, are gliding down unconsciously the dark and silent river of perdition? This is simply impossible. For love is a fire of heaven, which being once kindled, shall grow and be made perfect to all eternity, in the souls of those who die in **JESUS CHRIST** our **LORD**.

Prayer addressed by us to the Saints to obtain their intercession, or rather the communion of their prayers, proceeds in no wise from a feeling of doubt in divine mercy, or in the saving nearness of **GOD**. But as we know that prayer ought to be fervent, persevering and pure, and feel our own weakness, we call upon the Saints of heaven, upon our brethren in **JESUS CHRIST**, that they may lift up on the strong wing of their pure and ardent prayer, our own imperfect and cold ones. And this feeling impairs not in the least the just and firm belief of the Church, that holy, in the absolute sense of the word, is **GOD** alone, and that the holiness of the Saints is but a gift of His grace.

Another natural consequence of our faith in the communion of love and prayer between the Church upon earth and that of heaven, is our hopeful prayer for the souls of the departed. We firmly believe that prayers offered by the Church and by us her unworthy members, may obtain divine mercy for the souls of the dead; that the Church in her eternal reign has been empowered by her **LORD** to intercede for the souls of those who have died in the communion of love with her; for she is the one Church of **CHRIST** our **SAVIOUR**, Who reigns over life and death throughout all eternity.

As the best proof that the reverence offered to the Mother

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of God and to the Saints has not weakened in the orthodox Church that bond which ought to exist between the Church and her divine Chief, between the Christian and his Redeemer, we may point to the rite of the holy liturgy, which is the highest type of divine worship,—for all other services are but an introduction to, or a complement of it. It is impossible to find a more truly Christian prayer, more full of warmth, universal love, and breathing in its every part a most absolute hope in *the merits of the divine Victim of Golgotha alone*, than this most perfect liturgy presents to us.

The order of its ritual shadows out mystically before us the principal events of the earthly life of our LORD, crowned by His redeeming holocaust of love on the cross, and revives or realizes it in the divinely instituted Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which every Christian is called to participate.

Standing before the sacred Altar, on which are offered the mystical *Bread and Wine*, in the midst of the temple, typifying the upper room in Jerusalem, the Priest,—speaking in the name of the assembly of the faithful,—commemorates the just men abiding already in heaven,—the Apostles, Prophets, Confessors, Saints, and at last the most blessed Virgin Mary, and blending his own prayer along with those of the whole assembly, with their heavenly prayers, he unites by this commemoration the Church in heaven and the Church on earth. After this, the Priest lifts up to the throne of God the FATHER, in the Name of the merits of His divine SON, prayers and supplications for the whole world, for the Universal Church, for all sorts and conditions of men; he prays, for the faithful to be strengthened, for the wicked to be converted and purified. All needs, all sorrows, all infirmities are enumerated here before the throne of mercy; for, partaking of



the divine Food, we are filled with the gifts of grace, and, in the words of the Apostle, "we show the Lord's death till He come."<sup>1</sup>

At this solemn instant the Church forgets not her departed children, but prays for them in offering up the mysterious holocaust, making them thereby to participate in the holy Sacrament which unites heaven and earth, and at the same time unites also the praying assembly to the whole body of the Universal Church. For in the name of the Church, and not in that only of the present assembly, she offers unto the Lord God His own gracious gift in the words, "In all, and for all, we offer Thee 'Thine own of Thine own."<sup>2</sup>

We may truly say that if all the canonical books of the Orthodox Church were to disappear, and there should remain only the rite of the holy Liturgy, it would be sufficient to prove how faithfully the Church has preserved the true spirit of Christian prayer, without weakening in the least that gracious bond which ought to exist between the Church and Christ. More clearly and precisely than from any explanation and reasoning, from the very character of the divine Liturgy, one may derive a true notion of the significance in the Church of the invocation to the Mother of God and to the Saints, as well as of the prayers for the dead. This sacred and hopeful communion between the visible and the invisible Church, appears in the rites of the divine Liturgy in such an exalted, touching, Christian character, that contemplating it, we find it even impossible to accuse the Church

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 26.

<sup>2</sup> We recommend as a means of acquainting the English reader with our holy Liturgy, to read it in the Rev. J. M. Neale's "History of the Holy Eastern Church," (London: Masters.)

of differing in the least from the true spirit of CHRIST our LORD.

The orthodox Christian believes the Sacraments to be two-fold; on his part, an act of faith and free obedience; on the part of the Church, an anointment of grace, the seal of the HOLY GHOST, Who dwelleth in her, through JESUS CHRIST her LORD. He believes that in baptism, confessing the Holy Trinity, he is purified from sin, through JESUS CHRIST, and born unto a new life, a life of grace in CHRIST his Redeemer. Through baptism the Christian is made a member of that Body whose Head is CHRIST, and thereby he is admitted to the Holy Supper, not in virtue of his own merits, but out of the infinite mercy and love of Him Who has died for man on the cross, and with Whom he is become one by baptism. Faithful to this humble and hopeful belief, the Church grants the holy Eucharist to little children without waiting the time when they may *understand* or *merit* the Mystery of Grace, before which the Angels of heaven prostrate themselves and adore, without comprehending.

The orthodox Christian believes that in the Eucharist he partakes of the true *Body* and *Blood* of CHRIST, in order to be united with Him in the spirit and in the flesh; for he knows that the grace, dwelling in the Church as a gift of her LORD, is powerful and efficacious to accomplish miraculous works, far beyond our limited powers of comprehension. Let us quote here some lines from the Metropolitan: "The LORD said at the Holy Supper, and He repeats it at every renewal of the sacred Act, 'This is My Body, this is My Blood.'<sup>1</sup> And wherever dwells the *Body* and the *Blood* of the LORD, Who was crucified, but Who is also risen up,

<sup>1</sup> S. Mark xiv. 22.

there, doubtlessly, dwells His Spirit also, and His Divinity ; there He Himself is present, there we are near unto Him, before Whom the Angels quake."

In the Sacrament of Ordination, we confess the true origin of priesthood, and preserve in an uninterrupted line the grace bestowed by our SAVIOUR on His Apostles. The Bishop or the Priest is the Minister of CHRIST, and not the delegate of the community ; he owes his allegiance to CHRIST alone, and high above his human weakness we behold his perfect type in Him Who is "a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."<sup>1</sup>

The Sermons of the Metropolitan treating of Sacraments will be translated in a future volume.

Let us add a few words on the pious custom of honouring the relics of Saints. Without being a dogma or command of our Church, this custom is not merely tolerated, but even furthered by her, as a sign of devotion and reverence towards the memory of holy men, our brethren in JESUS CHRIST our LORD. The honour paid to the blessed remains of Saints is but a natural consequence of our faith in the resurrection of the body. It is a kindred feeling to that which moves us to frequent the resting-place of those whom we have loved, to adore their graves, and to feel ourselves there nearer to them. To this natural feeling the Christian adds the belief that the relics of Saints are sanctified, for their very bodies have been during life, in the words of S. Paul, "the temple of God," and "the Spirit of God hath dwelled in them ;"<sup>2</sup> he knows also that by means of these sacred relics divine grace has worked, and works still miracles of mercy.

The *icons*, or sacred images, are of a significance which

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 16.

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has been so often explained, that we find it useless to mention it here. Every one knows that according to our Catechism, "icons are leaves, written with the forms of persons and things instead of letters," and that "whilst we look on them with our eyes, we should mentally look to God and to the Saints represented on them."

Those who will study the doctrine of the Church, not in the errors and weaknesses of human superstitions and failings, but in her own divinely inspired rites and institutions, will appreciate the matchless purity of our beloved Church. Let us not be misunderstood. We do not assume to ourselves any prerogative of goodness; on the contrary, woe unto us who have so little profited by the perfect holiness of our Mother Church! We are daily showing that we know her not by the narrowness of mind with which we cling to her outward form, ignoring or disregarding the divine, quickening Spirit which is her very soul, and without which that form is but a lifeless corpse. The best among us fall grievously short of the ideal of the Church, which towers high above us, bearing aloft the standard of the cross.

Truly glorious and divine is the plan of our Church; but beware of judging her by the failures and errors of her unworthy children.

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## SERMON I.

### ON THE PROPHECY OF ISALAH, AND THE NAMES EMMANUEL AND JESUS.

#### Christmas Day.

“Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”—*S. Matth. i. 22, 23.*

**T**HE holy Evangelist Matthew repeatedly observes that all the circumstances and events which signalized the birth upon earth of our Incarnate God, and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, were not merely a concurrence of circumstances and events, but were an exact fulfilment of prophetic predictions. An observation this, important not only to the Jews,—who would not view even that which might be examined by the natural eye, otherwise than through the vision glass of the prophets,—but also to every one who wishes to discover the workings of Providence in the entangled paths of men, and to discern the hand of God in the events of the world. Is it not evidently a work of God, when something foretold several years

ago, is exactly fulfilled? and, above all, when that is fulfilled which according to ordinary ideas and calculations, seemed impossible of fulfilment?

As though she stood before his eyes, does Isaiah point to the most blessed Virgin Mary, *Behold, a virgin*; at a time, when not only this virgin herself, but even her parents and her forefathers, had not as yet come into the world, “Behold,” says he, “a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son.” What sayest thou, O prophet? Can a virgin conceive? Can she, who giveth birth, still be a virgin? If this be possible, then how can it be accomplished in the nation, to whom thou foretellest this event? If even it be fulfilled, then how can this be the *sign*, the evident and trustworthy sign, which thou foretellest? “the LORD Himself shall give you a sign.”<sup>1</sup> If thou dost indeed see this daughter of David, to whom thou pointest, saying, “Behold, a virgin;” if thou seest her in the far distant from the birthplace of David, and despised Nazareth, an orphan, poor, and with no marks of her royal descent, espoused to a carpenter; then tell us, how shall the LORD give that sign, that she should appear a virgin of the line of David, giving birth to her child in the house and in the city of David, namely, as another prophet appointed, in *Bethlehem*?

See then, how faithfully the LORD Himself answers for the truth of the prophecy, “The HOLY GHOST

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah vii. 14.

came upon Mary, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her ;”<sup>1</sup> and she conceived, being still a virgin ; and having become the mother of the SON, nevertheless remained a virgin. In order that those who were unacquainted with the mystery of this conception, should not be able to malign her who had conceived, she was betrothed to her husband before that conception : and, that to every healthy mind this sign of the LORD might be clear, that a virgin had conceived without a husband, the conception followed the espousals, even *before they came together*,<sup>2</sup> even before Joseph took unto him his wife<sup>3</sup> into his house. To Joseph himself, an angel was sent to reveal this mystery, and to show him this sign, so that he should not remain in doubt ; while to others, who could neither see nor hear angels, a no less trustworthy witness of the sign and herald of the mystery, was given in the person of Joseph himself, who was known to all as *a just man*,<sup>4</sup> and therefore was unable to deceive people, and still less able to slander GOD and the HOLY SPIRIT. But how was it to be brought about, that the sign, already revealed in the almost pagan *Nazareth*, should be given, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, to *the house of David* ;<sup>5</sup> that the virgin, who having conceived of the HOLY SPIRIT, and after staying three months in the house of a relative, should

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke i. 35.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. i. 19.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. i. 24.

<sup>4</sup> S. Matth. i. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah vii. 13.

abide until the last period of her pregnancy at *Nazareth*, without thinking of any journey, or removal; —that she should bring forth “the Ruler of Israel,” according to the prophecy of Micah, in *Bethlehem*.<sup>1</sup> Truly here, as Isaiah once more hints, was “a wearying of the LORD,”<sup>2</sup> that is, it was necessary to perform difficult, and to human understanding, impossible works, in order that the predicted sign should be fulfilled. A general taxing is chosen as the means of bringing Mary, who, by the angel’s counsel, was at last received into the house of Joseph, from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and by this same means the origin of her Son from David is truly and triumphantly shown. But as such a taxing of the people of God was not in use among them, nay was even forbidden by the law, it became necessary to submit the people of God under the rule of another nation. And thus did God shake almost all the kingdoms of the earth, and subjected them to Rome. He set Augustus over Rome; and to him did He grant an universal peace, that his might and the opportunity of the time should give him the idea, and that from him should go out the decree, “that all the world should be taxed,”<sup>3</sup> about the very time when the Son of the Virgin was to be born. This taxing, as unexpectedly as unavoidably, brought Joseph to his native town of Bethlehem: Mary was obliged to follow Joseph; and thus the earthly lineage of Emmanuel was revealed at the very moment His

<sup>1</sup> Micah v. 2.<sup>2</sup> Isaiah vii. 13.<sup>3</sup> S. Luke ii. 1.

birth drew nigh ; and—what seemed impossible but a few days before—He was born precisely as was foretold by the prophet, in Bethlehem.

Truly, all was done, that the prophecy might be fulfilled, and that in the great and small affairs of men there should be evident the one grand sign of the work of GOD ruling over them. “ Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the LORD by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a Son, and they shall call His Name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, GOD with us.”

In considering the exact fulfilment of the prophetic words, relating to the birth of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, some may ask, Why is it that the prophecy about His Name was not, apparently, so exactly fulfilled ? The prophet Isaiah had forenamed Him *Emmanuel* ; but, instead of that, the angel commanded that they should call Him *Jesus*.

To this, I answer, firstly, that if the other details foretold, concerning the Son of the Virgin, and amongst them even the least essential ones, as, for instance, the indication of the place of His birth, have been exactly fulfilled ; how is it possible, then, that the author of Prophecy, the HOLY SPIRIT, could have suffered it to be inexact in that which forms the very substance, the spirit and aim of all the particulars foretold, namely, that in the Son of the Virgin *God is with us*, or in other words, that by Him we are saved ?

Secondly, I admit that in comparing the prophecy, regarding the name of Emmanuel, with its accomplishment, we may perceive something seemingly inaccurate in the words; but at the same time, I unhesitatingly affirm, that this seeming inexactitude is not only no fault or imperfection in the prophecy, or in its fulfilment, but even forms part of its perfection, and reveals in a new manner the Divine origin of both. Recall also to your mind, that the Emmanuel was both foretold, and came upon earth, according to prophecies, for the faithful; and where there is faith, there everything cannot be clearly seen, but something must be supposed to remain hidden, because *faith*, as the Apostle says, “is the evidence of things not seen,”<sup>1</sup> whilst an open and perfect view would leave no place for faith. You must agree then, that it behoved the Emmanuel, in His advent upon earth, both to be sufficiently manifest, so as to be recognised, and at the same time so hidden, that we might believe in Him, and that unbelievers should not be able to penetrate into His mysteries, and thereby mar the work of God which He had to accomplish. And therefore that which the prophet revealed to believers in the unusual name of Emmanuel, the same was represented to the world by the angel under the veil of a name not so unfamiliar to the ears of the Jews, the name of JESUS, which long before one of their judges and one of their high priests had borne, which was also not without

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 1.

mystery to believers, and which was concealed from unbelievers.

Thirdly, if without limiting ourselves to the visible alone, we compare by the aid of faith, or of a revelation of things not seen, the name of *Emmanuel*, as indicated in prophecy, with that of *Jesus*, as revealed in the event; we shall then easily perceive in them not only an exact, mutual, inward conformity, but even a complete identity. What separates us men from GOD? "Your iniquities," says the prophet, "have separated between you and your GOD."<sup>1</sup> Thus separation from GOD and a state of sin are one and the same thing. Consequently, drawing nigh unto GOD, and salvation from sin, are also one and the same thing. Consequently again, *Emmanuel*, i.e. "GOD is with us," and *Jesus*, i.e. "the SAVIOUR from sin," are also one and the same. And consequently the prophecy is true, and the accomplishment exact to the prophecy. *Emmanuel* is *the Saviour*, *JESUS* is *God is with us*. Let us learn, O Christians, to understand the deep wisdom of this prophecy; and let us endeavour to feel the sublime blessing of its fulfilment.

GOD is with us in *JESUS*, through His very Incarnation: for in Him both the Divine and our human nature are not only brought together, but indivisibly united, yet without being confounded in the one person of the GOD-Man; and therefore He is not "ashamed," as the Apostle says, "to call us brethren."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lix. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. ii. 11.

GOD is with us in JESUS, through redemption: for without JESUS sin was with us, which we had inherited from Adam, and ourselves unceasingly committed; and "whoever committeth sin is the servant of sin;"<sup>1</sup> the devil was with us, for "he that committeth sin is of the devil;"<sup>2</sup> but JESUS having come upon earth, fulfilled in His life the law of GOD, which we had transgressed; by His suffering He has made atonement for the sin which we had committed; by His death He has overcome death, to which we were condemned for our sin; by His descent into hell He delivered us from the dark power of the devil; by His Resurrection He obtained for us anew "the life of GOD,"<sup>3</sup> from which we "were alienated" by sin.

GOD is with us in JESUS, by the gift of the HOLY GHOST: for the SON of GOD, Who came upon earth to redeem us, returned into heaven to "pray the FATHER," that He should "give us another Comforter, that He may abide with us for ever, even the Spirit of truth."<sup>4</sup>

GOD is with us through JESUS, in our mind and understanding: for no man hath seen GOD at any time; the Only-begotten SON, Which is in the bosom of the FATHER, He hath declared him.<sup>5</sup>

GOD is with us through JESUS, in our hearts and feelings: for CHRIST dwelleth in our hearts by faith,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. John viii. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. iv. 18.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xiv. 18.

<sup>4</sup> S. John iii. 8.

<sup>5</sup> S. John xiv. 16, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Ephes. iii. 17.



and at the same time, the love of GOD is shed abroad in our hearts by the HOLY GHOST which is given unto us.<sup>1</sup>

GOD is with us through JESUS, throughout our whole life and works, if we but entirely devote ourselves to Him: for then not we, but CHRIST liveth in us;<sup>2</sup> and GOD worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.<sup>3</sup>

GOD is with us through JESUS, if we but wish it, in all the conditions and circumstances of our life; so that, when suffering, we may suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together;<sup>4</sup> dying, we may die unto the LORD.<sup>5</sup>

In the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, GOD is with us, O Christians, always and in everything; only let us not cease to be with GOD, by remembering Him, by praying unto Him, through faith and love, and by constant exercise of that which pleases GOD, and which draws us nigh unto Him. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Philipp. ii. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. viii. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. xiv. 8.

## SERMON II.

### AGAINST WORLDLY SIN.

#### Christmas.<sup>1</sup>

“The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.”—*S. Matth. ii. 13.*

**H**OW wonderful and fearful! Angels, whose nature the SON of GOD did not adopt, celebrate His earthly birth. Angels strive to save the life of Him Who came to save man; while man, for the sake of whom the SON of GOD became the Son of Man, seeks to destroy his SAVIOUR. The heavenly host proclaim peace on earth: but in its stead arises an unheard of strife. On one side: King Herod and the whole of Jerusalem; on the other: the Child JESUS and His bodyguards, all the infants of Bethlehem.

True it is, the king did not overcome the Child; the host of infants did not deliver its Leader into the

<sup>1</sup> Preached on the second day of Christmas, at the Court-chapel, in the presence of the Empress Maria Feodorowna and of the Grand Dukes.

hands of His enemies, but with its own blood ransomed the life of the Redeemer of all ; while an invisible retribution visits Herod and his accomplices ; for they died which sought the young child's life.<sup>1</sup> But this victory did not bring peace, nor did it bring security to the victor. Joseph dares not even bring Him into His native city, he was afraid to go thither.<sup>2</sup>

After this it is no longer a matter of wonder, that the growth of the Child JESUS should have brought upon Him new struggles, new dangers. No sooner shall He appear in the world than all that is of note in the world shall aspire to dim His glory. Pharisees, scribes, priests, princes, judges, and rulers, will turn against Him, each with his own weapon. And when victory shall raise Him into heaven, all the powers of earth, nations and rulers, wise men and Cæsars, will rise to sweep His kingdom of peace from the face of the earth. The bloodshed, begun at Bethlehem, will imbue kingdoms and centuries.

Turning from the remembrance of these sorrowful events, with what comfort does the spirit rest at the sight of the great and powerful of the earth, humbling themselves before the Child of Bethlehem, deeming it their brightest glory to serve Him, seeking their joy in His Gospel.

But what was it, Christians, so long excited, and may be still, in a certain measure, excites men against JESUS CHRIST, against Him, Who, on the very day of

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. ii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 22.

His might, was meek and gentle as a child, and commanded all His followers "to become as little children?"<sup>1</sup> *Friendship of the world!* is the answer offered to us by the example of Herod, which the Gospel now presents to us, and thereby gives us an opportunity to bear witness against that love, as vain, as it is hurtful and ungodly.

Let us not speak of that love of the world, which, the world itself, together with the Gospel, acknowledges to be enmity with GOD. Denounced by its own self, it has no need of further accusations. There is another love of the world, which seemingly may be reconciled with the love of GOD: a love which consents to make offerings unto GOD provided it be not hindered from accepting offerings from the world; ready to works of charity, provided its deeds be seen and applauded by the world; fond even of going into the temple of divine worship, provided the world follow after. It is from that false and pretended love that we must tear the mask adorning it, and cast it under the severe judgment pronounced in the Gospel against every worldly love without exception: *the friendship of the world is enmity with God.*<sup>2</sup>

Those, who with all their desire to belong to GOD, are yet unable to tear themselves from the world, are bound to it more particularly by a triple knot: the seduction of its good things, the force of its examples, and the hope of making the love of the world com-

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xviii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> S. James iv. 4.

patible with the service of GOD. The word of the Gospel, like a spiritual sword, cuts asunder this mesh-work of deceit and reveals to the impartial eye the vanity of the good things of the world, the danger of its examples, and the secret seed of enmity with GOD, contained in the most innocent, as it is called, love of the world.

There, where the world assumes all possible greatness and splendour, in order to attract gazes of those whom it cannot but value, where the spirit of imitation, which is an attribute of the world, clothes it in the semblance of those perfections which it admires, and incites it to follow high examples in order to be able to impose its own with greater power, where the proximity of the great throws a certain shadow of greatness even upon the smallest objects; there it might so happen that this splendour would be likely either to dazzle the penetration, or to shake the firmness, or to destroy the confidence of the servant of the Word, bound in the face of the world itself, to bear witness to its insignificance. But the Spirit of GOD, Who is come "to reprove the world,"<sup>1</sup> has anticipated this difficulty by raising up to Himself a witness who can be charged neither with boldness or partiality, nor with ignorance or inexperience. He has invested the wisest and happiest of kings with the title of *Ecclesiastes*, that is, the preacher, and has inspired him with a word of judgment on all the good

<sup>1</sup> S. John xvi. 8.

things, all the happiness and all the glory of the world. What then does this royal Preacher say? "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem; I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity. Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun."<sup>1</sup>

S. Chrysostom found the preaching of Solomon on vanity of such great importance, that he wished it "to be written on the walls, on the garments, in the public places, on the houses, on the roads, on the gates, on the inner doors, and above all, in the hearts of every one." One may say that vanity is indeed inscribed everywhere, but not always on the front and face of things, and we generally happen to read this edifying inscription, only after having already for some time handled those very objects on which it is inscribed. Verily, what does it mean, that the ornament of yesterday ceases to please to-day; that repeated melody begins to weary the ear, that the acquired honours or

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. i. 2, 14, 16, 17; ii. 11, 18.

treasure but excites in our hearts new desires, that an enlarged sphere of knowledge serves only the more to reveal to us the boundless region of the unknown, and to discover in ourselves the unquenchable thirst after knowledge? Does this not mean that our spirit involuntarily finds the striking inscription of vanity upon everything which interests us in the world; on our pleasures, on our wealth, on our dignities, and on our very wisdom? The Creator of all things hath scattered upon them this superscription, as a careful father writes on the toys of his children the letters which they must learn.

Woe to the thoughtless children who will not receive instruction in their play. The playthings will be constantly taken away from them, while the hateful teaching remains and will attack them with the weapons of threats and punishments. Thus, if we also, whilst using the good things of this world, will not hasten to perceive in them the *vanity of vanities*, and to see that *all is vanity*: then, while these perishable goods will be hourly fading away in our hands, *vanity* will abide in our heart as thorns after flowers, and by its inflicting upon us various stings will beget at last *vexation of spirit*. Then the very satiety of the senses will become a source of eternal hunger; the sweetness of gain and possession will be poisoned by the cares of preservation and the fear of loss: the happiness and glory of others will seem to be our misfortune and shame: the light of knowledge, as a phan-

tom of the night, will be at one time flickering unsteadily in the smoke of pride, at another, sinking despairingly into the mire of an impure life. But above all, the thought of death, like a stern mentor, suddenly appearing, will confound and terrify the lightsome children of pleasure. In this way an abundant harvest throws the servant of pleasure into the same embarrassment which the poor man experiences from want of daily food; "What shall I do?"<sup>1</sup> The grace of miracles, manifested in the carpenter's Son, torments the ambitious leaders of the people more than the plagues of Egypt: "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles."<sup>2</sup> The vague rumour of the birth of an unknown infant, brought into the capital by strangers, shakes the king on his throne, on the stability of which he relied the less, the more he prized its splendour: "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled."<sup>3</sup>

"Ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity"<sup>4</sup> instead of being taught by it? Why "do ye seek after leasing" by which the world seduces you, and do not perceive the truth which the world is unable to conceal? "The fashion of this world passeth away:"<sup>5</sup> not the fashion of a few things only, but the fashion of the whole world; and what will become of the love of the

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xi. 47.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. ii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. iv. 2.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 31.



world when the world itself shall pass away irrevocably? "The earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up."<sup>1</sup> Where then shall our immortal desires repair, accustomed as they are to feed on things of the earth? What will become of the deepest philosophies which were also dug out of the earth? "There will be new heavens and a new earth;"<sup>2</sup> shall we be suffered to carry thither together with our heart, the relics of the old world?

But let us turn to the wisest of kings. How happily does he perfect his wisdom by vanity, having perceived the worthlessness of those things, which, by their vain splendour, have so often led astray the judgment of the wise *and spiritual*. How by vanity also does he heal the torments of vanity, showing the vanity of vanity itself; *vanity of vanities!* How through the vanity of this world does he prepare himself for a better and an eternal world, ceasing to love this world of vanities: "Yea, I hated everything that is in the world."<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, many know more of Solomon, moving like others in the turmoil of the world, and lose sight of the Ecclesiastes, abiding in the sun of truth, and preaching the vanity of everything to the earth-born. The woeful blindness of men seduced by the

<sup>1</sup> 2 S. Peter iii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah lxxv. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Verse 18 of chap. ii. of the Book of Ecclesiastes begins in the Slavonic Bible by the above written sentence, whereas in the English Bible we read, "Yea, I hated all my labours," &c.

world, is the more aggravated by the fact that the blind choose the blind also for their leaders, or else allow themselves to be carried away by the multitude, upon which they lean on the right and on the left, and deem themselves secure against falling. For what then, Christians, is the eye of our own intellect given to us, for what then is the lamp of revealed truth lighted for us, if we were able to grope our way with the help of the world's examples alone?

Let us enter Jerusalem, in which the Gospel presents us a miniature image of the world, and let us note whither the examples of the world lead when they are accepted in blind imitation. The tidings of the birth of CHRIST the King are brought to Jerusalem, which expected in Him its Liberator. Herod, raised upon the throne of David, not by the sacred right of inheritance, but by his own ambition, and who strengthened his power more by hypocrisy and violence than by a truly beneficent rule, could not quietly hear of the lawful King of the Jews, although He was still in swaddling clothes, and as yet unknown. "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled." But what of Jerusalem? Does it know the time of its visitation? Does it raise its head, bent under a foreign yoke? Does it rejoice? Does it "bless the LORD GOD of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for them in the house of His

servant David?"<sup>1</sup> On the contrary. The image of the troubled sovereign is reflected, as in a mirror, in the participators of his unrighteous rule; and from them this same image is impressed on their fawning sycophants; it is circulated by curiosity, malice, and imprudence, and at length all Jerusalem is filled with foolish restlessness and ungodly anxiety concerning the event so full of blessing to Israel and to the whole world. "Herod the king was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him."

Let those consider this who suppose they are living as they ought, when they live like the multitude; let them consider whether at the time of the troubling of Jerusalem, Zacharias, or Simeon, or the wise men of the east were bound to follow the example of the majority, and to regulate their feelings and actions according to prevailing opinion. Or was the world gone astray in Jerusalem alone?

Blessed be the age and the land where the example of the great and powerful is as a lamp to the people, and suffers not that obscurity to thicken, which is spread abroad in the world by the princes of darkness. But until the kingdom of our Heavenly FATHER comes, invoked by us in our prayers, there will ever be found even under the outward reign of piety, secret self-lords, to whom CHRIST the King is unwelcome, for He requires thorough submission, and the renunciation of our favourite passions and desires, and the

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke i. 68, 69.

captives of worldly examples will follow in their footsteps without perceiving that they are really enslaved by them. What then is the sign of these trouble-makers and their victims? O CHRIST, our King, the world will not believe it, but Thou Thyself assurest us that the sign of those who do not belong to Thee, is their multitude; that *many are called to Thy kingdom, but few are chosen*;<sup>1</sup> that those to whom Thy FATHER has vouchsafed to grant the kingdom, are a "little flock;"<sup>2</sup> that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."<sup>3</sup> No, the world is not a guide to be followed, but a foe to be overcome by the children of God; "whatsoever is born of GOD overcometh the world."<sup>4</sup> The most approved mode of thinking and feeling is not seldom the one most dangerous; the example against which we are commanded to guard ourselves, is indeed the one most general; the custom accepted at all times and everywhere; the spirit of the time, which we breathe and in which we live; be not *conformed to this world*.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps, Christians, you would wish to see the image of this world presented by the Gospel more clearly and distinctly, that you may distinguish the more infallibly what in *the sons of this world* is unworthy of the sons *of the world to come*; but He, Who

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xx. 16.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke xii. 32.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. vii. 14.

<sup>4</sup> I S. John v. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. xii. 2.

did not suffer the wheat and the tares to be separated before their time, lest in uprooting the latter, the former also should be plucked out, but left "both to grow together until the harvest,"<sup>1</sup> the same has also left the decaying fashion of this world, and in its very midst, the fashion newly-designed by His hidden hand of the world to come, in undecided, confused, and broken lines, until the predestined time of its accomplishment, when at length upon the whole hosts of the servants and the enemies of GOD, and on every forehead shall appear, here, the shining *name* of the Heavenly *Father*, and there, the terrible *mark of the beast*,<sup>2</sup> that has to declare an open, but to itself a destructive war, against the Lamb, CHRIST. At present we know but this, that the world is the cave and the lair wherein the beast is born and bred, and the field whereon the wheat ripens together with the tares, that are doomed to the fire. But is not that knowledge sufficient to guide us in the prudence enjoined upon us? The deeper "the whole world lieth in wickedness,"<sup>3</sup> so that the difference between good and evil becomes therein the less perceptible, the more circumspectly must we handle even those things in it which seem to be good. If all the world is full of tares, and until now could not be cleared of them, then can it be that a soul full of the world is entirely free from them? If the enemy of GOD is secretly

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xiii. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xiv. 1, 11.

<sup>3</sup> 1 S. John v. 19.

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begotten and lives in the heart of the world, then can the love of GOD dwell in the love of the world?

And thus it is in vain that some strive to refine their love of the world, instead of rooting it out; and instead of overcoming it by the love of GOD, endeavour to reconcile the one with the other. Howsoever much a man may strive to clothe his love of the world with the outward cloak of virtue, such as, with temperance, industry, disinterestedness, meekness, beneficence, still, as love is the soul of every virtue, so do all his virtues but betoken in him a son of this world; they breathe and live only for the world, and together with the world will they vanish. And as two souls cannot animate the same body, thus also two loves—the love of GOD and the love of the world, cannot animate one and the same soul. “If any man love the world, the love of the FATHER is not in him.”<sup>1</sup> And where there is no love of GOD, there must necessarily be an enmity against Him, although at times hidden and unnoticed, for in the presence of the highest good there is no room for indifference. In the kingdom of the Omnipotent every separate alliance is a rebellion against the universal Sovereign; the more so then is an alliance with a power evidently infected by a spirit of contumacy and rebellion. “The friendship of the world is enmity with GOD.”

Let us look once more at Herod, in whom the Gospel so fully reveals the deep and excessive evil of

<sup>1</sup> 1 S. John ii. 15.

the love of the world. This love in Herod appears to ordinary view to be of such a kind that those who wish to save it from the name of vice, and make it an associate of virtue, might begin with the present example. The birth of the King of the Jews troubles Herod. What of it? Is it not pardonable to feel some trouble at the threatened loss of sovereignty and honour? And moreover this troubling of spirit was apparently but a short-timed impulse of passion, which was soon subdued by reasoning. Herod did not forbid the wise men to make prudent inquiries after the King of the Jews, but even aided them therein by means of competent persons. "When he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them." He himself confessed the coming CHRIST by asking, "where CHRIST should be born."<sup>1</sup> He desired to have trustworthy information about His coming: "Go and search diligently for the young child." Finally, he was himself ready to worship CHRIST; "that I may come and worship Him also."<sup>2</sup> What impartiality and godliness! probably exclaimed the people of Jerusalem. The world would have remained under the false impression produced by the love of the world, but suddenly heavenly truth appears, "the angel of the LORD appeareth." He leaves unnoticed the artful words, and the virtues displayed for show, he introduces us into the very heart of their author, and reveals the

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. ii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. ii. 8.

desire, perhaps unknown yet to Herod himself, rising from the depth of his soul : " Herod will seek." And what do we now see ? The death of the SAVIOUR of the world written in the soul of the lover of the world, " Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him."

O, if we could but confirm ourselves in the blessed assurance that the world does not raise among us against the Lamb of CHRIST, men like unto this fox ! " For they died which sought the young child's life." But when those who are called to fight under the banner of Him Who " hath overcome the world,"<sup>1</sup> are seduced to the cause of rebellion, by the price of corruptible goods ; when the sheep of the Shepherd, Whose flock is small, think to find a better pasture among wild beasts and unclean animals, when they are content with merely having " the form of godliness,"<sup>2</sup> written in the handwriting of the world, and do not surrender themselves to its consuming and regenerating, alike deadening and quickening power ; then do they not still *seek*, though not in Herod's way, *do they not seek*, however, *to destroy* the child ? That is, do they not rebel, although unwittingly perhaps, against the true Spirit of CHRIST ?

Let us leave to Solomon, whom we have called as the chief witness against the love of the world, to seal this testimony, by giving to the present discourse its befitting conclusion : " Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter ; Fear GOD, and keep His com-

<sup>1</sup> S. John xvi. 33.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 5.



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mandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”<sup>1</sup> Oppose to the seductions of the world, *the fear of God*, and according to His commandments accept or reject examples which are offered to thee, and do not make to thyself thine own law from out of the examples approved of in this world. *Keep* the commandments of God, lest the world under pretence of regulating and adorning thy outward activity should steal them from thy heart. “For this is the whole duty of man:” that is to say, a filial fear of God, and the keeping of His commandments, in the centre of which dwells the love of God, are everything for every man; therein is his joy, his plenty, his glory, his rest, his bliss, and his temporal as well as his eternal life. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. xii. 13.

## SERMON III.

### *THE POWER AND EFFICACY OF PRAYER.*

#### **The Transfiguration of the Lord.**

“And He went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias.”—*S. Luke ix. 28—30.*

**H**OW sublime a spectacle on Mount Tabor! A spectacle indeed worthy of being contemplated with rapture as the Apostles contemplated it, and of being solemnly celebrated, as we now celebrate it. It is not without meaning, that they who witnessed the great revelations on Sinai and Horeb, not without purpose, that Moses and Elias appear on Mount Tabor also. They shall see more here than they saw there. On Sinai and Horeb, the might and glory of God were revealed unto men, through the powers of visible nature; on Tabor, not only does divinity reveal itself to man, but humanity itself appears arrayed in divine glory. Moses “quaked”<sup>1</sup> on Mount Sinai; Elias complained on Horeb;<sup>2</sup> whereas on Tabor, through

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings xix. 14.

the fear of the Apostles there shines forth joy: "It is good for us to be here."

Christians! your heart is no doubt ready to say of the witnesses of the glory of Mount Tabor: *indeed it was good for them to be there.* Happy were they that they could be there! What then, if we tell you that the way to the contemplation of the glory of Mount Tabor, is not swallowed up in an abyss, is not walled up from us, nor overgrown with thorns, not forgotten, nor lost, but may still be indicated by those who know it, to those who seek for it. (It is not difficult to understand that we speak here of the spiritual way; for a carnal way cannot possibly lead us to spiritual visions and divine revelations.) Why does the Evangelist, when about to describe unto us the glorious Transfiguration of the LORD, first of all, direct his own and our attention to prayer? "He went up into a mountain to pray." Why again does he, as if distrusting the insight of certain readers and hearers of the Gospel, or as if fearing that they might not sufficiently understand the importance of the fact to be observed, repeat that the Transfiguration of the LORD took place during prayer: "As He prayed." Why, if not to point out to us in prayer—the way to the light of Tabor, the key to spiritual mysteries, the might of divine revelation? If the divinely inspired Evangelist found it so necessary to associate the idea of prayer with the description of the glory of Tabor, then it certainly will not be amiss on our part also, Christians,

to associate however short a meditation *on the power and efficacy of prayer*, with the remembrance of the glorious Transfiguration of our LORD.

Though it is to be hoped that there are none in this house of prayer, who do not more or less comprehend the power and efficacy of prayer, yet in order to obtain a correct idea thereof, let us be allowed to meditate upon the subject, as if it were quite unknown to us. Well then: has any prayer any effect at all? This question cannot long remain unanswered. It is solved by the common sense of mankind, inasmuch as all, from the Christian, enlightened by the pure light of faith down to the Pagan darkened by gross superstition, all acknowledge the obligation of prayer; while the greater and better part of mankind do really fulfil that obligation, though not exactly in the same way, nor with the same success. But why ordain, or have recourse to prayer,—unless some power is recognized in it, or some effect expected to attend it? Should any one ask, How it is the heathen can be witness of the power of prayer when they, being ignorant of the true worship of the LORD, cannot consequently be in possession of the true form of prayer? then such a one we will in our turn ask, How it is that they have anything like prayer at all? In whatever way we may seek to explain a manifestation of prayer howsoever imperfect, the source of its origin will ever be found in the power of prayer. The heathen also pray, either because GOD, although forsaken by His crea-

tures, forsakes not them, but leaves even in their darkened hearts some rays of His *light*, “which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and which the darkness comprehendeth not,”<sup>1</sup>—a light which awakens even in the flesh, a certain feeling of a spiritual want, affords a certain presentiment of the possibility of its satisfaction, and thus incites a desire to call on an unknown God for unknown help; or they pray because, even out of the slough of sensuality, in which Paganism was sunk, there sometimes emerged a few winged souls, who conscious of the vileness and uncleanness of their condition did, through a sincere desire and exertion to know the powers of the spiritual world, attain to some communion with them, and did subsequently teach others to attain to the same, by means of a sincere and strong desire, that is to say, by means of prayer. Again, they pray because ever since those times, when the true worship of God still prevailed throughout mankind, and the power and efficacy of true prayer were therefore well known to it, there still remained, notwithstanding the subsequent corruption of divine worship, an indelible general conviction, both of the necessity of worship, and of the advantages of prayer, that is to say, of its power and efficacy. Unfortunately there is a philosophy (of that kind which the Apostle Paul designates as “philosophy after the rudiments of the world and vain deceit,”<sup>2</sup>) which disdaining the universal testimony of humanity, deems

<sup>1</sup> S. John i. 9, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Col. ii. 8.

itself able to find out the best witness of the truth. It teaches that the whole world is bound by the bonds of causes and effects, in which even free beings are more or less entangled, and when, for instance, man prays for abundance of the fruits of the earth, the said abundance depending on the temperature of the atmosphere—this temperature on the action and reaction of the sun, earth, and water, and their action again on the laws of the universe, once for all ordained by the Creator, and operating immediately and in obedience to fixed laws; he then is praying either to no purpose or at most only for the purpose of evincing his humility and submission to the might and majesty of the Creator. Let us note that even such a philosophy cannot deprive prayer of that effect at least, which begets in man a spirit of lowliness towards God; and this alone is of no small value, and is a redeeming influence. But this is not all. Ask any disciple of this philosophy whom you may meet with, which is better, a skilfully constructed machine or a living being, intelligent and free, and a well-ordered community of such beings? Who is greater? the artizan who constructs a machine, and regulates its movements, or a father who begets children, and by education forms them after his own likeness; or a king who has founded a kingdom of freemen, and governs them as they themselves wish to be governed, provided his wise and gracious designs are not controverted. The choice here is not a difficult one, and there is no need to wait

for the answer. Ask him again, why he prefers to see in the work of the All-perfect Creator, rather a perfect specimen of art than the well-ordered kingdom of a wise monarch, or the great mansion of an All-bountiful FATHER? Why would such people more readily picture to themselves GOD as the Architect of the universe, than as the King of heaven and earth and the FATHER of spirits? We leave them to seek an answer to this in their own conscience; while for our present purpose, it is quite sufficient to admit, that if GOD is not only our Creator, but also our King and FATHER, then undoubtedly the children will not call in vain on their FATHER, nor will the King shut His ears against the sons of His kingdom. And is it then to be wondered at, that a loving FATHER should, to satisfy the righteous, or at all events the innocent desire of a son, stop or alter the movements of the machine which He has formed? We must not wonder then, if our Most Gracious heavenly FATHER, in answer to the prayers of His earth-born children, gives some new and unusual direction to nature governed by the law of necessity. It is by means of such a comparison that the Truth itself, the Word itself, explains the efficacy of prayer: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your FATHER Which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him."<sup>1</sup>

There are some Christians, understanding and per-

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. vii. 11.

forming the act of prayer rather in an outward ritual sense, than in an inward spiritual one, who, whilst in no way doubting in the general belief that prayer is powerful and efficacious, are mistaken, or do entirely err in the application of this truth to themselves and to their prayer.

Praying repeatedly, and seeing nothing result from their prayers, either in themselves or around them, they, instead of doubting the sincerity and merit of their own prayers, are prone to imbibe the idea inspired by a spirit of sloth and self-deceit, that powerful and availing prayer must needs be some peculiar gift of grace, reserved for some of God's elect, and for certain extraordinary cases only . . . . To such we say without hesitation, that there is no man whose prayer may not become powerful, if he only desire it steadfastly and with a pure heart, with faith and hope in God, and that there is no case in which his prayer will not be granted, if only its object be not contrary to the Wisdom and Mercy of God, or to the true welfare of the suppliant. This is saying much ; we trust, nevertheless, that we are not deceiving the true lovers of prayer.

Figure to yourselves a man, who by the power of prayer shuts or opens the heavens, stops or brings down rain ; commands that a handful of flour and a little oil should suffice to feed several persons for several months, or perhaps even for more than a year, and it is fulfilled ; breathes on a dead man, and restores



him to life ; brings down fire from heaven, to consume a sacrifice and an altar immersed in water. What can appear more extraordinary than this power of prayer ? But it appears so only to a man who knows not what spiritual power is, whilst to one who does, it appears only as the act of a man like unto ourselves. This is not my own opinion merely, but the teaching of an Apostle. S. James, exhorting us to pray "one for another," and wishing to incite us thereto, says, "that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,"<sup>1</sup> and confirms this general precept and convincing motive by the example of that extraordinary man, whom we have just pictured, and whom he represents as a man like unto ourselves : "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain ; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."<sup>2</sup> Why is it said here, that this wonder-working Elias "was a man subject to like passions as we are ?" It is just that we, deeming him an extraordinary man, should not be discouraged from imitating him, and from attaining power in prayer.

If, notwithstanding, it appears to you, that to imitate the prayers of the prophet be a lot far above your mediocrity, and a height unattainable by you, then imagine yourselves as much below the prophet as you

<sup>1</sup> S. James v. 16.

<sup>2</sup> S. James v. 17, 18.

please, imagine yourselves to be even less than Christians, say heathens, and even then, I affirm that your prayer may be powerful and effectual. It may, and what more? it may convert you from heathenism to Christianity, it may lead you to the true knowledge and worship of GOD, even though they be till then unknown to you, and if there be no man near who can direct you to it, then will it open the heavens, and bring down thence an angel unto you, who will teach you. But am I not dreaming and carried away by my desire to invite you to fervent and effectual prayer? No, my brethren and fellow-worshippers, I am speaking but of what has actually happened before, and therefore may happen again, and which has the testimony of our holy books. The Roman centurion, Cornelius, who we know from the Acts of the Apostles, was a Gentile; it is not known whether he knew the One GOD, but certain it is, that he did not know "JESUS CHRIST, Whom GOD hath sent;" but he did as much good as he was able: he feared, and prayed alway to GOD, though to him unknown: "a devout man, and one that feared GOD with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to GOD alway."<sup>1</sup> And what did the unceasing prayer of the Gentile achieve? It did indeed call down heaven upon him, and brought to his aid high and even divine powers. In the midst of his prayers an angel appears to him, saying, "Cornelius, thy prayer is heard;"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 2.<sup>2</sup> Acts x. 31.

and then instructs him to send for the Apostle Peter. And when the Apostle was preaching unto him, JESUS CHRIST, the HOLY GHOST, even before baptism, was poured from on high upon Cornelius.

Search in your mind, invent if you will, some object which may seem inaccessible to the power of prayer, and we do not despair of being able to prove to you, by the light of the Word of GOD, that it is accessible and attainable, though the same may appear impossible. Imagine to yourselves, for instance, a whole nation that has offended GOD by some heavy crime; suppose also that GOD has already declared His righteous will to destroy that nation, and that at this awful moment there remains but one man upon earth who can pray for this people, already about to be engulfed by hell. Does it not seem to you that it is no longer possible to save this people? The experience of Moses has proved that even this is possible. The children of Israel, immediately after the glorious revelation and covenant on Mount Sinai, suddenly relapse into idolatry. Moses stands before the LORD on the mountain. Hear and understand what marvellous words the LORD then spake unto Moses: "Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them."<sup>1</sup> O LORD GOD of spirits and of all flesh! can this Thy servant, strong only in Thy strength, oppose himself to the fulfilment of Thy will? Let Me alone, says

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxxii. 10.

He, I wish to declare My righteous wrath, I wish to destroy this nation : but thou restrainest Me. “ Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.” What then ? The supplicant does not even then leave GOD, but redoubles his prayers ; and the wrath of the invincible Almighty yields to the power of the prayer of a mortal man ! “ And the LORD repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people.”<sup>1</sup> Measure here, if you can, the miraculous power of prayer, and find something, after this, which it cannot achieve to our salvation !

That we may again perceive with what ease the key of prayer opens spiritual and divine treasures, let us once more glance towards Mount Tabor, to which we have endeavoured to approach in these our present meditations. Let us once more earnestly contemplate the Transfiguration of the LORD as described to us by the Evangelist : “ And He went up into a mountain to pray : and as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered,” &c. If we may dare by these few traits to divine the heart-thoughts of the Divine JESUS : then does it seem that on the way to Mount Tabor, His direct and immediate object was not the Transfiguration, but simply prayer : “ He went up into a mountain to pray. It seems as if on the very mountain itself, even at the very moment of transfiguration, His sole object was prayer : *And as He prayed,*

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxxii. 14.

&c. Nor will one who meditates on this deem the supposition improbable, that the object of this, our SAVIOUR'S prayer, must have been the preparation of Himself and His disciples for His approaching Passion and Death on the Cross, which He had but recently revealed unto them,<sup>1</sup> and of which during the Transfiguration itself, Moses and Elias spake unto Him.<sup>2</sup> How was it then, that amidst this prayer of suffering, glory was revealed? Spontaneously, we may say, as the flower and fruit of prayer full of living power. The spirit of prayer, uniting itself with the Spirit of GOD, filled the soul of JESUS with light; the superabundance of that light, which could no longer be contained within His soul, diffused itself throughout His body, shone forth in His countenance, and not finding space sufficient to contain it there, illuminated and transfigured even His very raiment; extending itself still farther, it overspread the souls of the Apostles, being reflected in the exclamation of Peter: "Master, it is good for us to be here!" It penetrated into the domain of the invisible world, and drew thence Moses and Elias, reached unto the very bosom of the heavenly FATHER, and moved His love to a solemn testimony of His beloved: "This is My beloved SON!" O miracle of prayer, embracing in one act heaven, earth, and divinity itself! Let no one say that this example of prayer does not concern us, as being an act of the GOD-Man. It concerns us Christians also;

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke ix. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 31.

for in us, though not in a like degree, must be accomplished the same as was in CHRIST: "Let this mind be in you," says the Apostle, "which was also in CHRIST JESUS."<sup>1</sup>

But it is time at last to inquire why it is that so many prayers remain without effect, if every prayer may always be so powerful and effectual? For it is for the sake of this question principally that we have said all that which we have as yet spoken. Let us particularly note one instance, in which a prayer appears not to be answered, whereas it is really answered in an unexpected and sublime way. Thus, Paul "besought the LORD thrice, to be delivered from a thorn in the flesh;" but GOD answered him: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness."<sup>2</sup> The temptation is not removed: but a victory still more wonderful is granted over the continuing temptation. If we except such cases, all unsuccessful prayers are accounted for by this short saying of the Apostle: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."<sup>3</sup> Our prayers are fruitless, either because they are not fervent and persevering supplications, which proceeded from the depth of our souls, and into which our whole soul is poured forth, but are only weak desires, which we utter without fervour, thinking they must needs be fulfilled of their own accord; or because our supplications are unclean and

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 5.<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.<sup>3</sup> S. James iv. 3.

evil, inasmuch as we ask that which is hurtful, and of no benefit to our souls ; or ask things not for the glory of GOD, but for the gratification of our carnal and selfish desires.

Pray, Christian, fervently and with the whole might of thy soul, pray diligently and perseveringly, pray rightly and purely ; and if thou art not thyself equal to it, then pray for prayer itself, and by prayer thou wilt first obtain true and effectual prayer, and then this prayer shall overcome all things with thee and obtain all things for thee : it will guide thee unto Mount Tabor or create a Tabor within thee : it will call down heaven into thy soul, and raise thy soul into heaven. Amen.

## SERMON IV.

### ON THE PROPHECY AND MYSTERY OF PALM SUNDAY.

#### **Palm Sunday.**

“All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.”—*S. Matth. xxi. 4, 5.*

**A**S it is pleasant to look upon the image of the sun reflected in a clear stream, where, if not so dazzling as in the heavens, still it shines with a light more accessible to the spectator; so also it is pleasant with the spiritual eye, that is, with a mind disposed to divine meditation, to behold in the pure sources of Israel, or in the prophetic sayings flowing from the Spirit of God, the image of the Sun of Truth, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, although revealed not in so full a light as in the Gospel, yet in such outlines in which the attentive contemplator can easily discern His Divine attributes, His miraculous works, and His deep and saving mysteries.

The holy Evangelist Matthew himself has not



deemed it superfluous in the Gospel narrative to show us the glory and mystery of the present day as described by the Prophet Zechariah. Let us read the exact words of the Prophet, which are somewhat abridged by the Evangelist: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."<sup>1</sup> There are two subjects which we may consider here: the wonderful accomplishment of the prophecy, and the new prophecy contained in its fulfilment.

If even the fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah had not as yet been revealed, one might from the prophecy itself sufficiently conclude that it contains a promise of a wonderful event. Who could have expected that any king should make his triumphant entry into a royal city on a young colt, the foal of an ass? And if even any one had thus appeared as a king, could one have thought that he would have been received with sincere joy and shouts of triumph, and not with ridicule and contempt? From ancient times victorious kings have ridden on steeds; peaceful nobles, in the simplicity of ancient custom, did indeed sometimes travel upon asses, but for a king to mount a colt, the foal of an ass, that is, one born of a working ass, used as a beast of burden, and moreover a young colt, untrained, not yet separated from its mother,—was it

<sup>1</sup> Zechariah ix. 9.

becoming for a king, was it likely he would do so? How then could Zechariah think of foretelling the solemn entry and reception of a king "sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass?" How could such a prophecy be fulfilled? Both these circumstances could only have taken place in an extraordinary and divinely arranged way. It is on account of the extraordinary character of the event foretold, that the Jews themselves, from olden times even unto this day, acknowledge that the prophecy of Zechariah concerning the meek king relates to the Messiah, or in other words to CHRIST, though they, poor men, do not recognise Him in the meek JESUS.

But if in the very prophecy of Zechariah we are able to perceive the extraordinary character of the event announced by him, then will an attentive investigation of the event itself reveal unto us something still more wonderful, and still more divine in its origin.

When a king has to make a triumphant entry into a royal city, the triumph is arranged by preconcerted measures and preparations. But we see nothing of the kind in our LORD until the very day, almost until the very hour of His royal entry into Jerusalem. Yesterday He supped at Bethany, where He had raised Lazarus from the dead, and as Mary anointed His feet with spikenard, He spoke not of the preliminary arrangements for His royal triumph, but of those for His burial. There were many people there, "but they came not for JESUS' sake only, but that they

might see Lazarus also.”<sup>1</sup> This morning He is on His way to Jerusalem accompanied by His disciples, as He was wont on other days. “He went before,” writes S. Luke, “ascending up to Jerusalem.”<sup>2</sup> There are no preparations whatever; no one thinks about His enthronement. “These things understood not His disciples at the first.”<sup>3</sup> All begins suddenly, and as suddenly is accomplished. “And it came to pass,” approaching Bethphage, and not far from Jerusalem itself, He issues an unexpected command: “And it came to pass, when He was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, saying, Go ye into the village over against you, in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat; loose him, and bring him hither.”<sup>4</sup> Or according to another Evangelist, more circumstantially, “ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her.”<sup>5</sup> Observe attentively in how truly a divine manner does our divine King act. He sees the prophecy, sees the moment approaching when it must be fulfilled, but as yet there are no means for its accomplishment. He looks not with His bodily eye, but with the eye of His Omniscience, and that which is wanted is directly found. “Ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her.” It is wonderful how the means are found, but none the

<sup>1</sup> S. John xii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke xix. 28.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> S. Luke xix. 29, 30.

<sup>5</sup> S. Matth. xxi. 2.

less wonderful is the way in which they are used. "Loose them, and bring them hither," says He to the two disciples. "LORD," the messengers might have said, "how can we do this, how can we loose another man's colt and lead it whither its master knows not?" Truly this might have embarrassed the apostles; truly the evident impossibility of doing what was commanded might have provoked the disobedience of the messengers, as in another instance the meeting with difficulties was followed by their flight and even denial of their LORD; and then the whole work would have failed, and the prophecy have remained unfulfilled. But in this case also did the divine knowledge of our King foresee the readiness of His messengers, and His divine power over the hearts of men fortified them against all doubts. The same knowledge foresaw the question of the owner of the colt, "Why do ye loose him?" This same power over hearts endowed them beforehand with an answer seemingly far from convincing to a stranger, yet one which proved indeed irresistible, "The LORD hath need of him."<sup>1</sup> And the messengers took and brought the colt, knowing not to whom it belonged; and the owner of the colt gave it, knowing not to whom, and for what he gave it. Meanwhile the multitude, not by kingly order convoked, but "that were come to the feast;"<sup>2</sup> not at the voice of a herald, but drawn by the glory of the resurrection of Lazarus, went forth to meet JESUS,

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xix. 31.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xii. 12.

and seized with sudden enthusiasm, instead of prepared decorations, they spread their clothes in the way; instead of royal banners and arms, they take branches of trees, precede, follow and welcome the meek King, quietly borne, without any royal pomp, by a colt, which no human hand had until this moment trained to bear any burden. How came all these sudden things to pass? Truly all this was done "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." That which seems impossible of accomplishment, was indeed accomplished that it might be plainly seen that it was the work of Him to Whom "nothing shall be impossible."<sup>1</sup>

We see the wonderful fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy. Let us strain our sight and we shall perceive in the event itself a new prophecy of a still more wonderful event.

