Revd M D Conway
with the regards of

DISCOURSES

ON OCCASION OF

THE DEDICATION

OF

HOPE-STREET NEW CHURCH,

LIVERPOOL,

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, AND SUNDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1849.

BY

REV. THOMAS MADGE.
REV. JAMES MARTINEAU.
REV. CHARLES WICKSTEED.

LONDON:
JOHN CHAPMAN, 142, STRAND.

MDCCCXLIX.

PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

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PREFACE.

The occasion of the following Discourses was naturally one of great interest to the Society in whose service they were prepared. At the entrance of a new era in its congregational history, it seemed fit that some comprehensive expression should be given to the aims which it proposes to realise, and the views of life which distinguish its interpretation of Christianity. The immediate request for the publication of the Sermons justifies the hope that they fairly represent the state of mind and purpose with which the new Church is entered by its possessors; and that they may stand as a record of the time and connexion to which they belong. This circumstance gives to them a value not due to any intrinsic qualities of their own; and induces the preachers to consign them to a permanent form, less as original expressions of divine truth, than as marks in the ever-changing course of human sentiment.

November 14, 1849.

THE DEDICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN TEMPLE TO THE WORSHIP AND SERVICE OF GOD.

A SERMON,

PREACHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18TH, 1849,

BY THOMAS MADGE,

MINISTER OF ESSEX STREET CHAPEL.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY RICHARD KINDER,
GREEN ARBOUR COURT, OLD BAILEY.

A SERMON.

ALREADY, my brethren, as it was meet that it should be so, has the voice which has so often given utterance to the devout sentiments of your hearts, and to which, after a period of silence, you must rejoice again to listen,*—already, I say, has that voice breathed forth the prayer of thanksgiving and the prayer of supplication becoming the occasion on which we are now assembled. Nevertheless, I cannot enter upon that part which has been allotted to me of this day's service without once more beseeching Him whose favour is the primal source of all illumination, of all truth, and goodness, and happiness, to look mercifully upon us at this time, and graciously accept our humble endeavours to glorify his holy name. The words which I have chosen as introductory to the observations which I have now to address to you are taken from

Acts i. 13, 14.

"*And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, with the other apostles. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.*"

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* The devotional services were introduced by the Rev. James Martineau, the Minister of the Church, who, since his return from the continent after an absence of more than a year, had now, for the first time, presented himself to his congregation.

Most interesting and affecting must this first meeting of the apostles and their companions have been after the trying scenes through which they had lately passed, and the dispersion of that cloud of doubts, and fears, and anxieties, which had so heavily hung over them. From the deep depression into which their minds had sunk as they fled from the garden of Gethsemane and the tragedy of the Cross, they had now risen into a state of hopeful, joyful expectation. For a brief season they had given up all as lost. They disappeared from the public eye, and it seemed, for a moment, as if a life of privacy and retirement were henceforth the life most fitting for them to lead. But the sudden re-appearance among them of their risen and now ascended Lord dispelled their growing despondency, revived their expiring hopes, brought them again upon the open stage of life, and imparted to them fortitude and courage, patience and perseverance, untiring and unconquerable, in testifying to the truth of what they had seen and heard. It was when their hearts were thus re-assured, and their confidence was more than restored, that they assembled together in the upper room mentioned in the text, to call to mind those words and deeds of power and of love of which they had recently been the admiring witnesses,—to bow down in grateful acknowledgements before God for the glorious issue of their Master's labours and sufferings in his triumphant resurrection from the dead,—and to invoke the divine blessing upon their own future labours in the Christian cause. Here they had met to commune with one another on the new and important relation into which they had just entered, and the obligations and duties to which it summoned them. Hitherto, for the purposes of religious worship and instruction, they had assembled with their Jewish

brethren in the temple or the synagogue. Now they were associated together, expressly and purposely, as Christians, to dwell upon their Christian blessings and privileges, and to present unto God their thanksgivings and supplications in the name and as the disciples of Christ. This meeting, therefore, may be regarded as the type of all future churches, as indicating the purpose for which they were designed, and the end to which they should be subservient. It teaches us that, in entering the Christian temple, we should enter there to sit at the feet of Christ and learn of him; to meditate with the men of Galilee on mortality and immortality; and to unite our voices, in one blended song of praise and thanksgiving, that so they may go up in accepted chorus to the throne of God. Honourable alike is it, my friends, to your feelings and principles that it was in your heart, as it has been in your power, to raise up this beautiful structure for yourselves and families to worship in—devoting it, not to the interests and fashion of a world that passeth away, but to the interests and welfare of that higher life which shall not pass away.

In this place, then, we have nothing to do with the wisdom of the schools, with the doctrines of human philosophy, or the speculations of human ingenuity. I deny not that in other places, and at other times, they may well and properly occupy some share of your thoughts and attention, but here we have greater and more important topics to dwell upon, higher questions to resolve, a nobler science to learn, more grave and solemn lessons to attend to.

The first and greatest truth with which we are here concerned is the existence and government of God. That he is, and that he is the rewarder of all who truly and

diligently seek him, is a proposition of momentous import, upon the reception or rejection of which awful and momentous consequences are made to depend. But with the *nature* of God we must necessarily be totally unacquainted. It is a subject embracing heights which we cannot ascend, and depths which we cannot fathom. What the divine essence is, or in what manner God exists, is one of those things which are properly termed mysterious. It is hidden from our sight. It belongs not to us to inquire into it. It forms no part of our knowledge or of our belief. It lies completely out of the sphere of our understandings. But there is one truth concerning the divine existence which it is not difficult for us to conceive of, nor unimportant for us to believe. It is a truth for which reason and revelation both earnestly plead; and it is a truth which the history of the world shows to be intimately associated with the virtue and the happiness of man. That God is one; that he has no equal, no rival, but reigns absolute and alone, power above all powers, is the great pervading doctrine both of the Old Testament and the New.

We, therefore, dedicate this Church to the worship of one only God.

With the doctrine of the Divine Unity there is closely connected in the gospel of Christ that of God's paternal character. It tells us that as we came from him we are dear to him; that as he is our Father, so we are his children. It assures us that he has not only given us all things richly to enjoy, causing his sun to shine and his rain to descend, that the earth might give her increase and bring forth food for the service of man, but that even darkness, and storms, and tempests, are his messengers for good, that his afflictions are in kindness sent, and that

he chastens us for our benefit. It speaks of God as our almighty friend who ever careth for us, and who, in calling us into the ways of piety and virtue, calls us to the nearer and more perfect enjoyment of himself. It assures us that as in love God made us, so in love he sent Jesus Christ to redeem us, that with him there is no respect of persons, that what he demands of one he demands of all, that he pities our infirmities and hath compassion upon them that love him, and that all who sincerely repent of their sins will be equally the objects of his forgiving mercy. These are glorious, delightful revelations of Almighty God, well fitted to cheer and encourage the good, to reclaim the bad from the error of their ways, and to melt the hard and obdurate heart into penitence and submission.