What of a truth does this royal entry of the LORD into Jerusalem signify? Wherefore so wonderful a prediction? Why such a multitude of miracles? What is the intention of such unwonted arrangements? What is the result of these Divine works? What is the fruit of so majestic, but at the same time so transient an appearance of the King of Zion? Like lightning does the kingdom of heaven show itself over Jerusalem, and like lightning is it swallowed up in the region of darkness. The people are as yet only preparing to go forth to meet the King, Who

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke i. 37.

“is just and having salvation;” and already malice is taking counsel how to destroy both Him, and Lazarus who has glorified Him: “The chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death.”<sup>1</sup> The children are still shouting in the temple from the fulness of their hearts, and already the rulers and wise men, “the chief priests and the scribes, were sore displeased,”<sup>2</sup> and from the superabundance of their malice were unable to hide their displeasure. To-day they cry to the daughter of Sion, “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee;” and after a few days this same daughter of Sion—that is, the people of Jerusalem—will say, “We have no King;”<sup>3</sup> and the King Himself will renounce this phantom of royalty: “My kingdom,” He will say, “is not of this world.”<sup>4</sup> To-day it is, “Hosanna to the Son of David,”<sup>5</sup> and soon afterwards, “Crucify Him!”<sup>6</sup> Wherefore, then, this bright but transient spectacle? Thou hast already said, I may be answered, “That all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet.” I said, that all this was so wonderfully foretold that the word of GOD might be known in the prophecy; and so wonderfully has it also been fulfilled, that the word of GOD might be evident in its very accomplishment. But wherefore did the word of GOD precede, and the work of GOD follow? When GOD,

<sup>1</sup> S. John xii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xix. 15.

<sup>5</sup> S. Matth. xxi. 9.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. xxi. 15.

<sup>4</sup> S. John viii. 36.

<sup>6</sup> S. John xix. 15.

Who "spake and it was done,"<sup>1</sup> "and, behold, it was very good,"<sup>2</sup> sends forth His word, that the work itself may be afterwards fulfilled, it needs must be that thereby should be produced some real, substantial, and lasting good, and not a transient vision alone. Otherwise, why should the work of GOD have been undertaken? Why should the word of GOD have been sent forth, and why should it have condescended to such apparently insignificant details as the age of the colt? But perhaps these subtle questions already seem to be bold, though as yet they cannot obtain their full solution. Do you not observe, at least, that in the glory of the present day there must lie hid a certain mystery, although we have not reached its revelation? Can you make no conjecture concerning it, though you may not as yet divine its solution?

Having gone so far, I am silent, that I may not go beyond what may seem credible. Let S. Chrysostom<sup>3</sup> speak in my stead, and solve you this problem. "Here," says he, explaining the mystery of the entry of the LORD into Jerusalem, "the Church is signified by the colt, and the new people which was once unclean, but which after JESUS sat on them became clean. And see the image preserved throughout: I mean that the disciples loose the asses; for by the apostles both they (that is, the Jews,) and we, (that is, we Christians of the Gentiles,) were called, by

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxiii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. i. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Com. on S. Matth. chap. 66.

the Apostles we were brought near. But because our acceptance provoked them also to emulation, therefore the ass appears following the colt. For after CHRIST had sat on the Gentiles, then shall they also come, moving us to emulation (emulating us). And Paul, declaring this, said: 'That blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved.'<sup>1</sup> For that it was a prophecy is evident from what is said. For neither would the prophet have cared to express with such great exactness the age of the ass, unless this had been so. But not these things only are signified by what is said, but also that the Apostles should bring them with ease: for as here no man gainsaid them so as to keep the asses, so neither with regard to the Gentiles was any one able to prevent them of those who were before masters of them. But He does not sit on the bare colt, but on the Apostles' garments: for after they had taken the colt, they then gave up all, even as Paul also said: 'I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls.'<sup>2</sup> But mark how tractable the colt, how, being unbroken and having never known the rein, he was not restive, but went on orderly; which thing itself was a prophecy of the future, signifying the submissiveness of the Gentiles, and their sudden conversion to good order. For all things did that word work which said, 'Loose him and bring him to Me;' so that the un-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 25, 26.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 5.



manageable became orderly, and the unclean thenceforth clean.”

So far S. Chrysostom. Let us repeat the lesson contained in this mystery of CHRIST, so as to render it, if possible, more intelligible to ourselves. The entry of the LORD into Jerusalem is not the mere manifestation of His present kingdom, but rather a prophecy and a fore-shadowing of His future kingdom. His kingdom is not this Jerusalem, which shall soon be destroyed, nor is it the country of Judea, which shall soon be conquered and laid waste, but the *Church*, against which even “the gates of hell shall not prevail.”<sup>1</sup> The ass and the colt upon which He sitteth during His royal progress, typify the two classes of people over whom He is come to reign spiritually—the Jews and the Gentiles. The ass bearing the yoke is the image of the Jews, who have long borne upon their necks the yoke of the law, “a yoke which,” as the best of them confesses, “neither our fathers nor we are able to bear,”<sup>2</sup> and which it was therefore necessary to change for the easy yoke and light burden of CHRIST. The untrained colt typifies the Gentiles, untamed by doctrine, and ignorant of the law. The Apostles take the ass and its colt without hindrance, that is, the Apostles, notwithstanding all impediments, subdue Jews and Gentiles to the Kingdom of CHRIST. The LORD mounts the colt, and the ass follows: that is, it is the Gentiles who first, for the most part, submit to

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xvi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xv. 10.

the Kingdom of CHRIST, and when the predestined number of Gentiles shall have entered into the fulness of the Church, then will also the remaining Jews be converted and rejoin them. The untrained colt submissively bears the King: that is, the untaught, and until now self-willed Gentiles, are soon trained by the doctrine of the law of CHRIST. Garments are spread before the King: that is, perfect followers of CHRIST resign everything to Him. Children welcome and praise the King: that is, hearts childlike in their simplicity and sincerity receive CHRIST in faith, and glorify Him by love.

Christians! sons of the Kingdom of CHRIST! If we do behold the glory, or penetrate the mystery of to-day's solemnity, let us not suffer it to pass by as something that concerns us not; for in this case we should remain aliens and strangers to the Kingdom of CHRIST. Does the LORD send any of us on any mission? then let us obey like the Apostles, without demur. Does He require anything from us? let us surrender everything without contradiction, in the same manner as the unknown man, at the name of the LORD, gave up his property; let us also willingly give up everything, although it were at the cost of what is most necessary to us, as did those who spread their garments on His way. Has any one of us walked until now in the way of his own heart? let him then, from this day forth, bow himself under the yoke of CHRIST. Is any one thinking that he has trained

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himself by the keeping of the moral law? let him follow CHRIST if he would be perfect. Let us all exclaim with a sincere, childlike heart: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" We will Him to reign over us eternally. Amen.

## SERMON V.

ON THE CROSS.

Good Friday.

**W**HAT would you now, brethren, from the ministers of the word? The Word Himself is no more!

The Word, co-eternal with the FATHER and the SPIRIT, born for our salvation, the Author of every *quick and powerful*<sup>1</sup> word, is silent, dead, buried, and sealed up. The more plainly and convincingly “to show man the path of life,”<sup>2</sup> this very Word came down from heaven and put on flesh; but men would not hearken unto the Word, they tare His flesh, and lo, “He is cut off out of the land of the living.”<sup>3</sup> Who then shall now give unto us the word of life and salvation?

Let us hasten to confess the mystery of the Word which shall disarm His persecutors, and restore Him to souls ready to receive Him. The Word of God is not bound by death. As a word from the lips of man dies not entirely away at the moment its sound

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iv. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xvi. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. liii. 8.

ceases, but rather gathers new strength, and passing through the senses, penetrates the minds and hearts of the hearers; so also the Hypostatical Word of GOD, the SON of GOD, in His saving incarnation, whilst dying in the flesh, "fills all things"<sup>1</sup> with His Spirit and might. Thus when CHRIST waxeth faint and becometh silent on the cross, then is it that heaven and earth raise their voice unto Him, and the dead preach the resurrection of the Crucified, and the very stones cry out. "And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose."<sup>2</sup>

Christians, the incarnate Word keepeth silence only in order to speak unto us with greater power and effect; withdraws, that He may the more inwardly "dwell among us;"<sup>3</sup> dies, that He may grant us His inheritance. Assembled by the Church to hold converse with the departed JESUS, listen ye unto the *quick and powerful word*<sup>4</sup> of the dead; listen ye to the testament He has left unto you, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My FATHER hath appointed unto Me."<sup>5</sup> But lest any untimely dreams of the greatness of that inheritance should turn away our gaze from the Crucified JESUS pictured to us in these solemn days, let us, Christians, the more carefully observe that His

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. iv. 10.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke xxiii. 45; S. Matth. xxvii. 51, 52.

<sup>3</sup> S. John i. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. iv. 12.

<sup>5</sup> S. Luke xxii. 29.

immediate heirs found no other treasure after His death than the wood of the cross upon which He suffered and died, and it was this same cross which they offered as a pattern for imitation to all who desired to partake in the inheritance of His kingdom. What does this mean? It means, that as "CHRIST ought to have suffered," in order "to enter into His glory,"<sup>1</sup> which He "hath with His FATHER," so also does it behove the Christian, "through much tribulation, to enter into the kingdom of GOD"<sup>2</sup> which CHRIST hath bequeathed unto him; it means that as the cross of CHRIST is the gate of the kingdom of GOD for all, so is the cross of every Christian the key of the kingdom to every son of the kingdom. This then is the epitome of the sublime *preaching of the Cross*,<sup>3</sup> so incomprehensible to the mind, so easily accepted by faith, and so powerful through GOD. Let us offer it as a drop of myrrh upon the sepulchre of the quickening Word.

Even before the incarnate SON of GOD had taken up and borne His cross, this same cross already belonged unto man. In its origin it was formed of *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. The first man only intended to taste its fruit, but hardly had he touched it, when the whole weight of the forbidden tree, with all its boughs and branches, fell on the neck of the transgressor of the law of GOD. Darkness,

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xxiv. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiv. 22.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. i. 18.

sorrow, terror, labour, sickness, death, misery, humiliation, the enmity of all nature, in short, all powers of destruction seemed as it were to burst forth from the fatal tree and to make war against him; and the child of wrath would inevitably have been plunged for ever into hell, had not Mercy, in its eternal wisdom, stretched out its hand to him and sustained him in his fall. The SON of GOD took upon Himself the burden which crushed mankind; He bore His cross, and left to man but to touch it, doubtlessly not because man could aid the Almighty in bearing its weight, but in order that man himself with his remaining light cross might be borne along by the power of the greater One, as a skiff is propelled by the movement of a ship. Thus it is that the cross of wrath has been transformed into a cross of love; the cross which had barred the way into Paradise, becomes a ladder into heaven. The cross, sprung from the dread tree of *the knowledge of good and evil*, washed in divine Blood, is regenerated into *the tree of life*. The SON of GOD takes upon Himself our nature, and “through sufferings, makes perfect” in Himself “the Captain of our salvation; He is in all points tempted, and succours them that are tempted;” moves onward with the cross, and “brings His followers unto glory.”<sup>1</sup>

Who shall measure this universal cross borne by the Captain of our Salvation? Who shall tell its weight? Who shall number the various multitudes

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 10, 18; iv. 15.

of crosses of which it is formed, like the sea of drops of water? It was not from Jerusalem to Golgotha alone that this cross was borne with the help of Simon the Cyrenian; it was borne from Gethsemane to Jerusalem, and to Gethsemane from Bethlehem itself.

The whole life of JESUS was one cross, and no one put forth his hand to this burden except to make it the more burdensome. "He hath trodden the wine-press" of the wrath of GOD "alone, and of the people there was none with Him."<sup>1</sup>

Divinity unites with humanity, eternity with time, perfection with that which is limited, the uncreated with its own creation, the self-existing with nothingness; what an immeasurable, what an incomprehensible cross is formed of this union!

The GOD-MAN, Whose descent upon earth is glorified by the heavens, reveals Himself here in the most helpless age of humanity; in the smallest town of the smallest kingdom of the earth, there is no home, no cradle for Him, and, except His humble parents, none but a few shepherds take any interest in His birth.

They number unto the Eternal One eight days of this new life, and then subject Him to the bloody law of circumcision.

The LORD of the temple is "brought into the temple to be presented unto the LORD;" and He

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lxiii. 3.



Who came to redeem the world, is redeemed "by a pair of turtle doves."<sup>1</sup>

Whilst He was yet without power of speech, the sword of the preaching of the cross is already being sharpened in the lips of Simeon, and pierces through the soul of His mother.<sup>2</sup>

A few men of a strange tribe come to salute Him with the title of King of the Jews; but even this faint glory excites against Him the enmity of the Jewish king, makes Him the innocent cause of bloodshed, and obliges Him to withdraw Himself from among the people of GOD into a land of idolatry.

The boundless Wisdom of GOD "increaseth in wisdom, and in favour with GOD and man,"<sup>3</sup> according as it increases in stature. The Fountain and Giver of grace "increaseth in favour." For thirty years the LORD of Heaven and the King of Glory shrouds Himself from heaven and earth in deep obedience unto two mortals whom He has vouchsafed to call His parents.

And what did not JESUS suffer afterwards from the very day of His entering on the solemn ministry of the salvation of mankind? The Holy One of GOD coming to sanctify mankind, in company with sinners, seeking purification, bows His head beneath the hand of man, and receives baptism; *baptism*<sup>4</sup> indeed, my

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke ii. 22, 24.    <sup>2</sup> S. Luke ii. 34, 36.    <sup>3</sup> S. Luke ii. 52.

<sup>4</sup> In Russian, the word *baptism*, *krestsbenie*, is derived from the word *cross*, *krest*; so that to be *baptised* is equivalent to being crossed.

brethren, that is to say, immersion, not so much in the water, as in the fulness of the cross.

He Who "searcheth the heart," and trieth the reins,<sup>1</sup> is Himself delivered up to temptation. The bread of heaven is given up to earthly hunger; He before Whom "every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth,"<sup>2</sup> suffers the prince of hell to claim *worship* of Him.<sup>3</sup>

The Mediator between God and man reveals Himself unto men, but they either do not recognise Him, or will not recognise Him; His doctrine is counted blasphemy,<sup>4</sup> His works unlawful,<sup>5</sup> His miracles those of Beelzebub;<sup>6</sup> if He works miracles and does good on the Sabbath day, He is called a transgressor of the Sabbath; if He converts sinners and receives the repentant, He is upbraided as "the friend of sinners."<sup>7</sup> There "they take counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk;"<sup>8</sup> here "they lead Him unto the brow of a hill, that they may cast Him down headlong;"<sup>9</sup> at another place "they take up stones to cast at Him;"<sup>10</sup> nowhere do they give Him "where to lay His head;"<sup>11</sup> He raised up the dead, and His jealous enemies take counsel how to kill Him.<sup>12</sup> At

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xvii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. iv. 9.

<sup>5</sup> S. John ix. 16.

<sup>7</sup> S. Matth. xi. 19.

<sup>9</sup> S. Luke iv. 29.

<sup>11</sup> S. Matth. viii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. ii. 10.

<sup>4</sup> S. Matth. ix. 3.

<sup>6</sup> S. Matth. xii. 24.

<sup>8</sup> S. Matth. xxii. 15.

<sup>10</sup> S. John viii. 5.

<sup>12</sup> S. John xi. 43, 44, 46, 53.

the gates of Jerusalem the people salute Him as a King, and all the earthly authorities rise up to condemn Him as a malefactor. In the chosen circle of His friends He discovers an ungrateful traitor, and the first instrument of His death ; the best of them are an "offence" unto Him, for at the very time He goes forth on the work of GOD, "they savour not the things that be of GOD, but those that be of men."<sup>1</sup>

Wilt Thou not rest, Thou divine Cross-bearer, even for one moment from the yoke, ever pressing more heavily on Thy shoulders? Wilt Thou not rest, if not to renew Thy strength for new labours, at least in condescension to the infirmities of Thy followers? Yea, on coming nigh unto Golgotha, Thou wilt rest on Mount Tabor. Go up then unto that mountain of glory ; let Thy face be lighted up by heavenly light—let Thy raiment become white and glistening—let the law and the prophets come to acknowledge in Thee their fulfilment—let the voice of Thy FATHER's goodwill be heard ! But do not you perceive, my hearers, how the Cross follows JESUS even to Mount Tabor, and how the preaching of the Cross is inseparable from the preaching of the glorification ? Even there, amidst such great glory, of what do Moses and Elias speak unto JESUS ? They speak of His Cross and Death : "And they spake of His decease."<sup>2</sup>

For a long time JESUS bore His Cross, as though He felt not its weight ; but at length He was delivered

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xvi. 23.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke ix. 31.

up unto it as to "a lion, that should break all His bones."<sup>1</sup> Let us enter after Him with Peter and the sons of Zebedee into the garden of Gethsemane, and let us pierce with watchful eyes through the darkness of His last night upon earth. He no longer conceals the Cross that has broken down His soul: "My soul," says He, "is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."<sup>2</sup> And even the prayerful converse with His consubstantial FATHER does not free Him from the burden of His agony, but keeps Him under its weight: "O, My FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."<sup>3</sup> He Who "upholds all things by the word of His power,"<sup>4</sup> is now in need of "strengthening from an angel."<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps, to some of us, the mortal agony of JESUS appears to be unworthy of the Holy One. Be it known to such, that this agony was not the result of human impatience, but of divine justice. Could "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,"<sup>6</sup> fly from His altar of sacrifice? He, "Whom the FATHER hath sanctified, and sent into the world"<sup>7</sup>—He, Who had from eternity taken upon Himself the office of Mediator between man and GOD, could He be shaken in His work, by the thought only of suffering?

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxxviii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. xxvi. 39.

<sup>3</sup> S. Luke xxii. 43.

<sup>7</sup> S. John x. 36.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. xxvi. 38.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. i. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. xiii. 8.

If He could feel any impatience it was but the impatience to accomplish our salvation and to bless us. "But I have a baptism to be baptized with," saith He, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."<sup>1</sup> And therefore, if He is exceeding sorrowful, it is on account of our grief, and not His own; if we see Him "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows;"<sup>2</sup> the cup which His FATHER tenders unto Him is the cup of all the iniquities wrought by us, and of all the punishments prepared unto us, which would have overwhelmed the whole world, if He alone had not taken, held, and drained it. It was made up, firstly, of Adam's disobedience, and then of the corruption of the old world:<sup>3</sup> of the pride and iniquity of Babylon, of the hardness of heart and impenitence of Egypt, of the treacheries of Jerusalem, "that killed the prophets and stoned them that were sent unto her,"<sup>4</sup> of the malice of the synagogue, of the superstitions of paganism, of the folly of the worldly-wise, and, finally, (inasmuch as the Redeemer took upon Himself also the future sins of the world) it was made up of the scandals of Christianity itself, of the division of the one flock of the One Shepherd, of the audacious doctrines of the false teachers, of the lessening of faith and love, in the very kingdom of faith and love, and of the revival of atheism in the bosom of

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xii. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. liii. 3, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. vi. 12; 2 S. Pet. ii. 5.

<sup>4</sup> S. Matth. xxiii. 37.

piety itself. Let us add thereunto all that we find in us and around us deserving of the abomination and wrath of GOD; as well as all that which we strive to hide from our conscience, under the artful designation of weaknesses: the thoughtless and unlawful pleasures of youth, the hardheartedness of old age, forgetfulness of Providence in happiness, murmuring in misfortune, vanity in good deeds, love of gain in our industry, slowness in reform, manifold relapsings even after rising, carelessness and indolence, those followers of luxury, the wilfulness of our age, priding itself in its dreams of civilization: all these streams of iniquity flowed into one cup of woe and suffering for JESUS: all hell was precipitated upon that heavenly soul, and is it then to be wondered at, that it "was exceeding sorrowful even unto death?"

Words fail, my brethren, to follow the Great Sufferer from Gethsemane to Jerusalem, and thence to Golgotha; from His inner Cross to His outer one. But the mystical rites celebrated this day by the Church have already traced unto you this road and this last Cross. It is so painful, that the sun could not look down upon it, and so burdensome that the earth shook under it. For one, without spot or blemish, to endure all possible sufferings, both inward and outward, the heaviest and the most shameful, and to endure all this instead of receiving reward for blessings conferred; for the Most Holy to suffer from the most lawless, the Creator from His creatures, to suffer for

beings unworthy, ungrateful, and for the very authors of that suffering, to suffer for the glory of GOD, and to be forsaken of GOD : oh, what an unfathomable abyss of sufferings ! “ My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken”<sup>1</sup> Thy Beloved One ? Yea, O LORD ! Thou hast forsaken Him, for a little while, that Thou shouldest not forsake us for eternity—us, who have forsaken Thee. From this day “ He reigneth, He is clothed with majesty ; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself : the world also is established, that it cannot be moved.”<sup>2</sup> Lifted up from the earth, on the Cross, He spreadeth it abroad throughout the earth and “ will draw all men unto Him, unto heaven.”<sup>3</sup>

But, however, great and divine the all-attracting might of JESUS CHRIST, He cannot “ draw us, that we should run after Him,”<sup>4</sup> otherwise than by implanting His Cross in us, and uniting our cross with His own. “ If any man,” saith He, “ will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”<sup>5</sup> For although He has, of His sacred Blood and Cross, wrought the purification from sin and the redemption of the whole world from the curse, and opened unto us the entrance into the Holy of Holies, yet, inasmuch as none can enter therein but the priest and the offering, we must surrender ourselves as a sacrifice into the hands of this “ Great

<sup>1</sup> S. Mark xv. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xciii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xii. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Solomon’s Song i. 4.

<sup>5</sup> S. Luke ix. 23.

Priest, after the order of Melchizedek ;”<sup>1</sup> and since the curse is the fruit of sin, and the root of sin is planted in our free-will, so must we also freely surrender our will unto the agency of the Cross of CHRIST in us, in order that we may appropriate the purification and redemption, the righteousness and blessing of CHRIST. It is for this reason that they who truly understood “the power of GOD” hid “in the preaching of the cross,” so often teach us by their example and their word, “to be crucified with CHRIST, to be crucified unto the world, to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts ; not to live to ourselves, and to fill up that which is behind of the affliction of CHRIST in our flesh.”<sup>2</sup>

The more steadfastly and patiently we bear the burden of our cross, the more abundantly are the gifts of GOD, obtained by the Cross of CHRIST, granted unto us : “for as the sufferings of CHRIST abound in us,” so our consolation also “aboundeth by CHRIST.”<sup>3</sup> The sinner, who after steadfastly bearing his cross, at last crucifies himself upon it, submitting himself with perfect obedience unto all the demands of purifying justice, in the presence of the crucified SAVIOUR, will soon, like the malefactor, hear His gladdening voice : “To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”

To suffer in the presence of CHRIST, and in like

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cx. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vi. 6 ; Gal. v. 24 ; vi. 14 ; Rom. xiv. 7 ; Col. i. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. i. 5.



manner as He suffered, is to have a foretaste of Paradise.

Like as the visible material Cross is the royal standard of the visible kingdom of CHRIST, so is our secret cross the seal and distinguishing mark of the true and chosen servants of the invisible kingdom of GOD. It is a precious pledge of the love of GOD—it is the rod of the FATHER, not so much chastening and breaking the spirit, as “restoring” and “comforting” it;<sup>1</sup>—it is the purifying fire of faith, the companion of hope, the mortifier of sensuality, the conqueror of passion, the inciter to prayer, the protector of chastity, the parent of humility, the teacher of wisdom, the guardian of the sons of the kingdom. Where were all the great angels, the guides and guardians of the Church, the Josephs, the Moses’s, the Daniels, the Pauls, brought up? In the school of the Cross. Where was it that the Church most blissfully grew, flourished, and bore fruit unto holiness? It was at the time when the field of the LORD was incessantly ploughed by the Cross, and watered with the blood of martyrs. Who, it was asked of S. John, in his vision, who are they who surround the glorious throne of the Lamb? “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence come they?” and when he could not recognize them in their divine glory, then was he told that it was they who were sealed with the Cross: “these are they which came out of great tribulations.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ps. ii. 9; xxiii. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. vii. 13, 14.

Who are they then who would “make the cross of CHRIST of none effect,”<sup>1</sup> and fancy they can “know Him and the power of His Resurrection,” without “the fellowship of His sufferings?”<sup>2</sup> If CHRIST alone is *the life* and *the way*<sup>3</sup> unto *life*, how can they attain unto the *life* of CHRIST without walking in His *way*? Can such effeminate members be in union with that body, which *the Head*, crowned with thorns, “fitly joineth and compacteth together for itself?”<sup>4</sup> Can the members be at rest and unconcerned when the Head is stricken, smitten, and afflicted? Can they forget themselves in noisy revellings, when their Head is encompassed by deadly pains? Can they drink of the full cup of worldly pleasures whilst their Head thirsteth and drinketh vinegar? Can they be proud when their Head is bowed low? Will they not, even for a moment, be pained on account of their own sins and transgressions, when their Head suffereth and dieth for the sins of others? Can they live to the world and the flesh when their Head giveth up His spirit unto GOD?

O man, thou who art drawn unto heaven by the grace of thy LORD, yet wallowest in flesh in the world! Behold thy likeness in the man, who sinks in the waters and yet strives against drowning; he incessantly repeats the figure of the cross in the efforts of his limbs, and thereby overcomes the hostile waves.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Philip. iii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xiv. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Ephes. iv. 15, 16.

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Raise thine eyes on the bird which would leave the earth and soar on high : it spreadeth its wings in the form of the cross, and flies away. Seek thou also in the cross the means to raise thyself above the world, and ascend unto God. “The preaching of the cross is to them that are saved the power of God.” Amen.

## SERMON VI.

### *CHRIST IS RISEN!*

#### **Easter Sunday.**

“Then opened He their understanding.”—*S. Luke xxiv. 45.*

**H**OW many chambers are unlocked, how many doors are opened this day, by the *Key of David* alone, and with but one turn of it!

The doors of a house are strengthened and fastened to keep out thieves, or to restrain a turbulent inmate. So is it in the House of God. When the tiller and keeper of the paradise of God plucked the fruit of the tree of knowledge, then was he driven out, paradise was closed against him, and a guard mightier than he, armed with a flaming sword, was placed at the entrance. Moreover, since it behoved the transgressor to be also punished—since, even after his banishment, a turbulent, criminal spirit still continued to live in his seed, therefore both he and his posterity were one after the other conveyed through the gate of death to prison, there to be held captive, not for days only, but for ages. Hence is it also self-evident how the

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very house of the LORD, that is, heaven, to which the way lay through the garden of Eden, was barred and closed against the unworthy inmate.

At length, the only-begotten SON of the LORD of heaven, according to His mercy, and His love toward man, comes to free the captives, and to bring back the banished. The *Key of David*, unlocking all doors, is the Incarnation of JESUS CHRIST, whereby as the Divinity shares all the conditions of humanity, so also does humanity partake of the nature of Divinity. The revealing action of this key is the Resurrection of CHRIST. By it the prison doors are opened, and its captives released; paradise is opened and receives the banished; Heaven is opened and awaits the Elect. What I now say in your hearing, the same does the Church speak unto your eyes<sup>1</sup> by keeping open, throughout the whole of the present feast, the doors leading to the altar of the Divine sacraments.

Let us also take notice of another door which this same *Key of David*, and at the very same time, openeth; a door not very large, perhaps, but one which leads to the great treasury of GOD: "Then opened He their understanding," writes the holy Evangelist. *Then* opened the LORD the understanding of His Apostles. When was this? when He had risen from the dead, appeared unto them, showed

<sup>1</sup> "The king's doors," as the chief entrance into the sanctuary is called, in general remain shut, except during certain parts of the Divine Service; but throughout the whole of Easter week they are left open.

them His wounds, broken bread in their presence, when He had fully confirmed their faith in His Resurrection: "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures; and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved CHRIST to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."<sup>1</sup>

May, then, the understanding of all who now hear this, be opened to receive the important truth now being revealed unto us, that the resurrection of CHRIST, and faith in that resurrection, opens the locked up human intellect unto the true understanding of sublime and saving truths.

And truly, how long it is since "JESUS began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"<sup>2</sup> And earlier than others did the Apostles begin to listen to that preaching. How long it is since they themselves were sent out on the same mission of preaching: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."<sup>3</sup> Thus for a long time did they both listen to the preaching of repentance and the kingdom of GOD, and preach it themselves. But still their understanding was yet locked up. This is hardly credible; and yet, according to the word of the LORD, it is true. It was not

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xxiv. 45—47.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. iv. 17.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. x. 7.

till after His Resurrection that “He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures;” and it was as to persons already understanding that He said unto them, “Thus it is that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name.”

Till then they knew of repentance as of a deed of faith; now do they more fully understand *repentance in the name of Jesus* to be the spirit and power of it. They had known repentance more in the sense of a necessity and a duty: now do they more perfectly understand its fruit and reward—the remission of sins. Then they were able to preach that the kingdom of heaven *was at hand*. Now they can bear witness of its actual manifestation unto themselves and in themselves. At how early a period also, how frequently, and how minutely did the LORD foretell His Passion and His Resurrection to His Apostles! At times He veiled this prophecy in parables—as, for instance, when He said to the Jews: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”<sup>1</sup> At these words they thought of the temple of Jerusalem: “but He spake of the temple of His Body.”<sup>2</sup> But even His parable on this subject was at times as intelligible as a plain statement, as when He said: “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. John ii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> S. John ii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. xii. 40.

But this is not all. It was thus that He spoke to strangers in the presence of the Apostles, but to the Apostles themselves He more than once spoke of this not in parables, but plainly, precisely, in detail, as—  
“Behold, we go to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death, and the third day He shall rise again.”<sup>1</sup>

Could any one speak more plainly? Does it seem possible not to understand this? And you will probably say, did they really not understand it? The holy Evangelist foresaw this doubt, and assures us with particular emphasis, that they really did not understand it.

“They,” that is to say the Apostles, “understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.”

Another Evangelist relates, that on one occasion the Apostles hearing from the LORD of His resurrection, were so perplexed at His words, that they stopped at them as before an inexplicable parable, and disputed among themselves as to their meaning. “And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xviii. 31—33.

<sup>2</sup> S. Mark ix. 10.



It was indeed then only after the resurrection that the LORD “opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures; that thus it behoves CHRIST to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.”<sup>1</sup>

I fear however that notwithstanding the clear testimony of the Gospel, this darkened condition of the Apostles’ minds previous to the resurrection, and this sudden enlightenment of the whole sphere of their understanding at the mere sight of the risen CHRIST, will still be to some of us a hidden saying.

Oh, that the LORD would open our understanding also to utter something convincing, and to hear something instructive as to how the understanding is opened by the light of the risen CHRIST, and by faith in Him.

The word of GOD calls the mind, the eye; the understanding, vision; ignorance, blindness. As for instance, when the LORD says, “For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.”<sup>2</sup> We know that the Advent of CHRIST into the world did not blind the eyes of any, but that many at the time were found to be blind in their minds.

Let us then follow out the conditions and functions of the mind, as shown to us in the Word of GOD, by contrasting them with the conditions and functions of the eye. The eye sees objects, partly in consequence

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xxiv. 45, 6.

<sup>2</sup> S. John ix. 39.

of the property of those objects themselves, as for instance, it perceives light to be luminous, partly by reason of its own construction and peculiar condition, as, for instance, the eye of the blind man being gradually opened, at first "sees men as trees walking," but when completely cured, "sees every man clearly," partly according to the common action or mediation of light between the spectator and the object viewed; as for instance, it is one thing to see objects by moonlight or by starlight, and another thing to see them by sunlight. In like manner does the spiritual eye see spiritual objects; in other words, the mind comprehends them, partly in consequence of the property of those objects themselves, thus, "The invisible things of GOD from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made;"<sup>1</sup> partly according to the manner of its own inward construction and peculiar condition, as for example, the infant mind sees objects more sensuously, more superficially, and for the most part without any order or connection in its ideas, whereas a cultivated mind sees less sensuously, penetrates objects more deeply, and discovers in them connection and order; partly according to the action of the light mediating between the mind and the objects viewed, which light may be either natural or supernatural, either peculiar to the world in which we live, a compound of the sensual and the spiritual, or else, purely spiritual and even

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 20.

Divine, as it is said, "In Thy light, O LORD, shall we see light."<sup>1</sup>

The structure of the bodily eye is not adapted to many kinds or degrees of light, for a certain diminution of light deprives it of the power of vision, and in like manner a certain increase of light blinds it. The structure of the mind, as a spiritual organ, is incomparably more extensive and varied. One and the same human mind may become either a kind of night bird, to which darkness alone gives a power of vision, and of which light deprives it; or a beast, which by the light of the moon and stars prowls about in search of its prey; or else, as is natural to man, it can do its work in the light of day, and contemplate the manifold beauties of the universe. It sinks, and is then imprisoned in the sphere of sensuality; it rises, and becomes itself capable of spiritual light, it becomes purified and then open to the reception of the divine light.

For those who would see spiritual objects, it surely is not enough to open their fleshly eyes, or to light a lamp of material light. The more elevated the objects to be contemplated, the more sublime should be the condition of the eye, and of the light which serves as the medium of vision. Consequently to contemplate divine objects, we need a divine light, and a condition of the mind in harmony therewith. "In Thy light, O LORD, shall we see light."

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xxvi. 9.

The Word of GOD, the mysteries of the kingdom of GOD, the saving doctrine and the saving works of CHRIST are surely divine objects, therefore to contemplate them clearly and purely, man is in need of a divine light, the light of CHRIST, the light of the HOLY SPIRIT, and the opening of his understanding by the power of that light. So long as this has not been accomplished in man, so long is he unable to comprehend the compass, height, and depth of the Word of GOD, though he may hear it, and even see its effect; for his spiritual eye still abides in the lower region of natural light, and is adapted to it alone. For this reason the Apostles even after seeing with their bodily eyes the resurrection of the widow of Nain's son, could not yet rise to the contemplation and solution of the question, "What the rising of the dead should mean."<sup>1</sup> For this reason did the LORD say to the Apostles, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."<sup>2</sup> When then, O LORD, will they be able to bear Thy word and to understand Thy works? His answer is, "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."<sup>3</sup> But what prevents the Spirit of Truth from coming sooner? Again the Gospel tells us, "The HOLY GHOST was not yet given, because that JESUS was not yet Glorified."<sup>4</sup> At length He rises from the dead. And now instead

<sup>1</sup> S. Mark ix. 10.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xvi. 13.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xvi. 12.

<sup>4</sup> S. John vii. 39.

of Divinity in Him sinking into humanity, as it did till now, humanity in Him rises into Divinity. In this way His humanity is manifested, and superabundantly filled no longer with a hidden, but rather with the manifest light of the Godhead which it diffuses around itself; the God-Man appears as the Sun of mankind, and begins to part the clouds and darkness which encompassed humanity; His divine light strikes those eyes, which faith in His resurrection had already opened and directed to contemplation, opens them still more and raises them to a new, heavenly, divine perception or understanding of the Word of GOD and the works of GOD. "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand."

If this opening of the understanding or spiritual enlightenment appear to be sudden and unexpected, it must not seem strange, but rather a property of light, and particularly of spiritual light. The sun when he rises reveals a whole universe of varied beauties; is it then wonderful that the light of grace, the light of the HOLY GHOST, whose action on the *heart* the Apostle likens "to a day dawning and the day-star arising,"<sup>1</sup> should suddenly and unexpectedly reveal the boundless region of spiritual understanding. Howbeit natural light as well as light divine has for those whom it enlightens its own dawn and its noontide; for the Apostles a bright dawn arose when the LORD "breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the HOLY

<sup>1</sup> 2 S. Pet. i. 19.

GHOST ;"<sup>1</sup> but the fulness of day came upon them in the descent of the HOLY GHOST in the form of "cloven tongues, like as of fire."<sup>2</sup> But if our eyes be still too weak to enjoy the fulness of light with which the risen LORD opens the understanding, let us for a moment glance upon the opposite darkness, that we may the more love the truly *marvellous light* into which we are called.

See how at the very same time that faith in the risen LORD opens the understanding of the Apostles, unbelief in Him locks up the mind of the Jews in tangible, incredibly gross darkness. What do they think, and what do they say of the LORD'S resurrection? "This saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."<sup>3</sup> What saying? the saying which their high priests and elders had taught the soldiers, the watch of the LORD'S sepulchre, "His Disciples came by night and stole Him away while we slept."<sup>4</sup> It was this saying then which was noised abroad among the Jews, and they believed it. Was this possible? How could they have stolen Him away when you had surrounded His sepulchre with soldiers? They slept, say the Jews. The sentinels slept! Even so, was the opinion of the Jews. Was every one of them asleep? Every one. What, did not one of them awake, when in order to take away the body it was necessary to roll back from the grave a stone

<sup>1</sup> S. John xx. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. xxviii. 15.

<sup>4</sup> S. Matth. xxviii. 13.

which was *very great*, and to do which would have required the help of several men, and could not have been done without noise? Not one of them awoke. But who is it that bears witness that the body was stolen? The very same sentinels. Do the very same sentinels who slept, and did not awake, bear witness of that which happened during their sleep, and which they did not hear? Who can be so daring as to report such a fable? The unbelieving Jews. Who can be so senseless as to believe it? Unbelievers. One more question, How came it to pass that the Disciples of JESUS, who at the sight of the first danger which threatened Him forsook Him and fled, how came it that they should have resolved upon so daring and so useless an undertaking as to steal away the body of their dead Master from a sepulchre sealed and surrounded by a guard by order of the authorities?

Unbelief does not reason; it scatters abroad throughout the whole world words which please it simply, because they savour of unbelief. But if it was known that a theft had been committed in spite of the watch and the seal of the government, and the very thieves were known, then were not the watch and the thieves delivered up to judgment? Nothing of the kind. The military chief of the watch is unconcerned, the watch are untroubled, the pretended thieves abide at least eight days in Jerusalem, and not one of the elders of the Jews, hitherto so severe,

cites them before the tribunal for so important a theft.

Is it possible then that after all this, the fable of the stealing away of the body of JESUS by His Disciples could still be circulated among the Jews as something worthy of attention? Yes, possible indeed, for the mind hardened in unbelief, like a bird of night, sees only in the darkness of unbelief, loves only its own dreams, and flees from the light of truth which scorches its eyes: "And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

O Christians, the risen CHRIST opened the understanding of the Apostles, and illumined them by faith with divine light, not for their sake only, but that they should open our understanding also, and that we also, through faith, might become the sons of light. He suffered this absurd saying, showing the extreme blindness of the unbelieving Jews, to come down to us that we should dread unbelief. Say not with Thomas, "Except I shall see, I shall have no faith." Remember the words of the LORD, "Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."<sup>1</sup> "While ye have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light."<sup>2</sup> Let faith and love draw down upon you the light of life which hath shone from the grave; may this light open your minds to the understanding of the mysteries of your salvation, and

<sup>1</sup> S. John xx. 29.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xii. 36.



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your hearts to the consciousness of the kingdom of God, which is in you, and unto your heart thus opened to the kingdom of God may Heaven and Paradise be revealed. Let us not then through sin and unbelief, lock from ourselves that which hath been opened unto us *by the Key of David*. Amen.

## SERMON VII.

*CHRIST IS RISEN!*

**Easter Sunday.**

**A** GAIN hath it pleased GOD that we should see this king of days, the chief of all feasts. Blessed is He Who holds in His power time and seasons! Truly, the day of the resurrection of CHRIST is the king of days: for as subjects derive security, peace and dignity from the beneficent power of their king, so do all other days derive security and peace from the beneficent influence of the day of the resurrection of CHRIST: otherwise we should, "through fear of death, be all our lifetime subject to bondage."<sup>1</sup> They derive dignity from it, for every day of the birth, life, and death of each of us, would be worthy of a curse, if they were not all of them blessed by the day of the resurrection of CHRIST. It was perhaps for this reason, that the light of unblest days was extinguished at the moment of the death of JESUS CHRIST, that out of His death and resurrection there might shine forth the new light of blessed days, mira-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 15.

culously illuminating all the future as well as the past. And past ages too, say I, for Abraham, for so many centuries before the day of the resurrection of CHRIST, enjoyed the light, not of those days which he then saw, but of that day which he looked for in faith, as was said by JESUS CHRIST Himself unto the Jews : “ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day ; and he saw it and was glad.”<sup>1</sup> And he saw this much desired day, more especially when, Isaac,—during three days offered up as a sacrifice in the intention of his father’s heart and at length actually lying on the altar, on the wood of the burnt offering, under the sacrificial knife, and the slaying hand of his father,—was, in the words of the Apostle, “ received by him in a figure,”<sup>2</sup> that is to say, received by him again alive, as a foreshadowing of the future resurrection of CHRIST from the dead on the third day, after His visible sacrifice on the Cross, and inward holocaust. And that the day of the resurrection of CHRIST might shed light upon the succeeding days and ages, see how JESUS CHRIST, the very Sun of righteousness Himself sheds upon it an inexhaustible light, when He says to the children of Light, the Apostles : “ But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”<sup>3</sup>

If no man can take that joy away, then evidently it shall shine throughout all future time.

Christians ! ye sons of light, though perhaps the

<sup>1</sup> S. John viii. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xi. 19.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xvi. 22.

youngest of them ! oh, if this day, which Abraham rejoiced to see, and which gave the Apostles a joy which could not be taken from them : if this day could but bring us, on every return of it, an increase of spiritual light, and a new confirmation of the joy of salvation !

To some it will perhaps appear, that I am "asking a hard thing,"<sup>1</sup> that it is too much on my part to desire, and demand that the light and joy of the resurrection of CHRIST should always increase in us, while their source is ever one and the same, and therefore works upon us in the same way, and even appears not to act upon us with the same fulness of power as it did upon the Apostles ; for they themselves had heard the promise of joy, and themselves had seen the risen LORD, according to promise. Now listen to my justification ; for I hope to justify myself soon.

Think of the promise of joy given to the Apostles, and through them to us all : "I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice."

According to our way of thinking, it was better to say : You shall see Me, and your heart shall rejoice, for we rejoice when we see Him Whom we love ; whereas the fact that He sees us may have no effect on us ; for when we do not see Him, there is no reason for our heart to rejoice. But the LORD tells us the contrary : "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice ;" as if everything depended only on

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings ii. 10.

His seeing the disciples, and as if there were no ostensible difference between their seeing Him or not. What then does the wisdom of GOD mean by this? This, that as the light of this visible world proceeds from the sun, which is the eye of this world, so do the light of souls and the joy of hearts proceed from the presence of the SON of GOD, JESUS CHRIST, Who is the Sun of the invisible world. That, as the sun, when he rises and shines down upon the earth, thereby shedding upon all earthly creatures a beneficent light, according as each is capable of receiving it, so does the GOD-Man, JESUS, when He looks down upon the souls and hearts of men,—by His presence bestow the light of grace upon the soul, and joy upon the heart, according to the spiritual capacity of receiving them,—that is to say in proportion to their love and faith,—above all, after that day when He, in the true spring and the new dawn of the world, ascended into heaven in His glorified manhood; which, being exalted through suffering, became, so to say, translucent to the fulness of the divinity abiding in it, and whose wounds are as doors open to the divine light. And, as the enjoyment of the sun's light does not absolutely depend on our being able, or unable to see the sun's circle above us, both he who does not raise or strain his glance for this purpose as well as he who sits in the shade, or stands under a cloud, can avail himself of this light,—so also the enjoyment of the light of CHRIST and joy in the LORD do not necessarily de-

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pend on our seeing the figure of CHRIST appearing unto our bodily eyes, but both he, who in his humility does not raise his gaze to the height of His glory, as well as he who stands under the cloud of faith, or rests in the shadow of hope, are able to enjoy the spiritual light and heavenly joy, and that too at times with less danger than he who views supernatural visions which require an eagle's eye so as not to be dimmed by the superabundance of light. Truly then with regard to joy in the LORD, the matter of greatest moment is, that the risen LORD should see us; and it makes no very ostensible difference, whether we have seen Him with our bodily eyes or not, but, what is of the greatest moment, is that the LORD should Himself look down upon us, not only with the neverfailing eye of His Omnipresence and Omniscience with which He penetrates all things, and from which even, in the darkest depth of hell, the blackest thought cannot be hid; but that He should also look down upon us with the bright and luminous eye of grace, with the ardent and glowing look of love, with which He does not look upon all without distinction, but according to His choice, like as He looked down upon His Apostles and the holy women, after His resurrection. Yet, such is His mercy that He excludes no one from this election who does not exclude himself. He does not wait for us to seek that look of grace; but anticipating us, Himself seeks among us for those on whom He may bestow that look of grace, and Himself shows us the

position in which we should stand, in order that His look may rest upon us. "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word."<sup>1</sup> If thou canst do no more, then try at least to be meek and contrite in spirit, and to have the fear of GOD in thee; and the LORD will look down upon thee, according to the law of election which He hath laid down for Himself, and proclaimed to us all; and He will then fulfil upon thee, as He did upon the Apostles, the promise given to thee through them: "I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice."

To verify this meditation by undoubted proofs, let us look at the first and nearest partakers of the joy of the resurrection of CHRIST: for their manifold experiences afford us as many strong proofs to assure us of that blessed event, as they do trustworthy instructions to lead us to a saving and blissful participation in it. Was their joy in the resurrection necessarily dependent on their bodily vision of Him that was risen? Would any diminution of their joy be justified if they had been bereft of that vision? Do not we find quite the contrary in what happened to them? You will remind me perhaps of S. John's saying: "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the LORD."<sup>2</sup> True: but did not the holy women earlier than these disciples rejoice with great joy, even before they had seen Him? "And they departed quickly," says S. Matthew, "from

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lxvi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xx. 20.

the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring His disciples word."<sup>1</sup> Thomas thought he had a right to demand ocular proof, and obtained it: true, this caused him not only joy, but rapture; but was it however that particular vision which rendered him so peculiarly happy? Very differently did He, Who granted that vision, judge of it Himself; He reproached Thomas for it, and blessed those who had not seen. "Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."<sup>2</sup> And to be blessed is certainly something higher than transient rapture, something more perfect than joy. And the Apostle Peter also, as an eye-witness of the risen LORD, and knowing the worth of that vision, nevertheless ascribes the highest degree of joy to those who believe, without having seen: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."<sup>3</sup>

I trust then we have been able to prove in this way that the source of inward light and spiritual joy contained in the resurrection of CHRIST, is able to act upon us also with the same plenitude of power as it did on the witnesses and servants of the Word. And if by their experience we are also shown that this joy not only remained with them, according to the promise given, "that no man should take it away," but for

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xxviii. 8.    <sup>2</sup> S. John xx. 29.    <sup>3</sup> 1 S. Pet. i. 8, 9.



this same reason did also grow and perfect itself in them, then it is evident from this that it is not too much on our part to wish and require that this joy should not only not diminish in us, but ever increase, like the morning light, unto the full noon-tide of inward enlightenment by the HOLY GHOST, unto the eternal day of the kingdom of JESUS CHRIST. Then let us take another glance at the experiences of the witnesses of CHRIST's resurrection.

When, as the Evangelist informs us, "the disciples were glad when they saw the LORD," they then had not attained a high degree of joy, nor was their gladness perfect, for as another Evangelist adds, it was at first alloyed with unbelief, and required for its confirmation a still more palpable proof of the resurrection. "And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? and they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them."<sup>1</sup> But when they were separated from the LORD, "Who was carried up into heaven, and they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy;" then do you not perceive that their joy had become much greater, much more exalted, and much more fervent than it had been before? for even the separation from the Author of that joy does not diminish it, but reveals it to be great—greater than before. See at last how these same Apostles "de-

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xxiv. 41—43.

parted from the presence of the council of the Jews, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name." Behold a joy still greater, still more exalted, and one which indeed cannot be taken away, when neither enmity, nor persecution, nor shame, nor wounds could darken it.

I now repeat my wish: Oh, that this day's joy may become to us the joy of our life, a joy ever increasing like the life of youth, and never waxing old, like heavenly life.

But how, it will probably be asked, is this to be done? How is it to be done? What is one to do, that a joy, eternal in its essence, should not become short-lived? What are we to do in order that a joy, endless and boundless in its results, should grow and increase on its way to its infinity and eternity? Methinks the difficulty is not how to do this, but rather how to understand how it could be otherwise. Do not set yourselves against divine joy, do not reject, do not stifle it; it will of itself continue; it will increase and develope of itself, until finally it will change into bliss.

In the Book of the Prophet Joel there is a remarkable saying as to how men are bereft of joy, and how they expose themselves to grief and misfortune. "The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree languisheth; the pomegranate-tree, the palm-tree also, and the apple-tree, even all the trees of the field are withered, because joy is withered away from the sons of men."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joel i. 12.

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Pure joy is like unto a noble and chaste virgin, whose inseparable companion is a pure conscience, who associates only with those whose deeds are unblemished, whose words are modest, and whose intentions are pure and exalted. As soon as you allow yourselves to be betrayed into vicious deeds, idle or thoughtless words, impure or low intentions, her sensitive nature becomes aroused, her noble feelings are shocked, her chastity shamed, and she flees and hides herself from you. If in her stead you court gross and foolish worldly pleasures, so much the worse for you. Divine justice for the outrage against heavenly joy pronounces its curse against all the sources of earthly joy. "The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree languisheth, the pomegranate-tree, the palm-tree also, and the apple-tree, even all the trees of the field are withered; because joy is withered away from the sons of men."

Sons of men, or rather sons of GOD in CHRIST, let us not dishonour this heavenly and divine joy by an unclean life, or by deeds of gross sensuality. May GOD put gladness in our hearts more than that of those whose "corn and oil and wine increased," and may no man take away from us the joy in the risen and ever living JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

## SERMON VIII.

*CHRIST IS RISEN!*

*Easter Sunday.*

**T**HE Church of CHRIST has this day announced unto us, in the most solemn manner, the greatest of all glad tidings: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with GOD, and the Word was GOD," and so on.<sup>1</sup> Now since we know it to be her custom to reveal to us in the Gospel for the day the significance of the feast, and to afford unto us a subject for pious meditation and spiritual instruction; then what am I to do now? Shall I strive to raise your souls from the earth, to carry you above the sun and stars, to transport you into the heaven of heavens, past the lower and higher orders of Angels unto the extreme heights of creation, thither where time is not, for there eternity reigns intransient and indivisible, where space is lost in infinity, and whence by a retrospective glance you may be convinced how little exaggerated, how feeble even is the saying of the wise Solomon, "that the whole world is before GOD

<sup>1</sup> S. John i. 1—17 is appointed in the Orthodox Eastern Church to the service on Easter Sunday.

as a little grain in the balance, as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth?"<sup>1</sup> Shall I require you "to stand upon the watch"<sup>2</sup> of contemplation with the holy Evangelist John, higher even than the Prophet Habakkuk stood upon his watch, for the prophet contemplated the SON of GOD manifested in His incarnation, whereas the Evangelist contemplates Him in the mystery of His eternal birth? Shall I speak to you of the *beginning* in the highest sense of that word, of *the beginning of the beginning*,<sup>3</sup> in the words of the Prophet-king, of that beginning which long precedes the beginning of time, and of everything which is in time, of the beginning from which all things in eternity itself commence, but which itself is not limited by any further beginning or end? Shall I seek words in which to bring as near as possible to your understanding that *Word*, which not only the human, but even the angelic mind is inadequate to comprehend, and the tongue to explain,—that *Word* which was once for all uttered, and which is eternally uttered, or rather begotten, by the One Eternal FATHER of the Word, and which Itself called forth the whole creation, not nominally into hearing and understanding, but virtually into being and well-being? Shall I periphrase in some plainer words the sublime

<sup>1</sup> Wisd. xi. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Habak. ii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Chron. xxix. 12. In the Slavonic Bible the passage stands thus, "Thou reignest over all, and Thou art the beginning of the beginning," &c., but in the English Bible this last clause is omitted.

narrative of the great Divine, that *in the beginning was the Word*, that is to say, that it had no beginning of such a nature, that you might imagine a time when it was not, but that it always was, before all time and from all eternity, that it always is, and shall be, because it is everlasting: that *the Word was with God*, that is to say, that "the only begotten SON,<sup>1</sup> which is in the bosom of the FATHER," was not disunited or separated from GOD the FATHER by His birth, but is consubstantial with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST; that *the Word was God*, that is, that the Name of GOD in the same true sense as it belongs to GOD the FATHER, equally belongs to the SON of GOD, and also to the HOLY GHOST, yet so that in the Three Divine Hypostases there is but One GOD in substance; that by this hypostatical Word of GOD, everything, without exception, was created,—the earthly as well as the heavenly, the visible as well as the invisible; that in Him is life, or the source of the life of every living thing, and more especially of every being living a spiritual and immortal life; that this fountain of life always was and is the *light* of men which shone upon them in Paradise, was not quite hidden from them on earth, was not extinguished by paganism, though not perceived nor accepted by it, which revealed itself in foreshadowings in the law of Moses, like a dawn in the Prophets, until at last the *Word Incarnate* revealed Himself as the sun and noon-day,

<sup>1</sup> S. John i. 1, 14.

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in the full light of truth, with a quickening and miraculous power, and in His life and in His preaching, in His acts, and even in His free passion and death, and above all in His resurrection, "we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the FATHER, full of grace and truth."

You will observe that I have only attempted to theologise, under the guidance of S. John the Divine; and yet, may be, the little I have said may already have proved to be too much for the infirmity of my words, and, be not offended, perhaps even too much for the feeble powers of your understandings. Even amongst the divinely inspired Evangelists, was not Boanerges alone allowed to proclaim so solemnly the glad tidings of the heavenly glory of GOD the Word?

Although we, hearing the peals of thunder, do not understand them so well or so clearly as this same Boanerges understood the mysterious voices of the seven thunders, still we cannot help feeling that it announces to us the majesty of GOD; so also, when listening to the sublime utterances of S. John about GOD the Word, though we cannot attain a perfect understanding of them, both by reason of the want of purity of mind, and also on account of the inaccessible loftiness of the subject, still we are nevertheless able to feel that they announce unto us something divine in itself, something saving to ourselves,—the majesty of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. And even this is enough.

We may wonder how it is that our wise instructress the holy Church, should set us so hard a lesson from the Gospel for this day of gladness. Would it not have been more appropriate to the Day of Resurrection to give us the Gospel narrative of the resurrection itself, and on a day of joy to incite and sustain our joy by all possible means? Was not joy the first effect of the resurrection, although at the same time accompanied by fear at the sudden manifestation of the miracles? They who "came to see the sepulchre," and received the tidings of the resurrection of the LORD, "departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His disciples word."<sup>1</sup> Did not the risen LORD Himself command us to be joyful on the day of His resurrection? "Behold, JESUS met them, saying, All hail!"<sup>2</sup> What did the Apostles experience when they saw Him risen, and made sure of Him by the wounds of His crucifixion? "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the LORD."<sup>3</sup> And does not the Church herself now acknowledge more than ever the reign of joy, by filling almost the whole Divine Service with solemn hymns, especially before, between, and after the Lessons.

I say this, not from any wish to enter into a discussion with our Mother the Church respecting her rites, but rather to give you the means better to understand,

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xxviii. 1—8.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. xxviii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xx. 20.



and consequently better to fulfil, these same ordinances. What then was the object of our Mother the Church, in calling her children in the midst of their joy, to arduous meditation over a sublime truth, or rather to sublime contemplation of the mystery of truth? There is no doubt, that she would have considered this out of place, did she suppose in us a joy, degenerating into sensuality, leavened with vanity, thoughtless and noisy; but since she has deemed this proper, then no doubt, it was in the supposition that our festive joy ought to be spiritual, pure, peaceful and exalted; for such a joy not only does not hinder serious and deep meditation, but even renders a man more than usually capable of lofty contemplation. The Gospel offers convincing examples of this. When the future mother of the Baptist and the future mother of the LORD on seeing each other, rejoiced with a pure joy, and the joy of the saintly Elizabeth was shared even by the infant in her womb,—what was the effect of this threefold rejoicing? It was this, that the two mothers were filled with divine ecstasy, and both prophesied. When Thomas, through his unbelief deprived of the joy of the resurrection longer than the other Apostles, at length drew it plentifully, from the very wounds of the risen One: how did that joy manifest itself in him? It manifested itself in a confession of faith: “And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My LORD and my GOD!”<sup>1</sup> And this is very natural, for

<sup>1</sup> S. John xx. 28.

nothing leads us so directly to the perception and faith and conviction in the divinity of JESUS CHRIST, as does His resurrection.

We have thus in some measure ascertained what our present joy should be like, in order that it may harmonise with the dignity of its object, and the intention of our Mother the Church.

Oh, ye children of the Church and of light! learn to benefit by the light which the Risen LORD so abundantly sheds upon you. If it is not so easy to learn divine wisdom, it surely is not difficult to rejoice well. Be mindful of yourselves, and take heed that your festive joy be spiritual, pure, peaceful, and exalting to your souls. When, perhaps learning from the wise virgins, the hour of welcome of the heavenly Bridegroom, you, at midnight, with lighted tapers surround His dwelling-place and fill His temple; when you consecrate and devote to glorification, to the Gospel, to the Sacrament, and to the word of truth, the early hours of the morn taken from your sleep, then is it that you show a sign of pure and spiritual joy. When you offer each other the kiss of peace, avoiding no one who approaches for it: then have you a sign of peaceful joy. When the lips and the ears of all resound with the names of CHRIST and the Resurrection: then do I gladly acknowledge this to be an expression of joy which elevates your souls thither where the risen One reigns. So far, it seems, so good. The holy morn is lit up with the light of holy joy.

But will the day, the even, and the ensuing week, which the Church has consecrated to the joy of the resurrection, be worthy of this night, and this morn? Will not your spiritual gladness soon be swallowed up by sensual pleasures? Will not vanity squander away that which you have gathered for your soul in the temple? Will you not perhaps, after witnessing a sacred, heavenly, divine spectacle, go in search of low, worldly sights wherein some plaything, or what is still worse some player, will play with the attention of your mind, the emotions of your heart,—and where sensuality, folly, vice under various guises, will dispute with each other your time, your praises, your money, —perhaps the very money you refused to a beggar? Is not this what the prophet calls the withering away of joy? “Joy,” says he, “is withered away from the sons of men.”<sup>1</sup>

I counsel and entreat you, not to wither away hereafter the joy, so reverently honoured at the beginning. Is it right to convert into an amusement and pastime, that joy which was won for us through sacrifice and suffering? “CHRIST our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore,” concludeth the Apostle, “let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”<sup>2</sup> “Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on

<sup>1</sup> Joel i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

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the LORD JESUS CHRIST.”<sup>1</sup> He hath sufficient light and incorruptible joy, for all and each, so that none need pass by Him in search of illusive splendour, nor need an immortal soul seek its food in corruption. Seek ye then your joy ever in its true source. “Rejoice in the LORD alway : and again I say, Rejoice.”<sup>2</sup> Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iv. 4.

## SERMON IX.<sup>1</sup>

### *THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL, AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.*

“He ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves.”—*S. Luke xxiv. 12.*

**T**HE Gospel, narrating the resurrection of the LORD JESUS, among various details, draws our attention to the following particulars; that the stone of the sepulchre was rolled away by an angel, whose descent from heaven was accompanied by an earthquake; that the holy women found the sepulchre open; that Peter, and after him, John, having glanced into the sepulchre, saw the linen clothes of the LORD laid by themselves, that is, the shroud, in which His

<sup>1</sup> Preached on a Sunday which was also the Feast of S. Alexis.

S. Alexis, Metropolitan of Russia, was born in the year 1293. He was chosen Metropolitan by the Grand Duke Simeon the Proud, and was ordained at Constantinople by the Patriarch Timotheus, 1354.

Having occupied the Metropolitan throne of Russia during twenty-three years, and throughout this time proved himself the friend and the counsellor of her sovereigns, as well as the light of the Orthodox Church, he died on the 12th of February, in the year 1378. His relics repose in the monastery of Choudow in the Kremlin.

body was wrapped for burial, the napkin, that was about His head, and, probably, the girding also which was on Him during His Crucifixion. "Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves."

What does the Gospel narrative mean by so much occupying itself with the clothes, no longer necessary to the risen LORD? What does it mean, that our risen LORD leaves and preserves His clothes in the sepulchre so that they might be seen? It means that even the clothes of the LORD were to be among the witnesses of His resurrection. If the Jews should say, that the body of the LORD was stolen by His disciples; if the disciples themselves should think, as Magdalene for a time did think, that the body of the LORD had been removed by some one elsewhere; then His very clothes cry out against the slanderers and teach those who err. Would there have been any time for him who had stolen away the body, to unwind its shroud and the napkin, and then to refold them, and to lay them apart and in order? Why should he, who was removing a buried body, strip it naked, when on the contrary it was more fitting for him to cover the naked body, both for the purpose of its removal and in deference to the opinion of the Jews about touching the bodies of the dead? Thus, even the lifeless clothes of the LORD proclaimed His resurrection.

And we also, who are now assembled here, have come unto the sepulchre of a servant and follower of

CHRIST. And this sepulchre also was opened by an event which it is difficult to suppose could have taken place without the aid of an angelic agency: for the wooden temple under which this sepulchre lay hidden for some tens of years, suddenly fell in during divine service, by its fall causing injury to no one, but only serving to disclose the sepulchre before us. And what do we behold in this open sepulchre? We shall not sin if we say, that *we behold clothes lying by themselves*, not the clothes of the body, but the very body itself, as clothes, as the covering of the immortal spirit, which he has abandoned here, when entering into the life of heaven; we see them lying in order, not thrown down in confusion, nor rent in pieces, that is, we behold a body, which has undergone neither corruption nor decay, but reposes undefiled and peaceful.

What means it then, that the follower of CHRIST in life, imitates Him even after His death, by presenting to us His open sepulchre and the incorruptible garment of His body? As the silent clothes of the LORD proclaimed His resurrection, so also do the silent and uncorrupted remains of this follower of CHRIST, recall to our memory our future resurrection; not as something unknown to us, but which, in the vanity of present life, is often forgotten.

If it were necessary to converse on the immortality of the human soul, and the future resurrection of the human body itself, with an ignorant man; then, in order to give him an idea of immortality, one might

direct his attention to the very substance and nature of that which lives in man and of that which dies in him. That which we see dying, is the visible, material body: and that, which lives in man, is the invisible, ethereal power, which we call the soul. The body itself reveals its own mortality, because it is evidently divisible and corruptible: whereas, the soul, not only shows no sign of divisibility or corruptibility, but manifests an entirely opposite property in the faculty of reasoning, which presents the varied notion of things, in one, indivisible and indissoluble unity, wholly incompatible with the properties of a divisible substance. The body dies while yet in the course of its life, and it certainly dies many times in its parts, daily separating some dead portion of its substance; whereas the soul, during the whole period of life, experiences but one continuous existence. The body participates in life, as if against its will, being brought into movement by the power of the soul, and always weighing it down more or less, by its sloth; whereas the soul even when the activity of the body is suspended by slumber or disease, continues its own life and activity, independent of the body.

We could call as witnesses of the immortality of the soul, the best and greatest part of mankind, whole nations, even from among the most enlightened to the least civilised, so that in this case even error itself may in some way testify to the truth. However sensual may be the ideas of a future life among the followers of Ma-



homet; however rude the notions concerning it current among the heathens; however striking the power of the spirit of darkness and evil over some of them who consider it a virtue to be buried alive for the sake of the dead; still even in this perversion and confusion of ideas and feelings, and in this predominance of the animal and bestial instincts over the human, truth, like the spark in a heap of ashes, is not wholly extinguished,—that truth, that after this present life there exists for man a life to come. If the ancient or modern Sadducees strive to reject that truth, it is only because it hinders them from listlessly enjoying sensual pleasures; for the idea of immortality requires this mortal life to be in conformity with the immortal life of the future.

It would be possible, in order to convince man of a life to come, to force even mute and inanimate nature to speak. For throughout the whole world, it is impossible to find any instance, any sign, any evidence of the total annihilation of however insignificant an object; there is no past which does not prepare for a future; there is no end which does not lead to a beginning; every individual life, when it descends into its own particular grave, leaves therein only its former decayed bodily covering, and itself rises into the vast and invisible realm of life, in order to reappear in a new, and sometimes a better and more perfect garment. The sun sets, to rise again; the stars fade in the morning from the sight of the earthly spectator, and rise again

in the evening ; seasons end and begin ; dying sounds arise again in echoes ; rivers are entombed in the sea, and rise again in springs ; the whole universe of earthly vegetation dies in autumn, and revives in spring ; the seed dies in the ground, and therefrom arises the herb or the tree ; the creeping worm dies, and the winged butterfly rises ; the life of the bird is buried in the inanimate egg, and again rises from it. If creatures of inferior degree are destroyed but to be created anew, and die but to a new life : is it for man, the crown of creation, the mirror of heaven, to drop into his grave, only to crumble into dust, with less hope than the worm, worse than the grain of mustard-seed ?

One might also turn man's attention from outward things to the depth of his heart, and then let him hearken there to the presage of a life beyond the grave. Everything living upon earth, except man, following the instinct of nature, cares only for present life ; except in the case when the presentiment of a future life works as in the worm, which prepares for itself a silken or spidery tomb, hoping to rise in the form of a butterfly ; whence arises that man even when forgetful of his own future life, strives so much for a so-called immortality in posterity ? Is not this bent of the human heart a sprout from the root of true immortality,—an irregular sprout, but one which shows the strength of the root ? Again, every human heart acknowledges, and the nobler it is the stronger does it love goodness and truth, notwithstanding that in the

present life goodness and truth often suffer from malice and injustice: where then in human nature is the origin of this deep recognition of the worth of goodness and truth, or of conscience, if not in the deepest most intimate consciousness of that kingdom of goodness and truth which borders upon this present life by means of the grave?

But perhaps I am wrong to speak of this though even in a passing manner to Christians, for whom the future resurrection needs no investigation or proofs whatever, as a fact of certain, confirmed and acknowledged experience. "For if we believe," says the Apostle Paul, "that JESUS died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in JESUS will GOD bring with Him."<sup>1</sup> "But now is CHRIST risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."<sup>2</sup> If any one having this proof of the resurrection should choose to perplex himself with doubts as to how it can be accomplished, when the manner of destruction of many dead bodies seemingly leaves no room for the hope of their restoration; then the same Apostle not only empowers me to solve this difficulty by a consideration, grounded on the nature of known things, but moreover empowers me to express indignation against a doubt, which is an offence against faith, and does no credit to the intellect which has devised it. "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sow-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 20.

est not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain; but GOD giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body.”<sup>1</sup>

Methinks that it is not necessary to explain, or to prove immortality, resurrection, and the life to come, but only to remind you of these important subjects, which, as may be observed, are for a long time of less interest to many than the veriest trifles.

The Apostles call themselves “witnesses of the resurrection”<sup>2</sup> of CHRIST, though their ministry was to bear witness not of His resurrection alone, but also of His whole doctrine. So important do they deem the truth of the resurrection to be. And indeed as soon as this truth is confirmed, so soon is also confirmed thereby the truth of all that which our LORD did and taught. But inasmuch as the truth of CHRIST’s resurrection is important to faith, the truth of our resurrection is important to our life. When this truth is confirmed, all the rules of a holy and godly life become firmly established in us.

“Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.”<sup>3</sup> This precept which the Apostle pronounced in derision of those who either know not, or would not know of the resurrection of the dead, and which seems worthy of the moral philosophy of irrational beings, if they had the privilege of philosophising, this same

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 36—38.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 32.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 32.

precept would indeed have become the whole wisdom, morality, and law of mankind, if the thought of a future life had been taken away from them. In such a case be not angered, my neighbour and brother, if thou also wouldst have become the prey of those who love to eat and drink, for if it is not worth while to reform one's own life, since "to-morrow we die," still less is it also not worth while to spare another's life, which to-morrow the grave shall swallow. Thus a forgetfulness of a life to come leads to an oblivion of all virtues and duties, and transforms man into a brute or beast.

O man, inevitably immortal, though thou thinkest not of this, and even desirest it not. Be careful not to forget thine immortality, lest forgetfulness of immortality become a deadly poison even for this thy mortal life, and lest that immortality forgotten by thee, slay thee to all eternity, should it suddenly come upon thee, unawares and unprepared.

Say not in despair, "to-morrow we die," to rush the more headstrong in search of the pleasures of this mortal life; but say with hope and fear, "to-morrow we die" upon earth, and shall be born either in heaven or in hell; and so must we hasten to plant, and strive to nourish and strengthen in ourselves the germ of a birth unto heaven, and not of a birth unto hell.

What is the beginning and germ of a heavenly birth? The Word, and the Spirit, and the Power of the risen CHRIST, Who is both our resurrection and

life. Receive this divine seed of eternal life through faith, plant it in thy heart with love, deepen it by humility, keep it warm by prayer and divine meditation, feed it or water it with tears of contrition, and strengthen it by virtuous deeds.

In order to destroy in thyself the seeds of the tares of an unholy life, and to live at length with the pure and full life of the risen LORD, thou must die to everything which is not His life, that is, thou must do nothing contrary to His will; thou must not live to the world and the flesh, to thy desires and lusts; thou must not set thy heart on wealth, nor be puffed up by worldly pride. With Paul, "count all things but dung, that thou mayest win CHRIST, that is, the righteousness which is of GOD by faith," or the righteousness "by faith, that thou mayest know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death," that thou "mightest attain unto the resurrection of the LORD."<sup>1</sup> If thus thou wilt live and thus die, then shalt thou also, leaving in the grave thine earthly, corruptible garments, receive in heaven new ones, washed white in the blood of the Lamb, and on His marriage-day thou also shalt "be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."<sup>2</sup> Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 8—11.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xix. 8.

## SERMON X.

*CHRIST IS RISEN!*

**Easter Sunday.**

**WE** have already passed some of the solemn and significant hours of the greatest of feasts. The question arises in our mind,—do we sufficiently understand the very first moments of to-day's solemnity? Let us turn from this bright day unto the past night, dark in its commencement, but afterwards not less bright than day, and let us meditate on what has taken place.

At midnight the Church hastened to gather us together for the beginning of the solemnity. Why at that hour? Because it was desirable to bring the time of the beginning of the solemnity as near as possible to the time when that which was solemnised occurred, that is, the resurrection of **CHRIST**. This hour itself is not perfectly known to us. When the holy women at sunrise came to the sepulchre of the **LORD**, it was already open, and the Angels proclaimed the resurrection of **CHRIST** as already accomplished. Long ere this the earth had been shaken around the

LORD's sepulchre, the Angel had rolled back the stone from the grave, and had by the glory of his presence terrified the sentinels so that they fled, leaving to the holy women and to the Apostles free access to the sepulchre. Still earlier then did the resurrection take place, since it was accomplished even while the grave was still sealed up, as the treasurer of CHRIST's mysteries, the holy Church, bears witness. Yet not before midnight took it place, because, as the LORD had foretold that three days were to elapse, therefore it could have happened but in the first hours after midnight of Saturday. It is during these hours that we desire to await that unrevealed moment, that matchlessly bright and wondrous instant of the resurrection, so that by the hour of the beginning of our celebration, we might as far as possible identify ourselves with the celebrated event, as we are called to become one with the Author of the feast.

Immediately before entering into the triumph of CHRIST's resurrection, we have sung the canticle of His three days' resting in the grave. Wherefore this? Firstly, here also does the order of commemoration follow the order of the commemorated event, since the resurrection of CHRIST followed His three days' burial. Secondly, immediately before this same gladness, the excitement of a pious sorrow was to prepare us for a more correct and a clearer comprehension, and living sense of the divine gladness which followed it.



We opened the solemnity by a canticle in which we confessed that the resurrection of CHRIST was being sung by the Angels in heaven; and then we prayed for grace to be able to glorify it with a pure heart; and this canticle was previously proclaimed in the closed sanctuary, when the church was yet silent. What signifies this rite? Here also we see the order of events. The Angels knew and glorified the resurrection of CHRIST before men, for men learned it first from Angels. Heaven was not manifestly opened unto earth when CHRIST invisibly opened it by the power of His cross, and at His resurrection led into it the patriarchs, the prophets, and the saints of the Old Testament to the sounds of the glorification of Angels. By faith and not by sight do we know of this solemn procession of the Church of Heaven, and that our knowledge of it may not be too dark, and the shadowy image of it by the Church on earth not too lifeless, we have need to pray CHRIST the LORD for His grace and a pure heart, for "the pure in heart shall see GOD."<sup>1</sup>

Having besought the risen CHRIST Himself for aid to glorify Him worthily, we began to glorify Him with uncommon rites. Leaving the altar and the temple, we stood in darkness towards the west, before the closed doors of the church, and there we sang the first glorification of the Holy Trinity and of the risen CHRIST. The censer and the cross opened unto us

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. v. 8.

the doors of the temple, and then we entered from outward darkness into its inward light, and there we surrendered ourselves unrestrainedly to the joy of the feast. We see here such unusual things, that they might be considered unbecoming if we did not suppose in them some secret and deep significance. What is that significance? The same which has already been partly pointed out. In the visible acts of the Church upon earth there is as far as possible delineated the image of the invisible triumph of the Church in Heaven.

It is the ancient and sublime law of the Divine Service of the Church that it should represent the image of heavenly things. Thus does the Apostle Paul write of the priests of the Old Testament, that "they serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things."<sup>1</sup> And the Christian Church is nearer to the heavenly one than that of the Old Testament. The Church of the Old Testament offered in most parts foreshadowings of the advent of heaven upon earth, that is, of the Incarnation of the SON OF GOD; the Christian Church, after CHRIST'S Advent upon earth, should above all represent the time when He, in the words of the Prophet, "hath ascended on high, hath led captivity captive;"<sup>2</sup> or to speak more clearly, when He captured the captives and the slaves of hell, and led them into freedom and bliss; when He "received gifts for men," that is, when by His death on

<sup>1</sup> Heb. viii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm lxxviii. 18.

the cross He had acquired for men a right to the gracious gift of the HOLY GHOST.

The resurrection and the ascension of CHRIST began not from His grave only, but even from hell: for after His death on the Cross, He was as our Church confesses: "in the tomb bodily, in Hades spiritually, as GOD; He descended even into hell and there destroyed reigning darkness." Until then, although the patriarchs, prophets, and just men of the Old Testament were not plunged in deep darkness, wherein sink the unbelieving and the unjust; yet they emerged not from the shadow of death and enjoyed not perfect light. They possessed the principle of light, that is faith in the CHRIST to come; but only His advent and the touch of His divine light could light up their lamps with the light of true heavenly light. Their souls, like the wise virgins, were near to the door of the heavenly mansion; but the key of David alone could open this door, and the heavenly Bridegroom alone could enter it and lead along with Him the children of the feast. And therefore the SAVIOUR of the world, after He had been crucified and died to this visible world, descended into the invisible world, even unto hell, illumined there the souls of the faithful, led them out of the shadow of death, opened unto them the door of paradise and heaven, and then again in this visible world He "showed the light of His resurrection."

Do you perceive now how the Church links the in-

visible with the visible and shadows out the one by the other? As if along with the inhabitants of the invisible world,—in the west, in the darkness of night, as if in the shadow of death, we stood before the locked doors of the temple, as before the closed gates of paradise. And thereby the Church designs to tell us that thus it was before the resurrection of **CHRIST**, and it would thus eternally have remained without that resurrection. After this the glorification of the Most Holy Trinity and of the risen **CHRIST**, the Cross and the censer opened unto us the doors of the temple, as well as the gates of paradise and heaven. By these symbols the Church says unto us: Even thus do the grace of the Most Holy Trinity and the Name and Power of the Risen **CHRIST**, faith and prayer, open the gates of paradise and heaven. The tapers burning in our hands did not only symbolise the light of the resurrection, but at the same time they reminded us of the wise virgins, inciting us to be ready, with the light of faith, with the oil of peace, love and charity, to meet the second and glorious Advent of the heavenly Bridegroom in the midnight of time, that we may find the royal doors open unto us.

These are some of the symbolizations of today's mysterious teaching of the Church. Let us be attentive, my brethren, that we may also be faithful to the mystic instruction of our Mother the Church.

Glorifying CHRIST risen for our sake, let us at the same time look up with a contrite heart to CHRIST, Who was crucified for our sake, Who has suffered, died, and been buried, that our joy may not forget itself and become foolish. He alone possesses the perfect, absolute gladness of CHRIST's resurrection, who is risen himself inwardly along with CHRIST and who has the hope to rise up triumphantly: and this hope belongs but to him, who takes his share in the Cross, in the sufferings and death of CHRIST, as the Apostle teaches: "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection."<sup>1</sup> "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."<sup>2</sup> A festive gladness, which grows forgetful of the Cross and death of CHRIST calling upon us to crucify the flesh with its desires and lusts, is in danger—to end in the flesh that which was begun in the spirit, and to convert those who celebrate CHRIST's resurrection into such as crucify Him a second time.

Following the angels we have entered into the triumph of CHRIST's resurrection; together with the patriarchs, prophets, and just men, we have united symbolically therein, and as into paradise and heaven we were led into the Church for the solemnity.

Reflect then of what nature ought to be our feast! It should resemble that of the angels; it ought to be

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 17.

worthy of the communion of the heavenly Church of the patriarchs, prophets, and other saints ; it ought to be worthy of paradise and heaven. Think not that this demand is too great and difficult for our infirmity. He who celebrates this feast with a pure heart, celebrates it together with the angels. He who celebrates it with love to GOD and to the Risen CHRIST, and in a spirit of brotherly love to his neighbour, celebrates it in communion with the Church of heaven, for heaven is no other than the kingdom of divine love ; and if, as affirms S. John, "GOD is love ; and he who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in GOD, and GOD in him,"<sup>1</sup> then certainly he dwells not lower than paradise and heaven. But if it is not very difficult to elevate oneself to the celebration of the feast in communion with the angels and the Church of heaven, then to our sorrow, it is even as easy to fall off, and to withdraw from their communion. He who merges his spiritual gladness and buries it in carnal joy, no longer celebrates it together with the angels. He who so absorbs himself in earthly things, that he forgets those of heaven, is no longer one with the Church of heaven. He who strives not to preserve himself from sinful works, does not celebrate the feast together with the saints. He who does keep up and feed his inward light, but neglectfully suffers it to grow extinguished, has no great hope to find open to him the royal gates of the heavenly man-

<sup>1</sup> S. John vi. 16.

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sion, although he sees even upon earth the royal gates of the sanctuary open.

O CHRIST our SAVIOUR!. Who art glorified in heaven by the angels and the blessed souls of holy men! *Grant to us also, to glorify Thee upon earth with a pure heart.* Amen.

## SERMON XI.

### *THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD, AND HIS FUTURE ADVENT.*

#### **Ascension Day.**

“And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?”—*Act* i. 10, 11.

**B**UT to me it seems astonishing that you, ye men of light, should ask these men of Galilee why they stood gazing up into heaven. How could they do otherwise than look up into heaven, whither JESUS had just ascended, whither their treasure was transferred, whither their hope and their joy were removed, whither their life had disappeared. If they at this time had gazed upon the earth, they might have been asked, as should be all the followers of JESUS CHRIST, who gaze upon the earth with partial eye,—Why gaze ye upon the earth? What can ye be seeking on earth, after that your and her only Treasure, found in Bethlehem, scattered abroad throughout all Judea and Samaria, which passed through the hands of wicked men at Gethsemane, in Jerusalem and Golgotha, was



hidden under a stone in Joseph of Arimathea's garden, —and is now at last taken and carried into the treasury of heaven? You have been told, and so it must be, that “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also;”<sup>1</sup> and therefore if your treasure is in heaven, then your heart must be there also; and thither should your looks, your thoughts, and your desires be directed.

The “two men in white apparel,” who immediately after the ascension of the LORD appeared to the Apostles, and asked them why they stood gazing up into heaven, were without doubt themselves inhabitants of heaven, therefore it is not to be supposed that this was displeasing to them, or that they desired to direct the gaze of those men of Galilee elsewhere. No. They desire only to put an end to the inert amazement of the Apostles, when saying, “Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?” Having aroused them from their amazement, they draw them into meditation, and teach them and us with what thoughts we should gaze into heaven, following our LORD JESUS Who hath ascended thither. “This same JESUS,” added they, “which is taken up from you into heaven, shall come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.”

Although our LORD had many times after His resurrection appeared to the Apostles, and become again invisible, and thus habituated them in some

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. vi. 21.

measure to these miraculous manifestations, nevertheless, when parting from them on Mount Olivet, He did not simply withdraw Himself, or become invisible, but ascending visibly above the clouds, became invisible to them only by reason of His immeasurable elevation from them. There is no doubt then that this new way of withdrawal from them appeared to them extraordinary, and peculiarly significant even after their former experience of miracles.

They then beheld the exact fulfilment of His words which Mary Magdalene had recounted to them, "I ascend unto My FATHER and your FATHER, and to My GOD and your GOD."<sup>1</sup> They could not but conclude that those joyful visitations by Him, those instructive conversations with Him, that palpable communion between them and His divine humanity during the forty days, were at that moment ended. When neither hand nor voice could any longer reach Him, they followed Him with their eyes, eager to detain Him, "they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up." We can conceive what an immeasurable bereavement the Apostles must have felt after the ascension into heaven of JESUS Who was all and everything in the world to them; and it is this very bereavement for which the heavenly powers hasten to console them, when telling them that "this same JESUS, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall come."

Christian, if thou hast at all known the LORD JESUS,

<sup>1</sup> S. John xx. 17.

and "dost taste and see that the LORD is good,"<sup>1</sup> surely thou must more or less perceive what a blank the whole world is without Him, and feel how void is thy heart when He is absent.

And so it should be ; for all that is in the world is but "vanity of vanities,"<sup>2</sup> and vanity cannot satisfy the heart, created for truth by Truth itself ; "for all that is in the world is lust," an object of, or attraction to lust, under various forms ; and as "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof,"<sup>3</sup> or in other words, the objects which excite lust disappear, so however great the world, however varied its good things, however abundant the sources of its pleasures, they cannot fill that small vessel of the human heart, which being immortal, can only be satisfied by immortal life. If, sensible of this emptiness of created beings, it appears to thee that the LORD, Who is thy truth, thy life, thy desire, and the fulness of all thy desires, withdraweth Himself from thee, hideth His face, and leaveth thee not only without comfort, but even in tribulation, not merely alone, but in the very midst of the enemies of thy salvation ; if thy wearied sight cannot pierce the clouds covering the heavens, and the inscrutable ways of the Most High furnish thee nothing but uncertainty, then receive from the heavenly powers the word full of might, which is able to fill the void of thy heart, to lighten thy sorrow, to put

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xxxiv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Eccles. i. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 1 S. John ii. 16, 17.

an end to thy loneliness, to clear away the darkness, to solve all uncertainty, and to quicken thy spirit by a hope neither delusive nor corruptible, "This same JESUS, which is taken up from you into heaven," shall come.

And to this same comforting and redeeming testimony of the future Advent of the LORD, the heavenly messengers add some information, as to the manner in which this Advent shall take place. They tell us, that the coming of the LORD shall be in the same manner as was His going, or rather His ascension, "He shall come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Surely the heavenly heralds speak not idly, as we earthly beings sometimes do, but in a few simple words deliver a grand precept to those who are attentive. Let us then attend.

"He shall come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." In considering the circumstances of the ascension of CHRIST into heaven, we may first note the blessing which He then gave to the Apostles, "And it came to pass," says the Evangelist Luke, "while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."<sup>1</sup> This circumstance of His ascension into heaven, and parting with His chosen ones, the LORD Himself will recall to the memory of His Disciples when "He shall come in His glory," and meeting them again shall invite them to an actual participation in His kingdom, for "then

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xxiv. 51.

shall the King say to them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My FATHER."<sup>1</sup>

What an endless current of the grace of CHRIST is thus revealed unto us, Christians ! The LORD begins a blessing, and before its completion, ascends into heaven ; " for while He blessed them,—He was carried up into heaven." Thus, even after His Ascension, does He still continue invisibly to impart His blessing. It flows and descends continuously upon the Apostles ; through them it is diffused upon those whom they bless in the Name of JESUS CHRIST ; those who have received the blessing of CHRIST, through the Apostles, spread it among others ; and thus do all who belong to the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church become partakers of the one blessing of CHRIST and His FATHER, " Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in CHRIST."<sup>2</sup> " As the dew of Hermon, that descended upon the mountain of Zion,"<sup>3</sup> so does this blessing of peace descend upon every soul that riseth above passions and lusts, above vanity and the cares of the world : as an indelible seal, does it stamp those who are of CHRIST, in such a manner that at the end of the world He will by this very sign call them forth from the midst of all mankind, saying, " Come, ye blessed !"

And now, my brethren, let us consider, how needful it is for us to endeavour to gain now and to preserve

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xxv. 31, 34.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. i. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm cxxxiii. 3.

this blessing of the Ascended LORD, which descends upon us also through the Apostles and through the Apostolic Church. If we have received and preserved it, we shall, at the future advent of JESUS CHRIST, be called together with the Apostles and the saints, to participate in His kingdom: "Come, ye blessed!" But if, when He shall call "the blessed of His FATHER," this blessing either be not found in us, or we be found in possession only of the false blessing of men who themselves have not inherited the blessing of the Heavenly FATHER by grace and in the sacraments,—then what will become of us? Yea, I say unto you, let us consider and ponder on this while we may.

Another circumstance to be noted in the ascension of the LORD, when we imagine to ourselves this expected coming, is, that the LORD ascended in the presence of the Apostles, visibly and solemnly. "While they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight."<sup>1</sup>

What kind of a cloud? A cloud of light and glory, like unto that which once overshadowed the tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon. There they saw the glory, but not the LORD of glory; afterwards they saw Him, but not in His glory; and therefore they did not recognise Him, nor did they glorify Him. But here, neither does the glory hide the Glorified, nor does the Glorified One hide His glory. The Apostles beheld the glory of the ascending LORD: the Pro-

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 9.

phet also saw and heard it, when he himself solemnly exclaimed: "GOD is gone up with a shout, the LORD with a sound of a trumpet."<sup>1</sup> Thus when the heavenly heralds announced to us that He shall come in like manner as He was seen to ascend into heaven, they give us thereby to understand, that He shall come visibly and solemnly. So also did the LORD foretell of Himself, "that the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him."<sup>2</sup> So also does the Apostle explain that the "LORD Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of GOD."<sup>3</sup>

But wherefore, some may think, need we note these particulars which seemingly are more calculated to excite curiosity, than to afford instruction? for prophecy was granted, that we might know and receive with faith, an event ordained by GOD; but who is there that will not recognise the glorious Advent of CHRIST, even though he be not previously acquainted with the particulars thereof? Be not too hasty, my beloved, in concluding that these particulars are unnecessary. No! The Apostles, the Angels, the LORD Himself, tell us nothing for the sake of curiosity alone, but every word is for instruction. That the second coming of the LORD shall be a visible and solemn one, was foretold unto us, because there would be those who would tell

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xlvii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. xxv. 31.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 16.

us the contrary, when a spirit of deceit shall be sent forth upon unworthy, unfaithful, and corrupt Christians." "The hour will come," or the time of temptation (perhaps "it now is") "when they shall say: Lo, here is CHRIST, or there! Behold, He is in the desert! Behold, He is in the secret chamber!"<sup>1</sup> Behold, He is with us, say the sectarians, who, having left the city of GOD, the spiritual Jerusalem, the Apostolic Church, flee not into the true solitude of peace and silence, but into a spiritual and sensual waste, where neither is there healthy doctrine, nor sanctity of sacrament, nor good principles of private and social life. Lo, He is with us, say they who nourish heresy in secret,<sup>2</sup> pointing to their covert assemblies, as if the sun could shine only under the earth, or as if it was not the LORD Who hath said and commanded: "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in the light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops."<sup>3</sup>

When ye shall hear such clamours and whisperings, remember, Christians, the angelic voice and its preaching regarding the ascended LORD: "He shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven," just as visibly, just as solemnly. And therefore, "if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is CHRIST, or there; believe it not." Neither violent clamours

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xxiv. 23, 26.

<sup>2</sup> See Note at the end of the Volume.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. x. 27.



nor crafty whisperings resemble either the voice of the archangel, or the trump of GOD. "Go not forth," in the footsteps of those who shall call you from out the city of the LORD; remain in your places, and preserve your faith, until the true, glorious, and solemn coming of CHRIST.

The third remarkable circumstance in connection with the Ascension of the LORD, is, that it was unexpected and unforeseen by His disciples. It happened, as far as we can learn, from the short accounts of the Gospels, in this way: Having appeared to them at Jerusalem, as He had done many times before, and when going away in their company, He conversed with them, as usually, concerning the kingdom of GOD, and especially of the approaching descent of the HOLY GHOST, as is written: "And He led them out of Jerusalem, as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."<sup>1</sup> Not only did He by His will not apprise them of that great event, but even when questioned as to the time of the great events of His kingdom, positively refused to give them the desired information, "He said unto them, It is not for you to know the time or the seasons, which the FATHER hath put in His own power."<sup>2</sup> His refusal to grant the knowledge of the times and seasons, evidently relates also to the time of the future Advent of CHRIST, and

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

<sup>2</sup> Acts i. 7.

is especially connected with it. He had previously warned His disciples, how unexpected this event would be, by comparing it to lightning, which is in nature the most striking instance of perfect suddenness. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."<sup>1</sup> And in like manner doth the Apostle explain this: "The day of the LORD cometh as a thief in the night."<sup>2</sup>

From this same unexpectedness of His second coming, our LORD Himself draws for us, Christians, a saving warning: "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your LORD doth come."<sup>3</sup> Do not be led away by curiosity, or credulity, when Christians, thinking to know more than CHRIST hath granted them to know, would number the days of His kingdom, and determine the time of His expected coming: "it is not for you to know the times or the seasons;" endeavour rather to know your sins, to number your transgressions, and to seek a limit to them in repentance. Above all things, take heed, when you hear the blasphemers, foretold by the Apostle, saying: "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."<sup>4</sup> Take heed, that the gloomy dreams of those sons of the world, who shut their eyes to the light of the world to come,

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xxiv. 27.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. v. 2.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. xxiv. 42.

<sup>4</sup> 2 S. Pet. iii. 4.

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do not darken your hearts, blind your minds, or lull your spirits into sleep, till the approach of that longed for and dreadful hour, "when the day of the LORD so cometh as a thief in the night."<sup>1</sup>

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless."<sup>2</sup> Amen.

<sup>1</sup> 2 S. Pet. iii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> 2 S. Pet. iii. 14.

## SERMON XII.

### *ON SETTING THE AFFECTIONS ON THINGS ABOVE.*

#### **Ascension Day.**

“While they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”—*Acts* i. 9.

**WHILE** the eleven Apostles beheld, the LORD was taken up. Without witnesses, He arose from the dead; but in the presence of witnesses He is taken up into heaven. The sealed-up grave in the rock hid the glory of the resurrection, during the moment of its accomplishment; a light, transparent cloud reveals the glory of the Ascension when it takes place. Why this difference? Perhaps it was inasmuch as the LORD's resurrection, after His descent into hell, was a progress from hell to paradise, there was then no place for earthly witnesses, and it behoved the patriarchs and prophets alone, who had departed this earthly life to be witnesses of it; but the LORD's Ascension, as a progress from earth to heaven, might naturally be witnessed by the Apostles, standing on this earth, and looking up towards heaven.

Besides, it was sufficient to see the risen LORD, after His resurrection, in order to bear testimony to the resurrection itself: whereas the Ascension in earth-born flesh into heaven needed to be actually seen, in order to be testified to. Is it possible the carnal mind will say, that earth-born flesh could ascend into heaven? We answer: there is no need to speculate on the possibility of the fact, after its having been seen and testified to by men, who refused not to face death in testimony of its truth. "While they beheld, He was taken up." But was it only for the conviction of unbelievers that the LORD allowed His Ascension to be witnessed? Doubtless also to encourage the faithful. "If ye then be risen with CHRIST," says the Apostle, if,—let us also add,—you have seen Him ascending into heaven, and would take part in that new triumph,—then "seek those things that are above, where CHRIST sitteth on the right hand of GOD. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth."<sup>1</sup>

What is meant by setting one's "affections on things above?" Is it not true, that these words are not sufficiently clear? And if thou dost not understand them, thou must needs willingly or otherwise, acknowledge that thou doest it not, that is, thou dost not "set thy affections on things above:" for he who so does, knows what he is doing. If thou settest not thy affections on things above, thou wilt not as-

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 1, 2.

pend on high, where "CHRIST sitteth on the right hand of GOD." But if thou dost not ascend on high, where CHRIST sitteth on the right hand of GOD, bethink thee, man of earth, what will become of thee, when the heavens and the earth shall pass away, and nothing remain but the kingdom of CHRIST—and hell! See, how the earth crumbles under thy feet, and hell opens before thee: there is no other way of salvation but to hold, with thy whole might, on things above. You must learn to "set your affections on things above, and not on earthly things."

*Learn to set one's affections!* Let no man be afraid at this demand. Let him not suppose that he will have to encounter those varied and multitudinous difficulties with which he must inevitably meet in the path of worldly knowledge, and amongst which must be numbered the very means to the acquisition of so-called earthly wisdom,—as for instance, crowds of teachers, each maintaining his peculiar doctrine and refuting that of his neighbour,—numbers of books, often hurtful to the mind, as well as to the eye, by their dusty contents. Fear not. Learning to "set your affections on things above," in the sense of the Gospel, is not the same as learning worldly wisdom. The setting of our affections on things above, does not so much depend on outward means, needs not so much assistance, is not so beset with difficulties as the seeking of the worldly wisdom; though it also profits by external means, does not reject assistance, and is

not free from difficulties of its own kind. The same Apostle who gave us the command "to set our affections on things above," availed himself of the means and assistance of worldly wisdom, having been "brought up at the feet of the learned Gamaliel:" but he subsequently rejected all this as well as other privileges, counting them as "loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD,"<sup>1</sup> in order that he might win CHRIST; and consequently grew in affection for things above,—notwithstanding that he, at the same time, rejected the means and assistance afforded by worldly wisdom. The other Apostles had merely learned to knit fishermen's nets, and not to unravel the sophistries of books; but this in no way hindered them from strengthening themselves in affection for things above, and even becoming teachers thereof to the wise themselves. So was it after the time of the Apostles: Basil the Great acquired Athenian wisdom, and subjected it to the service of the wisdom of the Gospel. Arsenius, also Great, though master of the whole range of Greek and Roman learning, deemed himself ignorant enough to learn of an aged, unlettered Egyptian, who was wise enough to teach him the first elements of spiritual wisdom. And thus, this setting of one's affections on things above, though still high for the philosopher, is yet at the same time, simple enough for babes. "For Thou, O FATHER, LORD of heaven and earth, hast

<sup>1</sup> Philip. iii. 7, 8.

hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”<sup>1</sup>

What then does it mean to “set one’s affections on things above?” I repeat: if you do not understand this, then evidently you do not practise it. And if thou dost not set thy affections on *things above*, then undoubtedly thou settest them on things on earth; and this, consequently, thou knowest. Now, what dost thou, when thou settest thy affections on things on earth, as for instance, when thou settest thy mind on becoming wealthy? Thou wishest for wealth,—often thinkest of it,—devisest means to acquire and to increase it; thou puttest in practice these means, and whatever thou doest, thou doest with a view to attain and increase wealth, and in the possession of wealth thou placest thy happiness. Bearing this example in mind we may say in general terms, that to “set our affections on things on the earth,” is to wish for earthly things, to think of them, to practise them, to keep them in view, to place our happiness in their possession. Change the object, and you will perceive what it is to “set our affections on things above.” It means, to wish for things above, that is to say, for heavenly things; in other words, for that which is spiritual and divine; to think of heavenly things, to practise them, or in the words of the Gospel, to “work the work of God,” to have heavenly things in view, and to place our happiness therein.

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xi. 25.



How difficult!—some will think,—to have heavenly things in one's mind, one's heart and actions; for this an earth-born man must change his works, desires, and even his thoughts. I do not deny that this is necessary, and that to do this is not quite easy. But what is to be done? It is more difficult to ascend a height, than to fall into an abyss. Is it therefore better to fall into the abyss?

It is difficult to set our affections on things above! but is it not also hard to set them on earthly things? Has the covetous man, for instance, a light task before him? He labours day and night; deprives himself of food and rest; sometimes quits his home, wanders far away from those near to his heart; travels by land and crosses the sea; descends into the bowels of the earth; now tortures himself with the thirst of gain; now with anxiety for its preservation; now with the fear of a possible loss; now with despair at a real one.

If we can endure such cares in the hope of enriching ourselves upon earth with a treasure corruptible and which we can enjoy but for a short time,—is not the hope of obtaining a heavenly treasure, a treasure incorruptible and eternal, worth an effort on our part? It is indeed difficult for earth-born man to set his affections on things above; howbeit, does not even the grain of wheat, buried in the earth at thy feet, set its affections on things above, in its own way? It germinates, it shoots through the earth upwards, striving against the earth's weight and against its own; it

grows higher and higher ; and ever tending heavenwards, flowers and brings forth fruit. Dost thou really suppose, that mortal man is endowed with less vigour than this grain of wheat, to rise heavenwards in his own way ?

It is indeed difficult for earth-born man to set his affections on things above ; but stay,—art thou, O man, only of this earth ? Is *that* the man which is taken from the dust, and which will return unto dust again ? Is it not merely thy clothing, or, if thou wilt, thy prison ? But thou, thyself, the true man, thou art the breath of life, proceeding from GOD's own lips, as it is said : “ He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ; and man became a living soul.”<sup>1</sup> And thus, if it is hard for thee, as one earthly born to set thy affections on things above, is it not easy for thee to do so as one heavenly born ? Is it difficult for the flame to rise upwards, towards its natural region ? Is it difficult for the stone to fall downwards upon the earth whence it came ? Is it difficult for the human spirit to soar heavenwards, towards the Most High ? If the fall of the old Adam has changed man's yearning for things above into a longing for things that are on the earth and under the earth, have not the resurrection and ascension of the new Adam, the GOD-MAN, JESUS CHRIST, restored with two-fold might this longing into its original direction, and planted a ladder heavenwards ?

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 7.

Has not the descent of the HOLY GHOST, kindled in man a spiritual flame, naturally tending upwards, and drawing heavenwards that wherein it dwells? Do you still find it difficult to set your affections on things above, even though in order to do so it be necessary for you to change your deeds, your desires, your thoughts?

But how can we abandon earthly works, desires, and thoughts whilst surrounded by that which is earthly, while that which is earthly is indispensable to our earthly life? Do but observe how we abandon things heavenly, for things earthly, and we shall find it very easy to put aside earthly things for things heavenly. Thou limitest the time employed by thee in works of piety, in order to have more time for worldly things; sometimes thou goest into the Church of God, but in the meantime thou art thinking of that which engages thy mind at home; and sometimes even, while standing bodily in the house of prayer, thy thoughts are attracted elsewhere, by thy worldly affections, or by the passions which rule in thee; even thy very spiritual exercises are tainted by fitting worldly thoughts! Now do the very reverse. Do the works necessary to your earthly existence; but endeavour not to extend them beyond the necessary; and strive to liberate thyself as much as possible from such labour, in order to become free for works of piety. Restrain thy thoughts from earthly things not only when standing before God in His

temple ; but wherever thou art, when obliged to busy thyself with earthly things, turn away thy thoughts and desires from them, and lift up thy heart unto heaven and GOD. When thou settest about worldly affairs, remember GOD, and ask for His blessing and assistance ; when thou goest to rest, remember GOD, and return thanks unto Him for His assistance in thy labours, and for the gift of rest. Thus we may unite every earthly work, not contrary to the law of GOD, with a love of things above, and, so to say, change earthly and visible things, into things heavenly and spiritual. “When thou lookest upon the sun,” says S. Macarius, “seek the true Sun, for thou art blind. When thou stretchest thy gaze upon light, turn towards thy soul, and see whether thou hast there the true and blessed light, that is the LORD.”<sup>1</sup>

May the light of our LORD JESUS CHRIST illumine, may His Spirit strengthen each of us, and may our walking according to His Word, and His Life, lead us all here upon earth to set our affections on things above, and thereby conduct us to the blessed contemplation of Him in heaven, where CHRIST sitteth on the right hand of GOD. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> S. Macarius, Discourse xxxiii.

## SERMON XIII.

### *ON THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST.*

#### **Pentecost.**

“And they were all filled with the HOLY GHOST.”—*Acts* ii. 4.

**A**FTER man had fallen, and, no longer able to endure the uncreated light, “hid himself from the presence of the LORD GOD,”<sup>1</sup> and GOD had withdrawn Himself from man, lest He should annihilate the transgressor by His holy presence, then was it that He Who is One in Three Persons, did of His ineffable mercy once more draw nigh unto alienated man, in successive revelations, “that the grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST,”<sup>2</sup> might raise up, and once more elevate the fallen one. In promises of love and mercy the FATHER revealed Himself and brought the sinner, awed by the decree of Almighty justice, under the mediation of the SON Who appeared under the form of humanity, and having overcome sin in His own self, and vanquished death, opened unto

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

the children of wrath the door of the grace of the HOLY GHOST; under the sign of "tongues like as of fire," the HOLY GHOST at last appeared, and penetrated human nature in the Apostles, so that the good will of the FATHER and the merits of the SON might be applied to it, and "that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature."<sup>1</sup> On the very same day on which the law of "the spirit of bondage to fear death,"<sup>2</sup> was given of old on Mount Sinai, on that same day has now come forth from Sion, "the law of the Spirit of life, of freedom, the Spirit of adoption," that we might understand, that "the law of righteousness," which had not been attained by the worldly Israelites, can be attained by the children of faith, "who walk after the Spirit,"<sup>3</sup> and that the company of the elect go on in preordained course, to perfection.

We must therefore look upon the descent of the HOLY GHOST, not only as upon a miracle which glorified the Apostolic Church, but also as upon an event, which is essentially connected with the work of our salvation. The present festival is not merely a commemoration of the past, but also a continuance of the Apostolical preparation for receiving the SPIRIT which ever "breatheth where it listeth."<sup>4</sup> The Apostles, as

<sup>1</sup> 2 S. Pet. i. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 15, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. x. 31; viii. 4.

<sup>4</sup> In the English authorised version, this passage is rendered thus: "The wind bloweth where it listeth" (S. John iii. 8), but in the Slavonic the words *wind* and *bloweth*, are rendered *spirit* and *breatheth*.

we are told in the book of the Acts, after having continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, “were filled with the HOLY GHOST;” and not only the Apostles themselves, but according to S. John Chrysostom the disciples also who were with them, of whom “the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty,<sup>1</sup> were all filled.” And now the Church unites us also in this temple, as it did then, in the upper room at Jerusalem, to invoke the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, to come and to make His abode in us. That so great a supplication might not meet with the old reproach, “Ye know not what ye ask,”<sup>2</sup> let us first consider, brethren, what it is “to be filled with the HOLY GHOST,” and in what measure this gift is necessary to all and every one of us.

We will not venture here to speak of the HOLY GHOST, as of the Third Person of the adored TRINITY, proceeding from the FATHER and abiding in the SON; for the “SPIRIT of GOD alone searcheth the deep things of GOD.”<sup>3</sup> The SPIRIT “which is sent by the SON from the FATHER”<sup>4</sup> in saving gifts,—the SPIRIT, which filleth man, and man who is filled with the SPIRIT,—these are the subjects, which it is given to man to understand; and yet not to every man, but only to him in whom the SPIRIT abideth; and we, who have scarcely “the first-fruits of the SPIRIT,”<sup>5</sup> may only contem-

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 15.<sup>2</sup> S. Mark x. 38.<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.<sup>4</sup> S. John xv. 26.<sup>5</sup> Rom. viii. 23.

plate from afar, in the mirror of GOD'S Word, the manifestations of this great mystery.

What the HOLY GHOST is in His first gifts, the HOLY GHOST Himself explains to us by His "tongues of fire." He is a spiritual, immaterial fire, working in two ways,—through light and warmth,—through the light of faith and the warmth of love. This heavenly light, as Solomon says, "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."<sup>1</sup> It dissipates the gloom of ignorance and doubt; it reveals the delusion of phantoms, which the mind, sunk in sensuality, not unfrequently mistakes for truths; it enables man to see himself in the nakedness of his fallen nature, to perceive the world in its relation to the soul, and to feel the presence of GOD as the source of light; it imparts "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."<sup>2</sup> In the same measure in which the light of the Sun of Righteousness increases in the mind, does the heart also acquire warmth and fervour. Divine love drives from the heart the love of self; it destroys therein the thorns of carnal desires; it purifies and disencumbers it, and in return attracts a new light unto the soul. The fusion of these first spiritual gifts forms that "tongue like as of fire" which proclaims "the law of GOD" the word in the heart<sup>3</sup> of man, "forms CHRIST in him,"<sup>4</sup> and regenerates him unto spiritual life.

<sup>1</sup> Prov. iv. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxvii. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xi. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. iv. 19.



The means by which man is filled with the gifts of grace is the one and indivisible working of the HOLY GHOST: and yet this action of the Spirit may both begin and cease in man; it may diminish or increase, tarry or hasten; it takes various directions and forms; it is always in proportion to the readiness of the recipient, but never depends on his arbitrary will; it is accompanied by palpable results, but shuns the mind which desires to penetrate its source. Spreading outwards from within, it is like unto the dew, which invisibly contained in the atmosphere, descended upon the fleece of Gideon, and manifested itself in drops of water, which filled a bowl;<sup>1</sup> or unto the wind, which is seen only in the motion that it causes, but not in the causes which produce it. "The spirit breathes where it lists, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."<sup>2</sup> What then are the most remarkable changes that indicate the workings of the Spirit of GOD in the soul of man? There are moments, when even the man abandoned to the world and the flesh awakens from the fascination in which they enthrall him; he sees clearly, that his past life has been a chain of errors, infirmities, sins, and faithlessness towards GOD; that his deeds are naturally the seeds of future punishment; and that even his very virtues will not stand the test in the sight of the eternal Judge; he condemns himself,

<sup>1</sup> Judges vi. 38.

<sup>2</sup> S. John iii. 8.

trembles throughout his whole being, and despairing of himself, is through this same despair led to put his trust in GOD.

What can be this disposition to repentance, if not that "great and strong wind which rent the mountains," and brake in pieces the rocks,—(that is to say, which puts down pride and softens hard-heartedness)—that great and strong wind, which the LORD sent forth before Him as He passed?<sup>1</sup> What else can it be but that mighty wind which announces the descent of the HOLY GHOST? What else can it be but that fear of the LORD with which we have been with child, which we have been in pain with and received the Spirit of salvation?<sup>2</sup> Blessed is he that yields obediently unto such an impulse of the Spirit of GOD. It will lead him by the "narrow way"<sup>3</sup> of self-renunciation; it will make him root up that which he has sown before, and demolish that which he had built up; it will teach him to suffer, and to "rejoice in sufferings,"<sup>4</sup> and to "crucify his flesh with its affections and lusts,"<sup>5</sup> that he may fully yield his spirit into the hand of GOD. By degrees the mighty wind will change into those "groanings which cannot be uttered," and by which the "Spirit itself maketh intercession for us,"<sup>6</sup> into that living voice with which "He cries in our hearts, Abba, FATHER;"<sup>7</sup> and then does man

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xix. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xxvi. 18.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. vii. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Col. i. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Gal. v. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. viii. 26.

<sup>7</sup> Gal. iv. 6.

fulfil CHRIST's commandment of *unceasing prayer*, which had he been left to his own efforts, would have been quite impossible for him, both by reason of his tendency to be led astray, and by his ignorance of the subject and form of true prayer : "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought."<sup>1</sup> In close connection with the exercise of constant prayer, is spiritual solitude, during which the Christian "entering into his closet, and shutting the door," continues, like the Apostles, to "wait for the promise of the FATHER."<sup>2</sup> He does not abandon himself to those pleasures, in following which the lovers of the world become bound by vain conventionalities, and pursuing delights, and pursued by cares, seldom come to themselves ; but he is found "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of CHRIST,"<sup>3</sup> he either raises all his desires heavenwards, "where his life is hid with CHRIST in GOD,"<sup>4</sup> or pacifies them within himself, where grace will at last reveal the kingdom of GOD. He fulfils the duties of his station, without becoming engrossed with its advantages ; enjoys the good things of this world, without becoming attached to them ; gains them like one who needs them not, and parts with them, as if they were superfluous.

If a man is but firmly resolved to abide as much as possible in this state of self-denial, then very soon will "his wilderness and solitary place blossom as the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Acts i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. x. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Col. iii. 3.

rose."<sup>1</sup> *The grain of mustard seed which is cast into the garden* of his soul, "will grow and wax a great tree"<sup>2</sup> through the corrupt covering of the old man, hourly more and more put off; the "new man, which after GOD is created in righteousness and true holiness"<sup>3</sup> will shine forth, and the spirit of holiness will breathe in all his abilities and acts.

Thus does a man filled with the HOLY GHOST afford unto every eye not darkened by prejudice, an image of perfection, before which vanishes like a shadow all that the world calls beautiful and sublime. To such, my brethren, did the Apostle refer when in speaking of some of the soldiers of the faith, he said, "of whom the world was not worthy."<sup>4</sup> Grace transforms into a priceless treasure everything in the man devoted to it, and everything with which it comes in contact. In his mind shines the spirit of wisdom,—not of that wisdom in which the sons of this world excel "in their generation,"<sup>5</sup> as the LORD said, which teaches them to be ready in means, and clever in opportunities of acquiring temporal advantages, and to increase their worth, not so much intrinsically, as in the opinion of others, but that wisdom "which spiritually discerneth all things,"<sup>6</sup> in order to turn everything into a means of obtaining solely the eternal welfare of the soul. His will is moved by the spirit

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxxv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 9, 10.

<sup>3</sup> S. Luke xvi. 8.