We dedicate this Church to the service of God the Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In accordance with the view presented to us by our Saviour of the character of God, is the representation made by him of the duty of man. When asked what was necessary to be done in order to secure the gift of eternal life, he answered plainly and distinctly, "Keep the commandments; love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself; this do, and thou shalt live." And when the Scribe acquiesced in this declaration, and acknowledged that there was no God but one, and that He alone was entitled to the supreme homage and affection of his creatures, Jesus turned to him and said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven." In like manner, when he gave to his followers a test of true discipleship, it was not subscription to an unmeaning creed, the adoption of some mysterious dogma, but it was the practical

application of the precept, Love one another. "By this," said he, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another." Wherever he saw piety associated with charity, there he recognised the only bond by which man is connected with heaven, "the only step or link for intercourse with God." "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Impressive and beautiful, however, as these words of our Lord are, it is in his life still more than in his words that we see and feel the power and the beauty of the doctrines which he taught. Thus explained and illustrated, they become clothed with a touching sense of reality and truth. They speak to the soul with a voice of power to which all its purer feelings beat responsive. When I see how he went about doing good, healing all manner of sickness and ministering to the sorrows of the sorrowful, how he pitied the erring and sought to reclaim the wandering, what compassion he had on the multitude and what sympathy he felt for their distresses,—when I see him mingling with the despised and neglected of his race, and braving the misrepresentations and calumnies of his enemies in his efforts to raise up the fallen and to comfort the miserable,—when I look at the treatment which he observed towards the penitent, and perceive how gentle and merciful it was, and that to the contrite spirit he ever turned an eye of encouragement and hope,—when I thus contemplate the conduct of Jesus, and remember that he appeared on earth as the image and representative of the Most High, I feel that his life is, indeed, the best of teachers and instructors, that it leaves upon the mind an impression of what God is, and man should be, such as

even his own gracious words would alone have failed to impart. Our duty, then, as it respects our Maker, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves, lies clearly and plainly before us. The gospel relieves us of all difficulty and dissipates all doubt. From its pages may be heard the voice of Jesus, saying to us, Hither come, this is the way of truth and righteousness. Whosoever followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

We dedicate this Church to a righteous and holy God, who sent his Son Jesus Christ to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

From what has now been said you will perceive that Christianity does not present us with cold and comfortless abstractions, fitted to the entertainment of the speculative understanding, but that it brings before us those relations which connect us immediately with God, and the contemplation of which is adapted to touch and engage our hearts, to warm and enliven our affections, to awaken virtuous emotions, and to prompt to virtuous actions. It does not send us to struggle with conceptions too mighty for our grasp, but it places before us those sublime and simple truths, which, while they are intelligible to the humblest understanding, interest and delight the loftiest mind. To refine and elevate our souls, to lift us above the meannesses and littlenesses of earth, and to give us longings for the glories and satisfactions of heaven, our eyes have been opened to see the things which the wisest of ancient days desired to see, but were not able. Jesus Christ has torn away the veil by which the human mind was once shrouded in darkness and doubt, and let in upon our souls the discovery not only of that which will inform and instruct our understandings, but of that also which

will lighten the pressure of grief and relax the bondage of despair.

Much as on this account it becomes us to prize the gospel, we have yet still more reason to prize it for the clear and explicit assurance which it contains, and for the confirmation which that assurance receives in the resurrection of Christ, that we shall live again, that this world is not the last stage of our existence, but one to prepare us for another and a better. Were I asked what, more than anything else, is needed to make man what he should be, to give him courage in the profession of what is true, and firmness in the practice of what is right; to make him, in all his ways and doings, pure-minded and single-hearted, uncorruptible by temptation and unconquerable by sin,—my answer would be, the doctrine of a future everlasting life, such as is brought before us in the revelation of Jesus Christ. No man who truly admits it into his thoughts, but must feel its great, its inestimable value. In all states and conditions of our being, whether we are cast down by misfortune, or whether sorrowing for the loss of friends, what more blessed source of peace and consolation can be opened to us than the anticipation of that rest which remaineth for the people of God. And when we ourselves are stretched on the bed of death, —when the last dark hour of mortality approaches, and weeping friends gather around us to take their solemn farewell,—what is the doctrine we value then? What is the hope to which we then cling,—what the prospect upon which we then dwell? At such a moment, do we concern ourselves with questions about the divine essence, or with distinctions in the divine nature? Oh! no. To the one only question then in our minds, "When man dieth and giveth up the ghost, where is he?" the answer

of Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life; whosoever believeth in me shall never die," is all sufficient. This, —this satisfies the heart and gives rest to the soul.

With glad and grateful spirits, therefore, we dedicate this Church to the Author and Giver of Eternal Life, to Him who hath given us the victory over death and the grave through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The views of which I have now presented to you the merest outline, constitute the common faith of Christians; and to those who cordially embrace them, they afford every help and every encouragement that can be given to the mind of man when struggling with the evils and adversities that here assail him. Some of the wisest and best men that have ever lived have been distinguished for their attachment to this common faith. Yes, among Christian professors of this enlarged and liberal school are to be found those who have daily and hourly walked with God; the consciousness of whose presence has been to them the sanctifier of their inward thoughts and the guardian of their outward actions; men, whom the seductions of pleasure could not tempt, nor the terrors of suffering drive from the path of duty; men, whose great object in life was to do the will of God, and who, for this purpose, pressed right on in spite of every advancing difficulty and every surrounding danger, and who, when the summons of death arrived, fixed their thoughts upon that heaven, the promised inheritance of the wise and good, and so departed in peace and hope. Many are the men of this stamp and character who have been found in all churches. Take, I would say, Fenelon from the Roman Catholics; Jeremy Taylor, and Barrow, and Tillotson from the Church of England; Locke, and Newton, and Hartley from among the ranks of Christian philosophers;

and Doddridge, and Foster, and Price, and Priestley from the various classes of Dissenters; and you will find that the great principles which they most valued and cherished —those principles which were the actuating motives of their conduct, and which shed upon their souls refreshing dews of joy and of hope—were the principles which they held in common, that is, were the principles by which we, as a Christian body, are emphatically distinguished. Now these principles we are desirous of upholding in their simplicity and integrity; of preserving in their singleness and purity, apart from all admixture with foreign ingredients. We look upon the vital, essential truths of Christianity to be those which are possessed, not by any one sect exclusively, but which belong to the church of Christ universally. Our peculiarity therefore—if so it may be called—that which separates us from other bodies of professing Christians, consists mainly in this, in the *prominence* and *distinction* which we give to these truths; in regarding them as of supreme and paramount importance; as, in fact, the be-all and the end-all of the Christian dispensation. We hold the catholic or universal faith to be the true genuine Christian faith, and the only one that should be made a condition of Christian communion. It is upon this broad ground that we take our stand as a Christian society. It is upon this wide foundation that the fellowship of our churches is based. Ever sacred be this temple to the cause of religious freedom, of piety, peace, and charity!