<sup>4</sup> S. Luke xiii. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. xi. 38.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 15.

of freedom, "for the law of the spirit of life in CHRIST JESUS, hath freed him from the law of sin and death," which imposes upon its slaves as many hard masters as there are wants and desires, passions and habits. In the depth of his heart abides the spirit of consolation and of "peace which passeth all understanding,"<sup>1</sup> which "JESUS CHRIST gives" unto His Disciples, "not as the world giveth it,"<sup>2</sup> for the peace of the world is but a short slumber, broken by the sound of threatening storms; a state of security founded on ignorance, so that the joyful exclamation, "peace and safety" is at times interrupted by "sudden destruction;"<sup>3</sup> whereas the peace given by CHRIST is grounded on the sure hope of reconciliation unto GOD, so that the Christian in the very midst of his trials, sorrows, and dangers, "faints not," but yields himself up peacefully even unto death, assured that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."<sup>4</sup> In him abides also a sublime spirit which is neither a blind audacity, nor pride decked out in ostentation, nor the lustre of natural virtues, impure in their source, but a true sublimity of thought occupied with GOD, a vastness of view bounded by eternity alone, a nobleness of feeling born of, and nurtured by the Word of GOD; a spirit of lowliness, which amidst the treasures of divine goodness discerns in its

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xiv. 27.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. v. 3.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 17.

own self nothing but poverty and unworthiness, the more to "magnify the LORD;" whilst on the contrary they who are not born of the Spirit of GOD, are ever striving to find in their very defects something great, by their very abasement are seeking consideration, fawning on some to oppress others; a spirit of might with which the Christian is no longer that weak man, the captive of his own feelings, exposed on every side to attacks of the enemy, vanquished before the battle, and when subduing one passion, becoming the slave of another; but a faithful soldier "clad in the whole armour of GOD,"<sup>1</sup> "who can do all things through CHRIST which strengtheneth him,"<sup>2</sup> "and taketh by force the kingdom of heaven."<sup>3</sup> And what shall we say of those extraordinary gifts, of those signs of the Spirit which are given to the elect of GOD, for the benefit of others, and for the edification of the whole Church?

What unexampled bliss to be the vessel, the abode, the instrument of the Spirit of GOD! What heavenly happiness on earth! What a mystery, in which is hidden all that the spirit of man is in search of, and after which "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain."<sup>4</sup> But who, O LORD, "hath believed our report," and "to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?"<sup>5</sup> "Flesh and blood revealed not"<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. vi. 11.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. xi. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. liii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. iv. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. viii. 22.

<sup>6</sup> S. Matth. xvi. 17.

this mystery. The world thinks that in heaven itself breathes the spirit of this world, and having already oftentimes heard the voice of Thy Spirit, O LORD, do now, even as of yore, continue to revile it, saying, "these men are full of new wine."

Very true. There are some even among Christians, to whom the gifts of the HOLY GHOST seem so strange, that although they dare not entirely reject them, they nevertheless refer them to other persons and to other times, and without acknowledging the necessity of being "born again," content themselves either with a vain hope in the merits of the Mediator, or even with their own righteousness.

Let us not be deceived by the tempting aspect which worldly honesty generally bears. To be no enemy to faith, to do no crying injustice, to make an occasional display of charity, to avoid pernicious excesses, in short, to fulfil merely the most indispensable and outward duties of a man and of a member of society, is but to whiten one's sepulchre, which nevertheless remains "within full of dead men's bones;"<sup>1</sup> it is to pluck the "leaves of the tree of life," given for the "healing of the nations," but not to "eat its fruit,"<sup>2</sup> which should feed the Christian; it is to have "the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees," which does not lead into the "kingdom of God."<sup>3</sup> But to penetrate into the recesses of one's own heart, from

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xxiii. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. v. 20.

which "proceed evil thoughts,"<sup>1</sup> and there to establish purity and holiness, "to keep the whole law," and not to "offend in one point," in order not to be "guilty of all;"<sup>2</sup> who is the man, that left to his own understanding and powers, will boast of being able to do this? It is GOD alone Who "creates in man a clean heart, and renews a right spirit within him."<sup>3</sup> We must "be born again," in order to "see the kingdom of GOD."<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, although the incorruptible seed of this heavenly birth was brought down unto earth by the death of the GOD-Man JESUS,<sup>5</sup> still we cannot leave all the rest to the power of His merits, however unlimited they be. How is this? Did GOD then deliver up His SON as a sacrifice not only to His own justice, but also to our ingratitude? Was the reality of the Sacrifice of the Cross made known to us in order that we might remain the more thoughtless and inactive? To think thus is not to exalt the merits of CHRIST, but rather to lower them, and to rest on them with the same pernicious thoughtlessness as once the Jews "rested on the law." If we have been baptized in CHRIST, then let us, in accordance with that confession, manifest in ourselves the fruit of baptism, not by water only, but by the Spirit, for CHRIST "baptizes with the HOLY GHOST and with fire."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xv. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm li. 10.

<sup>3</sup> 1 S. Pet. i. 23.

<sup>4</sup> S. James ii. 10.

<sup>5</sup> S. John iii. 3.

<sup>6</sup> S. Matth. iii. 11.



Finally, when the Divine gift of the Spirit appears to us to be but seldom manifested, let us not on that account infer that it does not exist for all. It is for us all as long as all are for it. If its presence is no longer perceived, then it is either because though we have eyes yet we do not see ; or is it indeed because the question, “when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?”<sup>1</sup> is near its solution, and the world itself is come to its last gasp? The universe knows what became of it when GOD said in His wrath, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he also is flesh.”<sup>2</sup> Then was it that not only lawless mankind, but all creatures subject not of themselves to vanity were destroyed by the revenging flood.<sup>3</sup> One more such threat,—and there comes the fiery deluge of the last judgment.

But as long, Christians, as GOD preserves our existence, and the welfare of His Church, so long need we not doubt that the Spirit of GOD abideth in it. Even as at the time of the creation of the world, “the Spirit of GOD moved upon the face of the waters,”<sup>4</sup> so is it moving even now, during the continued restoration of man, upon *the deep* of our disordered being, and by its quickening power ensures his regeneration by grace. Let us yield ourselves unto His Almighty will ; let us turn our thoughts and desires from the flesh and the world unto Him ; let us, out of the

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xviii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. vi. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. i. 2.

depth of our fallen nature cry unto the Holy One, that He should come unto us, and by the grace acquired through the mediation of the Redeemer, should cleanse, enlighten, regenerate, sanctify, and save our souls. Amen.

## SERMON XIV.

### *ON BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.*

#### **Pentecost.**

“Be filled with the Spirit.”—*Ephes. v. 18.*

**T**HE soul of every feast is the presence of him whom we honour. Therefore to those who are commemorating the feast of the **HOLY GHOST**, what can be more desirable than that this heavenly Comforter should crown that feast by His gracious visitation.

O that He would, if no longer in the form of tongues like as of fire irradiate our heads, at least touch our hearts with the mysterious spark of His holy fire, and warm them by a sense of the presence of **GOD**, like as of old He warmed the hearts of the two disciples who were “slow to believe,” so that those same hearts were able at least to trace the presence of the **LORD**; “Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?”<sup>1</sup> This is so great a blessing, that I know not whether we even

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xxiv. 31.

dare to ask for it of the Treasury of blessings without an inward shudder, and a certain degree of amazement at our own boldness : although the Church, it is true, both daily, and every time at the beginning of our prayers, invites us to pray unto the HOLY GHOST that He should not only *come*, but *take up* His abode in us.

But that, my brethren, which appears to us so difficult even to wish for, how simply and how abundantly does the HOLY GHOST now offer unto us through the lips of the Apostle ; nay, not only offer, but command, exhort, and ordain as a law,—“be filled with the Spirit.”

How blessed, but how wonderful, how inscrutable a commandment dost thou give us, O divine Paul,—“Be filled with the Spirit.” But does it then depend upon our own will to be filled with the Spirit ? If this treasure be so near and so accessible, why is it then so rare and so little known ?

Christians, among our Ephesian co-disciples, to whom the Apostle of the Gentiles first addressed that instruction which we are now considering, there certainly was not one who did not understand him, or who could have opposed to him those doubts which we now feel. Had it been otherwise, the divinely inspired teacher would have doubtlessly anticipated the question by an elucidation. So did those who of old *thirsted*, know the way, once indicated by the prophet in the words, “Ho, every one that thirsteth,

come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come; buy wine and milk without money, and without price." But now it appears as if we "spent money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not."<sup>1</sup> It seems to us as if the LORD set too great a price upon His bounties, and as if it were not our hands that are too weak to hold those spiritual gifts, but rather His own had become shortened in the distribution of them.

Nay, the LORD doth bountifully "pour out His Spirit upon all flesh."<sup>2</sup> If we are not "filled with the Spirit," it is not because His gifts are wanting, but because we ourselves are wanting to them. Let the poor in spirit be comforted. Let those who are weak in the flesh take courage. Let the LORD be justified in His words.

There was a time when the Apostles, pre-eminently the temples of the HOLY GHOST, were not conscious of Him Who abode in them. They were already in possession of the gift of miracles, but yet they knew not the source, nor could they perceive the direction, of that power which was working in them. The spirit of love manifested itself in them as a spirit of wrath, and they who were called to be ministers of salvation were ready to command the fire of destruction to come down from heaven. He Who was *Truth* itself thus convicted them of this strange igno-

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lv. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Joel ii. 28.

rance of themselves, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."<sup>1</sup>

Hereafter, when this same Spirit, which in the beginning had worked in the Apostles with mysterious power, having visited them in His solemn descent and filled them with knowledge and wisdom, they then came to know this same Spirit so plainly, so intimately, that they could clearly distinguish it from their own spirit, as well as from that universal spirit working in the natural man, not yet regenerated by the Spirit of God, and which had perhaps formerly worked in themselves also. "Now," says one of them, "we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."<sup>2</sup>

Let us note, my brethren, that the Apostle does not say, "the Spirit was given to us," but "we have received the Spirit." As if he would say, "It is known that God *gives* His Spirit to every one who is disposed to *receive it*. But men are mostly enslaved and blinded by the spirit of the world. *Now we* have thrown off the dominion of this dark spirit, and have received into our souls the light-bearing influence of that *Spirit* which proceedeth *from God*, and thereby the knowledge and consciousness of the gifts pre-ordained unto us by God were made manifest in us. 'Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke ix. 54, 55.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 12.

might know the things that are freely given to us of God.' ”

Thus, if you believe not us, unworthy servants of the Word, then believe those chosen instruments, the messengers and heralds of the Spirit of God, that notwithstanding there always is a certain amount of independence and freedom of action in man, he not only may be, but generally always is under the guidance of one or the other of these two principles,—*the spirit of the world*, or *the Spirit of God*, according as he freely receives the influence of the one or the other of them. If you seem not to experience this in yourselves, it is only a sign that “ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.”

In order that I may bring these mystical relations of the spirit of man to the Spirit of God, as near as possible to the understanding of you all, let me make use of a parable, or a simile, in which even Divine Truth frequently clothed itself in order to manifest itself unto the eyes of man, who is always more or less sensual. The infant in the womb has its own soul and life; but its life is so to say in the life of its mother, is penetrated and nourished by it; so that, compared with the fully developed existence of a man, it can hardly be called life; here then you have an image of the condition of the natural man in this world! His spirit has its own existence and freedom; nevertheless, being in the flesh it is enveloped and imperceptibly governed by the power of the world; he

thinks, but he does so after the rudiments of the world ; he desires, but he does so under the influence of the all-powerful, in this world, “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life ;”<sup>1</sup> he acts, but only in the narrow and low sphere of the sensual ; he lives, but after the spirit of the world, “being alienated from the life of GOD.”<sup>2</sup> However the confinement of the infant in the womb is not the final intention of nature, but only a means and a way by which the infant is led into full being, and it will come into the light to see the world’s beauty, to taste of its good things, and to learn to know its Creator : such also is the highest destiny of the spirit of man wrapped up in the flesh and confined in the world : “Ye must be born again ;”<sup>3</sup> ye must, for this, according to the will of GOD, is not the fortuitous lot of a few, but a confirmed law and a predestined state for all mankind, a state for which all natural life is but a preparation and a state of transition. The captive of this world must be “brought out of his prison,” that “he may praise the name of the LORD,”<sup>4</sup> that he may be “enlightened by the light of CHRIST, and taste of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come,”<sup>5</sup> while yet in this present world ; to receive in this world “the Spirit which is of GOD,” to begin, even upon earth, to breathe the atmosphere of heaven. And as the new-born infant,

<sup>1</sup> 1 S. John ii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> S. John iii. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. vi. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. iv. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. cxlii. 7.



detaching itself from its mother's existence, has no difficulty in seeking out its new life, but carries within itself the germ of growth, which is ever developing and perfecting, and everywhere around finds the atmosphere necessary for its respiration; thus also man, withdrawn from the world by Grace, and called to birth from above, is nearer to the sphere of his new life than he thinks: for it is we alone who may be far from the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of God cannot be far from us. This Spirit "goes through all spirits,"<sup>1</sup> as Solomon says, being inaccessible in its Holiness, and omnipresent in its Grace. It is poured upon every power and faculty which submits to its influence, and in the very heart of the old man it opens a fountain of a new life: "He that believeth on Me," the Giver of the Spirit said, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this," adds the beloved disciple, explaining the words of the heavenly Teacher, "but this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive."<sup>2</sup> Finally, here is the important difference between natural and spiritual birth: the former is achieved and completed by a necessary process of nature, whilst the latter is attained by a free aspiration towards God, by faith in CHRIST, "He that believeth on Me," as the Scripture hath said, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And wherefore whole *rivers* from one belly, when one drop of the fulness of Grace sufficeth to quicken thou-

<sup>1</sup> Wied. vii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> S. John vii. 38, 39.

sands of spirits? For this reason, as the Scripture hath said, that the unbounded wealth of Grace might be manifested, by which the HOLY GHOST not only filleth, but overfloweth the measure of our readiness to receive Him; and, so to say, giveth us more than we are able to receive.

Is it for us, then, children of faith, not to acknowledge the presence of the HOLY GHOST among us, and to ask of His dominion, Where is it? And yet even before His solemn descent upon the Church, the children of the law felt His Omnipresent and Almighty power so forcibly, that nowhere could they hide themselves and rest, from a feeling of reverential awe: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?"<sup>1</sup> exclaimed David. Is it for us to doubt how the free action of the spirit of man can still exist while under the unceasing influence of the Almighty Spirit? And yet in the time of Job, it was already known, that there is "a spirit in man;" and the inspiration of the Almighty "giveth them understanding."<sup>2</sup> Need we also call to mind our own confession, so often renewed by us at the call of the Church, by which, while drawing nigh unto God in prayer, we proclaim the Omnipresent and all-filling might of His Spirit? *Everywhere present, and filling everything!*

"Filling everything!" But why then are not all filled with Him? It is evident we must question ourselves upon this.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxxxix. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Job xxxii. 8.

Can we "be filled with the Spirit," when the flesh unceasingly warring against the spirit finds in us no check to its dominion? If in the satiety of the flesh, in its pleasures, its enjoyments, we extinguish even the innate hunger of our spirit for the Word of God, and its thirst after righteousness; if we live only in the flesh, in which, as a man of God assures us from his own experience, there "dwelleth no good thing:"<sup>1</sup> in such a case we are willingly hurrying ourselves towards the fearful judgment of God, pronounced upon the first world: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh."<sup>2</sup> "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."<sup>3</sup>

Can we be "filled with the Spirit of God, whilst we are animated but by the spirit of this world, whilst we fill our mind with its earthly wisdom alone, enliven our imagination with its charms alone, excite our hearts solely with its passions, govern our will but by its laws, strive by our deeds to please it alone. Can we be filled with the Spirit of God if our better feelings, our virtues even, are infected by the pernicious breath of the spirit of this world, our love by partiality, deference by adulation, nobleness by pride, industry by avarice, charity by ostentation, dignity by

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. vi. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. vi. 7, 8.

contempt of others, great actions by ambition? They only can "receive the Spirit which is of God, who have not received the spirit of the world," or have driven it out by "loving not the world, neither the things that are in the world."<sup>1</sup>

Can we "be filled with the Spirit" whilst we are still so engrossed by ourselves, that there is not in us even one spot free and pure enough, in which even one drop of that "living water," which through the length and breadth of time and space, "is springing up into eternal life,"<sup>2</sup> might fall and not be changed into mire through our self-love and our sinful impurities? Our uncleanness is a dam which separates us from the flood of the living water of the Spirit of the LORD, which like unto the waters of the spring-time, are "sent everywhere to create" new life, "and to renew the face of the earth:"<sup>3</sup> but this is not a manifestation of the wrath, but rather of the mercy of GOD, that these waters do not break through into unworthy souls; for the holy and sanctifying water of life, falling on that which is unclean, would break out into an all-devouring flame.

Therefore let not those murmur against the HOLY GHOST, who though having renounced with their whole might, the flesh, the world, and themselves, come unto CHRIST with a spiritual *thirst* and yet *do not drink* of the fountain of blessings, do not feel in

<sup>1</sup> 1 S. John ii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> S. John iv. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. civ. 30.

themselves the comforting presence of Grace, sanctifying and regenerating them,—or having felt it for a time, lose it again. It is written in the Gospel, that once when JESUS CHRIST Himself was preaching “of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him should receive, the HOLY GHOST was not yet received, because that JESUS was not yet glorified.”<sup>1</sup> In another place He tells His disciples that even after their constant following of Him, they must first be tried by the loss of His visible presence, and then only be admitted to the mysterious communion of the HOLY GHOST: “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.”<sup>2</sup> And even after His resurrection, when “all power was given unto Him in heaven and on earth,” the Apostles needed fifty days of “patience and unanimous prayer and supplications”<sup>3</sup> to be purged of all that is worldly, and finally be filled “with the HOLY GHOST” alone, and begin to live in this fulness. Only when thus purged of all this did they become worthy to keep the great feast of GOD. Perhaps, unto you also, who are desirous of following CHRIST after the manner of the Apostles, but who do not feel in yourselves the “anointing of the Most Holy,”—perhaps unto you also is “the HOLY GHOST not yet given, because JESUS is not yet glorified” in you; perhaps you have

<sup>1</sup> S. John vii. 39.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xvi. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Acts i. 14.

as yet received Him only as a *Prophet*, bearing the word of GOD on His lips, but have not as yet dedicated yourselves unto Him, as unto the Priest, that He may, in the communion of His universal sacrifice, raise you up also as a pleasing offering to His FATHER ; perhaps you have not yet exalted Him as a *King*, so that no desire, no thought, should arise in you without His will. Perhaps if you “know and seek CHRIST” more “after the flesh”<sup>1</sup> than after the Spirit, *it is expedient* for you also that the blessed Bridegroom should be taken away from your souls for a time, in order that the loss of spiritual comfort might purify your faith, exalt your love, fortify your patience, incite your prayers, expel dangerous self-gratification, and prepare for you a double bliss.

But they in whom “the anointing,” by a mysterious hand, if not yet felt, has at least commenced, “need not that any man teach them ; but the same anointing teacheth them of all things.”<sup>2</sup> But what shall we do, we who live only in the flesh and blood ; and who “cannot inherit the kingdom of GOD ?” What will become of us, who are dead in the spirit, cold and dry, like the bones dispersed in the valley in Ezekiel’s vision ? “Can these bones live ?”<sup>3</sup> asked GOD of the prophet, wishing to send down on them His quickening Spirit : “He who wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 S. John ii. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Ezek. xxxvii. 3.

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and live," doubtless looks down on these spiritual skeletons also, with the same compassion, and with the impatient desire, if we may thus speak, that they may be quickened by the HOLY SPIRIT : " Can these bones live ? O LORD GOD, Thou knowest." And now, O LORD, say Thou Thyself, what Thou saidst of old to Thy prophet ; for there is none among us who can say it : say Thou Thyself unto these bones : " Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live ; and ye shall know that I am the LORD !" Amen.

## SERMON XV.

### *DEATH THE WAGES OF SIN.*

#### **Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.<sup>1</sup>**

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.”—*Rom.* vi. 23.

**T**HERE was a time when the very name of sin was as terrible to Christians as curses or punishments. The Apostle James wishing to crush at a stroke the pride of a man who gloried in the knowledge of truth, though living after the flesh, simply says that it is a sin to him. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”<sup>2</sup> In our days there are many who shudder at the name of dishonour, loss, or death, but this enlightened age is no longer haunted like a ghost by the fear of sin. Is it thus that the saying of the prophet concerning the kingdom of the MESSIAH is accomplished in us, “to finish the transgressions and to make an end of sin?”<sup>3</sup> Alas! we do not make an end of sin as we do of an old garment which we

<sup>1</sup> Preached in the year 1811.

<sup>2</sup> S. James iv. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Dan. ix. 24.



cast away when putting on a new one, but it is with us like an inveterate disease in which the sense of pain becomes deadened by time, and which we at length hardly distinguish from a state of health.

This dangerous condition is still further aggravated by the unfortunate short-sightedness with which we contemplate merely the seducing shape under which sin appears before our eyes, but do not realise its true qualities, nor perceive its consequences. What are our failings, our woes, our death? People say these are but natural imperfections, the consequences of accident, strokes of fate. And thus it is that our self-love finds it easier to blaspheme GOD, than to detect the source of evil in our own selves.

The righteousness of GOD, my Christian hearers, needs no justification on our part, whereas our own unrighteousness must be laid bare before GOD, to obtain justification from Him. To this end therefore let us in accordance with the present lesson from the Apostle, lay bare as far as we can the inevitable connection between sin and death, "for the wages of sin is death;" and to the baneful allurements of a sinful state let us oppose the advantages of a life by grace, "the gift of GOD is eternal life, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD."

"GOD," says the wise Solomon, "made not death."<sup>1</sup> Out of the fountain of life, could there flow anything but life? Having called nothingness into life, He

<sup>1</sup> Wisd. i. 13.

gave unto this same life a law according to which it was to work good, and it is the fulfilment of this law which in itself is life. The noblest object of creation, man, was endowed with that freedom which consists in the power to obey the law, through the conviction of its perfection, and through love for the Law-giver, and which consequently does not exclude the possibility of transgressing the law, and it is such wilful transgression of the law that is sin. But inasmuch as the creature having overstepped the limits prescribed by the wisdom and grace of the Creator, became unable to rise to supreme perfection, which, being in itself a nullity, it is not only unable to give, but even to restore to itself; its deviation therefore from the law is necessarily a lapse into a lower state of action, a state of disorder, destruction, and *death*. This was the path through which "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."<sup>1</sup> It enters like a thief, and rages like a robber, strips naked, enslaves and destroys. Man, by the triple relation of his actions to himself, to his neighbour, and to GOD, may enjoy a threefold life,—a natural one as the inhabitant of the visible world, a social one as a member of society, and a spiritual one as a being created "a little lower than the angels;"<sup>2</sup> but sin imposes the tribute of death not only upon natural life, but upon society, and even upon the immortal spirit of man. "The wages of sin is death."

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm viii. 5.

In his first state of innocence man was immortal as to his body as well as to his soul. The creatures subjected to his sway were dependent on certain natural changes, yet in such degree that neither their lord nor they themselves suffered from it. But scarcely had sin overcome this lord of theirs, than rebellion arose in his realm as well as in himself, by the inscrutable justice of God, and wickedness, may be, would soon "have destroyed every living substance from off the face of the earth,"<sup>1</sup> had not the merciful LORD accorded some space between sin and its fatal consequences, as a means for penitence and grace. Meanwhile, Divine Providence so ordained that death should pursue and chastise sin in various ways, and in such proportion to its progress and power, that its own brood should become an obstacle to its influence, and that the blinded sinner might nevertheless easily discern in it his foe and destroyer.

To show you the effect of this Divine judgment, I will not point to the primitive world suddenly engulfed by the flood for its wickedness, nor to those ancient towns which by the cry of their lusts brought down on themselves the fire of heaven; nor to those graves of lust which the luxury of the Jews dug for themselves in the barren desert, or the like. He who has eyes to see, may without searching through ages or centuries, always and everywhere see the sword of God raised against wickedness, in nature herself, or

<sup>1</sup> Gen. vii. 4.

in the ordinary course of human affairs. Do you not see how death, in the words of the prophet, "comes up into your windows,"<sup>1</sup> pervades every sense and faculty in the same measure as we open them to sin? See you not how the cup of worldly pleasures pours, if not a quick poison, certainly a slow one, into the lips of intemperance; how avarice does not so much fill the treasury with gold, as the heart with torment; how one wrong evokes, if not justice itself, then some other wrong; how craft falls into the pit which it digs for others, and how "bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days?"<sup>2</sup> See you not how the most subtle abuse of our natural faculties sharpens against us the very same weapons; how pride killeth reason; wisdom, "which does not like to retain GOD in its knowledge, GOD giveth it over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;"<sup>3</sup> and how the thunder of misfortune from time to time strikes self-love the very root of sin? And when GOD, "Who desireth not the death of a sinner," says of Himself, that He "visiteth the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation;"<sup>4</sup> does not this mean that sin having once gained unlimited possession of man, becomes implanted in his very nature, develops its power together with that life which man gives unto others;

<sup>1</sup> Jer. ix. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm lv. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. i. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. xxiv. 7.

and if this hereditary yoke be not shaken off, exacts its wages from his children, his grandchildren, and his great-grandchildren.

But if in this or some similar way the deadly disease of one is able to infect many, is it to be wondered at that death, its consequence, can also befall tribes and nations, like as it does individuals? Social life took its rise at the word of GOD spoken to the first human couple, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it."<sup>1</sup> Here we see neither division nor destruction, wherefore then are civil bodies transient and sometimes even beyond measure shortlived, if not from the same cause as that which renders man mortal? The wane of our love towards our country, and the decrease of mutual sincerity among the members of a community are followed by a debility and disorder in its acts; luxury, by destroying its true well-being, torments it with imaginary wants; ambition and injustice raise up against it foreign and native enemies; in its faith and piety it either preserves or loses the stability of its laws, the incitement to activity, the fear of iniquity, the reward of noble deeds, the pledge of its security, in short, its life and soul. And if thou, O my right faithful fatherland, outlivest thy neighbours and enemies without waxing old, then bless the righteousness and faith which the LORD of Hosts hath granted unto thee as an element of long life. Without them no nation can expect any better fate than that of

<sup>1</sup> Gen. i. 28.

the beloved but unfaithful, to GOD, children of Israel. "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?"<sup>1</sup> exclaims the Prophet Ezekiel. It is in vain, that after having forsaken the way of truth, thou fanciest "that the way of the LORD is not equal;"<sup>2</sup> vainly dost thou hope to evade His judgment; thou art destroying thyself through thine own iniquity. "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" If the wicked sometimes do "live, become old, yea, are mighty in power,"<sup>3</sup> this is either their last requital, which they shall receive for the remnant of their virtue, or the last effort which is to rob them of the remainder of their strength. A corrupt but powerful society is like a man in a burning fever, his vigorous and rapid movements are the effect of disease, and often the precursor of death. The royal prophet saw and described the fate of triumphant iniquity,—“I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.” But how long did this sight last? “Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not.”<sup>4</sup>

Howbeit all the inflictions which pursue iniquity, both in natural and in social life, are but reminders, or as it were foretastes of death, which is inseparable from sin. “For in the day that thou eatest of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt surely die.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xviii. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. viii. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Job xxi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm xxxvii. 35, 36.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. ii. 17.

You know that Adam lived nine hundred years upon earth after he had eaten of the forbidden tree ; is it possible that in this case the word was not fulfilled which saith, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled?"<sup>1</sup> No ; Adam *died* in fact on the very day of his sinful fall ; he died as to his intellect, which having formerly partaken of divine light, became darkened by sensuality ; he died as to his will, which lost the power of tending upwards towards spiritual truth ; he died as to his heart, which fell from the height of heavenly love and bliss, and was dashed into as many pieces as there are earthly enjoyments ; he died as to his powers, which from that time forth were able to produce only *dead works*.<sup>2</sup> What then are we born in sin, and too eagerly enriching ourselves through this inheritance of Adam's,—what are we "in the body of this death,"<sup>3</sup> but living corpses in our graves ? This death is the more deadly, because the less felt, and more dreadful than all other deaths which we see and know. For these kill temporary things, but that—eternal ones ; the former are themselves temporal, the latter may be eternal. The grave, says a certain Christian teacher, (Tertullian,) is a refuge from death, but not for him who dies in sin ; for on the other side of the grave a *second death*<sup>4</sup> awaits him, or rather the development of the first death in all its horrors.

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. v. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. ix. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. vii. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. xxi. 8.

Let us understand, my hearers, what we have to fear. If the sword is dreadful, how much more so is he who wields it; if death, which does not so much strike man as it does sin, is terrible, how much more so is sin which begets death. But seeing that fear is a useless tormentor, when it is not a loving monitor, let us not be slow in giving to our heart, seduced by sin, some worthier object of affection, and let us gather around it, as far as we are able, all our scattered powers, like the sad fragments of a shipwreck, into a secure harbour. What a quickening light does heaven send into the hell that is within us. And how soon does the shadow of death flee before it. The GOD of justice and retribution to the just, becomes a GOD of mercy and grace to the sinner. "The gift of GOD is eternal life, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD."

Having found us dead, grace requires not that we should merit life, for that were impossible; grace is found by him who seeks it not, it reveals itself to him who asks it not, it is a gift, not as a reward, it is "the gift of GOD."

But let us mark our sinful blindness. What do we not undertake for the gratification of our vain fancies and lawless desires? We sacrifice our rest to wealth, wealth to honour, and again our honour to rest. We venture into dangers either to derive glory from them, or to plunge some adversary into them; we lead a life of incessant cares, that we may attain some better



condition, which is always receding from us; and seeing our health failing, we go on killing ourselves by excessive efforts to obtain that which we desire. But to cast off the heavy burden of sin, and to take upon ourselves the easy yoke of CHRIST, to snatch our weak heart from the world, and to yield it up into the power of GOD, "which is made perfect in weakness,"<sup>1</sup> to disengage ourselves, and to suffer GOD to accomplish in us His work,—that is difficult, that is beyond our power. Alas! we have more activity and power in our destruction than would be needful for our salvation.

Grace renews and restores unto man all that which is destroyed by sin. It draws down upon him again spiritual life from GOD, its source; it makes him a member of the immortal body of the Church; and when that earthly temple, our body, shall be destroyed, it will prepare for us a divine habitation in heaven,—life eternal.

On the other hand, what is the reward of sin? Let us place ourselves between sin and death, and glancing on the one and on the other, we shall involuntarily repeat the lamentation of the son of Saul, "I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and lo, I must die."<sup>2</sup> I have but tasted a few drops of pleasure, and lo, before me lies a sea of woe. After a few moments of enjoyment there awaits me an eternity of suffering. I have

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. xiv. 43.

not satisfied even the body, yet have I destroyed the soul. "I did but taste a little honey, and lo, I must die."

Finally, grace presents to us an Almighty Giver and a faithful Surety in the person of JESUS CHRIST, the GOD-MAN. He is GOD, for our regeneration can be accomplished only through the power of our Creator, but He is at the same time Man, that we might safely and fearlessly draw nigh unto Him. For He hath made Himself "to be a sin and a curse for us,"<sup>1</sup> to redeem us from sin and its curse, and having bought us with His Blood, He desires that we should receive all things through Him, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Now upon what do we ground our hopes when we subject ourselves to sin? Every time the evil one offers us the forbidden fruit, he promises too much, "ye shall be as gods;"<sup>2</sup> but no sooner have we done his will, than we generally either receive nothing at all, or receive far less than we expected. And wherefore then do we still rely upon this reed, which has already so many times broken in our hand and wounded it; why do we not hasten unto the Great Physician, Who can heal the wounds, both of the body and of the soul? Why do we hold fast unto the earth, which whirls us round along with itself; and why do we not grasp with our whole might the Cross of the Mediator, which is the ladder that leadeth unto hea-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. iii. 5.

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ven? And wherefore, when "the fashion of this world passeth away" so quickly, when "the waters thereof roar and be troubled, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof,"<sup>1</sup> do we not seek refuge from the strokes which threaten us, in the wounds of our SAVIOUR?

O GOD, Who desirest not the death of a sinner, but that he should turn from his wickedness and live, take upon Thyself our sin, lest it exact from us the wages of eternal death; and grant us Thy gift, which is eternal life; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xlv. 3.

## SERMON XVI.

### *ON TOUCHING CHRIST BY FAITH.*

“And JESUS said, Who touched Me?”—*S. Luke viii. 45.*

**WE** are told in the Gospel, that as JESUS was once walking, surrounded by a crowd of people, He became aware that somebody had touched Him, which made Him ask who it was. And when His disciples, who were with Him, answered that the touch might have been an accidental one, occasioned by the throng, and therefore needed no further inquiry, He said that it was no ordinary or common touch, but one which made Him feel that virtue was gone out of Him: “Somebody hath touched Me; for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me.”

When we hear this narrative, and at the same time bethink ourselves that this inquiry was made by JESUS CHRIST, Who is GOD'S Power and Wisdom; then wonder inspires us with the desire to ask in our turn, Is it possible that Thou, O LORD, Who art Thyself Divine wisdom, didst not know who touched Thee? And again, is it possible that Thou, O LORD, Who

art Thyself Divine power, shouldst be so given up into the power of men, that they were able to elicit, to abstract as it were, from Thee that divine virtue without Thy knowledge or acquiescence?

The former of these questions the Apostle Paul will help us to solve, when he tells us, that "JESUS CHRIST being in the form of GOD, thought it not robbery to be equal with GOD;" that is, for Him it was not robbery to be, and declare Himself equal to GOD, because He is the true image of GOD. This same CHRIST JESUS "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men,"<sup>1</sup> that is, He took as really and perfectly upon Himself the lowly and servile form of man, as there lived in Him immutably and unalterably the sublime and glorious image of our LORD and GOD. And in this state of self-abasement, JESUS CHRIST, in the words of S. Paul, "was in all points tempted like as we are," that is, as to our own human infirmities and failings, "yet without sin,"<sup>2</sup> which in itself belongs not to the nature of man, but to that of the devil. And therefore if the Incarnate SON of GOD did thoroughly abase Himself, if He was tempted in all points like as we are, then it is not to be wondered at that He should also have vouchsafed to take upon Himself the likeness of human ignorance, under which He veiled the light of Divine wisdom, and through which that light shone but when it became

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. iv. 15.

necessary for the enlightenment of man. Hence we may understand that it was not unworthy of the divine JESUS to ask those who surrounded Him, "who hath touched Me?" Although His divinity saw, knew, and in a mysterious way revealed to His humanity who it was that had touched Him, He nevertheless was pleased to put this question in order to draw general attention to this peculiar touch, and to its consequences.

Therefore it may be said that JESUS CHRIST Himself offers again unto our consideration our second question; is it possible that He, Who is Himself divine power, should be so abandoned to the disposal of men, that by one single touch they could elicit from Him that divine virtue? Let us then try, as far as we are able, to examine this question, yet not so much out of a desire of knowledge, as according to the direction of our SAVIOUR Himself, Who desires to teach us and to draw us graciously unto Him.

First of all, we must in our present meditation form as true a notion as possible of that incomprehensible virtue with which CHRIST is so filled, that at a mere touch, not only of His body, but even of the very hem of His garment, it flows forth and works miracles. And such a notion is afforded us by the Apostle, when he tells us of CHRIST, "that in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."<sup>1</sup>

Let us study diligently this short but very remark-

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 9.

able definition of the GOD-Man. Divinity is here represented by the Apostle as the plenitude or fulness of all perfection, goodness, and bliss. But as divinity is infinite, then no finite creature can either receive or contain in itself that fulness. And as Divinity and its fulness is spiritual, no mortal creature is able to participate in that fulness. And as Divinity is holy and just, how could man, who is a sinner, approach that fulness without being annihilated by the all-consuming fire of GOD's righteous wrath? And what then does He Who desireth not the death of the sinner? "It pleased the FATHER," says the Apostle, "that all His fulness should dwell in CHRIST," the GOD-Man, "and having made peace through the Blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."<sup>1</sup> It is thus that the infinity of GOD dwelleth in CHRIST and becometh accessible to finite beings; the highest spirituality of GOD dwelleth in CHRIST, and becomes thereby not only accessible to the lower spirituality of the human soul, but penetrates, pervades, and fills with divine power, even the body of His humanity,—"dwelleth in Him bodily; this light which no man can approach unto, this consuming fire," in the words of GOD Himself,<sup>2</sup> dwelleth in CHRIST, and, being tempered by His divine humanity, reveals itself in Him as an open fountain of light and of living water unto man, darkened and dead

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 19, 20.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 16; Heb. xii. 29.

through sin. The humanity of CHRIST is a vessel so full of divine gifts, that at the slightest touch it overflows ; it is the mouth of the divine fountain in which all the inward and hidden fulness of the quickening power of GOD becomes accessible and easy of acceptation ; it is the "live coal,"<sup>1</sup> seen by the Prophet Isaiah in his mystic vision, which once laid on his mouth, penetrated his whole being with its fiery power, and purified and sanctified it.

Let us apply the same to the acts of CHRIST, as related in the Gospel, and we shall really find in those acts the fulness of divine power proclaimed by the Apostle, filling even bodily the GOD-Man, and diffusing itself over all things. He takes in His hand loaves, and His inexhaustible fulness renders five of them sufficient for five thousand men ; He takes clay, and His almighty fulness imparts to that clay the power of opening the eyes of the blind man ; He touches a dead man, and His quickening fulness rekindles in him extinguished life ; He is touched by the woman suffering from an issue of blood, only on the border of His garment, and His infinite fulness reacheth her with its miraculous power, "and immediately her issue of blood is stanchèd," and she is healed.

You see by this, Christians, that Godhead in CHRIST keeps not, we may say, closed, "but openeth His hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing,"<sup>2</sup> that the fulness of divine grace, in CHRIST, is

<sup>1</sup> Isa. vi. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxlv. 16.



ever ready to fill up all deficiencies, to heal every infirmity, to purify every human sin.

The Gospel narrative however shows that not all who outwardly seemed to approach CHRIST partook of His fulness. It shows us at the same time a whole crowd of people following, surrounding, and pressing upon Him, but one woman alone, as touching Him in such a way, that He felt it not with His body but with His divine power. "Master," says Peter and those who were with Him, "the multitude throng Thee." But CHRIST replied, "Somebody hath touched Me." There must then have been something of a mystery in that touch.

It is because of this mystery, Christians, that the LORD put the question: "Who hath touched Me?" It was His pleasure, that we should all of us understand that mystery, that we might touch Him unto our salvation. Let us therefore be attentive to the end of this evangelical narrative, and let us not overlook the lesson, which our heavenly Teacher Himself offers unto all of us, in the instance of the woman suffering from an issue of blood. This woman touched CHRIST secretly, being ashamed to declare to Him her disease, before the whole people; but when His twice repeated question, "Who touched Me?" showed her that the action could no longer remain hidden, she then, though not without agitation, confessed her object and the consequences thereof; "she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto

Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately." And then, the LORD, teaching her, that she be not ashamed of her former infirmity, but that she should rejoice in the healing which she had received, at the same time reveals for the edification of all, the secret of her miraculous touch, " Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole ; go in peace." Faith, then, Christians, is the appropriate medium to approach CHRIST for our redemption ; he who therewith shall touch but His garment, shall attain even unto the innermost power of His divine fulness ; faith is a spiritual magnet, attracting heavenly power.

This mystery is already known, some of these, who hear this, will perhaps say. O, that it were so, Christians ! O, if we but knew the faith which animated the true followers of CHRIST ! O, if we but knew that truly *universal* faith, which in Abel offered up a better sacrifice than that of Cain ; which in Noah pleased GOD and saved humankind from total destruction by the deluge ; which in Abraham offered up as a sacrifice to GOD, an only-begotten son, and enabled him through the distance of many hundred years, to see the day of CHRIST ; which in Moses parted the sea with a rod and led the people of GOD through the deep ; which opened the eyes of the prophets and rendered them witnesses of events to come ; which in the disciples of CHRIST, caused them to leave all to follow Him, in His name to heal every infirmity and

every disease, and to walk with Him upon the waters ; that faith which died not during the dreadful days of His death, which received the promise of the HOLY GHOST that was to come, after CHRIST's Ascension, which in His name ruled all nature, and through patience vanquished a whole world of persecutors ! But what am I saying ? If we could manifest faith, though it were but as a grain of mustard seed, what should we then be ? We should be able to move mountains : " If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove ; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." <sup>1</sup> If in that faith, which some of us so vainly ascribe to themselves, we not only find not the possibility of working with miraculous and divine powers, but even not sufficient aid for the restoration of the scattered and crushed powers of our own spiritual nature ; if that vain faith does not cure us, either from the blindness of our mind or the flowing inconstancy of the heart's desire, or from our falterings in the ways of law and righteousness, nor saves us from dead works, then must we not needs confess, that true faith, which the heavenly Teacher calls the faith of GOD, is to us still a mystery, which we have yet to learn, in order that it may be made manifest unto us ? And since this mystery, though it lies hidden in us, can be made manifest by no one except CHRIST, " the author and finisher of

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xvii. 20.

our faith,"<sup>1</sup> ought we not unceasingly to cry unto Him, as did His first disciples, "O LORD! increase our faith?"<sup>2</sup>

Or may it not be, that our faith attains not to the communion with divine powers as revealed in CHRIST, chiefly because He has left this earth and ascended into heaven? If any soul, thirsting after the LORD, be troubled at that thought, let such remember the last promise of CHRIST, given to the Apostles before His Ascension into heaven: "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."<sup>3</sup> The Apostles remained not upon earth "unto the end of the world;" therefore, who can doubt that the promise given to them extends likewise unto those who following them receive the same rights of faith and form the One Church, "unto the end of the world?" The divine fulness dwelling in CHRIST is not confined to heaven, and the Ascension of His Body into heaven, bereaves us not of His Spirit and of His power. We dare to say even more: it does not separate them from His Church, but unites her to Him still more closely. For why "hath He ascended up far above all heavens? That He might fill all things,"<sup>4</sup> says the Apostle. And therefore the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth now, not only in Him bodily, but also in the whole mystic body of the Church, "which is His Body, the fulness of Him, that filleth all in all."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 2.<sup>2</sup> S. Luke xvii. 5.<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. xxviii. 20.<sup>4</sup> Ephes. iv. 10.<sup>5</sup> Ephes. i. 23.

O, how nigh unto us, is CHRIST everywhere and above all in His Church ! But the world, surrounding us on every side, throws itself between Him and us, as in the above Gospel incident, and suffers us not to approach Him. But be of good comfort, O thou soul, that art working out thy salvation ! Yield not unto that thoughtless crowd, which know not themselves whither they are drawing thee. Use all thy efforts, to open to thyself a straight way unto thy blessed SAVIOUR, straining towards Him either in loud cries of repentance, or in the meek sighs of prayer, or in the ardent aspirations of love. Strive as much as thou art able to reach were it even the border of His garment ; and in it, He will not be slow to open unto thee, even through this medium, the fountain of His quickening power. Draw nigh unto Him, above all in this house of prayer and sacraments, where, though He veileth His presence under certain outward symbols, yet He at the same time revealeth it unto us in the most solemn manner. Here are daily heard His holy *words*, which though they are unto carnal men but sounds and writings, yet unto believers they *are spirit and life*.<sup>1</sup> Here, is consecrated His Body, the partaking of which in the holy sacrament, draws not only nigh unto Him the faithful but unites them unto Him wholly, according to His word : “ He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.”<sup>2</sup> Yield thyself

<sup>1</sup> S. John vi. 63.

<sup>2</sup> S. John vi. 56.

up, O faithful soul, with thy whole mind and heart, unto the quickening power of these sacraments of faith; and having found in them thy SAVIOUR, approach Him, touch Him, unite thyself to Him! "Be of good comfort! thy faith will save thee! Amen.

## SERMON XVII.<sup>1</sup>

### *THE LOVE OF GOD AND CHRIST THE CHIEF DUTY OF A CHRISTIAN.*

#### **All Saints' Day.**

“He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”—*S. Matth. x. 37.*

**B**Y the inscrutable decree of GOD, finding myself again in the midst of this town, in which I was ordained first to behold the light, and away from which I had been so far drawn by the flow of events that I hardly dared to hope to see it again,—beyond expectation, finding myself again in the midst of my brethren and neighbours, in whose society I received the first sweet sensations of life,—I long to yield myself wholly to the impulse of my love towards my native town,—a love, with which, as says a certain native of Jerusalem, the children of Jerusalem “took pleasure in her stones,

<sup>1</sup> Preached on All Saints' Day, May 28, 1822, on his first visit, as Archbishop of Moscow, to the distant town of Kolumna where he was born and lived till his entering the Seminary of Troitzza.

and favoured the dust thereof,"<sup>1</sup> that is, even the stones of the native town are beloved by them, and dear the very dust of its highways. My heart would fain sing unto this town the song which they sang unto their own Jerusalem: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee."<sup>2</sup> But what do I hear? This sweet song is cut short by the stern voice of the commandment of CHRIST, which, as if with a special purpose, is now calling to me from the midst of the temple, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." What then am I to do? I will take up another song of the Psalmist of Israel: "Truly my soul waiteth upon GOD."<sup>3</sup> I will subdue my love to my kindred and neighbours; I will subject it to the love of GOD and CHRIST; "I will also forget mine own people, and my father's house:"<sup>4</sup> and I will strive to remember the LORD's people alone and the house of my heavenly FATHER. In this frame of mind, I may even continue the interrupted song of Jerusalem: "Because of the house of the LORD our GOD I will seek thy good."<sup>5</sup> O city, beloved of GOD! For the sake of the holy Church, that is the

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. cxvii. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. cxvii. 6—8.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. xlv. 10.



house of GOD, for the sake of her Orthodox children, who are GOD's own people, I wish thee every good thing; and as I wish it because of GOD, therefore do I wish thee also divine things, "the peace of GOD, which passeth all understanding,"<sup>1</sup> "the faith that is the gift of GOD,"<sup>2</sup> and the love of GOD which "is shed abroad in your hearts by the HOLY GHOST."<sup>3</sup> But am I not offending my brethren and companions by so hasty a renunciation of my love to my native town? You will soon perceive, my brethren, that there is nothing unjust in it. For I require from you no other disposition of heart, than that which I myself wish to have. If you wish to be worthy of the love of GOD and CHRIST, you must love GOD and CHRIST more than father and mother, more than brother and sister, more than all that is dear to you. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

When following the Gospel, I announce unto you the sacred duty of loving GOD and CHRIST above all: it does not mean, that I fear to find in any one of my auditors this direct enmity towards GOD and CHRIST. There are indeed men so inclined, of whom the Apostle speaks "even weeping,"<sup>4</sup> and whom I remember with horror, "the enemies of the cross of CHRIST," who will neither subject their mind to His faith, nor

<sup>1</sup> Philip. iv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. ii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. v. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Philip. iii. 18.

their heart to His law, and who say along with the rebels described in the parable: "We will not have this man to reign over us!"<sup>1</sup> But I doubt not, that in contradiction to such, every one of the faithful will be seized with the zeal of the Apostle, and with him will not hesitate to reject them with the whole power of the soul, "If any man love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha."<sup>2</sup>

There is another clan of men among the very believers of CHRIST, and among those who acknowledge the authority of the law of GOD over them, who dread the thought of ranking themselves as the enemies of GOD and CHRIST, but who neither sufficiently understand, nor feel deeply enough, their obligation to love GOD and CHRIST, and consequently do not attain the perfect bliss contained in that love. They are aware of their duty to believe,—to accept with the submission of their own mind, the mysteries, which the word of GOD reveals, because the human mind, limited and corrupted, cannot comprehend that divine wisdom, so perfect and infinite; they accept the duty to live under the law of GOD,—to serve the true GOD by a certain form of worship, and not to wrong their neighbour by rapine, thefts and similar acts of injustice. They feel it to be their duty to present the offering of repentance, to accuse themselves before GOD of their sins, in the hope of forgiveness for the sake of Him, Whom GOD "hath made to be sin for us, Who knew

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xix. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”<sup>1</sup> They acknowledge the duty of prayer, of invoking the name of God, to bring down upon themselves the blessing and redeeming power of God ; they are struck by the fear of divine justice, when they see themselves transgressing some one of these duties ; and when they think they have fulfilled them, they quiet themselves with the hope of the heavenly kingdom, as a reward deserved by them. Is it not true, that for some, and perhaps for many Christians, therein consists their whole godliness, so that it does not even occur to them, that there remains something more to do beyond this. No, this is not yet all, my brethren ; there remains much more after this,—so much, that without this remainder, all the rest will not lead you to your true aim,—that is, to your eternal salvation. However high the ladder of your virtues may reach, it will not land you in heaven ; and, beware, it may miserably break down with you, if it is wanting in the last step, which alone strongly and firmly rests in heaven. Ask your heart if it loves Him, Whose faith and law it acknowledges, to Whom it offers repentance and prayer : do you really feel that “the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the HOLY GHOST,”<sup>2</sup> in like manner as you really feel a child’s, a parent’s, or a brother’s love, flowing into your heart at the sight of your parents, children and brethren ? If your conscience and spirit do not certify

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 5.

to you, that you really and vividly experience in your innermost heart that divine effusion of love to GOD: then you must diligently learn that love from the One divine Teacher JESUS CHRIST. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

Thou believest, and hopest to be saved by faith. I do not dispute this hope in thee. The SAVIOUR Himself makes salvation to be the lot of faith. "Thy faith hath made thee whole,"<sup>1</sup> has He often said to those, over whom He worked miraculous cures. And to all without exception He has promised that, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved."<sup>2</sup> But, is every faith alike? Is there no difference between one faith and another faith? What kind of faith for instance, is that, which the Apostle commends with such terrible praise, when he says: "Thou believest that there is one GOD, thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble."<sup>3</sup> Who can be satisfied with such a faith? What then is that faith which is able to save men? "Faith which worketh by love,"<sup>4</sup> the Apostle defines. If there is no love, then faith has neither power nor result, and will not attain salvation. Faith without love is a form without life: love is the breath of the HOLY GHOST, quickens faith and renders it active and saving. If thou wilt

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. ix. 22.

<sup>2</sup> S. Mark xvi. 16.

<sup>3</sup> S. James ii. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. v. 6.

be saved by faith, learn to love Him in Whom thou believest.

Thou livest according to the law. In this already there appears to be some love : for the Great Teacher of divine love Himself has said : " He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."<sup>1</sup> But ponder and truly understand what the Truth itself tells thee. As love is properly a feeling of the heart ; and as the Teacher that searcheth the heart foresees, that some of His weak disciples will think, that this feeling may be preserved even without the aid of a practice in accordance with it ; He therefore cautions us against a perversion of true love into a false one, and teaching us " to love indeed and in truth,"<sup>2</sup> He says : " He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." And it would have been impossible for the Master, Who was full of love, to say that it was sufficient for His disciples outwardly only to fulfil the works of His law, and that this would be imputed to them in the stead of love, even although they might not have felt it : in like manner, as it is not natural that a loving parent should say to his children, that he allows them not to love him, if only they will do what he bids them. And what is the keeping of the commandments without love ? Who is so ignorant of himself, or so insincere, as not to acknowledge, that he sometimes, and in some way, transgresses the law ? If then the edifice of per-

<sup>1</sup> S. John xiv. 21.

<sup>2</sup> 1 S. John iii. 18.

sonal righteousness, built on the foundation of the law, has its weak points : then the thunder of the curse of the law will come down, and with one peal destroy the whole structure : “ Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”<sup>1</sup> And still more strongly : “ For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”<sup>2</sup> Where then is salvation in keeping the commandments ? It exists, but only for those who fulfil them not in the letter, but in the spirit ; and the spirit of the law is love. Do you wish to avoid the curse of the law ? Do you wish to possess the best and surest means of fulfilling the law ? This best and surest of means is love. “ He that loveth another,” says the Apostle, “ hath fulfilled the law, for love is the fulfilling of the law.”<sup>3</sup> But this does not mean that love allows us to leave the law without fulfilment : no. It is itself the fulfilment of the law, because it is its very soul ; and the soul quickens and moves the whole body ; so does love grant strength to him who fulfils the law, and renders the very commandments easy of fulfilment. Does the son who runs to meet a beloved parent,— does he feel the fatigue of the journey ? Thus the sons of God, men who love God, do not weary of any work whatever, during the journey of their life, when hastening towards the eternal habitations, where

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> S. James ii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xiii. 8, 10.

they hope to behold the FATHER, Whose parentage has granted them so high an estate, "to become sons of GOD,"<sup>1</sup> and the love for Whom is stronger in them than every other earthly or heavenly love.

Thou repentest. And in this case thou art on the good path, for this path is laid down unto salvation, as it is said, "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of."<sup>2</sup> But mark even here the deep sense of Paul's words, *repentance not to be repented of*, says he, that is, a repentance, after which man does not exchange his better thoughts for worse ones, does not return to his former sins, does not faint in his zeal to live according to the will of GOD,—such repentance leads *to salvation*. And here again, my brethren, do I require your own testimony for your own selves. Do we not observe in ourselves that the good resolutions made by us at the time of repentance, are in time shaken, sometimes fall to the ground, and that we, partly from carelessness, and partly notwithstanding a certain degree of care for our own amendment, fall into those same sins of which we have already repeatedly repented? What hope of salvation in repentance in such a case, if that repentance alone worketh salvation which is not repented of? And what are we to do with our spiritual diseases, when the medicine itself being too frequently used against the ever-recurring illness, loses its power? As an aid to the medicine, as well as a preventive against the

<sup>1</sup> S. John i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 10.

recurrence of illness, as an assistance to repentance, as well as a remedy against sin, the most efficacious means is the true love for Him, Who "desireth not the death of a sinner," and Who even died for his redemption; true love, I say, for that is not love when a worthless son squanders his parent's goods, trusting to his condescension; but that is love when an affectionate son uses carefully, even those things which are allowed him, anxious to preserve the good will of his beloved parent. The Gospel narrative offers us a striking instance of the saving power which true love gives to repentance. A woman known throughout the whole town as a sinner, approaches JESUS CHRIST, anoints His feet with ointment, washes them with her tears, wipes them with her hair, in short, manifests all the signs, though we hear from her lips no words of repentance; and He Whom the Jews in reproach, and Whom Christians in joy called "a friend of sinners,"<sup>1</sup> absolves her, notwithstanding the multitude of her sins, "her sins which are many are forgiven." But how was it that a repentance which had not as yet manifested itself by an open confession of sin could have already worked so perfectly? It worked by means of perfect love towards the Pardoner of sin. "Her sins," says He, "which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much."<sup>2</sup>

Thou prayest! Who will not praise this spiritual exercise also? But let me ask again, How dost thou

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xi. 19.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke vii. 47.



pray? For there is a vain prayer, of which it is said, "This people draws nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me."<sup>1</sup> What does it mean, to draw nigh unto GOD with one's mouth, but to be far from Him with one's heart? To utter with the lips, or to receive in the ear from the lips of another, the words of prayer offered up to GOD, and not to unite therewith a heart-felt attention or a spiritual fervour, in short, to pray without love. It is not difficult to show the vanity of such a prayer even by simple reasoning, or by natural instinct. What does the child do, just beginning to reason, when it seeks to obtain a wished-for object from its father or mother? Does it not add to its prayers all those expressions of childish love and tenderness with which it is acquainted? And thus must we not confess ourselves still more unreasonable than children, when we expect by our cold supplications, pronounced without attention, or love, or warmth of heart, to obtain anything from our heavenly FATHER, Who looks straight *into the heart*, whereas "man looketh on the outward appearance?"<sup>2</sup> Shall we say that our heavenly FATHER is more merciful than earthly parents, and that therefore He will "give good things to them that ask Him?" True; but He is also more just than they, and therefore cannot give them to the unworthy; and on account of His very

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xv. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

goodness, cannot give good things to those who pray wrongly, lest they should defile the good itself. And certainly we pray wrongly when we pray unlovingly to the Most Merciful, and the Most Loving. But what more says the spiritual law? It shows that not only the exercise of prayer, but true and pure prayer itself is impossible without true and pure love. "For we know not," teaches the Apostle, "what we shall pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." And that none hearing this should remain in doubt as to how it is possible to acquire this high intercession, the Apostle immediately adds, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."<sup>1</sup> The love of God turns everything into a means for our salvation and bliss; without it no means are able to attain that end. The lamp will not give light without oil; neither will prayer lighten the spirit without love. The smoke of the incense will not rise without fire, neither will a prayer without love ascend towards God.

What shall we say of those inducements to virtue which those who know not the power of love substitute for it, namely, the fear of judgment, and the hope of reward? They are necessary supports to those

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 26—28.

who are building their spiritual edifice, but it is not on them that the sublimity and beauty of the spiritual building depends. He who works from fear is a slave, he who labours in the hope of reward is a hireling. "The servant," (i.e., bondsman,) says JESUS CHRIST, "abideth not in the house for ever,"—we may add, nor does the hireling,—for it is but "the Son" that "abideth ever."<sup>1</sup> "Fear hath torment," says the beloved disciple, "he that feareth is not made perfect in love," whereas "perfect love casteth out fear."<sup>2</sup> Another Apostle says to Christians, in opposition to the Jews, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, FATHER."<sup>3</sup> And thus the spirit of bondage, as well as the spirit of spiritual hire, is the lot of the Jews; but the lot of true Christians is the spirit of filial love towards GOD and the SAVIOUR. We may even say without contradicting the Apostle, that the true spirit even of the Old Testament was the spirit of love, if it had not been clothed in bondage by the stiff-neckedness of the Jews. I call to witness the very commandments of the Mosaic Law, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD," writes he. I wonder the more at this law, when I compare it to the commandment concerning parents, "Honour thy father and thy mother." What is this? We must *honour*

<sup>1</sup> S. John viii. 35.

<sup>2</sup> 1 S. John iv. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 15.

our father, and *love* GOD? But we generally love that which is nearer and more akin to us, and we honour that which is superior to us. Therefore it would have seemed more proper to require *love towards a father*, and *honour to God*. No, says Divine law, "Honour thy father," and "Thou shalt love GOD." As if it said by this, it is natural in thee to love thy father even without a commandment to do so, as well as to honour the great GOD. The commandment teaches thee that which it had been difficult for thee to understand without it; and thus thou must not only love thy father by nature, but also honour him according to the will of thy heavenly FATHER; thou must not only honour GOD as thou art inspired by thy nature and thy conscience, but thou must even venture to draw nearer unto Him, which thou hadst not dared to do without that law of grace,—love GOD as thy FATHER, call Him "GOD, the strength of thy heart, and thy portion for ever."<sup>1</sup> O beloved commandment of love! how great a pity that thy power hath remained so long unknown, and that we have broken our teeth on the hard crust of the letter, and knew not how to taste of the sweet grain that lay inclosed therein. So long was this, that at the time when Love itself appeared upon earth, it found the commandment of love quite forgotten, and preached it as a new one. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love;"<sup>2</sup> "As the FA-

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxiii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xiii. 34.

THEY hath loved Me, so have I loved you ; continue ye in My love.”<sup>1</sup>

Christians, GOD draws us in to His love by more than a mere commandment, or an imperative manifestation of His will ; He knows better than we that love is not acquired by commandments alone. He seeketh the love of us, sinners and unworthy beings, by His own holy and supreme love. “For GOD so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten SON, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”<sup>2</sup> Is it necessary to command us or to teach us to love Him, Who died to acquire eternal life for us ? If we feel that we should offend our father by loving his servants more than himself ; how can we not feel that we offend our heavenly FATHER when our heart opens and adheres to men, all of whom are hardly worthy to be called His servants, more easily and more closely, than to Him ? Let us strive to become worthy of Him. Let us say to our heart, We do not take thee away from our parents, kinsfolk, and neighbours, but we surrender thee together with them unto the GOD of our heart for ever. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> S. John xv. 9.

<sup>2</sup> S. John iii. 16.

## SERMON XVIII.

### *ON SELF-RENUNCIATION AND TAKING UP THE CROSS.*<sup>1</sup>

“Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”—*S. Mark viii. 34.*

**J**ESUS CHRIST once called Himself “the way, the truth, and the life.”<sup>2</sup> And now in accordance with the first of these designations, He shows us the way. “Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

The Evangelist in saying this, remarks that when **JESUS CHRIST** uttered these words, “He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also.” This shows that His call was addressed not exclusively to the elect, but to all without exception.

Whosoever thou art that hearest this, thou also must think about the way. In this visible and temporary world in which thou livest there is nothing stationary, but all moves on, and passes away; thy life also is moving onward and passing away: thou

<sup>1</sup> Preached in the Fourth week in Lent, called “The Week of the Worship of the Cross.”

<sup>2</sup> *S. John xiv. 6.*

art sometimes apparently at rest in body, but thy hidden thoughts, thy secret desires are incessantly moving; and therefore if thou dost not walk in the way of salvation, thou art assuredly walking in that of perdition, or if thou art not progressing, then thou art relapsing,—sinking from spiritual life into that of the flesh, from the human into the animal life, and thou wilt not even perceive how thou wilt fall into the life of hell, into twofold death, irrevocably. Take heed therefore to thy path.

As a Leader and King of freemen, JESUS CHRIST compels no one to follow the way which He points out, but invites those who are willing to enter upon it. “Whosoever will come after Me.” Ask thyself, O Christian, ask thyself so as to give a decided answer—wilt thou follow JESUS CHRIST or no?

A Christian not to wish to go after CHRIST! What a senseless idea. How it contradicts itself. Nevertheless there are men who though understanding the absurdity of the thought, yet do not feel how criminal is the action. Then why are we Christians, if we do not follow CHRIST? We are Christians, some will say, who have listened to the words of Christian doctrine, but have not understood their power,—we are Christians, because we believe in CHRIST. Granted. But if thou believest in CHRIST, then certainly thou also believest in His word; for CHRIST and His word are one. If thou believest in the word of CHRIST, thou must also act according to

this word ; for to believe in a word, and not to act in accordance with it is perilous boldness, and folly. Let us explain this by an example ; if during thy wanderings amidst unknown and dangerous places, some one had told thee, there is the path which will lead thee into a place of safety, and if thou, having no reason to doubt this indication, shouldst linger, or go in an opposite direction, perhaps to encounter a wild beast or a robber, would not that have been an act of dangerous boldness and folly on thy part ? But what says the word of CHRIST, in Whom and in which thou believest ? “ If thou wilt be perfect, come and follow Me.”<sup>1</sup> After this, how canst thou excuse thyself from following JESUS CHRIST ? Perhaps by saying that thou dost not seek perfection ? Yet this is the very thing required from thee by Him in Whom thou believest. “ Be ye therefore perfect,” says He, and moreover in what measure ? “ even as your FATHER Which is in heaven is perfect.”<sup>2</sup> If thou renouncest the aspiration to perfection, then will He take from thee the hope of the heavenly kingdom. “ For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>3</sup> If thou desirest not to be with Him,—and how is it possible to be with Him without keeping His word, and following Him in everything ?—then

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xix. 21.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. v. 48.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. v. 20.



will He proclaim thee His enemy, and deny thee in the face of heaven and earth. "He that is not with Me is against Me;"<sup>1</sup> "whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His FATHER with the holy Angels."<sup>2</sup> And so one of the two,—either thou must follow CHRIST, follow His word and example, or vainly wilt thou call thyself a Christian.

It would not be difficult to acknowledge and accept the duty of following CHRIST, if we were not stayed by the consideration, "Whither shall we follow Him?" Ah, whither? Let us see whither He goes. "Behold, we go," says He unto those who are following Him, "behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered up unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and spit upon Him, and shall kill Him."<sup>3</sup> An awful way indeed is the way of CHRIST. The Apostles themselves who under His immediate guidance followed Him, were not able to enter calmly into this way. "And they were," relates the Evangelist, "in the way going up to Jerusalem; and JESUS went before them, and they were amazed, and as they followed

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xii. 30.

<sup>2</sup> S. Mark viii. 38.

<sup>3</sup> S. Mark x. 33, 34.

they were afraid.”<sup>1</sup> And what more? There is a part of that way which CHRIST Himself did not traverse without amazement, as it is said, “and He began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy.”<sup>2</sup>

But am I not in vain revealing all the fearfulness of the way of CHRIST, which is already an object of fear to many? No, Christians, “for our exhortation,” we will say with the Apostle, “is not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile.”<sup>3</sup> We do not wish to conceal from you a difficulty, which is inevitable; but from this very difficulty itself you may perceive that it is not difficult to overcome it. Wherefore was JESUS CHRIST amazed, before Whom all fear and quake, Who has no one to fear, for there is no power which is able to menace the Omnipotent? Wherefore was He heavy, Who is the fountain of joy and gladness, for all that can but feel joy and gladness? It is evident that this amazement and this heaviness were not His own, but He submitted thereunto, because “He Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.”<sup>4</sup> But wherefore did He take our infirmities and bear our sicknesses, if not that He might heal them, or at least until their final healing, to lighten them to such a degree that we should not “be tempted above that we are able?”<sup>5</sup> Consequently if amazement and sorrow are not entirely taken away from the path of CHRIST,

<sup>1</sup> S. Mark x. 32.

<sup>2</sup> S. Mark xiv. 33.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> S. Matth. viii. 17.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. x. 13.

they are at least considerably diminished by His having already accomplished that way, and laid it down for us. Therefore the Apostles were not always, as in the beginning, afraid of following CHRIST; and afterwards the time came when they walked this dreadful and painful path with gladness. "They," as writes the narrator of their Acts, "departed, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name."<sup>1</sup> How could it happen that the same men standing in the very same path, were at first afraid, and then rejoiced? They were afraid whilst JESUS CHRIST had not yet traversed that way, and rendered it secure; rejoiced when He had passed through it, and borne away on Himself its difficulties.

They were afraid when they only glanced upon these difficulties without penetrating them further; but rejoiced when they clearly perceived the end of the way of CHRIST. For whither at length does that way lead? It leads to heaven, to GOD the FATHER, as JESUS CHRIST Himself saith, describing His whole way, from its beginning to its end, "I am come from the FATHER, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the FATHER."<sup>2</sup> This way leads unto divine glory. "Ought not CHRIST to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?"<sup>3</sup>

Is it then possible, some will say, who understand

<sup>1</sup> Acts v. 41.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xvi. 28.

<sup>3</sup> S. Luke xxiv. 26.

not the mysteries of CHRIST, is it possible that we also shall be brought near to GOD the FATHER, and enter into the glory of the Only-begotten SON of GOD? Yea, it is so, my brethren. For He is truthful Who hath said, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be."<sup>1</sup> And therefore if our LORD goes to GOD His FATHER, then He will bring us also to Him with Himself. If CHRIST enters into His divine glory, then will He also bring the Christians into it with Him, and will render them, in the words of the Apostle, "partakers of the divine nature."<sup>2</sup> Do not say that such a height is unattainable to earth-born man; we must but enter with firm resolution into that part of the way of CHRIST which He has traversed and laid open to us upon earth, and then, when we shall have need to raise ourselves high above all earthly things, and to rise unto that which is divine and heavenly, then He Himself will lift us up, and "bear us as on angels' wings,"<sup>3</sup> according to His great promise: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."<sup>4</sup>

With these reflections, my brethren, we hope that your heart is saying unto its Leader and Redeemer, "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest;"<sup>5</sup> only Thou to Whom all hearts are open, reject not this desire, as Thou did once reject it in the

<sup>1</sup> S. John xii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> 2 S. Pet. i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xix. 4.

<sup>4</sup> S. John xii. 32.

<sup>5</sup> S. Matth. viii. 19.

lips of a certain man, doubtless, because it did not proceed from the fulness of his heart.

But if you desire to follow CHRIST, then it is time now, to tell you how you must follow Him: "Who-soever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Firstly, then, he who desires to follow CHRIST, *let him deny himself*, that is, let him deny his self-love, let him not be devoted to his own honour, and interest, and pleasure; but like a traveller, meet all these things in passing, and soon leave them behind; and in everything act according to this precept of the Apostle: "It remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it."<sup>1</sup> How is it possible, some will say, to attain to such self-renunciation? Even as the warrior renounces all the joys of domestic life, when he enters on a campaign, and as he renounces life itself when he enters the very fight; for without that renunciation he could neither be brave, nor victorious. If it be possible to do this for the sake of a perishable crown and temporary fame: what is there that cannot and should not be achieved in order to obtain an incorruptible crown and eternal glory?

Secondly, to follow CHRIST one must *take up his*

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

*Cross.* The cross of CHRIST consists in His sufferings, rejections, and death.<sup>1</sup> Having alone endured all this for our sakes, He has the perfect right to require that every one of us should endure all these things for Him. But that we might not be crushed by the weight of His burden, under which He Himself was seen to faint, He does not lay upon us His own great Cross, but commands each of us to take up his own cross, that is, to be ready to endure as many sufferings and trials, outward and inward, as the chastening, purifying, and at the same time merciful dispensation of an all-ruling Providence may choose to visit us with. Is then this inevitable? some effeminate souls will exclaim. Calm yourselves and reflect. If CHRIST, Who was without sin and omnipotent, "ought to have suffered," that He might "enter into His glory," then how can we, defiled and weakened by sin, attain unto this glory, without being purified by trials and strengthened by sufferings? For what is it, that dwells in us now? If self-love prevents our confession, let us plead guilty, in the words of the Apostle: "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing."<sup>2</sup> There dwelleth in us, from the time of original sin, the old Adam, with his desires and lusts: how then are we to divest ourselves of him, and to put on the new man,—which is the aim of our aspirations?—I say not, not without suffering, but even, not without death. We

<sup>1</sup> S. Mark viii. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vii. 18.

must take up our cross not only to fight the good fight, but that we may at length entirely “crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts,”<sup>1</sup> “mortify our members which are upon the earth,”<sup>2</sup> *die*, mystically, that “our life be hid with CHRIST in GOD.”<sup>3</sup>

Such, O Christian, is the doctrine of the cross, a doctrine so necessary and essential in Christianity, that the Church, not content with proclaiming it often by word, still more frequently represents it to us in symbols and signs. At our very baptism she lays upon us the image of the cross; at every prayer she enjoins us to make the sign of the cross on ourselves; and from time to time, as on this present day, she solemnly presents it for adoration and holy salutation. Let us be attentive, let us accept this commandment, not as though from human lips, but as from the lips of our crucified SAVIOUR Himself: “let us deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow Him.” Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Col. iii. 3.

## SERMON XIX.

### *THE MOTHER AND BRETHREN OF CHRIST.*

#### **Nativity of the Holy Mother of God.**

“And He answered them, saying, Who is My Mother, or My brethren?”—*S. Mark* iii. 33.

**W**HY is it that the righteous Elizabeth, as soon as she saw the Virgin Mary coming to her, and heard from her lips the greeting usual in visitors, was directly filled with joy, such that this very joy communicated itself to the babe in her womb, who leaped therein and the mother spoke out with a loud voice and began to bless the Virgin? It was because, as Elizabeth herself explains, she recognised in Mary the Mother of the LORD. “And whence is this to me,” said she, “that the Mother of my LORD should come to me?”<sup>1</sup>

And why also does the Church so greatly rejoice in the holy Virgin Mary, and bless her with such rapture? Why does she render a festive honour to her very birth and infancy, an honour unaccorded to any

<sup>1</sup> *S. Luke* i. 43.



other saints or other righteous persons? There is seemingly no necessity to seek any other answer than the one, which is already to be found in the prophetic spirit of Elizabeth: Mary is the Mother of our LORD.

But see, what unexpected things the Gospel offers us. The Mother of the LORD, whom Elizabeth had so early found and pointed out to us, suddenly disappears. Behold, the LORD Himself is asking, "Who is My Mother?" It is impossible to imagine, that He should either not have known His Mother, or wished to deny her; yet to ask, "Who is My Mother?" means, either not to know her, or to deny her.

And what are we then doing, when we glorify the blessed Mother of our LORD, thinking thus to please Him, and to draw nigh unto Him through her, when He, in some sort, turns her aside from Himself.

Be not troubled, ye who sing the praises of the Mother of GOD, at this perplexing reflection. It will lead us to meditations which will not shake, but confirm us in the assurance of her divine glory, as well as in the right understanding of the holy doctrine of her Son and GOD. "The multitude sat about Him," the evangelist Mark relates, "and they said unto Him, Behold, Thy Mother and Thy brethren without seek for Thee. And He answered them, saying, Who is My Mother, or My brethren?"

That He should not will to know His brethren, is not difficult to understand. At that time they were worthy of such estrangement, "for," as observes S.

John, "neither did His brethren believe in Him."<sup>1</sup> But even apart from their sin of unbelief, this denial of them was just, since they were but the supposed brethren of JESUS: being of the family of Joseph, the father, as was supposed, of JESUS. And thus in renouncing His brethren, so called after the birth of the flesh, the LORD denies no earthly truth, but affirms the heavenly truth of His divine birth.

But how is it that the Mother of the LORD also should be subjected to the same lot as His brethren? She is not His supposed, but His true Mother according to humanity; and never has she lowered this high dignity by unbelief in Him, as the true SON of GOD. That faith alone, by which she received Him, before His earthly birth and conception, at the time of the Archangel's annunciation, that faith alone, already surpassed the faith of all other believers. When JESUS, still an infant in the manger, is acknowledged by the Shepherds as SAVIOUR, CHRIST and LORD, by what, if not by faith, is Mary impelled "to keep all these things, and ponder them in her heart?"<sup>2</sup> Before that by His miracles He had "manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him,"<sup>3</sup> the Mother of JESUS already believed so strongly in His miraculous might, that it was she who prevailed upon Him to work His first miracle in Cana of Galilee. Thus, she both before all others and more perfectly

<sup>1</sup> S. John vii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke ii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> S. John ii. 11.

than others, believed in Him and confessed Him : while He, at one time, pronouncing the blessed name of Mother, seems to avoid seeing her, saying, "Who is My Mother?" at another, seeing her, gives her not the name of Mother : "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"<sup>1</sup> And again : "Woman, behold thy son!"<sup>2</sup>

O LORD ! we dare not pry into Thy words, but we desire to be instructed by Thy redeeming wisdom. Impute not to us as a sin our examination of the Scriptures, and grant the grace of understanding to us.

Is it necessary to caution you, Christians, from thinking that the LORD did not fully honour His most blessed Mother? This can hardly be necessary. For you must be aware of the general caution against all similar misunderstandings, which He Himself gave to the Jews, by saying, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."<sup>3</sup> And therefore, doubtless, He did not destroy, but fulfilled this commandment of the law, to "honour thy father and thy mother." And indeed, when He, still young in years, but full of the consciousness of His mission, was drawn away from His converse with the teachers of the law of God by His ignorant parents, who understood this not and came to carry Him away from the temple ; then He, although objecting to this proceeding of His parents, nevertheless "was subject unto them."<sup>4</sup> And at the end, when the

<sup>1</sup> S. John ii. 4.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. v. 17.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xix. 26.

<sup>4</sup> S. Luke ii. 51.

sufferings of the cross were rending His soul and body ; when, by His pierced limbs He hung so heavily on nails, between life and death, while the whole world in Him was suspended over perdition, awaiting redemption ; neither the tortures of entire hell, nor the cares of the universe, of all time and eternity, were able to stifle in Him the sense of lawful duty towards His Mother. This duty, the fulfilling of which ceased for Him with His earthly life, He then transferred to John, whose chastity and love had made him worthy to be the servant of the Virgin-Mother, and thereby in this part of the law, as well as in all others, He showed us that perfection, which makes the respect towards parents, and the care of them, extend throughout all the circumstances of life, unto the grave, beyond the grave.

And if the LORD has showed such perfect reverence to His Mother even under such trying circumstances, then doubtless we are to infer, that in all other circumstances, although apparently estranged from her, He did so, not to the prejudice of those spiritual "great things" which "He had done to her,"<sup>1</sup> by His birth from her, but only from the consideration of the other high duties of His ministry on earth. Let us remember His teaching : "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me : and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."<sup>2</sup> And teaching thus He was bound to act thus also, and

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke i. 49.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. x. 37.

by His example to give strength to His instruction, according to His own precept, "that whosoever shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven, shall do and teach men."<sup>1</sup> And therefore it behoved the LORD JESUS at some period of His life on earth to show in very deed how fully He loved His earthly Mother, and yet not *more* than His heavenly FATHER; and how He offers up His human filial love as a sacrifice to the work of GOD, which He accomplishes.

Now see how, with the help of these considerations, are explained these deeds of CHRIST, which at first appeared so difficult of comprehension?

The Mother of JESUS requires that He should miraculously turn water into wine at a marriage-feast. But miracles were destined not for the gratification of a mother, but for the manifestation of the glory of GOD. And therefore it behoved Him here to sacrifice the gratification of His Mother, and for the fulness of this sacrifice the very thought of His Mother, and her very name are renounced, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" However the hour to manifest the glory of GOD, which had not come before that sacrifice was made, arrived immediately after it, and therefore the miracle, which He seemingly refused to His Mother, is performed a moment later.

The Mother of JESUS and His brethren come to take Him away from the house where He is preaching divine truth to a multitude of people. They had un-

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. v. 19.

dertaken this from a good motive, deeming Him to be in danger, for His enemies had proclaimed Him at one time mad, at another acting by the power of the prince of devils, and consulted together to kill Him. But had He submitted to the will of His kinsfolk, then the work of GOD would have suffered, not only because His preaching would have been untimely interrupted, but also because His foes would have made use of His removal by His kindred as a proof of their calumny, that He needed to be taken care of by them. And here again was it needful for Him to sacrifice His Mother's gratification; and this sacrifice again was a perfect holocaust, that is, the LORD offered up His whole love towards His beloved Mother, as well as even the thought and remembrance of her: "Who is My Mother?"

It was as if He had said, "Wherefore would you deter Me from doing the will of My heavenly FATHER, for the sake of the will of My earthly Mother? When these two wills draw in different directions, I know, and will directly show you which of them must be followed, and with what resolution. I resign My earthly birth and earthly kindred, as if I had forgotten it, as if it had never existed; I am perfectly devoted to the will of My heavenly FATHER, to His work, and to His kingdom, therein do I seek My kinship also, if it be necessary to have it: 'Who is My Mother or My brethren?' Who are they? 'The sons of GOD, those who believe on His Name; which

were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD.<sup>1</sup> Or still more forcibly, 'Whosoever shall do the will of GOD, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother.'<sup>2</sup>

Do you perceive now, O Christians, that it is not His Mother, who is worthy of every blessing, the LORD deprives of attention, but that it is us whom He here teaches truth and justice by word and by example. Be then attentive and learn; observe and imitate.

Whenever parents, kinsfolk, teachers, superiors, require of you that which is contrary to your own judgment, your inclination, your taste, but which is necessary or useful, or at least harmless, then ought you to sacrifice your own judgment, your inclination, your taste to the duty of obedience. Remember JESUS then, the Wisdom of GOD, *Who was subject unto Joseph the carpenter.*

And whenever your parents, your kindred, your neighbours require your assistance, consolation, or service at a time when you are yourselves in want, in sorrow or infirmity, then gather together your last strength, forget your own sorrow to lighten their woe, share with them your last crumb and your last drop. Remember how JESUS amidst the tortures of the cross, cared for the comfort of His Mother.

But whenever the unhappy example or the wishes of your parents, or kinsmen, or of those whom you

<sup>1</sup> S. John i. 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup> S. Mark iii. 35.

are bound to love and honour deter you from the fulfilment of your sacred obligations towards GOD, draw you into unlawful deeds which disturb your peace of conscience, which are contrary to that which is truly good, as well as to the salvation of your immortal souls, then question yourselves also, in the words of JESUS, "Who is My mother, or who are My brethren?" Remember that you have a kinship higher and better than the one on earth, that GOD is your FATHER, that the Church is your Mother, that all those that do the will of GOD, all the saints, are your brethren, or at least desire to become your brethren; do not degrade yourselves in the eyes of such noble kindred, do not separate yourselves from this good and beautiful family; do ye also the will of GOD instead of that of man, that the LORD might also point to you, saying, "Behold My mother and My brethren." Amen.



## SERMON XX.

### *ON HOLY VIRGINITY.*

#### **Presentation of the Mother of God.**

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.”—*Titus* ii. 11, 12.

**I**F the memory of the lives and acts of saints naturally leads us to meditate on the virtues and excellencies by which their lives were signalised, then what can be more suited to the present solemn commemoration of the consecration of the most blessed and most pure Virgin Mary, than a meditation on virginity and chastity?

For was it not she who laid the firm foundation of virginity? Was it not she who raised it to its immeasurable height?

The world of the Old Testament was zealous about the bearing of children, and therefore about marriage, aspiring to the birth of the Redeemer of the world. It so little understood and honoured virginity, that virginity, for ever bereft of marriage, was

to it an object of lamentation. The daughter of Jephthah, who was about to die, having "known no man," and not she alone, "but her companions" also "bewailed her virginity upon the mountains," and even after her death "it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year."<sup>1</sup> The life of John the Baptist, and still earlier, the life of the Prophets Elijah and Elisha, are the earliest indications of the dignity of virginity; but even these indications were not in their time understood, for the Jews had oftener seen their prophets not avoiding married life, as for instance, Moses, Samuel, and others. There have been men of GOD from the beginning of the world, but the first Virgin of GOD was the Most Blessed Mary. Being still in her infantile innocence consecrated to GOD for eternal purity, she became the first unshakable foundation of angelic life upon earth.

And on what a height, a more than heavenly one, has she shown to us the dignity of virginity. From Eve down to herself, womanhood as well as manhood was under the law of marriage, looking for the reward of bringing forth, sooner or later, the blessed Seed which was to "bruise the head of the serpent"<sup>2</sup> of darkness, and in Whom "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;"<sup>3</sup> but this reward was not predes-

<sup>1</sup> Judges xi. 39, 40.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. iii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xxii. 18.

ted to marriage. Marriage could but bring forth men,—virginity alone was worthy of giving birth to the GOD-Man.

But before I speak to you, who listen to me, of virginity, for your own personal application, I apprehend the impression which may shut your hearts to this preaching of virginity. You will perhaps say, “This virginity of the holy Mother of GOD, who was chosen to become the tabernacle of the Incarnation of the SON of GOD, is the one sole virginity throughout all human kind, which, as it had no example before, can of itself have no imitators afterwards.” It is true, that there will be neither another Incarnation of the Word of GOD, nor another Mother of GOD, yet, my brethren, we must not infer therefrom that the virginity of the most blessed Mary offers us neither an example to be followed, nor instruction for our life.

If the Virgin Mary was honoured by the highest election of GOD, then consider wherefore this was done? You will say, By the special grace of GOD. I do not dispute it. But go still farther,—can the grace of GOD be contradictory to the justice of GOD? No, doubtless. If inconsistency is absurd in man, how much more then in GOD, the All-perfect Being, ought there to be perfect harmony between His attributes and His works, a harmony natural to the purest unity. And therefore if the Virgin Mary is honoured with the highest election by divine grace, then she is so equally by divine justice. She is raised high above

all by election, because above all she appeared worthy of election by the qualities and aspirations of her soul, and, among others, by the purest virginity by which she has ascended, like a sun, high above all the ancient, and certainly also above all the future world. We must conclude therefrom that if the most blessed Mary has become worthy of her chaste virginity of the highest and most unexampled divine election, then, although a similar election is impossible, yet he who imitates, as far as he is able, her virginity, may hope in divine justice to receive like her a special divine grace, a special election, and to be especially drawn nigh unto GOD. If she alone became through virginity more pure than the cherubims, and more glorious than the seraphims, her followers may at least be rendered equal to angels. If she alone was made by virginity the tabernacle of the HOLY GHOST, the Mother of the SON of GOD, then other souls may also become daughters of GOD, draw nigh unto the heavenly King, and be made brides of CHRIST. This it is that the mystic psalm proclaims, saying, "the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto the King."<sup>1</sup>

If these conclusions seem not sufficiently trustworthy, the words of the prophet and our assumption not sufficiently obvious; then if you wish to learn from the LORD Himself the angelic dignity of virginity, listen to His own word: "For in the resurrection

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xlv. 15.

they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of GOD in heaven ;”<sup>1</sup> or, as another Evangelist paraphrases the same thing, “for they are equal unto the angels.”<sup>2</sup> The state in which they neither marry nor are given in marriage, consequently, that of perpetual virginity, is then called by the LORD equal unto that of the angels.

Do you wish to know from the Scriptures that virginity is not only possible for many to observe, but would be a blessed state for all? Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, “For I would that all men were even as myself.” What does this mean, *even as myself*? He explains it farther in the same Epistle, “Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife? Nevertheless we have not used this power, but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of CHRIST.”<sup>3</sup> That is, he has denied himself of the assistance and comfort of a married state, to be able the more unhindered to devote himself to the preaching of the gospel. Consequently the Apostle would wish for all that they should consecrate themselves unto the service of GOD and to godliness in virginity.

Do you wish to see the high lot appointed to virginity by GOD? Look with the eyes of the seer John, “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand having His FATHER’S Name written in their

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xxii. 30.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke xx. 36.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 7 ; ix. 5, 12.

foreheads." And he heard "them sing as it were a new song before the throne; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand." But who are they? will you ask? "These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto GOD and to the Lamb."<sup>1</sup>

Do you perceive the excellence of virginity? Try then to learn in what virginity consists, and how this virtue is made perfect.

Every one knows virginity, by his own experience, as the natural state preceding marriage. But this is merely the imperfect beginning of that of which we are now speaking. It is but the stem of the lily and not its flower; it is but the bloom of the apple-tree, and not the fragrant apple itself. The virginity of childhood, from the very reason that it is merely a natural state, is neither a free act, nor the fruit of victory, and consequently it is not a virtue. It is fittingly called *innocence*, for there is no sin in it which contradicts virginity,—but that is all; but therein is not yet the superior excellence which belongs to perfect virginity.

Virginity as an act of piety, as a virtue, as the flower of purity, as the fruit of chastity, as the way to perfection, manifests itself in man at an age, when,

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xiv. 1—4.

according to the common course of nature, more or less disposed to marriage, he neither yields to nature's inclination, nor suffers himself to be swayed by custom, by the examples, by the pleasures, and by the needs of social life, but resolves to renounce marriage, and to keep his virginity for ever.

But as a man who "striveth, is yet not crowned except he strive lawfully,"<sup>1</sup> even so he who resolves on virginity ought to know, always to remember, and to keep the chief law of this work, consisting herein, that virginity must be resolved on and kept for the sake of GOD. "For the kingdom of heaven's sake,"<sup>2</sup> says the Great Lawgiver of virginity, JESUS CHRIST Himself; and the Apostle says, "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the LORD, how he may please the LORD. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the LORD, that she may be holy both in body and spirit."<sup>3</sup> To please the LORD, and therefore to be holy both in body and spirit, is the aim and end of those who strive after virginity. But he who aspires to virginity not unto this end shall not be crowned. The chaste man therefore renounces marriage that an overpowering affection for an earthly creature may not hinder, or turn aside his aspiration towards GOD. For it is in proportion of the aspiration of the whole might of mind and heart towards the LORD, and of the application of one's whole

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. xix. 12.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 32, 34.

activity to please Him, that a virgin-soul shall be called the bride of the heavenly Bridegroom.

From this first rule of virginity we may easily perceive that bodily abstinence from all that belongs to marriage, is not perfect virginity, but only its lowest degree; for, to aspire and draw nigh unto GOD, Who is a Spirit, can and ought to be accomplished in the spirit alone,—whereas, bodily virginity does but remove a hindrance to spiritual aspiration, and saps opposing inclinations. Therefrom proceed the various peculiar rules of virginity.

The LORD hath said: “That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, since there is adultery of the heart, there must also be a virtue in opposition to that vice—the virginity of the heart. He who strives after this virtue ought to keep his heart pure from every carnal lust, from every thought contrary to chastity; he ought at once to repel every involuntary thought of impurity, and for this he must watch vigilantly every change of reflection and desire, occupy and preserve his mind and heart, as well by meditations on the Scriptures, as by attentive, inward prayer.

As the LORD teaches us, that the eye is a medium for adultery, therefore must we train our eye to serve virginity; that is, avert our glance from every tempting object, and look on that which unavoidably pre-

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. v. 28.



sents itself, without a desire, without a thought, seeing without perceiving, and as soon as possible putting an end to the dangerous sight. And this is what is meant by mortifying the sight, as the LORD hath commanded us to do: "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee." Therefrom originates the veiling of the face, solitary life and seclusion.

But if, to preserve virginity from temptation and uncleanness, we must mortify our sight: then, by comparison, we may understand and be convinced, that we must in like manner, mortify also our other senses, as the hearing—from listening to immodest and tempting conversations, the taste, the smell, the touch—from corresponding sensations disposing us to indulgence and luxury. Therefrom proceed the spiritual exercises of silence, fasting, abstinence, simplicity and austerity in our clothing, in our lives, in our habitations; the subjection and mortification of the flesh by toil, prayerful watchings and genuflexions.

To condense my picturing of virginity into one line, I will quote here the beautiful and profound saying of S. Chrysostom: "The root and fruit of virginity is a crucified life." (Tract on Virginitp, ch. 79.)

But am I not speaking too much of a subject, which many may think, does not concern them? Indeed the LORD Himself has forewarned us, that not all are able to be virgins, saying: "All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given."<sup>1</sup> He

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xix. 11.

Himself has called unto virginity not all men, but only those who are able, to whom it is given : " He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." <sup>1</sup> And as virginity is not for all, therefore you may even ask, Why then do I speak of it to all? I accept this question. It will lead me to the aim and end of my discourse.

We speak of virginity to all, because among all there are those " that are able to receive it ;" and my word is seeking out from amongst all those whom God calls to hear and to fulfil it, and who are often unknown unto men.

We speak to all men of virginity, that those who are married might know that there is a state higher than marriage ; and that honouring virginity in others, and thinking humbly of marriage, they might obtain for marriage a blessing near to the blessing appointed to virginity.

We speak of true virginity unto all men, that, knowing it, they may guard themselves from the mistaken ways of the foolish virgins, who with the unlit lamps of their minds, wanting the oil of love, are roaming far from the heavenly abode, and, instead of love for the Bridegroom, they are but breeding hate against the holy state of marriage. For, already, since the time of the Apostles, " the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xix. 12.

conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry.”<sup>1</sup>

Finally, we speak of virginity to all men, that they who are married as well as they who are not, may vigilantly and carefully distinguish the bright beauty of virginity, the comeliness of pure and honourable marriage, from the state of those who have neither been faithful in the use of the golden talent of virginity, nor of the silver talent of marriage, entered upon by the will of the LORD of all talents and gifts. Virginity and marriage are not for all men, but chastity is for all men: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”<sup>2</sup> What does it mean *to live soberly*? It means either in the purity of virginity or in the honourableness of marriage, in both cases, “in the abstinence from worldly lusts,” and above all, “from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”<sup>3</sup> They alone who live thus in this present world, may “look for that blessed hope”<sup>4</sup> to come. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 1—3.

<sup>2</sup> Titus ii. 11, 12.

<sup>3</sup> 1 S. Pet. ii. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Titus ii. 13.

## SERMON XXI.

### *ON THE NECESSITY OF THE INCARNATION.*

#### **The Annunciation.**

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness : God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”—  
1 *Tim.* iii. 16.

**WE** are now reverently commemorating and celebrating that day, the day of all days, the glorious moment when the great mystery of godliness, “God manifest in the flesh,” was brought upon earth by the Archangel Gabriel, not in word alone, but in the power of the Most High, was hidden in the pure heart, and was sealed up in lowly silence in the virgin womb of the most blessed Mary. Later, “this mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations,”<sup>1</sup> became a universal glory : but it nevertheless remains until now a mystery. “Great is the mystery of godliness : God was manifest in the flesh.”

Undoubtedly, they wondered also at this mystery in heaven, when it was revealed there, when **JESUS**

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 26.

CHRIST was risen, and had ascended into heaven, to sit on the right hand of GOD the FATHER, and was "seen of angels," in His, until then, unseen glory of the GOD-Man. But heavenly wonderment is, as is everything of heaven, beautiful. The angels were wondering at the mystery and glory of the GOD-Man, but they were not troubled. They asked, "Who is this King of glory?" but were neither anxious nor doubtful. They desired to know that they might revere; and even before their question, "Who is this King of glory?" was answered, they had already received Him as a King of glory, for they already shouted "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."<sup>1</sup> The more unfathomable the mystery, the more worthy they find it of the infinite GOD, the more they revere, the more they glorify GOD, the more they grow enlightened by His glory, and the greater their happiness. There, knowledge and glory neither contradict nor envy mystery; and mystery infinitely increases glory and light.

But does the earth receive in like manner the divine mystery of GOD manifested in the flesh, the earth, for whose peculiar advantage this Mystery was designed, employed, hidden, revealed, brought down, raised up, put to shame, and glorified? Indeed the holy Virgin is the one blessed among women, who offered herself as a worthy tabernacle of the Mystery sent down from

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxiv. 7, 8.

heaven, that it might not turn back, as a ship laden with treasures turns from a shore which affords no harbour ; who being raised to the exalted state of the Mother of GOD, suffered not her mind to be uplifted, even a hair-breadth, from the depth of lowliness ; who was able to embrace the infinite Word of GOD by so small a human word, " Behold the handmaid of the LORD ; be it unto me according to thy word."<sup>1</sup> And after her, let us also bless those by whom the mystery of GOD manifested in the flesh was " believed on in the world," who received it with faith, kept it faithfully, preached it unto all nations ; by whom it came down unto us in unaltered purity and undiminished power. But those are they of whom it is said, " they are in the world,"<sup>2</sup> yet " are not of the world."<sup>3</sup> And the world ? It would not receive the divine, saving mystery, and hearing of it rose up tumultuously to crush it, to obscure it with lies, to entangle it by inventions, to cover it with scorn and calumny, to impede its path by the sword, to flood it with the blood of its witnesses, to bury it in their tombs, to consume it in the flames, to drown it in the waters, and to destroy it by all possible means of destruction. But in vain ! Despite the efforts of the world, the mystery of GOD manifested in the flesh, became, as I have already said, a universal glory. But even now how many there are who either know not this mystery, or knowing it, do

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke i. 38.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xvii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xvii. 14.

not receive it ! And what is still more afflicting, even among those who have inherited it from their fathers and forefathers, there either remain, or appear anew, those who do not know what to do with that incomprehensible mystery ; they sometimes ask curiously,—Wherefore were such extraordinary measures employed for the redemption of mankind—as the incarnation of divinity ? at other times doubtingly, they ask,—Was it indeed impossible to save mankind without it ? And where there is curiosity there is not yet pure knowledge ; where doubt exists there is not perfect faith.

Mystery repels curiosity for the very reason that it is a mystery. It demands faith, although it does not forbid us to use moderate reflection, in order to remove from its path the stumblingblock thrown therein by doubt.

If therefore the believer dares to meditate about the necessity of the incarnation of the SON of GOD, for us men and for our salvation, he may take as the foundation of his meditation the following utterance of JESUS CHRIST Himself.

First saying : “ No man knoweth the SON, but the FATHER ; neither knows any man the FATHER, save the SON, and he to whomsoever the SON will reveal Him.”<sup>1</sup> That without the knowledge of GOD none can be saved and happy, no sensible person will doubt. But if the treasure of the knowledge of GOD lies

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xi. 27.

hidden in divinity itself, unattainable from its unaccessible elevation,—if to take therefrom for the use of salvation is possible “but to whomsoever the SON will reveal Him,” and meanwhile “no man knoweth the SON, who will reveal” to man divine knowledge, “but the FATHER,”—then how can the redeeming revelation of the knowledge of GOD be accomplished? It is necessary that the SON of GOD, from the invisible divinity which is above all form of knowledge, should, so to say, manifest Himself in some visible shape, for He is called “the image of the invisible GOD.”<sup>1</sup> But under what shape? Surely, under that which is nearer to divinity, under a spiritual one. Suppose it to be so. Thus far we begin to understand how divine knowledge is revealed in heaven, in the spiritual, angelic world. But earth is not heaven, nor is man an angel. Especially in the present condition of earth and men, heaven and angels are hidden from earth and from men: and consequently divine revelation also, which was appropriated to heaven and angels, was no revelation unto earth and to man. And therefore it is needful that the SON of GOD when He will reveal the saving knowledge of GOD unto man in his present state, should still more condescend and manifest Himself in such forms as are accessible to man, that the Word of GOD, not ceasing to be the Word of GOD, should adopt the form of human language, that “the image of the invisible GOD,” not ceasing to be what

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 15.



He is, should manifest Himself in a shape visible to the eye of an earth-born mind ; that He should appear either in a transient manner as in the revelations and visions of saints ; or in a lasting form, as is the incarnation of the SON of GOD.

Second saying: "No man cometh unto the FATHER but by Me."<sup>1</sup> What does it mean to come unto GOD? Unto GOD, Who "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto ; Whom no man hath seen, nor can see,"<sup>2</sup> in His substance. Certainly no man can come nigh unto GOD, either walking with his feet upon earth, or on wings through the air. What does it then mean to come unto GOD? We can come unto him from whom we are afar off: but how is it possible to be far from GOD, Who is Omnipresent? "GOD is a Spirit ;"<sup>3</sup> therefore also we must come unto Him in a spiritual way. A spiritual withdrawal or approach emanates principally from the will. By a sinful, evil will, man separates himself from GOD, as it is said in the Scriptures: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your GOD."<sup>4</sup> By a repentant and good will, man comes unto GOD. And this even cannot take place, save through the incarnation of the SON of GOD, as He saith Himself: "No man shall come unto the FATHER, but by Me." If thou shalt ask, Wherefore should not man come unto GOD by his will, which is free? I answer: GOD

<sup>1</sup> S. John xiv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 16.

<sup>3</sup> S. John iv. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. lix. 2.

speed! Make the attempt. But if thou wilt be attentive, then doubtless, thou wilt find and acknowledge that which was confessed by those better than thou and I: "for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not; for the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do."<sup>1</sup> However strange to the mind this contradiction in human nature may appear, yet it was long ago known by those even who were not taught of it by Christianity: and if we penetrate deeper into the cause of it, we may be convinced, that it even ought to be so under certain circumstances. The fountain of goodness and virtue is GOD alone. If man remains good, and thereby in communion with GOD, then he will constantly draw from GOD the power of doing good; and therefore he is free to wish for good, even so has he the power to achieve it. But if he has suffered himself to fall into sin, and thereby hath become alienated from GOD, then in proportion to his alienation from GOD, the possibility of drawing power from GOD will decrease in him; and therefore when his will, being naturally free, would return to goodness and unto GOD, the power of working good no more answers the will; and man can no longer come unto GOD by himself, without a special, extraordinary sending down upon him of divine power,—without such a mediation, wherewith the distance between GOD and man should

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 18, 19.

be filled up, the alienation put an end to, the communion re-established,—without such a mediation, which should be in perfectly equal relation to both alienated sides—GOD and man. And such a Mediator is the GOD-Man.

Third saying : “ For GOD so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten SON, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”<sup>1</sup> GOD can do nothing superfluous or unnecessary, for this would not be in harmony with His Wisdom. And therefore, if GOD has given His only-begotten SON for the world, then evidently this was necessary. Wherefore? As the SON of GOD saith : “ that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Is it possible that otherwise the world would have perished, and would not have received everlasting life? Evidently so. Why? To render this as clear as possible, let us turn our thoughts to the beginning of creation. It is written in the Book of Wisdom, “ GOD made not death.”<sup>2</sup> This short line ought to be copied from the Book of divine Wisdom into every book of human wisdom, that is not thoroughly devoid of the comprehension of GOD, as the perfect Creator. GOD is the principle of life. The creature, being a creature, is subject to change; but its changes, as created and ordained by the All-perfect Creator, may be well-ordered unto perfection, without suffering, without gross, unclean,

<sup>1</sup> S. John iii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Wisd. i. 13.

deadly corruption, even in the dissolution of its integral parts, which may take place easily and pleasantly, as for instance (inasmuch as it is possible to find some instance of it in the present imperfect condition of creatures) the solution of pure oil into light, or the distillation of laudanum into fragrant incense. Whence comes then disorder, deformity, impurity, suffering, destruction, corruption, in one word—death?

It seems to me that even natural reason will find nothing else to say than that which the revealed divine doctrine saith, “sin entered into the world, and death by sin.”<sup>1</sup> Sin as an alienation from GOD, is at the same time “alienation from the life of GOD,”<sup>2</sup> and consequently, sooner or later, temporary death for the corruptible and fleshly being, and for the spiritual, incorruptible—eternal death, for except GOD, there exists not, neither will exist any other source of life. And thus do sin and death bear testimony in this world to the presence of each other. Dost thou see sin all-powerful in this world,—thou mayest say, the world is on its way to death. Dost thou see death,—thou also mayest say, the world has evidently sinned and passes to perdition. He who is not too blind to perceive in the world the dominion of the one or the other, either of sin or of death, can understand how much the world is in need of deliverance from perdition, and a renewed gift of life. And it is for the sake of this great need that “GOD gave His Only-begotten

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 18.

SON." Death and perdition come down upon man, both as the natural consequence of his alienation from God, and as the working of the justice of God against sin. Therefore it is necessary for man's salvation, firstly, to satisfy the justice of God, (for none of the divine attributes can be deprived of its efficacy, and also because the proclamation of an unconditional pardon or impunity, would most surely lead man, standing already in the way of sin, farther on in that way, and consequently not unto salvation, but to perdition ; ) secondly, to infuse anew into mankind the life of God which should vanquish and destroy death reigning over it.

Such requisitions are difficult, nay impossible by natural means. To satisfy the justice of God means then to deliver the sinner over to everlasting death, and thereafter the possibility of eternal life vanishes from him for ever. How should it be possible to impart the life of the Most Holy unto sinful man? Such a striking contrast between both the united extremes threatens the destruction of the unworthy creature, like hay by fire, sooner than it inspires the hope of salvation.

But what is the design of the God of miracles? He sends His own hypostatic life, His only-begotten Son, unto a small chosen part of humanity, prepared by the long hidden working of His providence, and preserved from the contagious influence of sin. He blendeth divinity and humanity in the God-Man; He

lowers divinity clothed in humanity, unto a thoroughly human state,—except that of sin,—even unto infirmities, unto sufferings, unto death. And what then? Divine justice is perfectly satisfied, for in the person of the GOD-MAN humanity has undergone that death to which it was doomed, and has undergone it thoroughly, since one moment of the death of the GOD-MAN, by the presence in Him of eternal divinity, is equal to eternity, and it is upon this satisfaction of divine justice that the right of the SAVIOUR is grounded to forgive the repentant sinner without the pernicious hope of impunity for him who repents not; and at the same time, the life of GOD, having descended into the depth of human death, but being by its nature not to be conquered by death, shines forth from the depth of the grave upon all mankind dead through sin, and infuses life into every soul which opens unto it by faith, and does not repel it by unbelief and hardness of heart. “GOD so loved the world.”

These meditations lead to the following questions: how then did man live, do good, know GOD, before the incarnation of divinity was accomplished? How do they still love, do good, know GOD even now, who do not enjoy the fruit of the divine incarnation? Those questions are worthy of attention. To those who have not sufficiently penetrated the heart of the mystery, of GOD manifest in the flesh, to be able to see from within its quickening light, and to experience its saving power, the solution of the question just

given, may show at least the outward majesty of this mystery, which alone works out of human kind a glorious edifice of wonderful unity in its very variety, spreading throughout all extent of space and time, losing itself in heaven, and out of the pale of which humanity offers but disordered ruins, here and there somewhat raising itself, but generally shattered, scattered and hardly rising above the level of earth.

How did man live before the birth of CHRIST? He lived in the pristine purity of his creation, through communion with the Word of GOD, in Whom "was life, and the life was the light of men,"<sup>1</sup> as it was in the beginning, and ever shall be. And since the time when sin alienated man from GOD, before the Advent of CHRIST, if man already "dead in sins"<sup>2</sup> inwardly, was still outwardly alive, and if there appeared yet in him some glimmerings of a higher life, then he lived firstly, by the remnants of the life breathed into him by GOD in the beginning, just as the branch cut from the living tree lives on until the exhaustion of the living sap, or until its ingrafting on to a living tree; secondly, he lived by the anticipated first-fruits of the life of CHRIST, which may be looked for farther than the cradle of Bethlehem, and earlier than the salutation of Nazareth, which was, we may say, its crowning, and not its beginning; for at the very time when the original life was impaired by sin, it became necessary to infuse into mankind the healing of CHRIST, and it

<sup>1</sup> S. John i. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii. 5.

was infused by the first annunciation of the Incarnation of GOD the WORD,—“the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head;”<sup>1</sup> and from this time forward it began, and uninterruptedly continued graciously to work, as we may perceive in the patriarchs and prophets. As to man’s natural life, defiled by sin, is it possible not to perceive, both in former times and now, how it progresses not towards perfection, but towards destruction and death; how in the course of time it grew shorter in the individual life, how it was severed and hewn into unconnected groups, which are called tribes and nations, how among many people, estranged from CHRIST, it has fallen to the lowest degree of animal and bestial life?

How did man know, and does still know GOD worked and still works good, before Christianity or without it? I have but one answer,—If he knew GOD, then he knew Him by the remnants of the primitive light of his mind, and by the aid of godly tradition. If he did anything in any sense good, he did it through the remnants of the primitive goodness of his will. By the fall of man into sin, the image of GOD was broken in him, but neither entirely demolished nor destroyed; the eternal Sun was setting in his soul, but its last rays are still glowing on its heights. And even by this decreasing light, “the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii. 15.



eternal power and Godhead.”<sup>1</sup> “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these show the work of the law written in their hearts.”<sup>2</sup>

But perhaps it may be said, if there exists naturally in human kind at least some knowledge of GOD, and at least some good works, then could it not have been possible for him by some natural means, by continued efforts and mutual aid, to be raised, made perfect, and saved? To answer this is not very difficult, for examples are ready, and it is but necessary to point to them. Human kind before Christianity, during some thousands of years, had ample space to try its natural powers. What did it achieve? After the most ancient traditions concerning the One GOD, the innocence of Paradise, or as it was called among the Gentiles, of the golden times, we see polytheism, idolatry, vices and evil deeds, of which the very names horrify us by their being contrary to nature itself,—as for instance, not merely homicide, but infanticide and parricide and anthropophagy. The Gentile world, pitiful in its barbarity, when it grows civilised becomes repulsive in its depravity, which commonly progresses with its civilization, and makes of it its instrument. What accomplished the Gentile philosophy? Did it bring even one Gentile city or even one village to the knowledge of the true GOD? Was it not this philosophy that first raised doubts about the very existence

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ii. 14, 15.

of GOD and virtue? At the time of Christianity it became easy for the mind to kindle several centres of natural knowledge by the sun of divine revelation; but even at the present time, has not natural reason, designing to act without CHRIST, deprived itself of the last remnant of spiritual light; has it not disgraced itself by a frenzy, unknown even to paganism, in proclaiming atheism as a state law? Let them call this a chance paroxysm, a partial disorder, an abuse of reason by a few swayed by passion, which showed itself in great dimension but outwardly; I do not deny it, if you wish; but if this is an abuse, a disorder, a disease, then show me the usefulness, the order, the health of natural reason without the higher direction of revelation, without its Great Physician, CHRIST? Let them point out to me, if they are able, in more extensive, or at least in no less ample proportion, the common workings of this reason towards the perfection and happiness of human kind. And who can warrant that its abuses, disorders, diseases, will not return again and again under new aspects, according to circumstances with new intensity, if you leave it without guidance from above, and allow it independent sway; if, before its rendering you an impossible service, you will proclaim it the Saviour of mankind? In truth, we have sufficient afflicting proofs to convince us that the self-redemption of humanity, by natural means and by the efforts of reason, is no more than a dream and the sickly delirium of spiritually diseased humanity.

The best and most saving achievement of human reason towards the perfection and happiness of mankind can only consist in the endeavour to know and measure impartially its own powers, means, and deficiencies towards this glorious end; to understand the possibility, to acknowledge the need of revelation from above; to draw nigh unto "the great mystery of godliness," to lay at its feet its weapon and its crown; and to surrender itself into a noble captivity, into the free obedience of faith in "GOD manifested in the flesh."

O Christians! children of faith, heirs of revelation, keepers of the mystery of GOD! Let us bless the GOD of mysteries and revelations! Let us glorify the GOD-Man, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Let us keep the mystery of GOD, so graciously entrusted to us. Let us also think at the same time that it were unfitting to keep the mystery of godliness in an unclean soul and impure life. But it behoveth us to keep this sacred and divine treasure in a chest of pure gold,—“holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.”<sup>1</sup> Amen.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 9.

## SERMON XXII.

### *ON OBEDIENCE.*

#### *The Annunciation.*

“And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the LORD; be it unto me according to thy word.”—*S. Luke i. 38.*

**T**HOSE are earthly words,—but which like heavenly things are purer than tried silver, better than gold, of greater value than precious stones. This is the treasure which during five thousand years the heavens sought upon earth, and which one from before the heavenly throne was sent to reveal.

In truth, the Archangel Gabriel not only brought unto the Virgin Mary the word of divine annunciation, but he also awaited from her the word of compliance. When he had pronounced the words of salutation, “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the LORD is with thee; blessed art thou among women;” then was the annunciation of the SAVIOUR of the world almost accomplished, for thereby was the Mother of the LORD signalled and pointed out. But as the Virgin was troubled and was silent, casting in her mind

what manner of salutation this should be, then the Archangel extended and strengthened his annunciation and said, "Thou shalt bring forth a Son ; He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest ; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."<sup>1</sup> And now was the Annunciation on the part of the Archangel thoroughly accomplished ; yet still he does not consider the work of his embassy fulfilled, for he does not hear the word for which he is waiting, but only, "How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man?" He at length solves the question : "The HOLY GHOST shall come upon thee," and then he received the desired answer, "Behold the handmaid of the LORD, be it unto me according to thy word." And now only is the long sought treasure found. The joyful tidings from heaven have called forth answering joyful tidings from earth unto heaven, blessed for both. The heavenly embassy has attained its end. "And the Angel departed from her."

What does this mean? What means it that the incarnation of the SON of GOD is preceded by annunciation from heaven, and that it is not only proclaimed by the sovereign will of the LORD, but also awaits the assent of His handmaid. Is then the Almighty powerless to act without preparations or without awaiting assent? Wherefore does heaven so earnestly look for these earthly words, "Behold the handmaid of the LORD, be it unto me according to thy word?" They

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke i. 31.

were necessary as well for the dignity of the Mother of the LORD, as for the very act of the incarnation of GOD the WORD.

None will doubt that in order to become the chosen Mother of the LORD, there was required in her, who should be elected, the highest merit attainable upon earth. And in what can the merit of a free and reasonable being consist, if not in the pure and elevated aspirations of the mind, and in the free action of the will? They were necessary, that the dignity of the Mother of the LORD might be founded, confirmed, and revealed, for our joy and edification, in the Virgin Mary. Her trouble at the glorious salutation of the Archangel was the feeling of a deeply humble soul. Her restraining this trouble in silent meditation was a token of the wisdom, firmness, and tranquil exaltation of the soul. In the question, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" there was revealed a constant love for the chastity of virginity. At length, in the final exclamation, "Behold the handmaid of the LORD, be it unto me according to thy word," there was expressed the obedience of faith.