Of all the bonds by which man is connected with man, the first and the greatest is that which unites them all to the Creator. If there be anything more than another which belongs to us in common, in which we are all one, it is that of being the creatures of God, subsisting by his

will, depending upon his bounty, daily witnesses of his majesty and might, daily partakers of his kindness and care. Receiving common mercies, it is reasonable that we should unite in common acknowledgements. With the same reasons for thankfulness and praise, it becomes us to mingle our songs with the songs of our brethren, and in sacred union and fellowship to pour out our prayers and supplications together. Like the good men of old, it becomes us to go to the house of God in company, and, with the purest influences of heaven, to mingle the dearest sanctities of earth. For this let us welcome the return of each Sabbath morn, inviting us to suspend for a while the chase after worldly gains and pleasures, and opening to our inward sight the vision of an immortal heaven.

There are, I know, those who say that they need not the ministrations of the sanctuary to remind them of their relation to God and eternity, to silence the clamour of worldly passions and pursuits, and to beget in them a genuine religious thoughtfulness. They can commune with their own hearts, they tell us, in the stillness of their chamber, or go forth, like the patriarch Isaac, to meditate in the fields at even-tide. I believe, however, that for the most part they who talk in this way do neither the one nor the other. Gallio-like, they are careless about these things, and make their objection to time and place which has its deeper foundation in their own indifference. This observation, I willingly grant, may not be applicable to all of the class of whom I am now speaking. There are instances among them, I doubt not, where the spirit, in its moments of high-wrought emotion, may think that it can safely dispense with all external helps and supports,—may even regard them as suited only to ignorant

and feeble minds,—may imagine that its piety need not be poured forth in words,—that human language only restrains, cramps, and confines it,—that time and place are but hindrances and barriers to its exercise, and that "wrapt into still communion with God, it will rise far above all the imperfect offices of prayer and praise." Now admitting that there are a few gifted minds capable of rising by the force of their own wills into the high regions of pure spirituality, and that occasionally inclinations and desires, looking in the same direction, may be partially felt by a few more, it is not to be believed, I think, that such a state of feeling can be either general or lasting. On the contrary, I am persuaded that most men's experience will convince them that in the cultivation and exercise of their religious principles and affections they must have recourse to much the same means of exciting and improving them that are employed in the formation and exercise of their affections and habits generally.

Humanity does not become changed, is not stripped of the attributes by which it is usually characterised and distinguished the moment it touches the ground of religion. It still possesses the same tendencies and is subject to the same laws by which it is commonly influenced and governed. As we feel the value, the comfort, and the happiness of the social affections in all other things, I cannot understand the wisdom or the propriety of refusing their aid and co-operation in the concerns of religion. We are sustained, strengthened and cheered in our convictions and attachments by the presence and communion of our fellow-men. In the midst of the animating associations of the church and the radiating sympathies of other minds, we gather encouragement, confidence, and assur-

ance. It is therefore a great error to suppose that a different process must be pursued in building up in our minds the fabric of religion from that which is adopted in raising any other of our intellectual and moral structures. It is not in enthusiastic sentiments and fervid emotions that we must place our trust. Suddenly may they come, and as suddenly may they depart. Our chief reliance must be founded on the diligent and faithful use of all those appliances by which the heart of man is usually impressed and affected. The dread of superstition and the contempt of vain and idle ceremonies have, I am persuaded, led many to an undue depreciation and disparagement of the outward means and instruments of exciting and elevating our religious sensibilities. There is no doubt that abundance of mischief has been done by overloading religion with rites and observances. There is no doubt that the external garb and covering has been too often mistaken for the genuine inward grace, and that dead, inanimate forms have been substituted for the living spiritual substance. Too much care and caution, therefore, cannot be used to guard against such a perversion as this. But when that care has been taken and that caution has been exercised, let us beware of falling into the error, less pernicious, perhaps, but still an error to be deplored, of supposing that the religious principle can be built up and firmly maintained in the soul under a total disregard and neglect of those assistances and supports of which, upon other occasions, we are glad to avail ourselves.

We read of the prophet Daniel that, during the time of his captivity in Babylon, when he prayed and gave thanks before his God, his mind seems to have been impressed by the circumstance that the windows of his

chamber opened towards Jerusalem. Now this is an instance of the manner in which we are sometimes affected by little things,—by things, in themselves considered, of no importance, but which derive all their interest and influence from the thoughts and feelings associated with them. He whom Daniel worshipped was the same God and as ready to listen to the prayer of his servant whether his eyes were bent on Babylon's plains, or turned towards Judea's hills. Apart from the feelings called forth by them, it mattered not which of these it was. But who does not perceive that, with the thought of Jerusalem and the tender and solemn recollections which that thought would awaken, there would necessarily come over the mind of Daniel a more intense and vivid feeling of God's presence and power, of his presence to cheer and his power to save? Tell me not that such a feeling betokens a state of pitiable weakness. For, if it be a weakness, it is one which God has attached to the very constitution of our nature, and above which the proudest pretender to philosophy, falsely so called, cannot exalt himself. Will he say that no peculiar interest hangs around the spot where he has played in his childhood or sported in his youth? Has no place ever become endeared to his thoughts and consecrated in his imagination by friendship and affection? Can you visit the tomb where a parent sleeps, or walk over the ashes of the child you loved, with the same emotions with which you would tread on common ground? Then times and places *do* exercise a power over our thoughts and feelings to which we are all of us, in some measure, subject and obedient. It is a law of our very being, and resistance to it would be as impotent in its efforts, as it is vain and foolish in its aim. And why, we may ask, why should man be

treated in his religious capacity in a manner totally different from that which is observed towards him in all his other relations? From the reasoning and conduct of some people in this matter it might be inferred that with reference to the subject of religion they contemplated man as a being who had neither senses to be exercised, nor imaginations to be affected, nor feelings to be touched, nor hearts to be impressed. They would take him out of the circle of all those influences which, in other respects, so powerfully move and govern him. They would deprive him of the benefit of those associations which, on all ordinary occasions, form one of the chief sources of interest and attraction. Such a proceeding I cannot but deprecate as both unnatural and unreasonable; implying equally a forgetfulness of what the real condition of man is, and of what is taught us in the lessons of experience. If the love of country will grow stronger and warmer when standing before the shrine of her illustrious dead, or when gazing upon the scenes of her former greatness and glory, why should we not admit that the feelings of devotion may also be raised and strengthened in a similar manner, by going to the house of God in company, and uniting with our brethren in those sacred services which impressively speak to us of the glories of creating power and the riches of redeeming love? Let not Religion be deprived of all those accompaniments which are calculated to enliven her sentiments and to render her services more beautiful and attractive. Let us view ourselves on all sides. Let us consider what is due to us as thinking, reflecting beings, and what may be needful for us as sensitive and imaginative creatures. And when we feel inclined to treat as superfluous and vain all outward aids and influences to further the ends