If, as the Apostle teaches, "CHRIST may dwell in hearts by faith,"<sup>1</sup> being already near to humanity, and in communication with it by His incarnation; then how much stronger and more perfect must have been the faith required of the Virgin Mary in order that the SON of GOD might by His incarnation take His abode

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iii. 17.

in her, while humanity was yet alienated through sin from the inaccessible glory of His Godhead. And such faith was found in Mary, rendering pure and perfect obedience accessible to her; unto a mysterious calling, an undoubting obedience; unto a calling unparalleled in its exaltation, an obedience without exultation. And this obedience bent her soul under the overshadowing of the HOLY GHOST, blended her will with that of GOD, opened her heart to the power of the Highest; and the eternal Light came down and kindled in her a life, new, not for earth alone, but for heaven also, the heavenly in the earthly life, the eternal in the temporal, the divine in the human, the quickening life in the mortal life. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."<sup>1</sup>

"Thy works are wonderful, O LORD! Thy mysteries are wonderful, O Mother of GOD!" Who hears thy low breathings in thy closet of solitary prayer? Who foresees what marvellous events thy brief words carry in them? Is the world aware of this moment when its whole destiny is changed, in which the relations between heaven and earth are transformed? Does Rome, dreaming of universal sovereignty, know that in one of her remotest provinces, a certain king's daughter, calling herself "the handmaid of the LORD," has just uttered the sentence which prepares unto the world a new, a better, a higher Sovereign, and unto Rome the destruction of

<sup>1</sup> S. John i. 14.

her proud and arbitrary empire. Have the renowned oracles of paganism divined that from the lips of an unknown Virgin there has issued the prediction which shall silence them, overthrow the idols and their temples, put an end to the bloody sacrifices, and exterminate the sanguinary sacrificers? Did the wise men of this world conceive the thought that at the voice of a Hebrew maiden there should come down from heaven the Wisdom until then unknown, the Wisdom which shall confound the wisdom of the wise, and put to shame the understanding of the learned, but shall reveal unto infants mysteries unfathomable to the wise? But what do I say? Jerusalem and the tribes of Israel who have known and preserved from their ancestors the promise of God concerning the Great Liberator and Peacemaker, and who “instantly serving God day and night, hope to come”<sup>1</sup> to its fulfilment,—have they attained the knowledge, that having traversed the vast domain of promise, on this day or on this night, they have suddenly attained the limits of its fulfilment, and that this limit was found in Nazareth? Do the Scribes, who have so many times read in the Book of Isaiah, “Behold, a Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel,”<sup>2</sup> and have almost as often wondered at this,—do they think that the Virgin foreseen by the prophet, has already understood this prophecy, and is

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvi. 7.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. i. 23.



preparing herself to fulfil it? Does, at least, the just man Joseph, who is no longer a stranger to the mystery of the Virgin, having espoused her, that she might remain a virgin,—does he know that immediately after this she was espoused to the HOLY GHOST, and became the Mother of the LORD? Throughout the whole world none but one knew of the Annunciation of the Archangel, at the time of its taking place, and yet it was destined to be proclaimed unto the whole world on its accomplishment. And on first hearing the seemingly simple words of the Annunciation of Mary, “Behold the handmaid of the LORD, be it unto me according to thy word,” who would have been able to fathom their whole import, or feel their whole power? Their import is known but to the depth of the wisdom of GOD embracing time and eternity; their power is one with the might of the Highest, and shall transfigure earth and fill heaven. Humble yourselves, ye prying investigators. Wonder and rejoice, ye lowly contemplators. Throw down, O proud intellect, the fragile weapons of wilful sophistry, and learn to love the free captivity of faith!

And thou, soul, who in a godly manner seekest thy salvation, be taught by the word and example of the most blessed Virgin to what lofty heights we are led, how much is achieved, how perfectly GOD is pleased by this humble and seemingly obscure virtue,—obedience of faith: that obedience in its high, substantial,

spiritual sense, means the subjection of the human will, created and dependent, unto the divine will, creating and sovereign.

From this we may at once perceive the duty, efficacy, and importance of that obedience.

Is it for the creature to rise against its Creator? Dares the earth-born slave rebel against his heavenly LORD? A mind which is not thoroughly darkened, and a heart not entirely hardened, will combine to repel this absurd inconsistency. Mind and heart accord in pronouncing obedience the duty of the human towards the Divine will.

The Divine will is infallible. Consequently obedience unto the will of GOD must preserve or liberate man from sin and error.

The Divine will is most good. Therefore obedience to the will of GOD must lead man to everything that is good.

The creature without its Creator is nothing. It exists but through the power of its Creator. What then will become of the will of man if it do not adhere unto the Divine will through obedience, if it fall off from it by disobedience?

There was a time when the first man was happy. Why? Because he followed the perfect will of GOD. How did he fall from the height of his happiness? His will fell off from the Divine will, and sank into sensual desire. Disobedience, sin, death,—these are the links of one chain; he who lays hold of the first

link draws upon himself the last of them,—and, oh, that it were ever but upon himself alone! But we see the contrary; “for by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.”<sup>1</sup> “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men.”<sup>2</sup>

Is it then necessary to heal hapless humanity of a universal deadly disease? It is easy to guess, that the most efficacious remedy will consist in that quality the loss of which was the origin of that disease, that is, obedience. And it is with this corrective that the Great Physician came down upon earth. See, how being Himself whole, He prepares in His own person the remedy for diseased humanity,—by obedience. “He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”<sup>3</sup> “By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”<sup>4</sup> “Though he were a SON, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.”<sup>5</sup>

There is an obedience of love, an obedience of fear, an obedience of faith. Man lived in the beginning as on sweet food, on the obedience of love unto the Merciful and Perfect God. But afterwards, when he had poisoned that happy life by tasting of

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. v. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. v. 8, 9.

the forbidden tree, he needed, as a remedy, not without bitterness, to exercise the obedience of fear towards GOD, the righteous Judge, and then the obedience of faith in GOD and CHRIST, the merciful Physician and SAVIOUR, in order at length to be able as his spiritual health returns, to feed again on that sweet and immortal food,—the obedience of love. And thus it is on obedience that the spiritual life of a man and a Christian depends ; and therefore does the Apostle call Christians “obedient children.”<sup>1</sup>

If any should find the thought of feeding and living on obedience, a far-fetched and exaggerated image, and not a conception of the mind drawn from the substance of the object : let such a one remember the utterance of the infallible Master, in Whose words it is impossible to suppose exaggeration : “I am the vine, ye are the branches : he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without Me ye can do nothing.”<sup>2</sup> How is it to be achieved, that man should abide in CHRIST, and CHRIST in man, that man should be one with CHRIST, as the branch with the vine ? This cannot be done otherwise than through the obedience of faith, by the free surrender of the heart and the silent submission of the will of man unto the all-pervading will of CHRIST. Thus does the obedience of faith really infuse into man the power and life of CHRIST,

<sup>1</sup> In the Slavonic text stands : *children of obedience.*

<sup>2</sup> S. John xv. 5.

wherefore also the works of such a man are often far above and more powerful than the ordinary works of man.

He who understands not or seeks an excuse, may say : How is it possible to *live* on obedience, that is, to be constantly employed in the fulfilment of the divine will? Is it then possible entirely to suppress one's own will, which naturally exists, and which it is impossible to annul? And is it possible to know at every moment the will of GOD? Happy are the elect ones unto whom GOD sent His messengers; but, even to the elect these occasions were rare. He who speaks thus, proves, not that perfect obedience is difficult of accomplishment; but that he who does not exercise himself in work knows not how to perform it.

If thou sincerely desirest to know the will of GOD, there exists also for thee an angel, who is both near and ready. This is thy conscience. Hearken to thy conscience, drown not its still small voice by the tumults of thy passions, and the will of GOD shall be revealed unto thee, and thou shalt be in the path of obedience.

There is a still more impressive and perfect proclamation of the divine will, which thou mayest read in the holy Scriptures, hear at church, behold in the examples of saints. Hearken unto it, and the divine will shall be made clear unto thee, and obedience shall become more easy and sure.

Everything throughout the world is ruled by divine Providence, and consequently by the will of GOD in so far as it is not produced by the will of man. And therefore in everything that happens to thee, thou mayest see the will of GOD. There comes prosperity, and announces the divine will, that thou must thank GOD. There comes adversity, and proclaims unto thee the will of GOD, that thou shouldst endure. For obedience may be manifested not only in doing the will of GOD, but also in abstaining from acting against the divine will, and above all, in suffering un-murmuringly according to the will of GOD. Learn to say meekly unto the messenger of the heavenly will, "Be it unto me according to thy word." But learn also, at the sight of the cross, bravely to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done,"<sup>1</sup> O my heavenly FATHER!

Howbeit, although truth and virtue are accessible to all, it is yet not superfluous, but often indispensable to have special teachers, according to the kind of knowledge; special tutors, according to the kind of work. And thus also to progress in spiritual obedience as far as thou canst, as far as thou inwardly feelest an especial want, choose for thyself a special teacher, learned and experienced in that science, consecrated to that work, whose word should be made powerful by his life, enlightened through prayer, preserved from error by humility. Subject thy will unto his for the sake of

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xxii. 42.

GOD, and the will of the GOD of heaven will come down upon thee on earth, and thy simple earthly obedience will come up to heaven, according to the words of Him Who is the Giver of pastors and teachers, addressed to the true and lawful teachers, "He that heareth you heareth Me."<sup>1</sup>

It is true that obedience unto GOD in the person of a man, has from olden times carried its schools far away from society, separated them from the community of the world, built for itself special habitations, wherein it brought and still brings forth its fruits unto heaven and earth. But shall a lore which is, I confess, better taught in the silence of solitude, be therefore counted utterly unnecessary and useless for cities?

The sons of this world desire more and more extent for the exercise of their own will. And whither does this lead? Leads it not to what was once foretold by the prophet: "And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him?"<sup>2</sup> But what shall happen at the time of this unlimited freedom of the will of man? The prophet says: "Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and makes it waste."<sup>3</sup> That is, He will suffer wilfulness to

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke x. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xxiv. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. xxiv. 1.

punish itself by the very disorders which it brings forth.

And after all temporal punishment, do you know what shall add fuel to the fire of hell? Nothing more than self-will with its offspring, which is sin. Put aside self-will and hell will find no fuel in you. Accept the will of GOD and you shall receive heaven into your hearts, until it receive you into itself. For wheresoever abides the will of GOD there is heaven.

But is it an easy thing to part with liberty, which is natural to man? And who requires of thee that thou shouldst part with liberty? GOD has bestowed liberty upon thee, that thou mightest freely choose between good and evil, between the creature and the Creator, between thyself and GOD. If thou chooseth thyself, the creature, the evil, thou shalt be led into captivity by self-love, by the creature and by evil. If thou chooseth and constantly abidest in the choice of that which is good, of GOD and His will, thou wilt not lose, but on the contrary strengthen and increase thy liberty. "Where the Spirit of the LORD is, there is liberty."<sup>1</sup>

But is it easy sometimes to break down self-will? It is sometimes difficult indeed, and sometimes it is easy, in proportion as thou makest it difficult or easy to thyself. When thou wishest to fulfil the will of a beloved father or mother, is it not then easy for thee to forget thine own will, is it not even pleasant

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 17.



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to sacrifice it? Who hinders thee from becoming through faith and love the son of GOD, and who prevents thee from rendering thy obedience to the will of thy heavenly FATHER sweet unto thee?

*Our Father, which art in heaven! Thy will be done in all of us! Amen.*

## SERMON XXIII.

### ON SILENCE.

#### The Annunciation.

“And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the LORD, and my spirit hath rejoiced in GOD my SAVIOUR. For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”—S. *Luke* i. 46—48.

**A**T length does the hitherto silent Mary speak; and her word, full of the Spirit, flows and sparkles like a stream, ascends and exhales a sweet perfume-like incense, shines and illuminates like lightning. The words which we have just read, the commencement of the triumphal song, uttered by her when Elizabeth for the first time saluted her with the name of “Mother of the LORD,” how much do they contain? She glorifies GOD, and lifts up to Him not her voice alone but her very soul: “My soul doth magnify the LORD.” She rejoices and her gladness becomes a prayer and a spiritual sacrifice: “my spirit hath rejoiced in GOD my SAVIOUR.” She humbles herself and proclaims the condescension of the Most High: “For He hath regarded the low estate of His hand-

maiden." She prophesies and her prophetic eye pierces throughout all time unto its very end: "from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." For it behoved her, in whom henceforth the Word had taken His abode, to become herself mighty in word; before the time that the Word should come forth from her as the fruit of her womb, it manifesteth itself in her, as the fruit of her lips, which confess the LORD: "and Mary said."

The words of Mary are wondrous, and her silence also is sublime. Let the devout and the attentive themselves ponder the deep significance of her song, which is so often heard in our churches; and let us turn our attention towards that which is not brought so forcibly under our notice. Let us penetrate Mary's silence, and let us be taught by her to use carefully the treasure of speech.

Of the silence in which the holy Virgin grew and was brought up, I shall not speak, because this is hidden by the silence of the holy Evangelists. He who has heard what tradition relates of it, has the most perfect type of a godly education, and can judge, whether the distractions so freely granted to children in our time answer to this model and give promise of blessed fruit.

The day of the *Annunciation*, that is, of the joyful tidings of the approaching time of the incarnation of the SON of GOD, is the first revelation of the life of the Mother of the LORD, of a life until then hidden in

GOD. The word of the angel makes manifest in her the virtue of silence. He breaks suddenly upon her solitude, and says to her, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou among women."<sup>1</sup> How many questions must have crowded at this moment on the wondering Mary! Who is this unknown one? What right has he to break into the solitude of a virgin? What signifies this unheard of salutation which elevates an obscure virgin above all the women in the world? But nothing can draw her out of her habitual silence. She feels the emotion of the spirit, but her lips move not. She is in no haste to answer the salutation, but remains silent and thoughtful. "She was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be."<sup>2</sup>

The angel having quieted her spirit by one word, "Fear not,"—for the words of the heavenly powers are full of might, and do not remain inefficacious,—proceeds with the commenced annunciation. To explain the name of "highly favoured," he adds, that she has "found favour with GOD." Then he foretells the conception and birth of a Son, His saving name, His divinity, His miraculous reign, His everlasting kingdom. How many more subjects of inquiries and converse. But the "highly favoured" desires not to inquire into the mysteries of grace. "The blessed" dares not to speak of that which is above

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke i. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. 29.

words, and above understanding. She had not even now broken her silence, had not her love for virginity torn from her heart this short saying, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"

To understand these words rightly, it is essential, firstly, to suppose, as it stands in tradition, that Mary had yet still earlier bound herself by a vow to keep her virginity throughout her whole life. For, not being bound by such a vow, and espoused to a husband, what reason would she have had to question the possibility of bringing forth a son: "How shall this be?" Secondly, it behoves us to take into consideration the law of Moses, (Numb. xxx.) according to which the vow either of a virgin or of a wife could be annulled by one word from the father or the husband; and the vow could only then stand when either father or husband had heard and not forbidden it. We may conclude therefrom, according to tradition, that the vow of virginity which on the prediction of the birth of a son, caused Mary to say, "How shall this be?" was already known to Joseph, and approved by him; and also that he had espoused the pure Virgin that he might be enabled, under the name of husband, to be the guardian of her virginity, which it was necessary to hide under the outward cover of marriage amidst a people, which seduced by the visible blessing of marriage, was not able to comprehend the sublimity of virginity. In these circumstances, how far soever Mary might be from unbelief, or doubt, or gainsaying,

or inquisitiveness, she was yet forced to question the angel, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" Although I have a husband according to the rite of marriage, still I have no husband in obedience to my vow of virginity; that vow has been pronounced and confirmed, and however much I may desire to break it, even so much does the law forbid it, which says, "If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth."<sup>1</sup> The LORD breaks not His laws, then how shall it come to pass that the vow of chastity be kept, the law fulfilled, and a son brought forth? Do you perceive now that extreme necessity alone breaks the sacred tie of her silence, or rather grace itself flows from her lips? the mystery of her marriage with Joseph is revealed, that under that mystery may be hidden the other, the deeper one of her espousal to GOD; Mary's renunciation of an earthly husband gives the angel the occasion to proclaim her dignity as the Bride of the LORD, to which she was predestined. "The HOLY GHOST shall come down upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee."

The annunciation is received, the angel has departed, the Word is made flesh, the Virgin has conceived; the tokens of conception have appeared, she was "found with child of the HOLY GHOST."<sup>2</sup> "Of

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xxx. 2.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. i. 18.

the HOLY GHOST," writes the Evangelist S. Matthew, but for a long time this mystery was not revealed to Joseph, and he knew no more than was made evident by the womb, "she was found with child." For if he had known the secret of the Bride of the LORD, could he have thought of "making her a public example," could he have been "minded to put her away?" Whereas he thought of the former, and almost decided on the latter. "And not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily."

We see here so many miracles of silence, that I know not if I shall find words in which to explain that silence. Joseph perceives in Mary what he had not expected, and what he cannot comprehend; but he is silent, and does not question her. Mary sees herself in danger of being exposed to a heavy suspicion and even judgment, and yet she is silent, and reveals not her secret. Where is the Angel, the messenger to Mary? wherefore is he silent, and does not calm her in her new trouble? And where is Joseph's guardian angel? Why does he tarry so long and forewarns not the just man, when his pure soul may so easily be darkened by an unjust thought, and even by a blasphemous suspicion? And, if it be not too daring to ask this,—Wherefore is He Himself, the Sender of Angels, so long silent? Wherefore does He delay to enlighten His just man, and to save her in whom dwelleth the salvation of the world? "Observe,"

exclaims S. Chrysostom, speaking of Joseph in these circumstances, "Observe that man's meekness, he not only did not punish her, but spoke to none, not even to her whom he suspected, and revolved it in his own mind, striving even to hide the cause of his trouble from the Virgin herself. Neither does the Evangelist say, that Joseph wished to cast her out, but only 'to put her away.' So meek and gentle was the man." And again, "as he deemed it unlawful to keep her in his house; while 'to make her a public example and give her to judgment, was to doom her to death; he does neither, but sets himself above the law. For it behoved that at the advent of grace, there should already be manifested signs of a higher wisdom."<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, it is evident, that the heart of the just man had already a presentiment of the commandment of CHRIST, that the "eye be single,"<sup>2</sup> and "judge not, that ye be not judged."<sup>3</sup> Therefore although seeing the signs of motherhood, yet he is not willing to give way to suspicion concerning the Virgin; a law exists empowering him as a husband, and yet he is not willing to judge his wife; "and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily."

Do you perceive now what high virtues are contained in the silence of Joseph? But Mary's silence is still more sublime. He alleviates another's diffi-

<sup>1</sup> Med. on the Gospel of S. Matth., Serm. iv.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. vi. 22.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. vii. 1.



culty by his silence, and finds at the same time a means to put an end to his own difficulty; whereas she bears her danger silently, and with every day her silence increases her difficulty. What then does this wonderful silence signify? It is that Mary is a perfect vessel of grace. For as a material vessel is worthless when it leaks, even so is a spiritual vessel worthless if it preserves not the grace poured into it in inviolable meek silence, but on the contrary allows it to filter and evaporate, needlessly and uselessly, in words either idle or wanton, impatient or vain. Whereas a perfect material vessel would be such as would hold not only that which was poured into it, but even its very perfume, and which could neither be broken by a blow, nor impaired by atmosphere or fire. Thus a perfect spiritual vessel is he "who holds the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience,"<sup>1</sup> in a peaceful heart, and in the silence of his whole being; who keeps the grace entrusted to him with a firmness which neither strokes of misfortune can shake, nor passion, nor trial destroy. If Mary spoke of her secret with Elizabeth, it was because this mystery had already been revealed unto Elizabeth by the HOLY GHOST, and that He Himself had spoken through the lips of both. Whereas if she had spoken of this to Joseph, it must have been either from a human trust, or from a human fear, and consequently not from divine impulse would she have spoken of the divine mystery. But now she conceals

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 9.

herself from him to whom probably more than to any one else on earth her heart lay open, for she had chosen him to be the guardian of her virginity; she conceals herself, in evident danger not only of "being made a public example," but, as S. Chrysostom explains, in danger of *judgment* and *death*. Such a silence is the surest testimony that she holds strongly the Word conceived in her womb, keeps it perfectly, loves it more than her chosen and espoused husband, more than any earthly joy, more than life itself,—this silence is a constant, a pure, a glorious sacrifice unto God the Word. No wonder that even divine revelation should be silent for a time to allow such exalted virtues to ripen and to be revealed unto our edification. The silent sacrifice of Mary was made perfect; the mind of Joseph had conquered all passion; and then only was the time come for the word of heaven to crown this work of silence by putting an end to Mary's difficulty, and by revealing unto Joseph the great mystery of godliness. "But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the HOLY GHOST."

Whosoever will have sufficiently constant attention to follow Mary throughout the whole course of her life, will constantly observe in her this same character of profound silentness, of perfect calm, of deep inward

concentration, which nothing could disturb, in short, a life hidden with God. Neither the highest joy, nor the deepest woe could alter this chief characteristic of her spirit.

The Word is born; angels sing praises, shepherds preach. Is it possible for the Mother of the Word to remain silent, and not to utter words of triumph? Yet she remains silent, does not lavish words, but keeps all these sayings in her heart. "But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."<sup>1</sup>

Does Simeon pierce her soul by a threatening prophecy; does JESUS Himself, still young in years, leave His Mother, and seeming to deny her, exclaim, that "He must be about His FATHER'S business;" the Mother of the Word demurs not, and remains silent; "but His Mother kept all these sayings in her heart."<sup>2</sup>

At last "she stands by the cross"<sup>3</sup> of her beloved Son, and the sword foretold by Simeon is actually piercing through her soul. Strangers could not remain indifferent; and even then when He was but bearing His cross, "there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him;" and after His crucifixion, "all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and re-

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke ii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke ii. 49, 51.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xix. 25.

turned.”<sup>1</sup> What might be expected from the Mother of the Crucified One standing by His cross? Weepings, lamentations, wailing, and heart-rending? But we neither see nor hear anything of the kind: an eye-witness does not tell us even of a single word from her. She suffered undoubtedly, as none had ever suffered upon earth, save the Crucified One, but the flood of her woe neither overcame, nor overwhelmed her, sinking as it were unceasingly into an immeasurable depth of patience, meekness, faith, hope, unconditional resignation unto the decrees of GOD.

Contemplate, thou Christian soul, this sacred image of spiritual silence offered thee by the Gospel, partly in the person of Joseph, but above all in the person of Mary; and learn to understand the hidden, sublime glory of her soul, of which the prophet has written, “the king’s daughter is all glorious within.”<sup>2</sup> Learn to appreciate and to love this spiritual beauty; love it, and strive to be clothed, at least in part, with that glory of the king’s daughter, and, following her virtue, to attain to her beatitude; “the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto the king.”<sup>3</sup>

Meetest thou something incomprehensible in faith? Do not hasten to scrutinise or to gainsay, but hearken unto the word of faith in silence, and abide patiently the time when He Who is speaking in parables will

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xxiii. 27, 48.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xlv. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm xlv. 14.

deign to reveal them unto thee in living words and experience.

Dost thou mark in thy neighbour's words or acts something strange, or that appears to thee irregular? Do not hasten to convict or to judge him, if thou art not called to do it as a father, a pastor, a tutor, or an elder. Be thou not righteous like the Pharisee, who found himself to be alone such throughout the whole world; "I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust;"<sup>1</sup> but be thou "a just man" like Joseph, "that is," as explains S. Chrysostom, "good and meek."

Fearst thou that some deed of love or faith of thine may be exposed to unjust judgment or blamed? Proclaim not thy virtue, that preserving its glory, thou mightest not impair its purity. "Commit thy way," not unto man by proclamation, but "unto the LORD," by prayer; "trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."<sup>2</sup>

If happiness visit thee, and joy enlarge thy heart, do not "open thy mouth wide"<sup>3</sup> unto vanity, but keep in a thankful heart the works of a bountiful Providence.

If misfortune attain thee and sorrow fill thy soul, do not multiply wailings and lamentations in the multitude of which there are heard but echoes of rebellion against the decrees of the Most High. "Be of good

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xviii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xxxvii. 5, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm lxxxi. 10.

courage, and He shall strengthen your hearts, all ye that hope in the LORD."<sup>1</sup>

In no case mayest thou lavish words foolishly, thou rational creature of the Creating Word. If GOD has created everything by His Word, and man was made in the image of GOD, then what glorious works had it behoved the word of man to work. In truth, it has healed the diseased, raised the dead, has brought down fire from heaven, has stopped sun and moon, and, what is more important than all, having become the instrument of the Incarnate Word of GOD, it has changed, and still changes men corrupted by sin into new, pure, and holy beings. Such is the power of the human word when having been closely kept in the furnace of reverential silence, and warmed by secret inward prayer, it acquires the purity and power which are natural to it, or rather participates of the power of the Word of GOD and of the HOLY GHOST. And is it this powerful, creating, sacred instrument which is turned by us to impure, destructive, sacrilegious ends,—into evil-speaking, calumny, blasphemy, or that we reduce in our thoughtlessness into light dust, and scatter to the wind in idle talk?

A certain man has said of himself, "There be nine things which I have judged in mine heart to be happy, and the tenth I will utter with my tongue."<sup>2</sup> So careful are those who know the price of words. At least, thou Christian, "be not rash with thy

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xxxi. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Eccl. Jesus Son of Sirach xxv. 7.

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mouth ;”<sup>1</sup> bethink thyself, if the word which thou wilt bring forth shall be for thy good or for the good of others, for howsoever small or insignificant it may appear, it will stand until the Judgment Day, and will appear there as a witness either for thee or against thee. Follow the Apostle’s counsel,—“ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”<sup>2</sup> Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. of Solom. v. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 29, 30.

## SERMON XXIV.

### ON TRIAL.

#### The Annunciation.

“And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying.”—*S. Luke*  
i. 29.

**W**ILL not those who hear this be troubled by the very thought, that I intend to speak of the trouble of the most blessed Virgin, as though the present solemnity offered no more important object for meditation? So many virtues, so many perfections, so many miracles, so many mysteries, offer themselves to our minds at the name of the most blessed Mary, and at the remembrance of the angel's Annunciation unto her, that they hardly leave room to perceive the light and short-timed trouble of her meek and peaceful soul.

But I am not afraid of pondering this trouble. Miracles are glorious without words; mysteries are often better revered by silence than by irrelevant efforts to expound them. Virtues! perfections!—oh! that it were sufficient for us to speak but of virtues



and excellencies, and that it were unnecessary to remind us of deficiencies, nay, even of vices ! But if, as I suppose, there will be many who will not refuse to acknowledge with me that almost every day, and sometimes even more than once a day, this or that word, this or that circumstance, leads us into trouble, great or small, of longer or shorter duration, not seldom influencing our own words, acts, and relations to others, in every case unfortunate, since it disturbs the peace and clouds the serenity of the soul. And therefore, it is not without importance for us to observe with peculiar attention this seemingly trifling incident, how sometimes even a soul blessed with Divine peace falls unavoidably into trouble, and how it conquers it ; that we may by this example perceive, diminish, and conquer our own generally wilful troubles, and may spread, as far as we are able, the domain of true peace in the soul.

“ And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying.” Who is it that leads *her* into trouble who must be full of peace, being called to bring forth *our* peace ?<sup>1</sup> Is it a man of unfriendly disposition ? Is it the Spirit of enmity, the eternal foe of peace, because he is deprived of it himself, the common Sower of troubles and alarms, because he lives in perpetual rebellion ? No ! to our wonderment, the cause of Mary’s trouble is an angel, a peaceful servant of the GOD of Peace. But perhaps the form under which he appeared

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. ii. 14.

unto her, had something dreadful in itself? No, we see not even this. The angel comes in quietly, and speaks: "And the angel came in unto her, and said." Then why is she troubled? "She was troubled at his saying." Was then that saying threatening? On the contrary, it was a word of joy and blessing: "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the LORD is with thee; blessed art thou among women."

Let us reflect awhile on the words of the angel, that we may find out the hidden cause of Mary's trouble. Until now no earthly born man, and above all no woman, had heard such a greeting from heaven. It is evident that the messengers of heaven are not prodigal of compliments; for pure heavenly truth is as devoid of superfluous affability as of unnecessary harshness: "Peace be unto thee,"<sup>1</sup> said the angel of the LORD unto Gideon, because he needed to be reassured; for Gideon, according to the belief of his time, thought that the vision of an angel would be fatal to him. But the salutation, "Hail!" was without precedent in the ancient visions of angels. "The LORD is with thee,"—thus did the angel again greet Gideon, and also from a peculiar necessity, to inspire him with strength and courage for the miraculous victory over the enemy, and for the salvation of the people of Israel. Several times and abundantly did GOD bless Abraham, as for instance: "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy

<sup>1</sup> Judges vi. 23.

seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”<sup>1</sup> And again: “Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.”<sup>2</sup> But it is not said here, that Abraham was blessed among men, that is, above all men; and as to the blessing of Sarah, although she participated in bringing forth the blessed seed, there was nothing said whatever. It is true the LORD had once said of Sarah: “And I will bless her;”<sup>3</sup> but it is worthy of remark, that even this short blessing was uttered not to her, but to Abraham in her absence. It evidently, according to the decrees of GOD, behoved that the first-fruits of the returning blessing upon the unhappy earth should remain longer hidden from woman, in whom the loss of that blessing in happy paradise began earlier than in man. Undoubtedly, this was known to the Virgin Mary, as well from the written Word of GOD, as by means of her own lowly religious meditations; and therefore, when she hears the unexpected visitor greeting her not only with peace, but with joy, ascribes to her grace, not merely as a gift, but as an inalienable dignity, foretells her blessedness pre-eminently over all women in the world,—her meek soul is moved by the powerful words of the Spirit, as calm water is irre-

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxii. 17, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xviii. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xvii. 16.

sistibly put in motion by the mighty breath of the wind : " She was troubled at his saying." There is nothing impure in that trouble : but there subsists no longer during the moment of trouble that peace of soul which preceded it. When the wind, striking the face of water, raises it partly from its bed, then even the purest water is agitated, and seems troubled. Thus the soul of Mary, not only uplifted from the lowliness in which it reposed, but even raised above all creation by the glorifying words of the angel, became troubled by a holy fear, and her constant yearning towards deep lowliness, having become more manifest in her exaltation, revealed itself in her trouble.

We see here how even a holy and passionless soul enters into trouble. Let us now see if it abides therein, and how it issues from it.

" She was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." When in any soul trouble continues, increases, and gains the absolute mastery over peace ; then we hear impatient words, observe irregular movements, see unseemly actions. But nothing of the kind appeared in the holy Mary. Trouble did not impel her to action, extorted not a single word from her. It is thus evident that she remained not for a moment wilfully in the trouble into which she was thrown of necessity ; but as soon as she was conscious of it, she thought directly of the means of passing out of it ; and as a first defence against trouble she employed silence.

Another means of defence used by the wise Virgin against trouble, was reflection: "and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." The Evangelist does not relate in detail in what consisted her reflections, doubtlessly pure as her soul, exalted as her spirit, mighty as the grace bestowed upon her. He deemed not those details necessary to us; he wrote concerning Mary's trouble merely what is useful for all to learn who are exposed to trouble, namely, that she came out of trouble by means of firm and discreet reflection. If to achieve the victory of peace in her soul, the angel's appeasing word, "fear not," was necessary, then as a preparation for the new reception of the words of the angel, there was no less need of her own calming reflection, inspired by prayer, as we may undoubtedly conclude from the constant state of her spirit. Heavenly influence brings perfect peace to the soul; but only a soul firm against outward and inward agitation, and rising from well-grounded reflection to pious meditation, is able to receive the sublime and bountiful influences from above.

Let us now compare our own frequent troubles, with the faultless trouble of the faultless Virgin.

Mary is troubled by words of praise, though there is no praise of which she were unworthy, and which she would not far exceed by her merit. Do we thus receive praise, when it falls upon our ear? Do we think that although it seems to be the word of an angel, it may prove that of a tempter? Are we

ashamed of unmerited praise, do we abhor partial praise, are we afraid even of just praise, that it might not lull virtue to slumber or impair its purity? Does not the imprudent heart swallow praise as sweet food, and perhaps as a sweet poison? Does not insatiable self-love attain the shamelessness of begging praise, or of ascribing it to itself? There are those who say unblushingly of themselves, I am a good Christian: I am a true son of the Church: and they are tranquil at these words: but I own I should wish them more uncertainty and doubt concerning themselves, instead of this too careless and self-confident tranquillity, which may end in a too late and extreme confusion.

Mary is troubled at a word, unwelcome to her humility: while we, on the contrary, are we not often troubled at words unwelcome to our pride? Not only words really reproachful, and actions really offending, soon deprive us of our patience; but even slight disagreements, involuntary words, just and moderate reproach, revolt us to the very depth of our hearts, even to anger and exasperation. A soul unpurified from passions, at the least influence from without, like impure water, raises from its depth its mud and slime, adding to outward trouble a much more inward darkness.

Mary is troubled, and delays not to subdue her trouble, restraining and crushing it in silence. Whereas among us many are turned by almost every ebullition of inward displeasure, either into a vessel of

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fermenting wine, or into a fire-breathing mountain, which showers lava and stones over all surrounding it. As soon as the spark of restless displeasure begins to smoulder within thee, at once take heed not to give air to it, that the smoke may not become fire, and that the fire may not envelope thee. Whatever be the cause of thy inward trouble, carefully cover thy vessel by silence, and let it stand, in patience, until the agitated fermentation comes to an end, and thy wine is purified.

Mary is troubled, but she overcomes her trouble by reflection. Let us borrow from her that instrument, to employ it in our inward strife. Howsoever varied the attacks, a wise word, above all when it is sharpened by the word of God, like a two-edged sword, acts on all sides unto the overturning of the enemy and to our own security. What is rising against thee, and troubling the peace of thy soul? A reproach! Bethink thyself, is it a just one? If it is unjust, then the arrow has fled past thee; wherefore then shouldst thou be sick if thou art not wounded? But if it is just, then be not angry against him who reproaches thee, as against a foe, who deals thee a wound, but thank him as a physician, who discovers it to thee, and compels thee to cure it. Is it an offence which angers thee? Bethink thyself, which is better, to be the offender or the offended? Undoubtedly it is better to be innocent, than to be guilty. Bethink thyself also of this, which is better, to be angry or

to endure patiently? Anger may suddenly make us both guilty and unhappier than before, while on the contrary, patience preserves innocence and may lessen misfortune. If thou art led into trouble, and despondency by thy imperfect progress in the work of thy own perfection, by thy sudden fallings and other inward disorders,—bethink thyself, that trouble alone neither corrects nor perfects : while despondency takes away strength, and therefore thou must not linger in fruitless trouble, but start up from despondency, and unremittingly strive to gain the victory over passion and lust, and along with it peace of soul and the joy of salvation.

May the grace of the highly favoured Mary be with every Christian soul in its involuntary trouble, and help it to appease this trouble by silence, and thoroughly to overcome it by reflection and prayer, that the angel of peace may speak freely to our hearts, and sow therein the “fruit of righteousness,” which “is sown in peace of them that make peace.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. James iii. 18.



## SERMON XXV.

### *THE FOUNDATION OF GOD.*

#### **The Annunciation.**

“Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The LORD knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the Name of the LORD<sup>1</sup> depart from iniquity.”—2 *Tim.* ii. 19.

**I** SEEM to see to-day that sure “foundation of GOD,” which the Apostle points out as being sealed by a seal, and known of the LORD alone. What is that foundation of GOD, upon which stands firmly every work of GOD, if not the SON of GOD, JESUS CHRIST? “For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.”<sup>2</sup> And if it is needed to create anew the fallen creatures of GOD,—“other foundation can

<sup>1</sup> In the Slavonic Bible we read “the LORD,” whereas in the English there stands “CHRIST.” We preserve the Slavonic text.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 16, 17.

no man lay than that is laid, which is **JESUS CHRIST.**"<sup>1</sup> This foundation of **GOD** the **HOLY GHOST** now brings down from heaven above, and lays in the heart of earth; He brings it forth from the glory of the Godhead, and entrusts it to humanity, sealed up by more than one seal,—by the seal of virginity, by the seal of lowliness, by the seal of silence. In truth, who but the **LORD** knew Thee, Who art of one substance with **GOD**, in that incomprehensibly lowly state, in which was hidden "**GOD** Who is all in all,"<sup>2</sup> when Thou, as the foundation of our salvation, wast laid in the womb of Mary in a way which remained incomprehensible, even after the angel's annunciation.

We wonder at the glory of the creating works of **GOD**: let us also wonder at their mysteriousness. Let us fix our attention for a time upon the foundation of **GOD**, pointed out by the Apostle: we may hope that a hidden treasure may be found therein.

#### PART I.

"Nevertheless, the foundation of **GOD** standeth sure, having this seal, The **LORD** knoweth them that are His."

Although it is sure that the "beginning of the creation of **GOD**,"<sup>3</sup> or its universal foundation, is the **SON** of **GOD**, **JESUS CHRIST**; yet we may perceive from the words of the Apostle that he is speaking here of "the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Revel. iii. 14.

foundation of GOD," not in reference to all the creatures of GOD, but only to some elect, whom the LORD knows exclusively and names His own: "The LORD knoweth them that are His."

What signifies, then, the foundation of GOD in that peculiar application? Doubtlessly it means that which is founded upon the SON of GOD, as upon a common foundation, particularly that which is wrought out in mankind; that which is founded upon JESUS CHRIST, as upon its deepest foundation in every truly Christian soul. Speaking more clearly, it means the Church, whose Founder is the SON of GOD; it means the gracious and saving gift of GOD in man, faith, whose Author and Finisher is JESUS CHRIST.

This foundation of GOD is called by the Apostle *sure*; because the LORD Himself has said, as well of the Church in general,—“I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,”<sup>1</sup> as of every truly Christian soul, “neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”<sup>2</sup>

There was an ancient custom of putting on edifices a sign, or an inscription, which should show their appurtenance, design, importance, inviolability. According to this the Apostle perceives also upon the spiritual edifice of GOD *the seal*, or in other words, the sign, or the inscription, which distinguishes the sure foundation of GOD from the insecure and easily destroyed works of man, and which keeps the former inviolate from the

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xvi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> S. John x. 28.

attempts of craft or insolence, folly or malice: "The foundation of GOD standeth sure, having this seal."

What seal then?—"This seal," continues the apostle, "the LORD knoweth them that are His." A truly wonderful seal! You see that it is an inscription, for it consists of words; but it is not without reason that the Apostle calls it *a seal*, for it not so much expounds and reveals, as it hides and conceals, and this is the very property of a seal.

"The LORD knoweth them that are His." The LORD knows His own; and is it then possible that men know not them that are of GOD? Even so. Very often, and perhaps for the most part, they know them not. Was it possible not to know of Moses, that he was of GOD, when he struck the Egyptian, liberated Israel, and filled air, water, earth, wood and stones, with miracles? Yet it is evident they knew it not sufficiently when they murmured and rebelled against him. Joseph was led through slavery and a prison to the throne, was glorified by the knowledge of the mysteries of GOD, invested with power; yet his very brothers did not soon perceive that he was of GOD, and he was compelled to reveal it to them himself: "Fear not, for I am of GOD."<sup>1</sup> Who was there who knew not the angelic life and heavenly doctrine of S. John the Baptist? But were there many who knew that he was pointed out by that word of the

<sup>1</sup> In the Slavonic Bible the text stands thus, whereas in the English we read, "Fear not, for am I in the place of GOD?" (Gen. 1. 19.)

LORD,—“Behold, I will send My messenger?”<sup>1</sup> And at the question, “The baptism of John, was it from heaven?” “the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,” men who knew more than others, were not ashamed to proclaim their ignorance: “And they answered and said unto JESUS, We cannot tell.”<sup>2</sup> And Thou Who art co-eternal and of one substance with GOD, did they know Thee from Whom alone true knowledge proceeds, as light from the sun? did they know Thee, even after Thou hadst spoken “as never man spake,” after Thou hadst worked miracles which “no man can do, except GOD be with him?”<sup>3</sup> And if they had known Thee they would not have spoken so irreverently,—“is not this the carpenter’s son?”<sup>4</sup> They would not have renounced Thee with such indifference,—“as for this fellow, we know not from whence He is.”<sup>5</sup> “For had they known it, they would not have crucified the LORD of glory.”<sup>6</sup> If then blinded men perceived not the lights of the world, and even the Sun itself,—if they knew not the men of GOD manifestly sent, nor perceived the revealed Wisdom Itself, then it is not to be wondered at that the world should not know them that are of GOD, whom a special providence of GOD reveals not unto the world, while at the same time their own lowliness conceals them from it.

<sup>1</sup> Mal. iii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> S. John vii. 46; iii. 2.

<sup>5</sup> S. John ix. 29.

<sup>2</sup> S. Mark xi. 30, 27, 33.

<sup>4</sup> S. Matth. xiii. 55.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 8.

“The LORD knows them that are His.” The apostle ascribes that knowledge to none except GOD : and therefore, is it then possible that those who are of GOD, know not even themselves that they are of GOD? In truth, we must infer even this from the words of the apostle. It is true, that according to the saying of the same apostle,—“The SPIRIT itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of GOD,”<sup>1</sup> if we are such indeed; and as says another apostle,—“He that believeth on the SON of GOD hath the witness in himself.”<sup>2</sup> But what witness? “And this is the record, that GOD hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His SON.”<sup>3</sup> But as this *life* of the faithful, until the day of the manifestation of the sons of GOD, “is hid with CHRIST in GOD,”<sup>4</sup> it may happen that they know not themselves sufficiently what Divine treasure they hold in the clay vessel of their corruptible humanity. And the SPIRIT Who bears witness with their spirit, is He not the same SPIRIT, which “bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth.”<sup>5</sup> When thou “canst not tell whence it cometh,” then He fills thee with that which is Divine; and when thou “canst not tell whither it goeth,” then thou wilt find in thyself nothing but that which is human. Had not

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 S. John v. 10.

<sup>3</sup> 1 S. John v. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Col. iii. 3.

<sup>5</sup> S. John iii. 8.

the LORD pre-eminently chosen and evidently adopted Paul, when He said of him in a vision,—“He is a chosen vessel unto Me?”<sup>1</sup> and having laid in him His Divine foundation, He built thereon His spiritual edifice, not only of many souls which had believed through him, but of many glorious Churches throughout many countries and nations? And what of it? Paul does not even afterwards know if he has attained perfect Divine adoption: “Brethren, 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 towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS.”<sup>2</sup>

Truly, He alone, “the LORD, knows them that are His.” But wherefore does He conceal them from other men, and in a certain way even from themselves? Wherefore should they not know more clearly, unto their comfort, that they are of GOD? Wherefore should not even other men, unto their edification, know this? This also happens: for the seal of GOD cannot be thoroughly imperceptible, and ought not to be useless. But even here, as in other cases, there is more hidden under the seal than is revealed by its outward appearance.

The gracious foundation of GOD is hidden in men because it is laid in the very depths of the soul, in order that nothing human should remain beneath it

<sup>1</sup> Acts ix. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 13, 14.

which could weaken the solidity of Divine foundation, which is, in the words of the apostle, "the hidden man of the heart:"<sup>1</sup> and him we cannot meet in the highways, nor see in a mirror.

The foundation of GOD is hidden from the world, partly not designedly, but as a natural consequence of its sensual inclinations. The world does not discern the saints, in the same way that blind men perceive not the light.

The gracious foundation of GOD lies hidden in men, partly by the decree of the divine Providence which is watching over them, that the hostile powers threatening them with destruction might be the less able to assail them. Thus also is the foundation of an earthly material building hidden in the ground, because being exposed to the variable influences of the elements, it would be weakened, and along with itself would weaken the whole edifice.

The foundation of GOD lies hidden in man even from himself, that he might not "think himself to be something, when he is nothing,"<sup>2</sup> that he might not be led astray by his own reasoning, that he might not be puffed up with himself, and through pride overthrow the foundation of grace, which rests solid and secure in the depth of lowliness alone.

Such and similar reflections may lead us to comprehend why the foundation or building of GOD, so visible in its completion, bears the seal of such secrecy

<sup>1</sup> 1 S. Pet. iii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. vi. 3.



in its parts and inward composition, that the LORD alone surely knows them that are His.

Let us revere the mysterious decrees of GOD. Let us rouse ourselves and search with deep attention for the men of GOD, and the foundation of GOD in them. Let us not rashly judge our neighbours, being ignorant of that in them which is known but to the LORD.

PART II.

“Nevertheless the foundation of GOD standeth sure, having this seal, The LORD knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the Name of the LORD depart from iniquity.”

Considering the seal or inscription pointed out by the Apostle upon the foundation of GOD or upon the divine edifice, we have until now contemplated but its first part. There follows the second. “Let every one that nameth the Name of the LORD depart from iniquity.”

If upon the edifice of GOD there had been but the former seal, if there had been written upon it but the former inscription, “The LORD knows them that are His,” that is, GOD alone knows surely those, who by living faith and never failing love, inalienably and everlastingly belong to Him, and to His, not only earthly, but also heavenly Church; this might both comfort and terrify us. Comfort us, by the thought of the solidity of the divine foundation, which is inviolable;

of the indestructibility of the divine seal ; of the security of those who are hidden in the mystery of GOD. Terrify us, by the uncertainty wherein it is impossible heedlessly to abide. For if the LORD alone knows them that are His, then who are those with whom we live and communicate, by whose counsels we are influenced, whose examples we follow ? Who are we ourselves ? Are they of GOD ? Are we of GOD ? GOD knows ! How dreadful is this word in this case. If GOD alone knows those with whom I associate, and who guide me, then how can I know if I am not guided by spirits of deceit ? Am I not in companionship with the enemies of GOD ? Am I not therefore in danger of being and of remaining alienated from the true, gracious adoption of GOD ? What dreadful uncertainty.

O LORD, Who knowest them that are Thine ! Thou art just and wise, hiding them from the world which is unworthy of knowing them, and which would have misused its knowledge of them ; but be also merciful towards those who though they are not yet Thine, perhaps desire to become and to remain Thine ; show us a sign by which we also, who know them not, may recognise the true, good, gracious, holy, in a word, that which is of Thee in man, that we may love Thine above all, seek Thine, cling to and become one with Thine, and by union with that which is Thine, and consequently with Thee, hope to be Thine own faithfully and eternally.

Indeed, as a royal seal, which holds the king's secret, and which shows at the same time by its stamp to whom it belongs, and thus preserves from the error of accepting as a royal property what belongs not to the king; in like manner it behoved that the mysterious seal wherewith GOD seals to Himself His faithful and chosen ones, as known to Him alone, should be marked with some visible and sufficiently sure sign, by which they who are attentive might distinguish those who are of GOD from those who deceive others or themselves by representing themselves as such. And such is the latter inscription which the Apostle reads upon the spiritual building of GOD in man: "Let every one that nameth the Name of the LORD depart from iniquity."

It is a great blessing for us upon earth, a glorious hope of happiness in heaven, that we may by faith "name the Name of the LORD." Our Divine SAVIOUR confines almost the whole import of His heavenly embassy in this, that He has made men able "to name the Name of the LORD." Drawing near to the end of His earthly career, He calls in prayer to His heavenly FATHER, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." What work? "I have glorified Thee on earth," or otherwise, "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world."<sup>1</sup> We may therefrom almost conclude that those unto whom was "mani-

<sup>1</sup> S. John xvii. 4—6.

fested the Name" of the heavenly FATHER, who "name the Name of the LORD," belong therefore to CHRIST; are of GOD. "No man," as testifies the divinely inspired Apostle, "can say that JESUS is the LORD, but by the HOLY GHOST."<sup>1</sup> And whosoever speaks by the HOLY GHOST, must of necessity be of CHRIST and of GOD, for the HOLY GHOST has no part with aliens. Another Apostle bears also witness that "whosoever believeth that JESUS is the CHRIST is born of GOD."<sup>2</sup> And whosoever is born of GOD is in the nearest relation to GOD.

What then? Can we not therefrom reason and conclude thus: we name the Name of the LORD; we call JESUS our LORD: then surely we are of CHRIST, surely we are of GOD; surely the kingdom of GOD is in us, and we shall betimes enter into the kingdom of GOD? From the life and acts of some we may indeed perceive that they cherish similar thoughts and feelings upon which, as upon a foundation, they build their hope of heaven and eternity. In this manner their spiritual building bears but this seal, "Let them that name the Name of the LORD," and no more.

Let us be cautious. This is a broken seal. This is an interrupted inscription. This is not a solid foundation. Not every one "that names the Name of the LORD" is truly and perfectly founded in the LORD and in His kingdom. The LORD proclaims Himself, "Not every one that saith unto Me, LORD,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 1 S. John v. 1.

LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." And that which He foretells farther is still more threatening, "Many will say to Me in that day," that is the day when the heavenly kingdom shall be revealed, and the blessed shall be called, "LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils, and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you."<sup>1</sup> O what an awful awakening! They have named the Name of the LORD, consequently they knew Him, and believed on Him; they have prophesied, cast out devils, done wonderful works; consequently they have had no small, but more than ordinary faith; yet the LORD receives them not into His kingdom, and even knows them not. How incredibly have evil and corruption prospered in humanity! Is it possible that even the quickening knowledge of the One true GOD, and of Him Who is sent, JESUS CHRIST, can be void of spirit and of life? We must acknowledge it, for there are men who "profess that they know GOD, but in works they deny Him."<sup>2</sup> Is it possible that faith itself, which has the power to save men, can be useless? Useless indeed, as says the Apostle James, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?"<sup>3</sup> Can it indeed happen that the very action of the HOLY

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. vii. 21—23.

<sup>2</sup> Titus i. 16.

<sup>3</sup> S. James ii. 14.

GHOST in man, such as prophecy, casting out of devils, and working of miracles, may be swallowed up in the confusion of the faculties and works of the corrupt, carnal man; that the heavenly fire which, once kindled in him, should raise him heavenwards, may be extinguished by earthly clay, and leave the man who was becoming enlightened in the state of an extinguished brand? If that danger had not existed, there would not have been uttered that warning,—  
 “Quench not the Spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

O LORD CHRIST! if not all that name Thy Name shall enter into Thy kingdom, then who of them shall enter into it? The LORD answers: “but he that doeth the will of My FATHER which is in heaven.” And on the contrary, why shall some of them not enter into it? “Depart from Me,” saith He, “ye that work iniquity.”<sup>2</sup>

Christian! thou believest in thy heart; probably thou believest rightly. But GOD alone knows this: “the LORD knows them that are His.” But I am not edified thereby, and perhaps thou art not convinced thereof. While the seed lies in the earth, who can tell that there will be a tree or good fruit?

Thou confessest the Name of the LORD and thy faith, *with thy lips*. If thou wouldst confess this like the saint confessors and martyrs, amidst the terrors of persecution, under the threat of death for the sake of thy faith, thy confession then would not be an idle

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. v. 19.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. vii. 21, 23.

word, but at the same time a mighty deed, and then wouldst thou truly confess unto salvation. But without this, who knows if the confession of thy lips proceeds from a true inward power, from a living faith? At spring-time there are blossoms even on those trees which shall not bring forth fruit, and which shall themselves be withered and dried up from the weakness of their roots and from want of sap. What if thy tree bringeth forth but a small, coarse, unseemly and tasteless fruit? What if thy pretended faith, which boasts of its orthodoxy, and even perhaps represents itself as miracle-working; what if it exists along with a carnal, sensual life, with unrighteous and unlawful deeds? However this tree might be extolled, however it might be adorned with flowers, it is impossible to hide its being a wild tree: "For every tree is known by his own fruit,"<sup>1</sup> says the Great Gardener. However high thou mayest extol thy faith, howsoever thou mayest adorn it by words of confession, unjust deeds and an impure life will reveal what thou art in reality. Delude not others, neither be thou deluded; thou belongest not to the good tree of the garden of CHRIST, but to "the plants which the heavenly FATHER hath not planted," and which "shall be rooted up,"<sup>2</sup> if it be not cultivated by new spiritual life, by works of justice and of holiness.

Wouldst thou be a good tree, which shall neither be hewn down nor rooted up? Bring forth good fruit!

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke vi. 43.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. xv. 13.

Wouldst thou be a true building of GOD, an everlasting temple of the HOLY GHOST? Then be not content merely "to name the Name of the LORD" by faith, but "depart from iniquity" in thy life.

There is but one secure foundation of Divine hope, and one building of eternal salvation, one only, "having this seal: Let every one that nameth the Name of the LORD depart from iniquity." By this seal, know among them who name the Name of the LORD, those who are His,—according to this sign examine thyself. Answerest thou to this Divine adoption? S. Basil the Great considers hate against unrighteousness as the most hopeful sign of a state of grace: "How shall a soul be able to know," asks he, "if GOD hath remitted his sins?" And he answers, "When he feels himself in the same disposition as he who said, 'I hate and abhor lying.'"

O thou divine building, divine temple, Christian soul! be watchful of thyself. Has thy inward foundation really the true seal, confirming and guarding it? "Let every one that nameth the Name of the LORD, depart from iniquity," as from an abyss, as from death, and as from the gates of hell! Amen.



## SERMON XXVI.

### ON GRACE.

#### The Assumption of the Holy Virgin.

“And the angel came in unto her, and said: “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying.”—*S. Luke* i. 28, 29.

**I** WONDER not that even thou, the Mother of the Author of peace, wert troubled at the words of the heavenly messenger. His message was too unusual; the salutation was too unexpected; and an angel alone was able to utter it, and thou alone to listen to and to receive it with faith.

“The LORD” was “with thee” not only by His gracious Presence, but also by real incarnation within thee. This is “a favour” incomprehensibly high, a joy infinitely bright! But what clouds surrounded thee, living and life-bearing tabernacle of the Light! He had not yet shone forth from thy womb, when a storm of doubt arose around thee, which, darkening, almost overcame the guardian of the Light,—Joseph. At the time when the Divine Light was reflected from

the manger into heaven, and His heavenly glory was echoed upon earth, at the time when He shone both upon the simple-minded shepherds and upon the far-sighted Magi, Herod and all Jerusalem along with him were troubled at the approach of the Light, and a king arose to fight a mortal battle against an unarmed infant, whilst thou, Mother of the Light, wast obliged to flee into the darkness of Egypt, and to fear to return into the native country of the light, Judea, and afterwards to go among "the people which sat in darkness and in the region and shadow of death, into Galilee of the Gentiles."<sup>1</sup> The just man Simeon, one of the few, did not only early see, but also know and receive into his arms "the light to lighten the Gentiles:"<sup>2</sup> but what then? When this light illumined the future to Simeon, then he, with the weapon of prophecy, pierced beforehand the soul of the Mother of the Light, that soul which was doomed to be pierced through by the sword of the sufferings of the Cross: "Yea, a sword shall pierce," said he, "through thy own soul also." Did the Divine proclamation of JESUS in the river of Jordan, His glory on Mount Tabor, the triumph of His doctrine and miracles, sufficiently rejoice thee, O highly favoured? We know not sufficiently, but there is revealed to us in the Scriptures, and we are able to understand even with our own heart, howsoever imperfect its love may be, how numerous, manifold, lasting, and deep must have been thy sorrows for thy

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. iv. 16, 25.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke ii. 32.

SON—Divine, though clothed in human infirmities,—when thou sawest Him at one time exhausted by His labours, at another contradicted by the people ; sometimes in danger of His enemies, and at length in their power ; when the clamours and blasphemies raised against Him, and the blows and wounds inflicted on Him were bruising thy own heart ; when He gave thee in His stead a stranger to be thy son ; when thou sawest His last glance, heardest His last word, and followedst His lifeless body ! The light of His Resurrection shone undoubtedly more abundantly upon thee than upon any ; but must not earthly life have remained for thee as the darkness of night after lightning, still more dark and shapeless when He was taken from thy sight by His Ascension into heaven ? Is this the fate of her who is “blessed among women,” to become at first an orphan-mother through the death on the Cross of her SON, and then by the Resurrection and glorious Ascension into heaven of that same SON, to remain again an orphan-mother upon earth ?

But, behold, there comes a new time. It is made manifest that the seed of the heavenly Word, if it brings not always forth speedy fruit, brings it forth more abundantly and more lastingly. But now thy “favour” is no longer accessible to heavenly contemplation alone, and it is no longer an “angel” alone who mysteriously announces joy unto thee ; thy favour and joy are proclaimed throughout a glorious Church ; human kind blesses thee, thou that art “blessed among

women." And like unto the glory of thy SON and GOD, thine own glory, O thou who "art highly favoured," shines forth from the sepulchre. The miracles of thy Assumption have revealed, that thy GOD-bearing soul passed straight to GOD. Thy empty grave, forsaken of thee, revealed that even in thy body death found no prey, that is, nothing defiled by sin, and therefore nothing corruptible. The life of the world to come, which we are but hoping for, is unto thee already an actual, eternal life, in the highest degree of glory. Thou standest in the heavenly habitation as a queen by grace, "clad in gold of Ophir, on the right hand"<sup>1</sup> of the King, Who is the King eternal, or in the words of another contemplator, "clothed with the sun;"<sup>2</sup> as it seems to me, in the revealed and perfect light of CHRIST. Thou standest there, not only to abide in light and rejoice therein, but also to reign in light, or to guide others into light: for "virgins shall be brought unto the King," that is, chaste souls, or such as have become cleansed, following thee. "Hail, thou that art highly favoured!" from henceforth and to all eternity hail! not only rejoice, but continue in bliss, for thou art not only highly favoured, but also highly glorified!

And if a high degree of light and joy, of grace and bliss, be a state of plenitude, diffusing itself over that which is kindred to and able to receive it; then, O thou divinely favoured, send down of thy fulness upon

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xlv. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xii. 1.

us who believe in thy blessedness and glorify it, at least some of the mysterious dew of grace, as the dawn of light, as the source of bliss, as the pledge of beatitude.

Pardon me, my brethren, if I am meditating long in your presence, as if I were alone. On days such as the present one, it were possible entirely to forget earth in conversing with heaven; and it would be good for us if we would more willingly and perseveringly converse with heaven; and less willingly and hastily turn to earth, and therefore, that meeting but with our failings and wants, we should the more constantly have recourse to the munificence and bounteousness of heaven.

Yes, my brethren, when turning from the contemplation of the favour which Mary has found with God, and which has led her by such wonderful ways to so high a degree of glory,—we, looking to ourselves, ought to meditate on the necessity of grace for us. If Mary alone is pre-eminently “highly-favoured,” then none may remain devoid of grace without sinking into evil and perdition. And to attain at least an inferior degree of bliss, we want at least some portion of grace.

Grace,—if we desire to fathom the fulness of this word’s meaning,—is a gift from the Most Gracious, a gracious gift; a gift by grace alone, without any previous right, or merit, or worth on the part of the receiver. If we consider that according to the word

of the LORD, "there is none good but one, that is, GOD;"<sup>1</sup> and that therefore we can look for the fountain of all that is good in men nowhere else than in GOD alone, Who grants out of pure grace, and not as a requital, for "who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?"<sup>2</sup> then we might infer that man has received everything in himself, around him, his very being, life, body, soul, and the use of the powers of understanding, desiring, sating, through Divine grace. But as the good things with which GOD hath endowed His creatures in creating them, became in some measure their own, so that having been grace in its beginning, by its continuation it became the essence of the being and the nature of the newly-born generation; therefore, in order to distinguish, we call grace these gifts which the Most Gracious GOD grants to man above that which is proper and natural to him. It is in this sense that the Scripture uses the word *grace*, denominating thereby *the grace*, or the Divine power, shedding abroad its gracious influence, as for instance in the following utterance: "The grace of GOD that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men;<sup>3</sup> and as *a gift given*, or as a gift of grace, as for instance in the following testimony of the Apostle: "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of CHRIST."<sup>4</sup>

At the time when there was no sin upon earth, I

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xix. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xi. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Titus ii. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ephes. iv. 7.

know not if everything was accessible and transparent to material light, but doubtless everything was transparent and accessible to the light of grace. It diffused itself freely upon nature, and filled it evermore with good and bliss, preserving in inviolable perfection and immortality even that wherein were hidden the elements of corruption,—the human body. But when through seduction, misused liberty, and the falling off of the human will from the will of GOD, sin entered into the world; then thereby the original alliance between nature and grace was violated. And although the light of grace being divine and therefore unimpeded, ceased not to shine on for ever upon all things, nature defiled by sin and darkened, rendered obdurate and tainted, became both unworthy and unable to receive the pure, luminous, ethereal, incorruptible influence of grace. Thus spiritual “death entered into the world by sin,”<sup>1</sup> and after it bodily, temporal, and at length eternal death. And if it be impossible for man to preserve his primitive gifts but by the aid of grace, then assuredly it is impossible for him, without the special help of grace, to retrieve that which he has lost. And therein above all becomes manifest the extreme necessity of that which is expressed in a wonderfully satisfying manner, in the words of the Apostle, “the abundance of grace.”<sup>2</sup> It was natural to man, after he had torn himself away from, and forsaken grace, to sink down even into hell; if the eternal

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 17.

mercy of GOD, having foreseen this from eternity, had not stretched forth a supporting and restoring arm. And the Granter of grace and the receiver thereof, divinity and sinless humanity, He wonderfully united in the One Hypostasis of our LORD CHRIST, opening in His word and life, in His Body and Blood, in His baptism by water and spirit, a new and abundant flood of grace shed abroad upon human kind, alienated from GOD, but of the same nature with the Incarnate One, that He might thereby purify that which was defiled by sin, enlighten the darkened, spiritualize the carnal, heal the corrupt, restore the fallen, justify the condemned, quicken the dead, and redeem the lost. And this is not my own speculation, but the doctrine of the Gospel. "The GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST," says the Apostle, "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In Whom we have redemption through His Blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."<sup>1</sup>

The word of the Apostle often turns up to the thought of grace, and founds all Christianity upon it. Is it desirous of leading us up to the beginning of our salvation? it directs us towards grace: "for the grace of GOD that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men."<sup>2</sup> Is it desirous of pointing out our salvation as being already accomplished? it points again to grace: "by grace ye are saved."<sup>3</sup> Is it desirous of explain-

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. i. 3, 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Titus ii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ephes. ii. 5.



ing the aim, power and work of the incarnation of the SON of GOD, and His advent upon earth? it explains it by grace: "grace and truth came by JESUS CHRIST."<sup>1</sup> Is it desirous of pointing out how the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and their mission concerning the salvation of other men arose in the church? it points to the beginning of this in grace: "but unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of CHRIST."<sup>2</sup> Is it desirous of strengthening a Christian in his struggle? it strengthens him by grace: "thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in JESUS CHRIST."<sup>3</sup> Is it desirous of warning him from sin? it warns him by grace: "for sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace."<sup>4</sup> Is it desirous of governing our outward activity? it rules it by grace: "let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."<sup>5</sup> Is it desirous of greeting and blessing? for this also it seeks the help of grace: "grace and peace be with you, from GOD the FATHER and the LORD JESUS CHRIST."

Do you perceive, Christians, that in Christianity everything exists by grace, and nothing without it? Let every one diligently strive to obtain grace for himself.

But let no one be tempted by the thought that if in

<sup>1</sup> S. John i. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. iv. 7.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. vi. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Col. iv. 6.

the work of our salvation everything is accomplished by grace, we have little need of anxiety about our salvation. No, my brethren in grace, grace, powerful and efficacious, is announced and granted to us to strengthen our infirmity, encourage our hopelessness, inspire us with beneficent activity, but not to render our carelessness more inert, or to lull us into slothfulness. "We beseech you," writes S. Paul to the Christians of Corinth, "that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."<sup>1</sup> What! is it really possible to receive grace, "that bringeth salvation to all men," in vain? Apparently this may happen, when the Apostle warns us so carefully from it, "we beseech you, that ye receive not the grace in vain." Divine grace is in itself saving, but it does not save us without our own efforts. It is not received *in vain* when received in faith, faithfully used and kept, when we use it in our life and works; but *in vain* when our faith is failing, when our life and works offend the grace of God and repel it. Grace is the talent of the heavenly Master which both enriches the faithful and zealous servant, and is taken away from the unfaithful and unprofitable one. And therefore "we beseech you, that ye receive not the grace in vain,—looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God."<sup>2</sup>

Let us also beware of another thought, unfavourable to grace. Some think that they live well enough when they live according to nature, and therefore they

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xii. 15.

do not strive to raise the tenor of their life, that they may live according to grace. This is indeed a dangerous illusion. If, as we have partly shown, man undefiled by sin lived not by nature alone, but rather that he was happy by grace, then will it be possible for a life according to nature to be good enough, when defiled by sin and not regenerated by grace? Will some one point in approbation of the life of nature, to the saying of the Apostle, that "the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law?"<sup>1</sup> To such a one I say, art thou then satisfied but to equal the Gentiles in worthiness of life? Not so did our LORD judge when He said in reproach of imperfect life, "do not even the Gentiles so?"<sup>2</sup> He taught by this, that it is not sufficient for His follower for a perfect man to live according to nature like the Gentiles.

To be able to determine the significance and worth of natural life, it is necessary to glance on the place it occupies in the kingdom of GOD and CHRIST. Although this kingdom is boundless and immeasurable to us, yet, as in every well-ordained realm, we may observe some division in its composition, answering the ends of its government; thus the divines have not erroneously observed in the universal kingdom of GOD and CHRIST, three contiguous kingdoms,—the king-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. v. 47. In the English Bible we read *publicans* instead of *Gentiles*, but we preserve as everywhere else the Slavonic text.

dom of nature, the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of glory. The entrance into the kingdom of nature is opened to man by his natural birth, that into the kingdom of grace by baptism, into the kingdom of glory it shall be opened by the resurrection of the dead and by the last judgment. The kingdom of glory borders upon the kingdom of grace, and only through the latter lies the way into the kingdom of glory from the kingdom of nature. And consequently he who lives but according to nature is separated by a whole kingdom from the blessed one of glory. And therefore when at the last day the whole kingdom of grace shall be completely merged into the kingdom of glory, "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up;"<sup>1</sup> where then shall remain that life by nature devoid of grace, if not in the lower regions?

My brethren, partakers of the gifts and promises of grace, let us not be careless of divine grace. Let us seek it by the acknowledgment and confession of our infirmities and sinfulness, by prayer and the study of the Word of GOD, by the communion of the sacraments of faith, by a sincere desire to live according to the commandments of CHRIST. Let us receive it in faith and in readiness to obey its inspirations; let us preserve it by faithfulness and constancy in following its directions. And grace itself shall be to us an invisible help in our struggles for its sake, and shall

<sup>1</sup> 2 S. Pet. iii. 10.

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crown them. And in accordance with the Apostle's instructions, "let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace," that we may obtain mercy, "and find grace to help in time of need;"<sup>1</sup> and according to the prophet's promise, "the LORD GOD will give grace and glory."<sup>2</sup>

Glory to the LORD GOD, the Giver of grace, the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST for ever.  
Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

## SERMON XXVII.

### *THE VIRGIN BLESSED BY ALL GENERATIONS.*

#### **The Assumption of the Holy Virgin.**

“For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call Me blessed.”—*S. Luke* i. 48.

**W**HO that attends divine service knows not this often repeated Canticle of the Church in honour of the holy Virgin Mary: “We bless thee throughout all generations, O Virgin, Mother of God?” If we consider, whence this Canticle proceeds, and to what its very words point, then there will be presented before the contemplative spirit a wonderful and boundless view. In the remoteness of far past times, you see, that from the humble *Nazareth* into another unknown town of the hill country of Judea, there comes a poor and obscure virgin. She greets her aged relative with the usual salutation, and suddenly inspires her with prophetic rapture. She is saluted by her as *the Mother of the Lord*, and being seized with the same rapture prophesies concerning herself: “For,

behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Her voice is heard by all nations in all generations and at all the ends of the earth; and nations, generations, and the ends of the earth answer her: Behold, we fulfil thy word; "we bless thee throughout all generations, Virgin-Mother of GOD!"

The present temple, feast, and holy assembly, form also part of the fulfilment of the prophecy of the holy Virgin that from henceforth all generations should call her blessed. In her person is blessed even that, which before her time had always been an object of lamentation,—the end of earthly life.

Let us therefore learn, my brethren, the high import of this saying of the holy Virgin: "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." This is not a mere utterance of joy, nor a supposition which accidentally assumes the appearance of a presentiment; but a prophecy, in the strictest meaning of the word, the word of the HOLY GHOST in the mouth of Mary; a manifestation of the ordination by divine decree, of her destiny and of our duty towards her.

Let us understand the high importance of the tradition, according to which the Universal Church in every divine service, constantly and fervently glorifies the holy Mother of our LORD. This is not merely a human tradition, not merely a custom, introduced by voluntary fervour, not an imitation of personal examples of belief, but it is the inspiration of the HOLY GHOST, transmitted to men; the following of

the indication of the finger of GOD ; the fulfilling of a duty, as sacred as it is just and beneficent to the Christian.

The law by which true prophecy is given, is defined by the Apostle Peter in the following words: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of GOD spake as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST."<sup>1</sup> Two signs must combine to reveal and stamp such a prophecy with authenticity. Firstly, the prediction must be such as it were impossible to deduce from known circumstances by means of the conclusions of reason, or to explain by some natural state of the foreteller. Secondly, the prediction must be accomplished precisely. If the prediction be the result of the deductions of the mind, or if it may be explained by some natural state of the predictor, then it is but a human supposition, and not a divinely inspired prophecy. Thus we are taught to judge of the prophets by themselves: "When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him."<sup>2</sup>

Let us apply these principles to the prediction of the Holy Virgin.

Whence could a poor and unknown virgin reasonably deduce such a splendid conception, and upon what could she naturally ground so glorious a hope, that she would become known and blessed, not only

<sup>1</sup> 2 S. Pet. i. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. xxviii. 9.



by the contemporary world, but throughout all the generations of future time? Could it be because she was of royal lineage? The glory of that race had long faded; she herself was espoused to a carpenter, and such a lot was surely widely distant from universal fame. Could it be because it had already been prophesied unto her that she should become the Mother of CHRIST? Had she considered this in the light of her time, in the way in which the very apostles considered it at the time of CHRIST, and had she therefore expected "the restoration of the kingdom to Israel,"<sup>1</sup> how little could even this lead her to the hope of universal glory throughout all generations! Who among Israel's kings was more illustrious than David? Whose memory is more blessed among the people of Israel than that of the patriarch Abraham? Yet the mother of Abraham and the mother of David are not only not blessed by the generations who followed them, but even their names remain unknown. Could the Mother of the Messiah, then, from these examples, expect much for herself when considering things naturally, and reasoning by the understanding of her people and her time? We must also here remember the deep humility of the most blessed Mary. He who thinks not poorly of his own merit, of his own virtues, may flatter himself with exaggerated hopes: but the disposition of her spirit was not such. At the very moment, when glorifying God

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 6.

for having chosen her for the high calling of the Mother of the LORD, she considers herself but as His handmaid, speaks of her own nothingness : “ He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden.” How is it, then, that she passes suddenly from such lowly meditation to such exalted utterances concerning herself : “ from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed ? ” It is evident that this thought is not born of the seed of her own mind and heart. The HOLY GHOST, to Whom she has surrendered herself in the ecstasy of prayer, has at this moment enlightened her mind, moved her lips, and she has uttered that which GOD has decreed of her, and what, directed by His Providence, the Universal Church was destined to fulfil towards her.

As the prediction of the Holy Virgin reveals in itself signs that the Word of GOD is speaking through her, thus is the accomplishment of that prediction stamped with the mark of Divine handiwork, not only in general, because the event is fully in accordance with the prediction, but also in detail, because the event was not brought on and confirmed by those means which would have demonstrated the common course of nature, or the work of human hands. If the seeker of this world’s fame attains it, or if he who willingly profits by events meets with it, this indeed is but the ordinary course of the things of the world, this is the work of human hands. But when he who flees from glory receives from men a glory pure, exalted, even

more than human, then it is evident that this is neither the way of this world, nor a human work; there are reasons to look here for the ways of GOD, to try to discern therein the finger of GOD. "I receive not honour from men,"<sup>1</sup> says the SON of the Virgin Mary; but His glory covers the earth, and it is evident that this is "the honour that cometh from GOD only."<sup>2</sup> Such a path of glory has He also ordained for His purest Mother. And yet seemingly she ought less than others to avoid the honour which she foretold for herself; nevertheless, she held constantly aloof, and fled from it. When the people were in ecstasy at the Divine doctrine of JESUS; when they glorified Him for His miracles; when they triumphantly greeted Him as a king;—in none of these cases do we read in the Gospel that His Mother appeared beside Him to partake of His glory. On the contrary, we see her hastening to Him with motherly care, when He is defamed by those who said, "He is beside Himself;"<sup>3</sup> we see her by His Cross, sharing His sufferings and insults. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself, in the days of His earthly life, did not hasten to reveal the glory of His Mother, that this might not seem the result of natural human love which was to be the work of exalted grace. And therefore it is not wonderful that at this time the Apostles themselves, as in many other things, did not sufficiently understand what

<sup>1</sup> S. John v. 41.

<sup>2</sup> S. John v. 44.

<sup>3</sup> S. Mark iii. 21, 31.

degree of honour and service it behoved them to render to the Mother of the LORD, and it was necessary to give forth from the Cross the beginning of this doctrine to "the disciple whom He loved, Behold thy Mother!"<sup>1</sup> Such was the retiredness of the holy Mother of GOD from the honour which was reserved to her in accordance with her humility, and also with the time "when JESUS was not yet glorified."<sup>2</sup> But behold, how even at this time her glory is shown by a way seemingly unopened: like the lightning from the cloud does it suddenly shine forth from the lips of a certain woman, who in spiritual ecstasy at the Divine teaching of JESUS, "lifted up her voice, and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare Thee!"<sup>3</sup> This unknown woman had certainly not heard what the Mother of JESUS had said more than thirty years before to Elizabeth alone: "all generations shall call me blessed." But how truly does her answer fulfil that prophecy, not only in thought, but even in word: "Blessed is the womb." Is it possible not to perceive here, from the prediction down to its accomplishment, one and the same way of GOD, whereby comes "the honour that cometh from GOD alone," the breathing of the HOLY GHOST alone, moving "all generations to call blessed" the Virgin-Mother?

When the crucified LORD was glorified by His Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, then does the

<sup>1</sup> S. John xix. 26, 27.

<sup>2</sup> S. John vii. 39.

<sup>3</sup> S. Luke xi. 27.

glory of His Divine Mother appear, flashing no longer like lightning, transiently, but in the words of Solomon, "looking forth as the morning;" so that she who is as fair as the moon, in the presence of the Sun of Righteousness, she, the same after His Ascension high above all heavens, remains unto earth, "the choice one, as the sun,"<sup>1</sup> amidst the eleven or twelve stars, that is, the Apostles. "These all," says the Book of their Acts, "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the Mother of JESUS, and with His brethren."<sup>2</sup> And observe, that she, having never been seen among the Apostles during the life of JESUS, is now inseparable from their assembly; "continued with one accord," abided constantly, "with Mary the Mother of JESUS." What means this new arrangement? Although it may be explained simply by the desire of community in prayer, in the common expectation of the descent of the HOLY GHOST; still, on deeper consideration, we may detect here something peculiar and mysterious. If a vessel which has contained a fragrant ointment, continues to give forth fragrance even when the ointment is gone, and carries on in some measure the action of the ointment itself, so much the more she who had become the vessel containing Divinity at the time of the Incarnation, was to be eternally anointed with the fragrance of the grace of Him, Whose very name "is as ointment poured forth;"<sup>3</sup> and therefore it is

<sup>1</sup> Song of Sol. vi. 10, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Acts i. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Song of Sol. i. 3.

appropriate, and, so to say, natural to her, by her presence and prayer to bring near to man the gracious presence and redeeming influence of Him, Who once dwelt in her bodily, and dwelleth constantly in her spiritually and divinely. And assuredly this benign influence of communion with the Mother of the LORD was felt by the apostles in their hearts the more fully, as the more strongly they thirsted for such a feeling to comfort them in the bereavement of visible intercourse with the Ascended LORD ; and in this way she became the deep centre of their unity, notwithstanding that, by her humility she continued to keep aloof from any appearance of pre-eminence in their assembly : “ Continued with one accord, with Mary the Mother of JESUS.” And the grace of “ the choice one, as the sun,” did at length solemnly and wonderfully manifest itself, as the central power of the Church at the time, when she, according to the law of the earthly-born, having reached the sunset of her life upon earth entered upon the eternal, heavenly day ; for, the light of the Spirit revealed to the Apostles, scattered throughout the universe for the preaching of the Gospel, the time, the last, when they should see her upon earth, and the impulse of the Spirit assembled them around her death-bed and her life-receiving grave. Since then in the words of the Church, “ her divinely majestic glory shineth forth in godlike miracles.” Vainly has the dark sophistry of the erring striven to obscure her glory ; they have only sharpened the zeal of those

who believe rightly in her glorification. Neither space nor duration, nor vicissitudes of time, have weakened the radiance of her glory. And how far soever our late times are removed from a personal communion with her, this does not hinder faith from contemplating her, and prayer from drawing nigh unto her; as for instance, by means of her sacred images; and she herself, through the mysterious communications of images and miracles, meets faith and prayer, extendeth the grace appropriated to her and spreads her beneficent power throughout the whole body of the Church, which in its turn calls her blessed throughout all generations, as much from the duty of reverence towards the Mother of the LORD as from a feeling of faith, hope, and thankfulness.

Christians! the more perfectly we convince ourselves, that the honour yielded to the holy Virgin by the Church is the work of GOD; that our duty to call her blessed is a decree of GOD; the more fervently, the more faithfully ought we to acquit ourselves in this observance.

We call the Virgin blessed. But are we sincere? Is there no flattery therein? Flattery is contemptible even among the inhabitants of earth, although it sometimes deceives them: but her who dwelleth in heaven and who sees everything in the Omniscient GOD, is it possible to deceive? But is it possible, some will say, to flatter there, where even the highest praise falls short of its object? We flatter, when we praise that

which we revere not inwardly. And thus, while calling the Virgin blessed, do we honour virginity? Do we value chastity? Do we keep purity? Do we hate uncleanness? Are we zealous about our own purification?

We glorify at church the most blessed Mother, but are not some of us doing the contrary at home? Are not children insulting the blessed names of father and mother, by their disobedience and undutifulness, and parents themselves by neglecting parental duties and virtues?

We are here honouring Mary, exalted in humility, and profound in silence: but have we not brought hither along with us our pride, our vanity, our frivolity, our distraction and our inclination to idle talk? And does the tumult of our passions not stifle in our hearts the words of glorification on our lips?

We call blessed, along with Elizabeth, her *that believed*, and who has thereby brought into the world the Author of our faith. We wonder at the divinely favoured, magnify her who works miracles; but do we carefully keep the priceless pledge of faith, which can bring even us unto bliss? Do we seek for grace? I say not, for the grace manifested in miracles, which is not given to all, because it is not necessary to all,—but, for the grace inwardly regenerating, creating in us a pure heart, renewing a right spirit within us, making us new creatures in CHRIST? Do we not on the contrary live on carelessly and heedlessly in the cor-



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ruption of nature, after the old man, amidst carnal works, in the cares or pleasures of the world, with the vain name of faith, faith which is unfruitful of love and good actions, and therefore unable to create in us inward life, or to bring us into the life of heaven?

“Praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner.”<sup>1</sup> If we desire to bless worthily the holy Mother of God, then let us learn to love with our whole heart her excellences and virtues; and loving them, let us strive with our whole might to follow as far as possible in our own life that which we bless in thought and word. May she, whom we honour, help us to strengthen ourselves in such resolutions by the grace bestowed on her and her powerful prayers to her Son and God, of one substance and equally glorified with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST in all eternity. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Jesus the Son of Sirach, xv. 9.

## SERMON XXVIII.

### *THE SECRET GRACE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.*

#### **The Assumption of the Mother of God.**

“That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy FATHER which is in secret; and thy FATHER which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”—*S. Matth. vi. 18.*

**A**T the grave-side of the holy Virgin the Church places us to-day in pious meditation. For what is a feast of the Church, if not a pious meditation in which the spirit rests from the labour of the flesh, and gathers strength for the work-days of life?

What do we see as we stand by the grave of the holy Virgin? An unusual sight! Commonly, there is light and brightness as far as the grave, beyond it—obscurity and uncertainty; but here we see quite the contrary, on this side of the grave, what high excellence and virtue in what deep mystery and obscurity! Beyond the grave, what light and glory, what triumphant requital of excellence and virtue!

No great effort is needed to explain that the moral worth of the most blessed Virgin Mary ought to be recognised as matchlessly high. This is evident in

itself from the dignity of the mission to which she was chosen and raised. If there could have been found a virtue higher than her own, then it would have been unfitting that she should be selected above all to become the tabernacle, the throne, the Mother of GOD the Word. But in the decrees and works of GOD there can be nothing inconsistent. Consequently, as certainly as *Mary is blessed among women*, that is, blessed with the highest blessing above all other women, even so certainly was her virtue the highest, the purest, the most perfect, albeit she is pure and perfect through this same CHRIST, Who became the reward of her purity and excellence.

But see how little is known, how little is seen of Mary's worth before her death.

Who could know her better than he who was honoured by the trust of becoming the guardian of this treasure of the world, of this sealed treasury of heaven? But Joseph knew so little in the beginning how highly she was to be honoured, that he thought it even possible *to make her a public example*,<sup>1</sup> although he was not willing to do so. Joseph was ready to throw away this priceless jewel, if it had not been more carefully kept by more enlightened guardians,—the angels. “And not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream.”

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. i. 19.

O wonderfully-silent Virgin! was it not more natural that thou shouldst thyself inform Joseph of that, of which he was at last informed by the angel? Wherefore didst thou await the distant messenger from heaven? Why didst thou not hasten to succour the just man who had almost fallen into injustice? Doubtlessly that thy virtue, thy grace, thy dignity should "not appear unto men, but" solely "unto thy heavenly FATHER which is in secret."<sup>1</sup>

The mystery of the high dignity of the Virgin Mother of GOD, was more or less revealed by the angels, by the star, by the wise men of the East, by the shepherds, by Simeon; but the angels returned into heaven, the wise men into the East, the star disappeared, Simeon departed in peace from this world, the light of the glory of Bethlehem was obscured by the wrathful breathings of Herod, and by the blood of the innocents, Mary hid herself at one time in Egypt, at another in Nazareth, and concealed her dignity and glory in her own heart. "But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."<sup>2</sup>

The time came when the fame of the wisdom and miracle-working power of the Son of Mary shone throughout Judea and Galilee. It behoved that the reflection of the Son's glory should also soon illumine the Mother's person. Once it seemed unexpectedly that this was about to begin. A woman, perhaps herself a mother, or one who strongly desired to be such,

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. vi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke ii. 19.

pictured more vividly than others the happiness of the most blessed Mother, and publicly gave way to an enthusiasm which incited her to glorify JESUS, and along with Him His Mother. "A certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked."<sup>1</sup> But mark, she speaks in periphrasis, she blesses the womb and the paps, but does not utter the name of her whom she blesses. Why? Doubtless because she knows her neither personally nor by name.

Others knew Mary both personally and by name; it could not be otherwise; and notwithstanding this, remained most strangely ignorant of her. Listen what the townsmen and neighbours of Joseph and Mary said, "Whence hath this Man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" Consequently they acknowledge the wisdom of JESUS, see His miracles, assert them, and are thereby incited to learn all that concerns Him. "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His Mother called Mary?"<sup>2</sup> You see they are not even able to say, Joseph, the son of David, Mary, the daughter of David,—they know only that which is on the surface—that Joseph is an artisan, that Mary is—Mary. How do they not even know that which the Jews so carefully strive to know as well of themselves as of others? How did they not know the race and origin of Mary? It is impossible to explain this otherwise,

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xi. 27.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. xiii. 54, 55.

than that the holy Virgin not wishing in any way to *appear unto men*, seeking no human comfort, was not even willing to solace herself in her poverty by revealing to men the dignity of her lineage; and she therefore no more proclaimed her origin, than she did her virtue and her grace.

But what is there to be wondered at, that strangers, be they more or less acquainted with her, for a long time refuse to see the glory of her whom “all generations shall call blessed.”<sup>1</sup> Her Son Himself,—I should even hesitate to say it, could there be any hesitation in repeating the words of Truth itself,—her Son Himself seemingly is not willing to give her before men the honour which belongs to a mother; and He appears to be ignorant of, or unwilling to know her. “Who is My mother?”<sup>2</sup> asks He, as if He were seeking upon whom to bestow the name, honour and glory of His mother, passing her over in silence to whom His birth had given a right to this title. “My mother and My brethren are these which hear the word of GOD and do it.”<sup>3</sup> But speaking thus, the LORD denies not His Mother in the flesh, because more than others she hears the word of GOD, who heard it before others; and more actively than others she performs it, who has prepared unto Him a worthy tabernacle in her womb. But, firstly, the LORD exalts by this saying those who hear and do the

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke i. 48.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. xii. 48.

<sup>3</sup> S. Luke viii. 21.

word of GOD, and incites them to continue this saving work. Secondly, He does also, in the previous saying, conform Himself to His Mother's own rule, *not to appear unto men*, keeping aloof as far as possible from human fame, seeking the glory which is of GOD, and therefore does He tarry, deferring to reveal unto men the whole dignity and glory of her "who is more favoured than Cherubim, and more glorious than Seraphim."<sup>1</sup>

I proceed further with the earthly career of JESUS and Mary, and I see the same everywhere. Where glory abounds, there Mary appears not; as for instance, at the triumphant entry of the LORD into Jerusalem. And when the Mother of the LORD appears she meets not with glory, as for instance: "Now there stood by the Cross of JESUS His Mother, and His Mother's sister."<sup>2</sup>

Let us follow the Crucified One, through the gates of death, into the realm of glory of the Risen. The time has come, when not only the first, but even the last in faith among His disciples, glorifies His divinity, saying, "My LORD and my GOD!"<sup>3</sup> The glory of the LORD's resurrection is already followed by the new divine glory of His Ascension into heaven. But I look for a man, an act, a word, wherein now at least the glory of "the Mother of my LORD" should appear, which when at its dawn, without witnesses, and with-

<sup>1</sup> From a Canticle which is sung during Mass.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xix. 25.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xx. 28.

out immediate result, the just Elizabeth proclaimed. I seek, and I seek in vain, "These all"—is written of the Apostles after the LORD'S Ascension—"continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the Mother of JESUS."<sup>1</sup> What a strange enumeration. Not only after the Apostles, but even after certain unknown women, they have hardly at length remembered to name "Mary the Mother of JESUS." What then is this? Does indeed the narrator not revere the Mother of GOD? GOD preserve us from admitting this thought, offensive not only to the holy Virgin, but even to the evangelist S. Luke. What means it then? It means this, that S. Luke writes in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles in the same spirit as that in which the blessed Virgin conducted herself in their midst; and, although she, by the height of grace, presides invisibly and in spirit over the assembly of the Apostles,—by lowliness of heart, in the body, she suffered not herself to be visibly the object of any glory, accepted no pre-eminence, and placed herself on the same rank with the other women, teaching them by her example, the same that the Apostle Paul taught them afterwards by his word: "Let your women keep silence in the churches."<sup>2</sup> "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach."<sup>3</sup> I should desire, I would say in passing,

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 34.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12.



that our alienated brethren should take this example into serious consideration, they, who before the judgment of CHRIST, having condemned without discrimination the whole hierarchy, and thereby punished themselves by a wilful renunciation of the priesthood, do as the maximum of disorder, intrust the conduct of their divine service to virgins, who are undoubtedly not wise but foolish. For what virgin if not a foolish one, would dare to accept in the Church that which the holy Virgin the Mother of GOD dared not to undertake?<sup>1</sup>

Let us look on the other sphere, immeasurable to the eye, but easily perceivable by its brightness, which was opened to the holy Virgin by her assumption. As soon as this was accomplished, the Apostles, as says the sacred tradition, were assembled from everywhere by the HOLY GHOST, not so much to lament, as to celebrate her burial. And as before, when the unbelief of Thomas was turned into a means of proving the reality of CHRIST's resurrection, even so now, the delay of Thomas is turned into the means of the glorification of the assumption of the Mother of GOD, until now unrevealed as her life upon earth had been hidden. Having received glory from GOD in heaven, she no longer rejects human glorification upon earth, before then unwelcome to her humility, but now useful and beneficent to those who live upon earth.

<sup>1</sup> This relates to a certain sect of the *raskolniks*, concerning which see the Note at the end of the volume.

Her glory had also its enemies, as had even the glory of CHRIST Himself: but herein above all appears the divine power of grace, that her enemies are less an obstacle to it than a means to attain its end. What obtained those heretics who both astutely and daringly strove to bereave the holy Virgin Mary of the exalted name of *Mother of God*? This, that the Orthodox Church, guarding against their malice and daring, began still more fervently to glorify the holy Mother of GOD; wherefore there is now in the Church, not one day, not one divine service, which is not abundantly adorned by her divine glory. And this is not merely a contest of words between the orthodox and the heretics, but a real strife between spiritual powers and a perfect victory of the power of CHRIST over that of His antagonists. For the glorifying lips would have tired in the course of centuries, if at the voice of prayer and glorification the holy Mother of GOD had not met the faithful with her powerful aid, bringing into the soul CHRIST and His grace, in the same manner as she is pictured, bearing Him in her arms, on our sacred images: "Hail, thou that art highly favoured." Thy divine glory shines forth in godlike miracles!

This, my brethren, is what I see to-day, standing by the ritual of the Church and on duty at my post, in contemplation by the grave of the holy Virgin-Mother of GOD. But wherefore this vision? For a pious meditation ought not to be idle, but active.

Moreover, the example of her hidden life should help us to understand, to receive and to accomplish the doctrine of CHRIST: "That thou appear not unto men . . . but unto thy FATHER which is in secret; and thy FATHER which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Thou shalt struggle, do good works, serve GOD; but be careful that thy efforts, thy virtues, thy godliness do not appear unto men without necessity, wilfully, in self-gratification, in vanity; take GOD as the witness of thy conscience, and He shall be thy remunerator for all that thou in secret from men doest or sufferest for His sake.

The LORD commandeth secrecy, firstly, in the works of charity: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen by them; but when thou doest alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Secondly, in works of godliness: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy FATHER which is in secret." Thirdly, in works of self-sacrifice and mortification of the flesh: "That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy FATHER which is in secret." Consequently He enjoins the secrecy of modesty and lowliness in all the duties of man towards GOD, his neighbour and himself,—in every virtue, in all the works of the law.

Some will say, But how then will the word of CHRIST Himself be fulfilled, saying, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good

works, and glorify your FATHER which is in heaven?"<sup>1</sup> Trouble not yourselves about that; the word of CHRIST shall be fulfilled by itself without your aid. It is said, "Let your light so shine," by itself, naturally, as every light shines; but it is not said, make a show of your light. Good works are works of light in themselves; work in secret, the light will shine forth when and inasmuch as GOD, the Author of light, shall command. The only thing to be dreaded is to do dark, evil deeds, these surely can give no light, and GOD will not be glorified by them.

Some also will say, How is it then possible to pray or to preach at church, if even works of godliness ought to be done in secret? To answer this, let me remind you that in the same sermon in which our SAVIOUR speaks of prayer which is in secret, He speaks also of the gift brought to the Altar, "if thou bring thy gift to the Altar;" and this takes place but during public divine service, openly and solemnly. We perceive from this that by the commandment of secret prayer, we are not released from the duty of sharing in divine service at church. But there is also in this case a prudence of its own kind, not to appear vainly before men, but to stand humbly before the heavenly FATHER, Who is in secret. If standing in church, thou accomplishest acts of piety in common with all those who are present, but strivest to repress, or to render imperceptible in thee the particular emotions

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. v. 16.

excited by piety,—sighings and sobs ready to escape thee, tears ready to flow,—in such a disposition thou dost, even amidst a numerous assembly, stand before thy FATHER, which is in secret.

Let us reflect, my brethren, how ignoble, wearisome and useless it is to live but for show, as many do, in moral, social, and family life. They show everything, expose everything, trumpet everything, proclaim every insignificant act, like a clucking hen which proclaims her new-laid egg. But the proclamations of the hen are better grounded, they announce an egg, which is really laid and remains, whereas vain persons announce that which either exists not, or which is annulled by its very proclamation. For instance, a work of charity is done, well, until now it exists; but if he who has done it boasts of it, then is the good action annulled. Now it is manifest that there is no good in his heart, there reigns in it but vanity. There is no good in his action; the fruit of vanity is not a good action. It is nothing good even in the eyes of men, for they penetrate vanity, and if they glorify the act of a vain man, they at the same time proclaim also a condemnation of his vanity. How much more then is there no good therein in the sight of GOD. He renounced vain men when He said, “they have their reward.”<sup>1</sup>

Christian! be, and pretend not; this is one of the most important rules for thee. Learn to know the

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. vi. 2, 5, 16.

unparalleled dignity of modest, quiet, and hidden virtue. It is its property to be a mystery upon earth, because it is of heavenly birth, and exists for heaven. Perfect it in secret, and preserve it from the eyes of men, often impure, and impairing its purity; but offer it fervently and unceasingly to the pure and purifying eye of GOD. “And thy FATHER which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly.” Amen.

## SERMON XXIX.

### *WORLDLY CARE A HINDRANCE TO GRACE.*

#### **The Assumption of the holy Mother of God.**

“Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house.”—*S. Luke x. 38.*

**B**LESSED art thou, obscure, nay even thoroughly unknown village! for **CHRIST**, the **LORD** of glory, visits thee. Blessed art thou, poor home! for **CHRIST**, rich in grace, enters under thy roof. **Zacchæus** was perishing from the passion of covetousness; but as soon as **CHRIST** had visited his house, “This day is salvation come to it.”<sup>1</sup> And salvation will also come to the house of **Martha**, which has received the **SAVIOUR**, it will come undoubtedly. Blessed be every place and house which is honoured by divine visitation. But above all, blessed be the man who receives that divine visitation worthily. For if the infinite **GOD** visits some place it is to draw near unto man, and to take up His abode in his soul.

<sup>1</sup> *S. Luke xix. 9.*

And what means it that the Church so frequently proclaims to us the Gospel narrative of this visitation of CHRIST? Is it not to excite in our souls the thirst for divine visitations? Is it not to teach us how it is possible to attract, and to receive them worthily? Oh, thou, who art the high door of divine visitation, the living city of the living GOD, the first abode of CHRIST! *Mary*, thou art blessed above her who "had chosen the good part," since thou hast chosen, or better, thou wast chosen by supreme and perfect Goodness before all, but also for the sake of all who sat in darkness, "whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,"<sup>1</sup> for the supreme Visitor of souls, not only visited, but dwelt in thee, and under thy roof. Departing from us through the gates of the tomb, to go up to Him and to dwell with Him in His glory, leave open to us the gates of mercy. Remind Him of the lowly village on the cross-roads of the world, which yet belongs to His kingdom,—remind him of the frail hut in this valley of corruption, which He built Himself, and for Himself. Let not a soul thirst in vain for His gracious visitations, let not the visitation of grace come in vain into that soul and find it unable to meet and receive it.

I seem to hear the soul saying: Oh, if GOD would but visit me by His gracious visitation! How could I do otherwise than receive Him reverently, fervently, even as it pleases the Visitor?

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke i. 78.



In answer it would be more just to say: Oh, if only thou wert but able, disposed, ready to receive worthily the gracious visitation! Were it possible that **GOD** should not soon visit thee? The **LORD**, Who according to Job, “sets His heart upon man, visits him every morning, and tries him every moment.”<sup>1</sup>

But what hinders man from seeking **GOD** successfully, and from worthily receiving His gracious visitation? The Gospel narrative concerning Martha, who received the **LORD** into her house, shows for our instruction that the greatest hindrance to it is worldly care, or attachment to that which is earthly.

Martha no longer sought, or wished for a visit from **CHRIST**, but had already received it. “Martha received Him into her house.” She had received Him reverently, for she had called Him **LORD**, and being herself empowered to arrange the affairs of her own house, had begged Him to command her sister, saying, “**LORD**, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore.”—Martha had received the **LORD** with zeal, for she diligently prepared to honour Him, as did Abraham at the time of the visitation of the **LORD** unto him. “Martha was cumbered about much serving.” Does this not dispose us to think that she received **CHRIST** worthily, and in a way pleasing to Him? Do not hasten to form a decided opinion. Wait for the judgment of **CHRIST**.

<sup>1</sup> Job vii. 17, 18.

What then says the LORD? He does not approve the reception which Martha offers Him, but bestows a pre-eminent blessing upon Mary, of whom Martha complained. What is the cause of this? With what can Martha be reproached? She is reproached with worldly care. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things."

If thus worldly cares hindered the gracious visitation already received, and deprived it more or less of its fruit; will it not still more impede and harm those who are but beginning to seek GOD and His grace?

By an attentive consideration of the Gospel narrative, we may distinguish some peculiar ways by which earthly care prevents man from pleasing GOD and acquiring His grace, or from preserving it when once received. It distracts and troubles; it darkens the spiritual eye to the perception of the light of truth; it weakens the will in the choice of what is best.

Worldly care distracts and troubles. Look at Martha. CHRIST is in her house,—He, Whom to see, to hear His words, a multitude of people followed through villages and deserts,—He, Whom "many prophets and kings have desired to see, and have not seen."<sup>1</sup> "Whose day Abraham," already acquainted with divine visitations, "rejoiced to see,"<sup>2</sup> and having seen from afar "was glad;" He, Who was sought for, He, Who was longed for, is near to Martha, seen and heard by her. And what of Martha? Does she re-

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke x. 24.

<sup>2</sup> S. John viii. 56.

joyce at seeing Him? Does she delight in His presence and listening to His words? It is doubtful. She has other cares, other thoughts, and other feelings.

She thinks of and cares about flour and oil, about bread and fish. The divine Teacher of truth, the Giver of grace, almost exists not for her; for "Martha was cumbered about much serving." Displeasure against her sister, who shares not these cares, directs her at last to the LORD; but even of Him she seeks help only that she might increase care and distraction, and involve others in them. "And Martha came to Him and said, LORD, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me."

Think, O Christian, that CHRIST the LORD, either actually visits the house of thy soul, or is standing at the door, and waiting for thee to "receive Him into thy house." If this seems incredible, we assure thee of it, and not by our own word alone. Listen, how He speaks of Himself to all of us. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."<sup>1</sup> Shall we say at this, we see Thee not, O LORD, standing, we hear not Thy knocking? What idle contradiction! The LORD deceives us not, He is "justified when He speaks."<sup>2</sup> How can it then happen that He stands at the door and we see Him not; that He knocks and we hear Him not? Even as the

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm li. 4.

same happened to Martha. Worldly care draws us from one occupation to another, from one care to another, and as our cares for the most part meet not with the success which we desire, failure troubles us, the want of help afflicts us, obstacles on the part of others irritate us; our desires and passions grow tumultuous as the wind, as the waves; we rage and imagine vain things; we are tossed about to our own harm and danger; the soul overwhelmed both outwardly and inwardly, perceives not the meek presence, hears not the still small voice of blessed and saving grace.

Worldly care darkens the mind to the light of truth and grace. Such obscurity of mind the LORD reproves in Martha when He says to her, "but one thing is needful." How was it that even before that admonition she had not understood that truth of herself, if not profoundly, then at least in the simple and open sense of the words? Granted that she could not at once raise herself to the comprehension how it is that the one thing needful is GOD, His word, His kingdom, as it is said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of GOD?"<sup>1</sup> Add again, "But seek ye first the kingdom of GOD, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."<sup>2</sup> But, having received CHRIST into her house, and consequently having some knowledge of Him previously, how had she at least not understood that He Who had said, "My

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. iv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. vi. 33.

meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me,"<sup>1</sup> and for Him who fasted forty days and nights, for Him Who fed many thousands of people with a few loaves, there was no need of many kinds of food and drink? How did she not perceive that He Who was come into the world, "that He should bear witness unto the truth,"<sup>2</sup> He Who names Himself the Bread of Life, Who calls to Himself those who thirst, was not to be pleased with a perishable food that should be abundantly offered unto Him, but rather by receiving from Him incorruptible food, living water, the word of truth and salvation? No, she understood it not, she who was cumbered about many things,—understood it not for the very reason that she was cumbered about many things; because the habitude of busying herself with earthly things, of caring for earthly things, weighed like lead upon the wings of her mind, suffering it not to rise to the comprehension of that which was spiritual.

Is it not so with some among us, Christians, who although they are under the same roof with CHRIST, as in reality it is with them who are in His Temple, although they almost see Him in the Sacrament and hear Him in the Gospel, yet know not how to profit by and how to enjoy such high gifts? The Gospel is not clear enough to us; the sacraments are too closely veiled; prayer is wearisome. We know not how to find in the Gospel Divine light; in the sacraments

<sup>1</sup> S. John iv. 34.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xviii. 37.

Divine power; in prayer Divine joy, and bliss, and heaven. And why is not this spiritual understanding and pure contemplation granted to us? Because worldly care binds our mind, weighs it down by heavy earthly desires, covers it by the darkness of thoughts sensual, vain, and impure; and the eagle who was destined to soar on high, to look upon the Sun of spiritual and Divine truth, is changed into a mole, burrowing the earth, amidst the dust and corruption of works worldly, carnal, and alien to the spirit.

Worldly care weakens the will in its choice of that which is best. "Mary hath chosen that good part," says the LORD, and what she has chosen is to sit "at JESUS' feet, and to hear His word." Why did not the other sister also choose the same part? did she not wish to draw nigh to JESUS? yet this desire was manifested by her still earlier than by Mary, when "Martha received Him into her house." Why then did not one and the same seed of desire bring forth and bear the same fruit? Because in the heart of Mary it grew up freely; whereas in the heart of Martha it was choked by the tares of worldly care: "She was cumbered about much serving." By the will of the spirit she aspired to the LORD and drew Him to herself: by the inclination towards that which was worldly, she was distracted from serving Him in the spirit by serving Him in the body, and thus she apprehended not His gracious presence.

At every time and in every place we may note how

differently the desire of grace and salvation works in the soul, according as it is free, perfect, and entire, or divided, impeded, weakened in its working by some earthly desire or worldly inclination. We see men who during many years are ever but beginning the work of their salvation, and who never bring it to perfection ; they for a long time seek GOD, but find Him not ; see some dawn of grace above them, and cannot await the time when its noonday will brighten their hearts. Why is this ? Because although they have begun the work of salvation, yet being passionately attached to the earthly and the worldly, they leave not altogether their perishable works ; they seek the Creator, yet are not willing to lose the creature ; they hope for the consolation of grace, but are unwilling to part with the comforts of corrupt nature. We see on the contrary some who begin later to serve GOD, and yet succeed therein more than others. The prodigal son progresses more rapidly than his elder brother in his father's goodwill. Magdalene from the depth of sin, nay, almost of hell (for a part of hell dwelt in her) ascends to a degree equal to the Apostles. Saul, the persecutor, becomes suddenly transfigured into Paul the Apostle. "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of GOD before"<sup>1</sup> those who deem themselves the born sons of this kingdom. How are such miracles accomplished ? By a strong, resolute, all-conquering will, and by the desire of grace and salvation.

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xxi. 31.

Therefore does the Word of GOD powerfully protest against the commixtion of worldly cares and passions with the desires and aspirations of the spirit. “No man can serve two masters,”<sup>1</sup> it says. And thus, if thou art the slave of worldly care, then how canst thou be at the same time the servant of GOD? “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”<sup>2</sup> And thus, if “thy treasure,”—that which thou desirest, lovest, that about which thou art passionately anxious,—is upon earth, how is it possible that thy heart can be in heaven with GOD? “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”<sup>3</sup> And therefore, if thou acknowledgest inwardly that thy soul is yet strongly attached to the worldly, then how canst thou flatter thyself that thou pleasest thy Captain, CHRIST, Who has overcome the world?

He who is attentive to the saving ways of Divine Providence will perceive not without fear, how sometimes GOD Himself, preparing man for a peculiar visitation, or unto some gift of grace, “with a strong hand and a stretched out arm”<sup>4</sup> breaks the bonds which bind him to the world and to the earth. What wonderful visitations GOD granted to Abraham! But also what sacrifice did He require from him! “Get thee out,” was said unto him, “of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. vi. 24.<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. vi. 21.<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 4.<sup>4</sup> Ps. cxxxvi. 12.<sup>5</sup> Gen. xii. 1.



Why should not GOD's visitation and blessing come down upon Jacob when Isaac had blessed him in his house? But he was taken from the arms of his pious parents, and brought through dangers, without help, without fellow-travellers, to an unknown place; he laid his tired head upon a stone of the desert, and here he found for himself the house of GOD, GOD's Presence, and GOD's mighty blessing. What path led Joseph to the grace of becoming an interpreter of mysteries, and to the glory of a saviour? The path of Egypt, wandering, slavery, a prison. When and where did GOD reveal Himself most to the people of Israel? At the time when they were torn from Egypt, and yet not in possession of the promised land,—there, where the soil offered them no earthly attraction, but sent them back to heaven in quest of everything.

What do we expect when we delay to renounce our worldly desires? Is it that GOD should draw us unto Him "with a strong hand," by special, powerful attraction, as with Abraham? But were not such a hope daring and illusive? Or that GOD should bring down upon us His "stretched out arm," and by involuntary sacrifices, misfortunes, sorrows, strokes, should break the glittering fetters wherewith the world and the flesh bind us? But ought we to await this, and should we not rather anticipate it? Is it for rational and free beings to be like "those which have no understanding, and wait until their mouth be held

in, guided with bit and bridle, because they come not near unto thee."<sup>1</sup>

Let us no longer, my brethren, linger or delay; but let us hasten to deliver ourselves from the burden, whose weight we, perhaps, insufficiently know, because we have not yet tried to walk without it,—from the burden of worldly desires. Let us put aside in the common works and exertions of life, superfluous solicitude, over-anxious and vain care, proceeding from immoderate desire, from an exaggerated estimation of things, from a want of faith in GOD and hope in His Providence. And as we are called peculiarly to Divine works, to prayer, to the study of GOD'S Word, to spiritual struggles in the acquirement of the grace of GOD, let us put aside every worldly care, that we may receive in our soul and heart the visitations of the LORD, and see and find in Him "the one thing needful," and "the good part which shall not be taken away from" us, either in time or in eternity. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxii. 9. The Slavonic version differs somewhat in this quotation from the English, in which the horse and the mule are "held in by bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee;" while in the Slavonic the action of the animals is reversed, hence the quotation becomes applicable.

## SERMON XXX.<sup>1</sup>

### *ON THE CAUSES AND USES OF AFFLICTION.*

“Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also.”—*S. Luke*  
ii. 35.

THE trials of a good and innocent man form one of the difficult problems which this present world offers to the thoughtful mind. Seeing a good man suffer, another good man suffers along with him, because he feels compassion. And thus from one problem proceeds another: wherefore does also this one suffer? Perceiving this, he whose faith is weak falls into temptation. Observing this, a man inclined to vice solves the problem to his own peril: what use, says he, is there in being virtuous? Perceiving this, he who is inclined to unbelief solves the incomprehensible problem by another incomparably more incomprehensible, saying it is chance that rules the world and the works of men.

O thou who art blessed among women! O thou, purest of the daughters of men! And even unto thee

<sup>1</sup> Preached on a feast of the Holy Virgin, in one of the convents of Moscow, June 2nd, 1834.

the wise old man, Simeon, did not hesitate to offer this problem, saying, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." The day,—the woeful and terrible, yet at the same time the saving day,—solved to thee the problem of this prophecy. The thorns of the crown of JESUS, the nails of His Cross, the spear that pierced Him, His wounds, His painful ejaculation, His dying glance,—those are the swords with which thy motherly heart was pierced as infinitely deep as thy love was perfect, as thine innocence was matchless. And now that thou dwellest in the Divine glory of thy Son, the problem of the unparalleled event is already explained to thee: for thou contempest now in the light of GOD why it was necessary that even thine own pure soul should be pierced by the sword, and how this harmonises with the infinite wisdom, justice, and mercy of Providence, as well as with thine own eternal bliss.

O thou, mother of the Light! bring down upon us a spark of the light of CHRIST, that we also may understand the mystery of earthly calamities and sorrows, not so much as our curiosity would desire, but as much as is necessary to our peace and salvation.

There would have been neither evil upon earth, nor calamity among men, if there had not been sin: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,"<sup>1</sup> in which word the sum of all earthly calamities and woes is contained. For sin man was doomed to a

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 12.

coercive and exhausting labour instead of a free and easy exercise: "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."<sup>1</sup> Sin has begotten disease: "in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children."<sup>2</sup> Sin has begotten death: "for in the day that thou eatest of the forbidden tree, thou shalt surely die."<sup>3</sup>

But man having lost the enjoyment of his own primitive, pure existence, as well as that of the universe, has lost even the comprehension of it. As the fish, moving about in the water, knows not the better and more perfect life of animals breathing the air: even so the unhappy soul of man, immersed in the gross and corrupted elementary world, and living in it, like the fish in the water, knows not the ethereal and incorruptible life of Paradise. Therefrom proceed the doubts of a mind, reasoning from its natural powers alone, concerning the reality of such a life, and the possibility of its existence. I will now cite but one of these doubts, to show their utter nullity. Reason calculates, that if men were continually being born, and if none should die, then the multiplicity of people would at last become out of proportion to the space and the resources of the inhabited earth; and that therefore the overcrowding of the universe requires the mortality of men, in order that the dying might make room for the superabundant multitude of the newly-born. We may answer such petty calcu-

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. iii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. ii. 17.

lators of lives in the words that the LORD addressed to the Sadducees, who had imagined to draw from the laws of marriage a refutation of the doctrine of the life to come: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of GOD."<sup>1</sup> Who told you that earth should be an eternal prison for human immortality? And do you indeed suppose that there is no other way from earth unto heaven than that which lies through the coffin and the grave? Do you indeed think, that even before the curse on human works, it was necessary to divide the earth as now into tithes for man's dwelling and sustenance? "Ye do err, not knowing." Man undefiled by sin was infinitely less dependent in his life upon the products of earth than now, and the earth, even without his labour, was infinitely more bountiful than now in its products to him. Having accomplished on it his appointed career, he would have ascended up into heaven as easily as in Jacob's vision of the ladder, reaching up to heaven, "the angels of GOD ascended and descended on it."<sup>2</sup> The possibility of such a transition is partly shown to us in Enoch and Elijah. Fear not! The uncorrupted life of sinless man was better ordained by Providence than you are able now to imagine. But as eternal Providence foresaw from eternity that the gift of freedom, excellent and essential to salvation, would be misused by man, and that thereby the primitive ordination of man and the earth should be altered; then undoubtedly

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xxii. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxviii. 12.

the ensuing confusion of good and evil which astonishes and strikes us now was wisely and mercifully calculated by Him.