of religion,—to think that all regard to times and places may be utterly discarded, and that our minds are strong enough to elevate and sustain themselves without such instrumentalities; when we are disposed to reason in this manner, it would be well for us to remember the words of Christ, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," and instead of presumptuously relying on our own imagined strength, to feel more humbly concerning ourselves, and to be careful to put on the whole armour of God, so that in the day of trial we may be able to stand, to be firm and faithful, enduring to the end.

Our failure in duty, our neglect of the things belonging to our eternal peace, arises, generally speaking, far more from insensibility and thoughtlessness than from absolute ignorance. We need, therefore, to be told, not so much of what we do *not* know, as to be reminded of what we *do*; to have the dormant energies of our souls roused from their degrading, destructive torpor, into watchfulness and vigour; to have the genuine feelings and principles of our nature called into activity and exertion, and those truths which lie, as it were, upon the surface of our minds, impressed deeply upon our hearts, and wrought into the web of our affections. One of our greatest aims should be to rescue admitted truths from the neglect caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission. Truths, says Coleridge, of all others the most awful and interesting, are too often considered as so true, that they lose all the power of truth, and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors. If the principles which we hold, fail of prompting to virtuous conduct, of generating kind and devout affections, of making the life pure and holy, it is not because they

are intrinsically unfitted to produce these effects, but it is because they are not sufficiently rooted and grounded in the mind to be capable of sending forth strong, vigorous shoots of morality and piety. It cannot be, that while our faith exists thus loosely in the head without drawing the least nourishment from the fountains of the heart,—while it is a mere chance outward profession, and not a real inward conviction, a cold abstract speculation, into which there does not enter a single warm affection of the soul,—it cannot be, that, while it exists in such a form and under such a condition as this, any very valuable or precious fruits should be gathered from it. The fault, however, lies not in the principles which we profess to believe, but in not truly and heartily believing the principles which we profess. Now the design and tendency of the services of this place is to excite within us those recollections of God and of Christ, of our duty and destiny, of our condition as men, and of our hopes as Christians, which cannot come frequently before the mind without rendering it, in some degree, purer and better and happier.

I am not ignorant that complaints are sometimes made that the range of topics to which the preacher restricts himself is too narrow and circumscribed to satisfy the thoughtful and inquiring. Hence there are those who seem to be desirous that other questions should be introduced here than those of a strictly religious character. Now while I admit that, in many cases, there is just ground for complaining that the discourses of the pulpit are trite and uninteresting, I must, at the same time, contend that this is owing, not to the nature of the subjects treated of, but to the manner in which they are treated. Bring to their treatment judgement and imagi-

nation, genius and sensibility,—such, my friends, as you are no strangers to,—or, to say nothing of rare endowments, let the speaker, if he be possessed only of ordinary qualifications, give forth what is in him with simplicity and earnestness, and with a heart penetrated with the love of God and goodness, and it will, I think, no longer be found wanting in interest or impressiveness. I cannot agree, therefore, with those who are for including among the themes to be discoursed of here, questions of government and politics, of literature and science. I know well the exciting nature of these topics, and the resources which they supply for strong impression and immediate effect. But we assemble within these walls for other purposes than amusement and excitement. We have a more momentous and solemn end to answer, that of awakening the soul to its obligations and its hopes, as the creature of God and the child of eternity. With so many means and opportunities around us for acquiring all kinds of information, literary, scientific, and political, it were, as it seems to me, a wanton desecration of the purpose for which this temple is reared, to divert and alienate the little portion of time to be spent in it from its directly religious ministration. Considering the absorbing nature of the things that press upon our senses, and the almost constant immersion of our minds in the cares and pursuits of this world, it surely is not too much to ask that our thoughts and affections should, for a few moments in the week, be withdrawn from these solicitudes and engagements, and be devoted exclusively to the spiritual and immortal concerns of our being. Of course I am taking it for granted that we have spiritual and immortal concerns; that out of and beyond this world lie treasures of knowledge and stores of enjoyment, with

which the wisdom and the gladness of the present moment are not worthy to be compared. If it be so, most fitting and reasonable is it that we should be awakened from our dreams of vanity, and be made to feel that earth is not all, nor man the mere tenant of an hour, but that when the night of the grave is past, the dawn of an endless day shall burst upon him, and he shall spring forth the denizen of a new and nobler community. We come here to think of these things, to meditate on this high and holy destination of our being, and upon the feelings, purposes and actions which are its required and appropriate accompaniments. We come here to listen to the voice which speaks to us of a better and more enduring substance than meets our bodily eyes; of hopes which are unfading, and of joys which are imperishable; of communions and friendships which time will not impair and which death will not interrupt. We come here to have our minds enlightened with the wisdom which is profitable to direct; to have our hearts touched, as it were, with a live coal from the altar of God, that even when we quit the precincts of the temple, a purifying and invigorating warmth may still be felt glowing within us. We come here to break that continuity of little and low cares in which the world almost necessarily involves us, and to fasten upon our souls the links of a chain which embraces in its circuit wider views and loftier interests. In a word, we come here as weak, dependent, sinful, dying creatures, to be reminded of what, as such, it becomes us to be and to do; to be reminded of the power that made us, of the goodness that supports us, of the mercy that saves us, and of the heaven that awaits us. We come, the weak to be strengthened, the careless to be warned, the erring to be corrected, the sorrowful to

be comforted, the penitent to be soothed and encouraged, and all to have the spirit of their minds renewed, and to receive fresh impulse to run with patience the race that is set before us. The object for which we assemble on the "day of the Lord" is not to pamper the appetite, ever greedy for something new, for something that may play around the head, but which comes not near the heart. It is rather to call attention to truths already acknowledged, but not sufficiently dwelt upon, not sufficiently admitted into the homes and intimacies of our spiritual nature. It is to draw near and make bright to the inward eye, views and prospects which lie clouded in the distance. It is to make that felt within us as a warm and living reality which too often dwells without us as a cold and lifeless abstraction. It is to assist us in lifting up our hearts unto God, and to make us feel that in his favour there is life, and that his loving-kindness is better than life. It is, that seeing we may see, and hearing we may hear, what God hath done for our souls, and that the glad tidings of the gospel may not lie before us as a dead letter, but may be "felt in the blood and felt along the heart, and passing into our purer minds with tranquil restoration."