After the general question of the trials of humanity, as to why they exist in the domain of Providence,—to which question the answer is already contained in what we have just now said,—the inquisitive mind puts two particular questions: firstly, why do the innocent also suffer? secondly, wherefore do those who are guilty not suffer in proportion to their guilt, and why not seldom those who are less guilty suffer the most heavily? We will answer both questions.

To this end let us consider humanity, not with our own superficial glance, but with the deeply penetrating glance of men enlightened from above. Under what aspect does humanity appear to them? “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God,”<sup>1</sup> saith S. Paul. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” asks Job, and answers: “not one, if he had even lived but one day upon earth;”<sup>2</sup> “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me,”<sup>3</sup> confesses David, not afraid by this declaration to transgress the law of honour to parents. What does this then mean? This, that all men had already

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Job xiv. 4, 5. In the English Bible we read in the 5th verse, “Seeing his days are determined;” whereas in the Slavonic Bible there stands, “If he had even lived but one day upon earth.”

<sup>3</sup> Psalm li. 5.

sinned in Adam, who as he begot children after having sinned, could not transmit to them, without a miracle, that which he no more possessed,—innocence and incorruptibility; but did naturally transmit unto them what he had in himself,—sin and corruption. If any one of us should venture to ask, How are we then guilty, having unwillingly inherited from Adam sin and corruption? to such a one, if he be but at all attentive to himself, instead of me, his own conscience might answer and shut his murmuring lips, for conscience may point out in the life of every one, instances in which we were not faithful to our good impulses, which were still powerful even after our hereditary degradation. “GOD is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things;”<sup>1</sup> and therefore He perceives in us even those subtle moral impurities, of which the conscience, more or less hardened, is not even aware. “If Thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand?”<sup>2</sup> By this reflection, the question, Why even the innocent suffer? is not only answered, but even annulled; because, judging justly, there are none innocent upon earth, and consequently all those who suffer, suffer more or less for being guilty, save One, “Who did no sin,”<sup>3</sup> and Whose sufferings, sublimely mysterious, have a most blessed significance for us, “For He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of

<sup>1</sup> 1 S. John iii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxxx. 3.

<sup>3</sup> 1 S. Pet. ii. 22.



our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.”<sup>1</sup> He has raised and borne the burdens which crush us, that He might raise us at the same time from our fall.

As to the question, Why do men, who although not perhaps sinless, but to all outward appearances innocent, suffer sometimes heavily beyond measure? I answer, Who can accuse Providence of excess in this? If we acknowledge that the sufferer is not sinless, and if we know that every sin is a transgression of the law, and therefore is a revolt against the will of God, the Lawgiver, is a rebellion in the kingdom of God, an offence against the eternal majesty of God, then tell us what sin is too small for temporal suffering, and what temporal suffering too great for sin?

No one disputes that not all sins are equally heavy, and that there are different degrees of guilt in sins of the same kind; but who amongst us is able to weigh sufficiently justly this weight, to define correctly enough this degree? It is necessary therefore to put in the balance, and to take into calculation, not only the visible action, but also the invisible aspirations; the hidden intention, the secret thought, strength and infirmity, knowledge and ignorance, aids and impediments, seductions to evil and encouragements to good, inattention to things not yet understood, and unfaithfulness to that which is taught us by experience; stubbornness and repentance, hard-heartedness and

<sup>1</sup> Isa. liii. 5.

contrition. But to whom is all this possible, save to Him alone that trieth the hearts and the reins, the Omnipresent and Omniscient? Also to be well able to mete out the weight of suffering, we must take into consideration, besides its visible aspect, the degree of sensibility in the sufferer; the deficiency or even the absence, or on the contrary the abundance of opposing consolation, and much for which there exists for the outward spectator neither balance nor measure. How, then, can we speak of the excessive heaviness of suffering as compared with the weight of sin, if not at random and at hazard?

GOD ordains the temporal life of man, defiled by sin, not only as a Judge, for which there will yet be time at the end of all, but also, and pre-eminently, as the Great Physician, Whose time is even now. He therefore appoints to man a measure of trial and sorrow, sometimes not as a just requital of his works, but as a potion of medicine, able to overcome the power of the sinful disease; and this is quite a different consideration. There are diseases which seem of little importance and without danger, but against which an experienced physician finds it necessary to employ severe medical remedies. Moreover, the Great Physician sets Himself to the cure of the disease of the soul, not only when it is already manifest, but His glance pierces into the depths of the soul which are invisible to the soul itself, and detecting there the small germ of sin, passion, self-will, self-gratification, even a

slight alloy of evil and uncleanness with good intentions and dispositions, draws outward, through trial, those unhealthy principles, that they may be cured, and the soul be led to higher purity. Do we not happen to see that men of well-ordained life, having willingly recourse to GOD, being bereft of that which they strongly loved—as, for instance, child or husband, worldly honour, glory, or property—surrender themselves so much to sorrow, that they concentrate their whole life in it, and are no longer able to strengthen themselves by those sensible reflections wherein they were not wanting before. They are no longer able to collect themselves in prayer, in which before they took delight; faith, love to GOD, submission to Divine will, are now to them but familiar words and sounds, whereas they formerly, before their trial, experienced their power and influence. What does this mean? This,—that they loved without measure their beloved ones, and loved them more than GOD, although they were unconscious of it themselves. Their children, husband or wife, honour, glory, or property, were the idols of their heart. What remained then unto Him, Who knoweth the heart and loveth the soul, but to take from us our idol, to tear out, be it ever so painful, the undue love for the creature from the soul which He desires to fill with His Divine love? He loves, pities, purifies, cures, and prepares unto bliss; while we look on and say, How heavily He visits!

Finally we must own, that there are misfortunes

of which it is thoroughly impossible to ask, wherefore? but rather, to what end? in which there is no need of accusing man, but in which we must learn only to justify and love Providence. Such are the trials of Job, of the prophets, of the Apostles, of the Holy Virgin. Not having attained that highest degree of spiritual maturity and life, in which one is fed on the strong food of the Cross, we in our Christian infancy,—God grant that we be at least in that infancy!—can undoubtedly, though feebly and indistinctly, lisp about the paths and actions of these souls who have reached the maturity of CHRIST. Let us rather ask them, what they will tell us of their trials. What says Job? “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”<sup>1</sup> What says the Apostle? “I now rejoice in my sufferings :”<sup>2</sup> “for as the sufferings of CHRIST abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth by CHRIST.”<sup>3</sup> Do you see how inopportunately we sinful men take the part of the just men, and attempt to revolt against Providence in behalf of their sorrow? They accept not our foolish service, they do not lament their better lot, they are not desirous of changing it, they rejoice therein, they are blessing GOD, they are happy, we understand not their happiness, and we suppose it possible to murmur against that for which they are thankful.

If you wish to understand or at least guess at that which you have not yet attained, consider earthly

<sup>1</sup> Job i. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 24.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. i. 5.

things, and from them try to conceive of heavenly and divine things. Thou lovest a friend, he loves thee and is thy benefactor. Will thy love be entirely satisfied by similar relations, if it be perfect and pure? Methinks no. Thou wilt think, Is my friend convinced of the sincerity of my love? does he not suspect that I prefer his benefits to himself? Let there happen an occasion, when thou shalt be able to undertake for thy friend's sake some labour, to bear some sorrow, to encounter some danger,—if thou art a noble soul, how willingly wilt thou embrace this opportunity! And, enduring for thy friend's sake labour, sorrow and danger, how wilt thou rejoice that he now will undoubtedly know the sincerity and purity of thy love. Apply this example to those who love GOD in prosperity. They are assured that GOD knows their hearts, thankful unto Him; but they are not sure of themselves. They may, and in some measure they ought to inquire carefully of themselves whether their gratitude towards Him is perfect, their love pure; whether their heart clings not with secret partiality to those benefits, to the overlooking of the Benefactor, and the love fed by temporal benefits, be not extinguished by the exhaustion of its fuel. Trial comes and calls upon us to sacrifice our beloved Isaac; to endure for the sake of GOD, the loss of that which thou lovest the most after GOD; bear, for the name of the loved JESUS, persecution, dishonour and suffering. What powerful aspirations quicken the GOD-

loving soul at this! How ready it is to enter upon the path of suffering, to surrender itself up to fiery trial! How firm it is in this trial! How it rejoices in the thought, that it offers at length up to GOD a sacrifice which costs so dear! What consoling and trustworthy testimony does conscience afford it, when the fire of trial cannot impair its gold; when in the furnace of suffering its love unto GOD burns more brightly; when, through the outward mortification of nature there shines forth the inward life of grace, and heaven dwelling in man confirms in him the hope of heaven. Believe, O ye inexperienced ones, that those men lie not, when they speak of their joy amidst suffering, and when in the fire of misfortune they sing and praise GOD with the same security, liberty and delight, as did the three young men in the furnace of Babylon.

Christians! who among us does not more or less often meet in the path of this temporal life with manifold misfortunes? Vainly should we endeavour to avoid all such encounters; some of them at least are inevitable. Consequently, we must in time habituate ourselves to meet them in a becoming way. Let our present meditation incite us to encounter misfortune not as an enemy and a tormenter, but as the just punishment of sin; as the physician of moral disease, as the messenger of GOD, as the herald of grace. "For whom the LORD loveth He chasteneth."<sup>1</sup> Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 6.

## SERMON XXXI.

### *ON SIGNS AND MIRACLES.*

“And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.”—*S. Mark* viii. 12.

**T**HE race of Israel, unfaithful and corrupt, is menaced by the LORD that there shall be no sign given unto it. And we, Christians, the chosen people, on the contrary, are we not to hope that a sign shall be given unto us for our welfare and our salvation?

Yea, there was a time when Christians sowed abundantly, not in the earth and in the flesh, but in the spirit and in heaven, and accordingly abundantly reaped spiritual and heavenly fruits. They sowed faith, and reaped signs and miracles, beneficent and saving, feeding and strengthening the spirit unto eternal life. And in return GOD sowed from heaven signs and miracles, and they brought forth upon earth, among men, the fruits of repentance, reformation, faith, hope, thanksgivings to GOD, and virtues of

<sup>1</sup> Preached on a feast of the Holy Mother of God.

every kind. Not seldom did GOD work miracles, not only through holy men, but even through sacred symbols, or through visible signs and commemorative images of holy things; as for instance, by the agency of the pure bodies of saints, and through sacred images. And He worked those miracles so evidently and so solemnly, that the Church has consecrated certain particular days to the celebration of some of those miracles or miraculous signs.

But is it not as mere commemorations that these signs are known to us now? Do we not seek for them, as for some rare thing? Do we not seek them in vain?

And therefore is not the LORD again complaining of this generation? Is He not again with stern resolution refusing signs? "Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation."

The remark, that we see no miracles now, is so common and so often accompanied by such varied and often strange judgments, that it will not be profitless to consider why we see no miracles now.

Some say decidedly, that we see no miracles, because there are none, and moreover there ought to be none in our time; for miracles are used by GOD as a means for spreading and confirming faith; and therefore, when faith is sufficiently spread and securely grounded, then miracles become useless to it.

I agree, if you wish, with such reasoners, that



miracles are used by GOD as a means of propagating and confirming faith ; but ought we to conclude therefrom that miracles are no longer needed in our time ? I leave the impartial to decide. If there exist unbelievers, then, the means of propagating faith are not superfluous. If there be enemies of faith and such as strive to shake it, then the means of confirming faith are not superfluous. But as unbelievers and enemies of faith, unto the grief and danger of the faithful, do really exist in our time and even in the very bosom of Christendom, like a serpent in the breast ; then is it right, I repeat, to conclude that miracles as a means of propagating and confirming faith are no longer needed in our time ?

But that we may not please those self-confident reasoners at the expense of truth, let us investigate their thought, that miracles are used by GOD as a means of propagating and confirming faith. There are miracles which are evidently meant for the propagation of faith. Such for instance is *the gift of tongues*, or the miraculous faculty granted to the Apostles through the descent of the HOLY GHOST, of speaking languages until then unknown to them. Evidently the meaning of this miracle was to give to all nations the immediate possibility of hearing the teaching of faith. The history of Christianity shows that the gift of tongues worked powerfully at its beginning ; that by means of it faith penetrated with the swiftness of lightning into all the nations of the earth ;

but soon, when every nation having received faith, came to possess in its midst such as both knew its doctrine and were able to communicate it in their native tongue, by the help of the usual study of those languages in which the men of GOD wrote, the miraculous gift of tongues disappeared. In this case we may affirm, and not without foundation, that the miracle ceased, being no longer necessary. But there are other miracles which are not so closely connected with the propagation of faith; which even where faith is already propagated and confirmed, may be used unto the benefit and salvation of men. Such for instance, is the gift of healing, or the miraculous gift of healing disease by prayer, word, the laying on of hands, or by means of some other signs. Why was king Hezekiah raised from his death-bed by the prophet Isaiah, and restored to life for fifteen years? Was it that the glory of this miracle of faith might teach the infidel Babylon and draw thence an embassy as flattering as it was dangerous, which led the king into the temptation of vanity and called forth a prophecy of dreadful events? Not for this had Hezekiah wept and prayed. "I beseech Thee, O LORD," exclaimed he, "remember now how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And GOD answered him through the prophet: I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears; behold, I will heal thee."<sup>1</sup> And thus

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xx. 3, 5.

this sign was on the part of GOD an act of unutterable love and extreme condescension ; and to Hezekiah it was a reward for his faith and virtue ; for other believers, but weak in their faith, it was an incitement to a stronger faith and a firmer hope in GOD. Why did JESUS CHRIST Himself raise the son of the widow of Nain ? The evangelist shows no other cause for this, than that the LORD “ had compassion on her.”<sup>1</sup> When can such miracles become superfluous, with such incitements and for such ends ?

When the Apostle James having prescribed, “ is any sick among you ? let him call for the elders of the Church ; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the LORD,” adds the promise that, “ the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the LORD shall raise him up ;”<sup>2</sup> what means it, if not that he perpetuates in the Church of CHRIST the gift of healing, bestowed in the beginning by the LORD on the Apostles ? Was it but for a time that the LORD Himself gave to the faithful this commandment and this right,—“ he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do ?”<sup>3</sup> *He that believeth shall do*, consequently, as long as there are believers upon earth, so long ought there to exist those who do the works of CHRIST, “ and greater works than these,” and among the number of these great works, doubtlessly are also

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke vii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> S. James v. 14, 15.

<sup>3</sup> S. John xiv. 12.

signs and miracles included. Let us speak still more freely. Even as GOD always exists, even so there are always miracles; for as GOD always exists, therefore does He always work; if He works, then evidently these are divine works, and works properly of GOD are miracles. "Thou art the GOD that doest wonders!"<sup>1</sup> And vainly will the daring sophistry of the creature strive to deprive Thee of this eternal attribute and manifestation of Thy creative power,—“Thou art the GOD that doest wonders.”

But if according to that there shall even now be miracles, why do we not see them? We will not explain this by conjectures which are deceitful, but let us take counsel from experience which is sure.

At the time which all call the time of signs and miracles, at the time of the life on earth of our LORD JESUS CHRIST were there visible signs? were there miracles? You may laugh at these questions. But as the Pharisees of that time, question in general the men of that generation; did they see signs? were there then miracles? They saw them not,—there were none. They are necessarily obliged to answer thus; for if they had seen signs, then why should they “seek after a sign,” and by seeking, “tempt the LORD,” as they did. “And the Pharisees came forth and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him.”<sup>2</sup> If you are not convinced by the hypocritical request of the Pharisees,

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxvii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> S. Mark viii. 11.

then let the open refusal of JESUS convince you. "Why doth," says He, "this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, there shall no sign be given unto this generation." If He said that no sign shall be given unto this generation, then surely He also acted thus, and therefore there was no miracle for this generation.

What dost Thou say, O LORD? How shall it be that "there shall no sign be given unto this generation?" Didst Thou not give unto it innumerable divine signs? Hearest Thou not how one of their generation confessed them, "for no man can do these miracles that Thou dost, except GOD be with him?"<sup>1</sup> And what then, if not miracles and signs, dost Thou Thyself point out to the disciples of John, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them?"<sup>2</sup>

What then does all this signify? We meant to answer this question by an example, but in this example we have found a new mental knot. They see the signs and miracles of CHRIST, and yet are not aware of them; they do exist, and yet there are none. Let us find the ends of this knot, and all will be explained. Nicodemus sees the miracles of CHRIST, but the Pharisees see them not. To a few of John's disciples the LORD gives many signs, but unto this

<sup>1</sup> S. John iii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. xi. 5.

generation either none at all, or "but the sign of the prophet Jonas,"<sup>1</sup> that is, His death on the cross and His resurrection. It is not difficult to perceive from this, that it shall be even so throughout all time. For the believers there are signs and miracles, and they see them; unto the unbelievers partly signs are not granted, partly also they see not the miracles which are worked, they are to them as if they did not exist.

One of the causes why miracles remain invisible lies in the miracle-workers themselves. True miracle-workers do not like to make a show of the miracles. For JESUS CHRIST Himself, the chief and most perfect type of miracle-workers, Who came upon earth that men should know through Him the saving, miracle-working power of GOD, Who, working openly for the sake of divine glory, had no need to guard Himself against the temptation of human glory, possessing against this temptation divine power and glory, and yet seemingly He not so much revealed as hid His miracle-working power. Except the sign, solemnly promised and granted to this generation, or rather unto all generations and nations, "the sign of the prophet Jonas," that is, the miracle of the death and resurrection of CHRIST, which it was absolutely necessary to put forth in light and glory, as the sun in the firmament of miracles, and except a few other signs, as for instance, the resurrection of Lazarus, and the hea-

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. xvi. 4.

venly voice over the SON of GOD, glorifying in Him the Name of GOD in which miracles are revealed openly and solemnly,—the greater part of the miracles of CHRIST were accomplished not only without any effort to publish them, but even with some pains to hide them. He cleansed the leper, and immediately “JESUS saith unto him, See thou tell no man.”<sup>1</sup> He raised the daughter of Jairus, and when the parents were astonished and ready to glorify Him, “He charged them that they should tell no man what was done.”<sup>2</sup> He was gloriously transfigured on Mount Tabor, but only in the presence of three chosen disciples, and even unto them “as they came down from the mountain, JESUS charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead.”<sup>3</sup> Wherefore such secrecy? That, according to His parable, “pearls be not cast before swine,”<sup>4</sup> that the holy works of GOD be not insulted by the unclean and blasphemous lips of the sinners, or trampled under the disdain of the ignorant; that the working of the mystery, spoken into the ear, might not be harmed by being prematurely proclaimed upon the housetops; that there might be left us the example of avoiding human glory so dangerous to virtue. And this wise and holy secrecy of the miracle-working God-Man is imitated as much by duty as by a fear of temptation by all men who work miracles, in every

<sup>1</sup> S. Matth. viii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke viii. 56.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. xvii. 9.

S. Matth. vii. 6.

age and throughout the whole universe. Let us point out a homely example. As long as S. Sergius lived, although in some of his works the power of working miracles could not be entirely hidden in him, yet his greatest miracle, the resurrection of the youth, was hidden by the strongest command laid on the father of the risen one.

Another cause why miracles remain not only unknown, but even are not at all accomplished, is unbelief, or want of faith, either on the part of those whom it would have behoved to work them, or of those for the sake of whom they would have been worked, or of both the one and the other. It is said, that "all things are possible to him that believeth,"<sup>1</sup> thereby is also said, that he who has little faith, has little power, while to the unbeliever all is impossible, in which a power above the human is necessary. Once the Apostles were unable to cast out a devil. "Why could not we cast him out?" asked they the LORD. "And JESUS said unto them, Because of your unbelief."<sup>2</sup> But what is still more wonderful, even the Almighty LORD JESUS, being at one time come into His native country, "did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."<sup>3</sup> Does even Almighty power fail against unbelief? No; it always remains Almighty; but either the obdurate heart receives not the gracious power, like as a hard coarse

<sup>1</sup> S. Mark ix. 23.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matth. xvii. 19, 20.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matth. xiii. 58.



stone reflects not the light; or the holy power, by a merciful providence, approaches not the unworthy, as fire touches not the straw that it might not devour it.

Address these general considerations on miracles, if you like, to our own time in particular, and to ourselves.

Why do we not see miracles? Let him who can answer otherwise, but to me it seems that we are of necessity brought to this answer, We do not see miracles, or we see them rarely, either because they are invisible to us as unworthy of trust, or because they are not even accomplished through our unbelief or want of faith.

How can miracles be accomplished in us by prayer, when our prayer is short, cold, inattentive, and offered up, not so much in faith and filial love to GOD, as in a sort of involuntary submission to His law?

How can a spiritual word work miracles in us, when our heart, like a field wild with tares, is thickly sown with idle words, and overgrown by carnal desires and unlawful thoughts?

How can the Sacraments work miracles in us, if we approach them but from absolute necessity, without a careful previous purification, without an ardent aspiration to be united to GOD? The Apostle Paul, convicting the Corinthians of an unworthy communion of the Body and Blood of CHRIST, concludes, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and

many sleep,"<sup>1</sup> that is, many are struck with sudden death for insulting holy things. I think that, unto many of us, it is already a miracle of divine mercy if on such occasions we are not visited with similar punishment.

Let us, my brethren, call upon the LORD Who is unceasingly working miracles unto our salvation, and both each for all and all for each, let us cry to Him with the Apostles, "LORD, increase our faith."<sup>2</sup> And then also with David, "Show me a token for good, that they which hate me may see it and be ashamed; because Thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me."<sup>3</sup> Amen.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 30.

<sup>2</sup> S. Luke xvii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm lxxxvi. 17.

## NOTE.

Page 128. "They who nourish heresy in secret," &c.

THE above mentioned expression of the Metropolitan refers probably to the *secret heretics* not of Russia alone, but of other Christian countries. Nevertheless, we suppose that it will not be superfluous<sup>1</sup> to acquaint the English reader in some degree with the religious sects existing in Russia, and offering to this day so large a field for the activity of the Home Mission of the Orthodox clergy.

Those who have seceded from the communion of the Orthodox Church, are divided into two principal categories: dissenters (*raskolniks*,) confessing the general dogmas of the Church, but nevertheless separated from it; and heretics, rejecting or altering the very doctrines of the Orthodox faith. This division, which is thoroughly consistent with the fact itself, is also recognized by the civil law.

We call *raskolniks* those who adhere to the ancient rites of the Church, and who, although confessing the same doctrine as the members of the Orthodox Church, yet reject all those corrections of the ritual, and those alterations in the rites which took place in the second half of the seventeenth century, under the supervision of the renowned patriarch Nikon. Notwithstanding that these corrections and alterations did not in the least affect doctrine itself, and that they had for the most part been called forth by extreme necessity in consequence of the errors as well as wilful and ignorant additions, which in former times had crept unnoticed into the manuscript rituals, and thence been transferred without severe critical examination into printed books issued from the Government printing-office in Moscow,—notwithstanding that the re-

<sup>1</sup> More especially since the appearance of Mr. Dixon's book, entitled "Free Russia," which abounds in incorrect information and most unsatisfactory statements concerning the Russian Church.

forms of Nicon had no other aim than that of rendering the text of the Russian ritual thoroughly identical with the Greek originals, as well as identifying the divine service of the Russian Church with that of its Greek prototype,—and notwithstanding that they were approved by the Oriental Œcumenical patriarchs; the dissenters are persuaded that the Russian Orthodox Church has from that time lost the gift of the redeeming grace of CHRIST. Thus the using either of two or three fingers in making the sign of the cross, the repetition twice or thrice of the “halleluia,” the proceeding in the direction of the sun’s course, or against it, in some parts or ceremonies of divine service, the way of writing (in Russ!) the Name of JESUS, and a few other peculiarities, none of them greater, but rather of less importance; these are the fundamental points of the dispute, which has disturbed the peace of the Russian Church; these are at least the officially proclaimed arguments by which the raskolniks themselves justify their separation, and for the sake of which more than ten millions of the Russian people remain until this day out of the pale of the Church. There is no doubt that the soil which has engendered *raskol* (dissent) and which feeds it still, is the ignorance which has confounded rite with doctrine, or more strictly, which ascribes to the outward rite of the Church the significance of the doctrine of that Church. Yet, certainly, it is impossible to explain by ignorance alone, or by mere blind adherence to the ancient ceremonial, so important a fact in Russian religious life, as is *raskol*, but rather by an aggregation of motives extremely complicated; by the peculiarities of the national spiritual development; by historical circumstances, which have aroused the activity of national instinct in the form of conservatism; and finally, by a misconceived way of dealing with *raskol*, on the part of the Russian Government, spiritual as well as temporal. The truth is, that in ancient Russia, by the absence not only of schools, but of every means of enlightenment, and equally from the thorough separation from other more civilized nations, religion was the only element and instrument of civilization, for the mass of the people, as well as for the higher classes: religion, in its outward manifestations, in its divine service, in its rites, in its books, which were translated from the Greek and transcribed by godly but illiterate zealots of the faith. The Church of ancient Russia was so intimately blended with the nation and had so penetrated its whole life, that it had almost become the expression of nationality itself. And therefore an attempt to alter the ancient rites of the Church (made by the clerical

authorities without the counsel or participation of the secular members of the Church) could not but appear, in the eyes of the Russians of the seventeenth century, other than an attempt against the spiritual integrity and the independence of Russian nationality, and against the Russian national customs. It remains still doubtful, what would have been the further fate of Russian raskol, if the instinctive fears of spiritual and national sentiment had not found, seemingly, a full justification during the very absolute reforms of Peter the Great in the eighteenth century. Those reforms, which may be more correctly styled revolutions, and the fundamental intention of which issued from necessity, were attended by radical changes in the relations between the Church and the State, and accompanied by thorough change of the then existing form of the government of the Church, to that of German bureaucracy: by a despotic persecution of national usages and of the whole tenor of Russian life, raskol became still more confirmed in its errors, acquired new moral strength, and obtained the significance of a protest against foreign anti-national influences, which had become predominant in the social, governmental, and even clerical spheres. This protest did not limit itself to denegation only, but it showed itself in positive resistance; namely, in the well-known mutiny of the *strelzies* (a militia, existing from the time of John the Terrible). These *strelzies*, the armed representatives of raskol, were at length thoroughly crushed by the iron will of Peter the Great, who put the rebels to death by thousands. Raskol was silenced for a time, but, during the reign of Catherine II., reappeared in the person of Pougatchew. This rebellion arose from the midst of the raskolniks, and drew its strength therefrom: an audacious cossack, an impostor, issuing manifestoes in the name of the Emperor Peter III., granted therein to the people "*the soil, the cross and the beard*," that is, he liberated them from serfdom, granting to the peasantry the land of the nobility; he restored the ancient rites of the Church, (for by "*the cross*" was here meant the ancient form of it, that is with eight extremities instead of four, which is the only shape of the cross recognised by the raskolniks, other crosses not receiving from them even the name,) and re-established the national customs, of which "*the beard*" (so strongly forbidden by Peter,) served as the readiest symbol. From that time raskol has given no more signs of open resistance, but has contented itself with a passive, almost exclusively clerical protest, which at the present time not only offers no political danger, but does not prevent even the raskolniks themselves from giving their help to the govern-

ment in the critical moment of struggle with some foreign foe. The invasion of the French in 1812, the Crimean war, and the last Polish rebellion, have shown in a striking manner that no proclamations on the part of foreign countries, no instigations of revolutionary agents, not only foreign or Polish, but even Russian, are able to excite the Russian raskolniks to treason against their native country and their Sovereign. Nevertheless the raskolniks form even now a society sufficiently locked up and separated from the bulk of the nation,—a society powerful and possessing considerable wealth. If they can count in their ranks none of the nobility of the so called enlightened class, they at least possess the third and the wealthiest part of the merchant class, as well as the greater part of the Cossacks of the Don and the whole of those of the Oural. The total number of raskolniks consists now (although the statistical information may not be very precise,) of about ten millions of men. Therefore the raskolniks represent even now that part of the Russian nation, in which there can be found more than in any other class the closest connexion with ancient Russia as it was before the time of Peter, and which class was distinguished by a peculiarly solid stamp of nationality, considering themselves pre-eminently Russian and Orthodox, while not accepting their official name of raskolniks, but styling themselves “*primitive believers*,” “*primitive ritualists*,” followers of ancient orthodoxy. Justice compels us to add, that those instinctive aspirations, although in themselves worthy of sympathy, were developed on an exceptionally religious and moreover on a totally ignorant ground, and that they never attained a clear understanding of the true principles of Russian nationality; neither have they produced any *progressive* activity in that direction, but have limited themselves rather to impassiveness or to conservative activity.

At the beginning of raskol, among the number of the opponents of Nikon who seceded from the Church, there were not only laymen, but also priests and even one Bishop. But when this Bishop died, then raskol found itself face to face with the following dilemma: either to remain without any priesthood at all, and consequently to cease to be a Church, since without a priesthood, even by the conviction of the raskolniks themselves, a Church cannot exist,—or to accept the hierarchy of the very Church from which they had torn themselves. On the solution of this dilemma raskol was cleft into two principal sects, the *popovtshina* (which admits of priests dismissed from the Established Church,) and the *bispopovtshina* (which rejects priesthood entirely).

The former, that is the *popovtshina*, violating logic and sense, persisting in denying the presence of grace in the Established Church, but not desirous of remaining without a clergy, and acknowledging at the same time as the absolute condition of true priesthood the legal ordination of priests,—resolved on admitting those members of the Orthodox hierarchy, who would consent to abandon the communion of the Church that had ordained them. To this end they bought off some venal priests, or harboured those who were condemned for some committed crime and fleeing from merited punishment. Thus did *popovtshina* provide for itself during two hundred years. The Government, which at the beginning had relentlessly pursued those vagabond priests, resolved at last to tolerate them, yet on the condition that they should not surpass an appointed number, and reside in those places alone where the *raskolniks* were allowed to erect their churches. But their efforts to furnish themselves with the higher spiritual power, that is with Bishops, did not succeed until the fourth decade of the present century, Twenty-five years ago the *raskolniks* succeeded in buying off with a great sum of money one of the Greek Orthodox Archbishops, residing in Turkey, the Metropolitan Ambrosius, deprived of his charge by the Patriarch of Constantinople, and established him in the character and with the title of Metropolitan of Russia in the Bukovine, at a distance of twenty versts from the Russian frontier, under the protection of the Austrian Government, in a monastery called *Belaja Krinitiza*. Having thus established a *manufactory of ordination*, the *popovtshinzi* were not long in creating by the venal hands of their pseudo-Metropolitan, many such false Bishops not only for the *raskolniks* who lived in Turkey, Wallachia, and Moldavia, but also for the adherents of their own sect in the interior of Russia itself, having formerly divided them into dioceses. During the reign of the Emperor Nicholas, those pretended Bishops visited Russia only in a secret manner, for they were severely pursued, but in the present reign, profiting by the general relaxation of persecution for religious opinions, they live freely in Russia and even in the capitals. The Government suffers them, although it acknowledges not their ecclesiastical rank. The results of this wise policy were most beneficial. The dissenting hierarchy brought from darkness into daylight, could not but appear, even in the eyes of the *raskolniks* themselves, a piteous caricature of that of the true Orthodox; among the *raskolnik* pseudo-Bishops, the greater part of whom were wanting in all matters of education, there were found those who by their conduct

and actions roused disputes, and became the cause of the organization among the raskolniks themselves of new parties each hostile to the other. And the best of the Bishops, troubled in their minds by their situation, doubting of the rights of their office, and sincerely aspiring after truth, came to Moscow and desired to converse with the Metropolitan Philaret, concerning matters of faith, for also in this respect, the activity of the late Metropolitan was highly remarkable. His austere, ascetic life had acquired for him the deep reverence not only of his own flock, but even of those who, though erring, were yet anxious for the true faith. The consequence of those conversations, was the conversion of the most remarkable and influential Bishops and of other members of the dissenting clergy, under the name of *edinoveritzi* (which means men of the same faith, fellow-believers).

We must add here some information about *edinoveriĕ*. In the year 1667, the council of the eastern Patriarchs assembled in Moscow to judge the Patriarch Nikon, pronounced an anathema against the raskolniks. This severe measure did not only fail to weaken raskol, but rendered it more obdurate and gave to it new strength. The anathema struck without distinction at all the adherents of the ancient rites; whereas, in former times, these same rites had been observed by many saints, revered throughout the whole country as holy men, and among whom were even Metropolitans of Moscow, whose relics repose in the cathedral of the Assumption, in the Kremlin of Moscow. This anathema was in the eyes of the raskolniks the solemn renunciation by the Church of its former national life; a blasphemous rupture with sacred national traditions. This conclusion was as unjust as it was unfair. It was evident that the anathema was pronounced not against the rites, but against resistance to the commands of the Church. In the year 1800, Platon, Metropolitan of Moscow, put the question in a truer light; acknowledging the differences in the rites as a matter without consequence wherever there was unity in the confession of the doctrine; or, at all events without importance, when compared with the evil of separation from the Church. Platon suggested to the Holy Synod and to the secular Government, to show their condescension towards those erring Christians, by allowing them the observance of all their beloved rites, but with the condition that they should again enter into the communion of the Church, acknowledge its authority, and accept from her hand legally ordained priests. This measure was then adopted by the Government, yet by reason of the



existing system of religious persecution in the reign of the Emperor Nicholas, as well as from the distrust of the raskolniks, it was brought into effect at first but very slowly, but in the last few years it has made great progress, mostly through the care of the Metropolitan Philaret. He founded in Moscow an *edinovertsheski* monastery, and himself celebrated therein divine service, after the ritual which had been printed before the time of Nikon, and observed all the ancient rites, thus bearing testimony to the amplitude and freedom of the views of the Orthodox Church, which places above all the unity of faith and the law of brotherly love.

It must be owned, that during these last ten years, in consequence of the greater liberty granted to raskol and also to the press, which has thrown the light of publicity and criticism over the dark and secret world of raskol, its fanaticism in general, but particularly that of the *popovtshina*, has greatly decreased. The necessity of education, the influence of civilization, and the temptations of fashion, have considerably shaken its former stubbornness, and it may be hoped that the time is not far distant when the *popovtshina* at least will be reunited to the Church through the path of *edinoverie*.

The *popovtshina* is the most numerous sect of the raskolniks,—its number amounts to nearly seven millions.

Concerning the other fraction of raskol which did not consent to admit into its body the vagabond priests of the Established Church, that fraction called *bespopovtshina* was always distinguished from the former by fanaticism, by stubborn persistence, and by the darkness of ignorance. And their condition was indeed tragical. Confessing in their Creed the absolute necessity for an Œcumenical, Apostolic, Catholic Church, with its sacraments and its hierarchy, they are convinced that the grace bestowed by CHRIST on His Church had abandoned it since the time of Nikon, and that the Church abides now in a state of orphanhood. They have been waiting in vain from GOD for already two hundred years. the restoration in some miraculous manner of a legally ordained hierarchy; for two hundred years already, they, while believing in the redeeming power of the sacraments, have remained without the enjoyment of them. Their temples are built exactly like those of the Orthodox Church; there are altars, but no servants of the altar; there stands the chalice, but it is empty, and seems as if waiting to be filled with the Body and Blood of CHRIST; they perform only that part of divine service which can be fulfilled by laymen, without the assistance of priests, that is the reading and singing of prayers and hymns. It

will be easily understood that by such an involuntary abolition of sacraments and rites, which are generally much believed in and fervently revered in the Russian people, they find not the peace of their souls,—and therefore there is nowhere to be found such agitation, nay, rather such restlessness of spirit, as among the bespopovtshinzi. It has broken up into a great number of subdivisions, or separate sects, almost all of which experience the most direful and reciprocal hate, often sending to one another violent polemic missives, and often assembling to the number of some thousands, in desert places or woods for religious debates.

All those sects, or, as they call themselves, “*opinions*,” differ from one another by various shades of ignorance and fanaticism; but all show the same common desire, to get out in one way or other of their awkward position,—to find some solution of the moral dilemma, which wearies and oppresses them,—to supply the want of clergy and of divine service by some self-ordained institution,—to find out the way of redemption otherwise than through the Church and its sacraments. It was natural that among the bespopovtshinzi, the doctrine of antichrist should be developed, the incarnation of whom some see in Nikon, others in Peter or in the Orthodox hierarchy in general and in the State Government. Antichrist is a necessity to them: for it is only by the reign of antichrist that the sectarians are able to excuse, even in their own sight, the unseemly anarchy which exists among them. The question of antichrist has produced in the centre of bespopovtshina an entire literature of its own (of course in manuscripts,) as well as the question of marriage, and namely, is marriage a sacrament of the Church, that is, is it one of those sacraments which require for their fulfilment the blessing of a priest,—or may it be celebrated by laymen, as is sometimes allowed with baptism? This question has also divided them into many sects. Some of them, wholly rejecting the lawfulness of marriage in the present state of the Church, prefer public sin to such unlawful marriage, saying, that they at least by doing so lose not the consciousness of their sin, and do not lull their consciences into slumber by the admission of a pretended sacrament. . . . On an exactly similar ground, some of them, convinced of the impossibility of praying in the Church and of partaking of the holy Supper, have come to the conclusion that they can do without any visible Church and be satisfied by communicating in the *spirit* alone. Thus, the raskol of the bespopovtshina, having begun by a servile worship of *the rite* and

*the letter*, has arrived, submitting to the implacable logic of denegation in its extreme development, not only at the renunciation of sacraments in practice, but even at the denegation of *the principle* of their necessity as a means of salvation. It has come in short, to almost rationalistic conclusions, though but of a negative character. To those belongs for instance the sect called *nietovtshina* (from the word *niet*, i.e. *no*,) which represents the highest degree of negation,—so far as concerns the institutions of the State Church.

Among the sects of the bespopovtshina we must signalize that of the *begounoff* (runaways), *strannikoff* or pilgrims, in which vagabondage is revered as an act of piety. Proceeding upon the rule that the civil laws are the representation of antichrist, this sect preaches that none of the faithful may be numbered among the subjects of the state, neither pay its taxes, nor profit by its protection. Therefore the adherents of that sect disappear suddenly from their abodes, purposely that their names may be inscribed in the official registers as "*runaways*," or as having disappeared without trace, and in this way they are excluded from the roll of citizens. Meantime they not seldom remain at home, hidden in secret refuges: and for this purpose they form in their houses different hiding-places: double walls, double roofs, and subterranean rooms. The chief contingent of this sect are runaway soldiers, who have founded it, to give a religious colour to their desertion. Before the emancipation of the peasantry, those who fled from their proprietors generally entered into the same sect. Being interrogated by the magistrates of justice, they call themselves "*subjects of the King of Heaven*," acknowledging no other Sovereign or authority, and declare obstinately that they know nothing either of their name or of their origin. It must be stated that in general the relations of the bespopovtshina with the State, are considerably more hostile than those of the popovtshina. Some of the sects are peculiarly hostile, even rejecting the principle of obedience towards the Government; such sects are not, of course, tolerated by the Government as soon as they put their theories into practice. None of those sects however, offers any serious political danger, as well, because each of them taken singly is not numerous (although the total number of the bespopovtshina is said to be three millions,) as that their protests also are more of a religious and passive character, inclining them rather to voluntary sufferings, to martyrdom, than to any other active resistance or rebellion. Moreover, in later times, we may note even among the bespopovtshina a considerable decrease of fanaticism.

Many of the most influential representatives of bespopovtshina have passed into *edinoverie*, that is, almost into the Established Church; and no doubt, with the entire suppression of religious persecution and the establishment of liberty of conscience, on firmer foundations, it will thoroughly lose its intense hatred to the Church and the actual civil order.

Let us now speak of heresies: they may also be divided into two principal groups: heresies simply rationalistic or those whose principal aim is rational spiritualism, and heresies pre-eminently secret or mystical, where gross materialism and even sensuality lie at the bottom of false mysticism. Notwithstanding their seemingly keen differences, both groups touch one another and even cross their respective limits,—in their extreme logical development.

To the former group belong the *Molochani* and *Duchoborzi* or *spiritual Christians*. It may be said of the Three Persons of the HOLY TRINITY, they worship pre-eminently and almost exclusively the HOLY GHOST, Whom they consider to be the inalienable acquirement of the faithful, as a quickening power, ever dwelling in and sanctifying him. They reject not only the Established Russian Church, but also every visible one, and pronouncing the soul of every Christian to be a Church, they reject at the same time the sacraments, rites, and every outward manifestation of inward faith. They call themselves "*saints*," and honour in each other the presence of the HOLY GHOST by low obeisances. The doctrine of these sects, and especially that of the *Duchoborzi*, exhibits a striking similitude to that of the *Quakers*, and its origin in Russia is even ascribed to the preaching of an English Quaker, during the reign of the Empress Elizabeth, in the middle of the eighteenth century. These sectarians have no temples,—for every Christian soul is a temple of the HOLY GHOST,—yet they have prayer-meetings, at which they sing psalms and hymns of their own composition which are not devoid of poetic worth; they are distinguished by austerity and purity of manners, by temperance in their food, by total abstinence from wine, from swearing and ribaldry (virtues, which are, alas, very rare among the lower classes of the people), by neatness in their housekeeping, by industry, and in general by spiritual aspirations, yet without asceticism, and which are easily reconcilable with solicitude concerning their material welfare. They preach perfect civil equality, for all men are equally *holy*, all are brothers. They are generally better instructed than is the case with men of their class, and the Bible is their chief, nay, almost their

only book for reading ; therein they greatly differ from the other dissenters, who seldom read not only the Old Testament, but even the Gospel, and who, instead of that, assiduously study the writings of the Fathers, the Canons of the Church, and the Book of the Revelation. In general the adherents of the sects of Molochani and Duchoborzi are distinguished from the common people by a higher degree of intellectual development and instruction. Notwithstanding all this they possess almost no writing of their own confession of faith,—and the dissertation of one of the learned men of Russia, who first published the systematic contents of their belief, actually served them from that time as a sort of catechism. Their canticles and hymns breathe a spirit of peculiar enmity against the clergy of the Established Church. Towards the Government they, on the contrary, profess no particular enmity ; they certainly fear it, considering it the support of the Church, but in their relations with it they are quite indifferent and passive in their submission, without hate, as well as without great attachment. They generally have not that strong national leaven, which is the chief characteristic of the adherents of the ancient forms and rites, and are in their manners unlike the Russian people in general.

These sects, which at their beginning were severely persecuted by the Government, during the eighteenth century, received in the reign of Alexander I. the munificent gift of large and fertile domains in the Taurida Government, Melitopol, district, on the banks of the river Molosnaia, where they were transferred from the central governments and where they founded several wealthy and flourishing colonies, which are still in existence. It is a notable fact, that meeting in their neighbourhood with a colony of Scotch *Mennonists*, the Russian sectarians were much struck by the perfect similitude of their respective doctrines : and notwithstanding their different nationality, the adherents of both sects entered into close friendly intercourse with each other, whereas generally, foreign colonists in Russia live quite estranged from the native inhabitants.

The Molochani and Duchoborzi differ very little from each other ; the former name is not even admitted by the sectarians, and was given them by their Orthodox neighbours, who had observed that they used *molako*, i. e. milk, instead of meat.

Nevertheless the name Molochani clung to them and even became their official denomination, and until now designates that part of “*the spiritual Christians*,” among whom the spiritualistic rigorism is weaker,

or rather whose spiritualism is less subtle and abstract, and admits of more outward manifestations than is the case with the so-called Duchoborzi. The best interpretation of this sect is that of the well known traveller, Baron Haxthausen, in his book, "Etudes sur la situation intérieure, la vie nationale et les institutions rurales en Russie." Robert Pinkerton, in his "Russia," printed in London, in 1833, communicates also some information about them. These two sects number about half a million of men; but it is difficult to know their exact number, for besides the colonies of the Taurida and the Caucasus, where they live openly, many of them dwell secretly in Central and Eastern Russia, where their existence is not officially acknowledged by the civil law.

There is nothing more difficult, nay, so positively impossible, as for man in his earthly state to abide in a sphere of pure spirituality, and to make it his normal, natural condition. It is evident that such a rejection of every form, such a persecution of every outward manifestation of faith, becomes a narrow-minded formalism of its own kind, and a fettering of the true freedom of individual spirit. On the other side the attempt to keep oneself on the height of pure spiritualism cannot exist without an over-exertion of the spiritual powers of man, to a tension which places us in a state of exaltation and which carries us away into the fantastic domain of enthusiastic mysticism,—while it not seldom requires for its support artificial, creative, and quite material means. All sects in general, in Russia as well as in other countries, which exclusively worship the HOLY GHOST, beget in their adherents a natural desire to be in immediate communion with the HOLY GHOST; to feel in themselves His living presence, hence the necessity of a peculiar kind of religiously mystic *inspiration*,—which however is nothing else than a state of strong nervous excitement, considered by them as a token of the real presence of the HOLY GHOST. To this end they have recourse, as it is known, to outward, sensual excitements, and namely to exaggerated movement (as does the sect of the *Shakers*,) to castigation and so forth.

The same interior logic presides over the development of the Russian sects, who exclusively worship the HOLY GHOST, and to their number belong also the above mentioned Molochani and Duchoborzi.

Thus, while they on one side reject in principle the form, the letter, every outward manifestation, as well as every Established Church, with its sacraments, rites and sacred traditions,—requiring that God should

be worshipped but in the spirit and accepting the holy Bible alone as the foundation of faith,—the Molochani could not do otherwise than submit to the natural and thoroughly lawful desire of strengthening and confirming in their own conviction their only foundation—the Bible. Hence the diligent reading and study of the Bible,—hence the almost deification of the Bible, that is of *the book*,—hence the worshipping of the text, *the letter*. If we consider that this reading is performed by men, wanting in every matter of education, unacquainted with any other book than the Bible, and at the same time not acknowledging, nay, often totally ignoring the sacred traditions and the doctrines of the Church; then it becomes evident how the sect of the Molochani in some of its points of faith sometimes almost identifies itself with Judaism. Those *semi-Judaists*, as they are called, cling commonly to the Bible, which says that not one jot, nor one tittle shall in any wise pass from the law: they keep the Sabbath instead of Sunday, according to the fourth commandment (wherefore they are also called Sabbatarians,) and in their confused notions of CHRIST they often fall into the purest Mosaism, i.e. Judaism, free from the alterations of the Talmud. They were also influenced by the circumstance that among the inhabitants of the Crimea there are found *Karaims*, who give themselves out as the descendants of those Jews who left Palestine after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, confessing the doctrine of Moses, rejecting the latter Books of the Bible, and who are really free from every talmudic influence. In comparison with the position of the talmudic Jews, the Karaims enjoy by the Russian civil law many peculiar privileges.

But there are also sects, and namely those sects which belong to the second group of heretics before named by us, of which outward sensual excitement constitutes the principal basis and almost the chief doctrine. They also worship the HOLY GHOST, but it were useless to seek for an immediate, so to say, genealogical link between them and the sects of the former group, that is with the Molochani and Duchoborzi. The primitive origin of the latter is doubtlessly rationalistic; they were, so to say, bred on a ground of philosophical spiritualism, although they alone attain in their extreme development to the denegation of this very same spiritualism. But in the sects of the second group, there is not the least leavening of philosophy. Of these sects is that of the "*Chlisti*," and another thoroughly identical with it, the sect of the "*belija golubi*," i.e. *white doves*; they are eunuchs, founding their doc-

trine on the Gospel of S. Matthew, xix. 12. These sects which are pre-eminently *secret ones*, not only by reason of persecution on the part of the Government, but also as not being tolerated by society, and at length from the very character of their teaching. Secrecy is a part of their dogma, and is enforced by dreadful oaths. Both these sects arose quite independently of that of the Duchoborzi and have their origin in the remotest antiquity. Their root is the same as that of all similar sects in Europe and in the East, the Manicheans, the Bogomilians, the Albigenses, &c.

The adherents of the *Cblisti* call themselves "the people of God." Some suppose that the former name was given them ironically by the people, in consequence of the rumour that they thrashed each other with *switches*, which in Russ means *chlist* at their meetings; but it is more probable that this name is but an alteration of the word "*Cbristovtshina*," as this denomination stands in the spiritual writings of the first years of the eighteenth century. Whatever its origin, the designation of *Chlistovtshina* is adopted by the official language. But the heresy of the *Chlistovtshina* in its broadest sense has many shades and divisions and as many names. We shall limit ourselves to a few words on those sects who principally belong to the *Chlistovtshina*, and are more important than any other, their ranks being filled by the lower and more numerous class of people. The *Chlisti* are divided into *korabli*, i. e. *ships*, which are separate groups or communities formed by themselves and each governed by its own *kormtshi*, i. e. *pilot*. Being thoroughly dependent on their pilots, those ships differ one from another by every possible variety, as well of belief as of custom, often so contradictory that it would be very difficult to give any general account of their doctrine. Nevertheless we may consider, according to the new investigations made by Mr. Melnikow, as their generic distinction, the belief in the *mystic death and burial in Christ*, and in a *mystic resurrection*, taking these words in a symbolic, spiritual sense. Under the words death and burial in CHRIST we must understand the mortification of the flesh, the desires, the will, a state of self-renunciation and absorption in oneself; under the name of resurrection—that state in which man hears in his own heart the voice of the *inward Gospel* of the HOLY GHOST, becomes himself *the temple of God*, a being *without sin*, living no longer under the law, but under grace. But this first principle, common to the *Chlisti* with many other mystic sects, is preserved in its original purity but by very few "ships," and it mostly manifests itself



among the Chlisti under a mutilated aspect and with the grossest interpretations. We may say that a general belief among the Chlisti is, that CHRIST and the Virgin Mary do not cease to manifest themselves to the world, and become incarnate in the persons of the elect. Some "ships" believing in that way, that CHRIST appears really, number a whole line of consecutive incarnations during the lapse of two hundred years, and relate whole annals about the life, miracles, martyrdom and resurrection of these new Christs. They even believe, that the LORD SABAOTH Himself became incarnate at the end of the seventeenth century, in the person of a peasant of the government of Wladimir, Daniel, son of Philip, and that afterwards ascending, he chose among them also a peasant to be CHRIST: thus founding the religion of *the people of God*. Among other "ships," CHRIST is a denomination, meaning a man, who is constantly inspired by the HOLY GHOST, possessing the gift of prophecy and of grace—that is perfect infallibility,—because, in that man there dwelleth no longer his own will, but that of the HOLY GHOST, whatsoever he might do and whatever sins he might commit. There exist also "ships" in whose doctrine the narrative in the Gospel about the birth, death and resurrection of CHRIST ought not to be accepted in a literal, but a figurative sense. And as to the Virgin Mary, she is to women the same as CHRIST is to men,—the highest degree of perfection. In some "ships" women are raised to that dignity by bringing forth CHRIST *in a spiritual manner*, that is, by the power of prophetic revelation—they point out a man in whom CHRIST dwells. In other "ships" they confer that dignity also through revelation, upon a young and spotless virgin, who becomes thus the object of their worship.

The Chlisti admit, as is but natural, of no Church, yet to be better able to hide themselves, they keep strictly all the observances of the Orthodox Church, and some of them do even believe that the observance of the Church institutions may be useful, by preserving in men a religious disposition, although they be insufficient to salvation. And though they confirm their doctrine by various texts of the Old and New Testament, still they confess and sing in their hymns, which it appears contain their whole creed,—that there is but one book wanted for salvation,—the Golden Book, the Book of Life,—our LORD the HOLY GHOST. Besides this, these sectarians are ruled not by those inspired speeches, but by those revelations, which are chanted by their prophets, when they get into a *spiritual state*, i.e. in that ecstatic state

which is attained by that diligent whirling and racing round at their meetings. These exaggerated movements, amounting even to frenzy, accomplished by people of both sexes clad in long white shirts, and accompanied by songs or various exclamations to the HOLY GHOST, are designated among the Chlisti by the peculiar term of *radenie*, which means religious zeal, efforts to be united to God. And when one of those zealots, after being thus employed for some hours, at length with foaming mouth, beside himself, begins to utter anything (mostly in verses,) then he himself and all who surround him, are convinced that the HOLY GHOST is come down upon him and speaks by his lips. Those improvisations are considered as revelations, as prophecies, and the improviser is honoured as a prophet. Many of those improvisations, written down by the Chlisti, have been lately published and contain mostly a very incongruous assemblage of sentences, expressing either gross glorifications of *the Master*, the HOLY GHOST, or commendations of the sect, or some vague predictions about the future Judgment. All these improvisations have not the least literary worth.

The power of those Christs and virgins (who in some "ships" are simply styled *pilots*), over their "ships" is boundless, and they are constantly finding out some new variety of the theme of their mystic doctrine. Notwithstanding that celibacy, continence, purity of manners, and abstinence are considered of absolute necessity to salvation, there are "ships" where the public dances, whirlings and turnings round, are ended by the most repulsive orgies, during which the participators in them consider themselves freed from sin, being at that time inspired by the HOLY GHOST, and consequently they find themselves no longer under the common law, but under that of grace. There are finally "ships" in which from time to time is accomplished the communion of the blood and body of an infant eight days old (whom they call Christ), born of some false *virgin*, and killed for this very end in presence of the whole community and with great solemnity! It will be understood that the Chlisti stoutly deny the existence of such monstrous and bestial customs when they are interrogated by justice, but unhappily they are undeniable facts, and have been thoroughly proved.

It is difficult to determine the number of the adherents of the Chlisti with all their secret branches, for the least manifestation of their doctrine is severely prosecuted by law: but we suppose their total number does not reach more than a hundred thousand, and is perhaps much lower. They mostly live in the Governments of Oriel and Tambow. These

sectarians belong mostly to the agricultural class, but there are also among them merchants, and even wealthy ones. Yet it is not long since, during the reign of Alexander I., under the influence of free-masonry and other mystical doctrines, not in Russia alone, but throughout Europe, above all after the fall of Napoleon,—that the Russian secret sects numbered in their ranks members of the nobility, even among those who stood high in the hierarchy of the state. Of course, the worship of *the Spirit* was never accompanied among those intellectually cultivated sectarians either with those bloody rites or impure orgies which we have mentioned, but was limited to the turnings round, racing, leaping, and similar movements, like the frantic gestures of those Mahometan mystics—*the dervishes*. However, with the sudden change in the religious dispositions of Alexander I. from mysticism to a severe observance of the Church's institutions, the indulgence of the Government towards those sects ended, and with it the adherence to it of persons of the higher classes except in some solitary instances.

We have sought to point out, in these short outlines, but the chief characteristics of Russian *raskol* and heresies, omitting a great many of the less important among them which rise and fall with their founder. We have but to add that all these raskols and heresies, however afflicting in themselves, still prove the lively interest felt by the Russian people for their religion. On this deeply religious soil, without culture and neglected during whole centuries, in consequence of various historical circumstances, there grew up tares and thistles in abundance. But the sun of freedom and light is already rising, a spirit of life is breathing, that shall disperse the mist of prejudice and misunderstanding, which is equally needed by the pastors and their flocks, by those who rule and by those who are ruled. That quickening breath will send forth workers, no longer isolated and separated, but strong by their number and their unity. The tares and the thistles shall be torn up, but the fertile soil will remain and bring forth, if it please God, a good harvest for the welfare of the Church and the glory of the Truth confessed by it!



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