I repeat then,—it is not for the gratification of the speculative understanding that we are to assemble here as a congregation of Christian worshippers, but the lighting up in our souls of desires and aspirations which may lead us, when we retire from this place, to commune with our own spirits, and to make diligent search whether they are in the state in which they ought to be,—in the state becoming their distinguished privileges, worthy of their high descent, and befitting their heavenly destination. If the result of our weekly communion should be to send us away in-

quiring within ourselves what shall we do to be saved, a real and substantial good will be obtained by it, a blessing conferred infinitely surpassing any other which it could be the means of imparting. Let me observe also that, important as I consider just views and correct opinions on the subject of religion to be, more especially those which relate to the character and will of God, I must, nevertheless, not omit to remind you that it is of more consequence to feel right than even to think right; to do well than to reason well; that the best orthodoxy is the orthodoxy of the heart, and that while sentiments and creeds and systems perish, the best and purest feelings of the human soul remain unchanged; the same in all countries, sects and generations, and so will continue to remain as long as the relations of man to God and of God to man have any existence. Doing righteously, living virtuously, carrying into the world a pure and a gentle and an elevated spirit, this is the beauty of holiness, and the excellence of faith, this is the bright consummate flower, the end, the crown, and the ornament of the whole.

Feeling it, then, to be our duty to gather ourselves together for the pure and spiritual worship of God, let us gratefully remember the blessed and benignant character under which the object of our worship is brought before us in the generous and merciful dispensation of the New Testament. Let us be thankful that we have a religion so pure, benevolent and holy; so glorious in its doctrines, so precious in its promises, so beautiful in its hopes. Let us rejoice that we are ever in the sight of God, and that the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. Let us cheer and comfort ourselves with the welcome assurance that all who do his com-

mandments shall eat of the tree of life, and live for ever; that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth; and that no humble contrite spirit shall go forsaken of its God. In the presence of such a being let there be banished from our minds all desponding and despairing thoughts. Let us come and kneel before the Lord our Maker in the spirit of filial affection and in the confidence of filial trust. In deep submission let us bend before Him in whose hands our life is, and whose are all our ways. Humbly and meekly let us adore Him; joyfully and reverently let us praise Him; making melody in our hearts as well as with our tongues. And since we have all one Father, let us bear in mind that we are one family, bound to render to each other mutual assistance and comfort. To our piety, therefore, there must be added charity—to the love of God there must be joined the love of man. Let these be the offerings with which we approach the altar of the Lord. Let us consecrate this house of prayer by the humble mind, the worshipping spirit, the devout heart, the grateful thanksgiving which we bring to it; and then peace within and hope in the favour of heaven will sweeten the days of our earthly pilgrimage, till, fit for a purer world of love and blessedness, we pass on from this perishable temple to that eternal temple not made with hands, where at a nobler altar we shall offer up to God a nobler worship, where we shall unite our feeble voices to those of adoring millions, and sing his praises everlastingly.

To you, the members of this congregation, and to him whom you have chosen to be here the leader of your devotions and the expounder of Christian duty, I would now offer my cordial congratulations at the completion of that work and labour of love which stands before us,

together with my earnest wishes that you may long be spared to assemble under this roof, mutual helpers of each other's joy. On the one hand, may you, my brethren, rejoice in the privilege of possessing a Teacher so richly endowed and so thoroughly accomplished to instruct you in all things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven; and, on the other, may my friend, your valued and beloved minister, have the happiness of seeing that the work of the Lord prospers in his hands, and that through his instrumentality many have been made wise to the salvation of their souls. So may you both have reason to be thankful that you came up hither to keep the holy day, and may the intercourses in which you have delighted here be renewed and perfected in that land where dwell for ever the spirits of the just.

THE WATCH-NIGHT LAMPS.

A DISCOURSE,

PREACHED ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF PUBLIC WORSHIP,

(OCTOBER 21, 1849,)

IN

HOPE-STREET NEW CHURCH,
LIVERPOOL.

BY

JAMES MARTINEAU,
MINISTER OF THE CHURCH.

THE WATCH-NIGHT LAMPS.

Now does the Heavenly Mercy rebuke all my fears. The long-imagined moment is really come; God restores us to each other. Beneath his eye we parted, and before his face we meet; and that Infinite Light scatters the lingering shadows of misgiving which have hung around the forecast of this hour. We have not hoped in vain that He would remove with us to the shrine we have devoutly raised; and now in his eternal memory he sets the vows and prayers by which this new opportunity is to be consecrated or condemned. In distant lands, through waiting months, my eye has rested upon this day; which has appeared as a star of hope behind the perspective of every scene, and looked down, with a clear and guiding sanctity, on intervening tracts that had sometimes no other, and *never* a diviner, ray. Standing here at length, and looking round on this strange mixture of the new and old,—the outward structure new and beautiful, the living temple of faithful hearts both old and dearer far,—First, I greet you with all the warmth of my affection and the fresh devotion of all my powers; consecrating myself anew to the service, not indeed of your will,—but of your faith and highest hope, your love and conscience, your remorse and aspiration,—

which you know to be interpreters of a Will that must be monarch of your own. Next, I remember some, whom we had thought to have with us as sharers of our joy, but whom the voice of our salutation can no longer reach. Those close-filled ranks cannot hide from me the vacancies in their midst; and I miss *here* the sweet attentive look of maidenly docility,—*there* the dear and venerable form of one from whose eyes age had exhausted the vision but not the tears, and whose features were quickened and kindled by the light within. Greeting to others, Farewell to them! and to Him, with whom we and they alike live; from whose presence no pathless sea, no Alpine height, no gulph of death, can e'er divide; who spares us for his work, or calls us to his rest; who makes sweet the memory of dreadful hours, and turns our tremblings into joy;—to Him, the assuager of care, the reviver of hope, the giver of opportunity, I render for this hour a glad thanksgiving, and renew my vow to bear again his glorious yoke.

My purpose this morning is very simple. I ask you only to think what you have done in raising this building, and to find for your own act its true ground of thought. That you have *built this house at all*, places you at once in the great commonwealth of Christendom, and detaches you from all faiths or *un*faiths that would destroy it. That you have *joined together* to build it, proclaims that through your religion there runs a *common consciousness* which blends and organises your individual wills into a higher unity, and makes *a Church*. The forms you have given to its outline, and the memorials embodied in its stones, speak everywhere the sentiments of *Worship*, and promise here, not the severity of teaching, but the mellowed tones of meditation and prayer. That you throw

open its gates on this sacred day, and ever, when a week is gone, think to come back to it again, is a confession that you *cannot* make your every day a Sabbath, and *would* not turn your Sabbath into an every day; but would still intersect the time with holy lines, and help to prolong that ladder of heaven which climbs as yet through all Christian duration, the favourite pathway of saintly souls. These cardinal points I silently assume as fixed upon the very face of your design; and what further may be the function of a Church, and ought to be the function of *this* Church, in the present age of the world, I would explain from the words of the parable,

Matthew xxv. 4.

"*The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*"

And then, presuming on their supplies, they took their ease, like the foolish, and while the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept. So must it *not* be in that great watch-night,—that solemn eve of an eternal day,—which we call *Human Life*. The spirit that sits sentinel through its hours, intent for the Master's voice and expectant of his approach, cannot, however rich her stores, set the lamp of duty idly on the ground, while she dreams away beneath the stars; and then hope, by a sudden start, at the last knock, to refit the neglected fires and join the pomp and mingle with the everlasting train. The watch-lights which we must burn before God are no outward thing, no ritual adornment, but, like the glow-worm's, the intensest kindling of our own life, rising and sinking with the tone of our energies; and the oil that feeds them is too ethereal to be set by; it exists only by being ever used and ever re-distilled. To keep the heart awake,—to resist all collapse of the

will and the affections,—to bring the angels of our nature to a mood not merely less heedless than the foolish virgins, but more faithful than the wise; this is the disciple's great thought, ever ringing like a midnight bell upon his ear, from the Master's awful word, "*Watch*!" A Church is a fraternity for accomplishing this thought; an association for realising the Christian life, creating the Christian mind, and guarding from deterioration the pure type of Christian perfection; and its agency is designed for keeping to their vigils the several Graces of the soul commissioned to wait upon their Lord; for trimming the lamps they severally bear, and screening them from the winds and damps of this world's night. Let us number these Graces as they stand. Till their lamps were lighted they were themselves invisible, dark negations on the grand summit of human nature, looking into the dark: but since the glory of Christ has caught them, they shine afar, and we see in their forms the distinctive spirits of our religion. First, I discern the Spirit of

Endeavour.—Foremost among the elements of the Christian consciousness do I place this,—that we must strive and wrestle to achieve the Will of God, and that only he who faints can fail. What else means the deep doctrine of self-denial, which it has ever been the lowest impertinence of philosophy to doubt, and the last degradation of human nature to reject? How else can we read the contempt we feel for those who evade martyrdom with a lie,—the throbbing of our hearts as we watch the tempted in the crisis of his trial,—and their leap of exultation when he decides, "Better perish than be false"? These sentiments, than which none are more ineradicable in man, and none more intensely stamped into Christian history, would be absurd illusions, if we were not en-

dowed with a knowledge, placed under a law, and invested with a power, of right and wrong: they are founded on the conception of life as an *Obedience* due, and of mere Self-will as an insurrection against authority infinitely venerable. This faith which assigns a *moral* basis to all religion, touches, I believe, the ultimate point of all certainty: older than this or newer, more authentic, more infallible, no revelation can ever be. Its very contrarieties, which offend the one-sidedness of logicians and enthusiasts, constitute its truth, and accurately represent man's balanced position; whom you can neither turn into the mere realm of nature nor invest with the dignity of a God; who is at once bound, yet free to slip his bonds, and strangely finds in his thraldom a true liberty, in escape a wretched slavery; and is conscious of divine and infinite prerogatives immersed and struggling in finite conditions. All religion is Christian in proportion as it takes up into its very substance this law of conscience, and resolves itself a consecration of Duty. It is the great glory of the Catholic religion, that it adopts and proclaims this principle: to this one deep root, which penetrates through the soil and very structure of our human world, far beyond the reach of ecclesiastic storms, does it owe the width of its branches and the richness of its shade. Conscience, indeed, in reference to the universe of *Persons*, like Reason in relation to the universe of *Things*, is the *Catholic faculty* of human nature; and no faith which does not interpret and sanctify it can take as its motto, "*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus.*" I am not forgetful of St. Paul's depreciation of *legal* religion, and of the triumphs, asserted in all the churches of the reformation, of a Gospel of Love over a System of Law. This also I embrace with all my soul,

and chime in with the hymn of Grace led by Luther's mighty voice. But this truth is only the other's second half, and without it could no more exist than the complement without the primal arc, or the joy of convalescence without the lassitude of illness. Did not Conscience *propose* the awful problem, and the Will struggle into its midst, Faith and Affection could never bring the relief of solution. Law and Love are but the strophe and antistrophe of the great chorus of redemption; and without both the opening and the answering voices, the thought and melody must alike be broken. The moral law of God then, and the moral freedom of man, constituting life a theatre of endeavour, we lay as the granite pillars of an everlasting faith,—the Rock on which we build our Church; and whoever, in the partial spirit of one age, builds on any more inflammable material,—on the wood, hay, stubble, of a disenthralled enthusiasm,—shall find, when his work is tried by fire, that, however poised for awhile on the upward pressure of elastic heats, it will lean and totter as the temperature declines, and either drop on to some more primitive foundation, or collapse among the ruins of the past.

Is Christianity, then, a mere Ethical System? and do we identify religion and morality? Shall we say that the man who commits no fraud, or violence, or excess, is forthwith a denizen of the Kingdom of Heaven? God forbid! as soon might we say that every scribbler who makes no slip in scanning his metres and tuning his rhymes is a great Poet. Morality speaks like the defiance of the hero to his foe,—"Depart;" Religion like the summons of the leader to his impatient host,—"Arise, come on!" As a prison-task to an Olympic race, so is the duty copied from a code to the service inspired by a

faith. So long as moral restraints and obligations are urged upon us we hardly know how, by usage, by opinion, by taste, by good sense and regard to consequences, they appear to lie within a very moderate and definable compass, and to be matters of dry necessity included in the conditions of respectability. But when the voice of Christ has opened our spirit to their true nature, and from utterances of human police they become tones, stealing through the foliage of the soul, from enshadowed oracles of God, their whole character and proportion are as much changed as if the dull guest had turned into an angel, and the stifling tent expanded to the midnight skies. From the drowsy figure emerges the sleepless immortal; upon the heavy body grow the glorious wings; and the sheet which seemed a tiresome limit to our head, passes into the deep of stars open for an everlasting flight. The feeling of duty, no longer negative, ceases to act like an external hindrance and prohibition, and becomes a positive internal power of endless aspiration. Yes, of *endless* aspiration; for if the suggestions of conscience are breathings from the Holiest, they are no finite whole, but parts of an infinite Thought, the surface movements of a boundless deep. When we have brought ourselves to be at one with them, when they are no longer dashed and broken by the resistance of our spirits, but carry harmoniously with them all the movements of our nature, still all is not over; God will now try us with a quicker time: wave after wave of impulse will roll in with intenser speed from the tides of his eternal Will; till the undulations reach the limits of a new element, and our thrilling spirits burst into an immortal light. To whomsoever God is Holy, to him is Duty Infinite. The good habits, in which others abide content, give him no rest;

they are but half his world, and *that* not the illumined half: by the rotatory law of all custom, they have gone off into the dark, and make now but the negative hemisphere of his obligations; and this must be completed by another, where the morning light of thought is fresh, and the genial warmth of love yet glows. To such a mind is revealed the depth of that word, "There is none good save One;" and of that other, "I must work the work of Him that sent me, while it is day;" and life appears simply as the appointed scene of *holy Endeavour*.

Now, to awaken this consciousness of infinite obligation, to draw forth and interpret its solemn intimations; to resist and expose, as a Satanic delusion, every sluggish doubt or mean doctrine which denies it,—and to sustain it in its noblest resolves,—is the first function of a Christian Church. The great antagonist to it is that corruption of ease, that poisonous notion of enjoyment as the end of life, which in so many men absolutely stifles the higher soul, and suppresses in them the belief in its existence. In that lowest condition of human nature, man enjoys a certain unity with himself, because all powers above his animal and intellectual being are fast asleep, and give him no contradiction in his unworthy career. In its highest condition, his nature reaches again a unity with itself, because faith and conscience have carried their demands, and rule without dispute whatever is below. It is the aim of the Church to urge him through the vast interval between these two limits; during the whole of which he is at *variance with himself*, and cries out for deliverance from that "body of death," which at first made up his entire consciousness and is no other than his unawakened self. When that fatal sleep is once broken, it is the business of a Church to suggest,

perhaps even to provide, a discipline of voluntary self-denial, without which the incipient insight will not last, but relapse into the darkness which it is so difficult to dispel from the infinite. It is wonderful how faithful endeavour withdraws the curtain from before the opening eye of the late slumbering soul. As one who just turns on his pillow,—with another folding of the hands to sleep,—*feels without recognising* the dazzling light, and it only passes through into his dreams to paint anew their empty phantasies;—so the mind, just stirring from the dead repose of self, does not yet treat as *real* the dawning glow of a diviner consciousness; which, stopping there, will only glide as a bewildering spectrum over the scenery which the man takes to be the world. But let him spring up and break the bands of sleep; let him move about among the objects which the new light shows, and *do* the things which it requires; and anon he finds what's true, and feels how he is transferred from the subterranean den of dreams into the open and lustrous universe. *Effort* is the condition of the commonest intellectual knowledge; much more, of insight into things moral and divine. Is there a poem or a landscape which you are anxious to remember? So long as you only *look at it and take it in*, though with attention ever so fixed, its hold upon you will be slight and transient: but invert the mental order, begin at the active instead of the passive end, and force yourself *to reproduce it* by pencil or by word; and it becomes a part of yourself, incorporated with the very fabric of your mind. So with the whispers of the holiest spirit; while they only pass across the still—though it be *listening*—ear of the soul, they are evanescent as the traceless wind; but *act* on them, and you will believe in them; produce their issue,

and you shall know their source; and he with whom God's presence has quieted a passion or subdued a grief is surprised by the nearness of his reality. Such *Endeavour*, such earnestness of life, do the members of a Church undertake to preserve in one another's remembrance.

But next to this high Angel of the Soul, I observe a downcast spirit, bearing in her hand the lamp of HUMILIATION: and she too must never cease from her sorrowing watch.

Endeavour has its seat in the Will. If there were no sense of *difficulty* in the exercise of Will, if all resistance crumbled away at the first touch of purpose, and thought could fly off into instant execution, failure, shame, remorse would be unknown; conscience would realise whatever it conceived; and though the *infinite character* of holy obligation would leave an ineffaceable interval between our position and our aspirations, the one would for ever tend to overtake the other; and the chase, albeit without a goal, would be inspired by the joy of an eternal success. No deeper shade than the mild sense of imperfection would fall upon the spirit. But our actual condition is very different. The suggestions of God are ever fresh and his enterprises always new, demanding, if not new matter, at least a new spirit: and it is *hard* to our Will to quit the old track, to snap the old restraints, to lash itself into a higher speed. And thus, with a sentient nature that loves the *easiest*, and a conscience that reveres the *best*, we feel that Epicurus and Christ meet face to face within our soul; which becomes at once the theatre, the stake, the arbiter, of the most solemn of all conflicts. The pleasant pleadings, so persuasive to our languid strength, make our Temptation;

and their triumph plunges us into the *Sense of Guilt.* This utterly changes the relations of the mind to God; breaks the springs of Endeavour; turns every blessed sanctity from a life *within* the heart to a load upon it; and condenses the infinite heaven of duty into a leaden universe of nightmare on the breast. So sinks in sadness the pure enthusiasm that had flung itself upon the godlike track; and the wing that had soared so high hangs drooping and broken down. It is less the *anguish* of this fallen state, than its *weakness,* that makes it awful. Who shall remove this burden of sin, which paralyses the soul's native strength and restrains it in terror from seeking God's? Could the immediate remorse be banished or outlived, yet who can resume an infinite race with a lowered hope, or faith abashed? This crisis is the turning point of many a life. By either fall or rise may the mind escape from it; in the one case relapsing by the gravitation of the world into the stupor of indifference and the old belief in the dreams of sense: in the other, lifted once more into a light of heaven, milder perhaps, but less precarious. *Lifted,*—I say; for sure it is that the fallen, though he may hold his place and fall no more, has crippled his power to lift himself. Even an archangel's wing cannot rise without an atmosphere; and the human will (in things divine) is ineffectual with its mightiest strokes, unless surrounded by a certain air of pure and clear affection,—which recent sin exhausts and spoils. While the sweet element of love and hope and self-reverence is lost to the mind, the spasms of resolution are but pitiable distortions,—cramps of uneasiness and fear, not the progressive action of a vigorous health. It is the awful punishment of all unfaithfulness, that it turns the mind in upon itself; makes it look at its dis-

ease, and put forth a writhing movement to escape it, with no effect but to renew the anguish, to feel all the weakness, and sink down again in faintness and despair. The intense power which conscious evil gives to considerations of *Interest*, the tumult of anxiety and alarm it induces, is in itself the most fatal obstacle to recovery: on which however, with the delusion common to all empirics, the mere moralist rests all his hopes. There are no terms in God's universe on which the selfish can be saved; no,—not if a thousand Calvaries were to repeat to him the divine tragedy of the world. And the more you set upon him with lists of unanswerable reasons, the more do you make him the sharp-witted alien from God. What opening then is there for the offender prostrate under the sense of sin? Shall I be told that expiation must be made by *another*, who will bear the burden for him? Doubtless, with the low mood to which guilt has brought him, he is just in the state to accept that mercantile view of sin, and reckon it as a debt against him on the ledger of the universe, which the overflowing wealth of some perfect nature might gratuitously wipe off. And if you can then convince him that such free sacrifice *has* actually been made, that for *him* in his degradation a heavenly nature has been moved with pity, taken up the conditions of sorrow, laid down the immortal prerogative and died; I do not deny that you may touch the springs of wonder and delight, and that a burst of thankfulness may break his ice-bound spirit and set it free. Gratitude for an immense personal benefit is the first affection of which a low and selfish mind is susceptible; its very selfishness rendering an act of generosity in another the more surprising. The passionate emotion thus awakened may certainly tear him

from his prison; and as the object to which your fiction conducts him is the Jesus Christ of sacred history, that sublime and holy being, the gentle and winning type of God's own perfectness, it will be strange if the false and immoral grounds of his first homage are not insensibly exchanged for a veneration purer and more disinterested. As it is sometimes easiest at the moment to cure a morbid patient by a trick, the immediate case of many souls may be met by this disenchanting legerdemain; but not without the cost inseparable from *untruth*. The great doctrine of *mediation* is here corrupted by a complete inversion of its truth. There are two parts of our nature essential to our first approaches to God; the *Imagination* places him before us as an object of conception external to the mind; the *Conscience* interprets his personal relations of communion with ourselves. The first of these emphatically needs a mediator; the function of the second perishes, the moment he appears. We *cannot trust* the representative faculty of our nature whose pencil of design varies with the scope of Reason, and whose colours change with the moods and lights of Passion, to go direct to the sheet of heaven, and show us the Almighty there: else, what watery ghost, or what glaring image, might we not have of the Eternal Providence? Only through what *has been* upon earth can we safely look to *what is* in heaven, through historical to divine perfection; and by keeping the eye intently fixed on the highest and most majestic forms in which living minds have ever actually revealed their thoughts and ways, we have a steady type, with hues that do not change or fly, of the great source of souls. Jesus of Nazareth, the centre of the scattered moral possibilities of history, is thus mediator to our imagination between God and man. On the

other hand, *we cannot allow* the Conscience to resign for an instant its native right of immediate contact and audience with God: to delegate the privilege is treason; and to quit his eye is death. Yet the current theology reverses this. The imagination of the offender, at the very instant that it is throwing out the fire and smoke of conscious guilt, is invited to paint its own unmediated image of the Most High, and rely upon the terrible picture with unquestioning faith; and while the corrupted fancy is thus sustained in its audacity, the shuddering Conscience is encouraged in its cowardice, and allowed to hand over its burthen to a mediator, under pretence of forfeited approach. Who says, that the sinner must fly the terror of the Lord? I say, he must *face* the terror of the Lord, and instead of blasting it will only melt him then. You say, he *dares* not tell his tale and cannot pray? Then, I answer, not yet is he true and contrite; and it is not his humility, but the little speck of insincerity still spoiling it, that asks for a mediator. He must accept his whole abasement; must desire, not to *escape*, but to *endure*, his woe; must not even hang the head and veil the face before God; but look full up into the eye of infinite Purity, and, as he disburthens himself, seek its most piercing glance, that nothing may escape. Nothing but truth can appear before God; but the truth always *can* appear, and loses its very nature in parting with its rights to an intercessor. And, as dreaded duties are apt in the performance to surprise us by their lightness, so the moment the soul lies thus exposed and transparent before God, he appears terrible no more: the dark reserve thrown from the heart seems to sweep away the cloud from him; and he shines upon us, not indeed with the sudden blaze of clearance after storm,

but with the affectionateness of an eternal constancy. We have trusted him, and he is distant no more; we are emancipated into sympathy with his pure nature; the old aspirations find way again; and instead of looking at him with outside recoil, we go up into his glory, losing ourselves once more in those positive admirations and desires for perfection, which are the very glow of his spirit, and which, far more than any passionate gratitude for personal benefits, are fitted to restore our union with him. And in this crisis it is that the repentant eye, now purified by tears, turns with infinite refreshment from the false forms that have beguiled it, to rest on Christ, as the divine depositary of the sanctity we have lost and seek again; and that the ear feels the deep sweetness of that call, "Come unto me, ye weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

Now to give this humiliating self-knowledge, to open the sources of remorse, to prevent its lingering into morbid and credulous woe, to cause every film of pride and fear to drop away, and bring the penitent to make a clear heart before God, is the proper aim and function of a Church; which thus humanises, while it sanctifies, and uses our own sins as ground for pity to others, not others' as excuses for our own. In the early Christian societies, penitents were recognised and distinguished as a class,—a practice which, however needed in evil times as a check to apostacy, could have no place now, without drawing lines of classification not truly distinguishing the characters of men. In later times, the still more dangerous practice of confession to a human—yet hardly human, because a sacerdotal—ear, bears witness to the boundless power of repentance in the heart of Christendom. Perhaps the reaction into the jealous individuality

of modern times, in which each soul not only repels the intrusion, but declines the sympathy of another, has been carried beyond the point of natural equilibrium. At least it is *not natural* that, in fraternities under common vows of Christian obligation, flourishing selfishness should often hold a higher place than humble sanctity; and *unrepaired*, therefore *impenitent*, injustice should lift its head unabashed amid indulgent worshippers. Surely the power of rebuke is too much lost in an easy indifference; the estimates of the world,—ranging greatly by outward fortune and condition,—have extravagantly encroached on those of the Church, which can look only to internal soundness and affluence of soul. *That* is not a true community of disciples, in which a collective Christian opinion does not make itself felt by at least some silent and significant expression. So long as the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for the battle? By its revelations of self-knowledge, its echo to the voice of self-reproach; by its suggestion of a restorative discipline; by its appeal to that faith in infinite possibilities which alone sustains the burthen of penitential self-denial; by leading the soul at once to suffer, to aspire, and to love much,—must every Church of Christ pour into the energy of *endeavour*, the lowly spirit of *humiliation*.

Side by side with this sad Angel of the Soul stands another, with look of equal meekness, only clear of shame: and the small fair light in her hand, shining a few steps into the dark around, is the lamp of

Trust.—The companion Spirits of which we have hitherto spoken preside over the work and temper of the *Conscience* in its relation to God; and they would still have to stand upon their watch, though the soul

(were such a thing possible) lived in empty space, in mere private audience with its Creator. But now comes before it *another* object, forcing it to look a different way, and pressing for some orderly interpretation;—viz., *Nature* or the outward Universe. To a mind that, through moral experience, has *already begun its life with God*, the glorious spectacle of the heavens and the earth will instantly appear divine: the voice of the waters and the winds, the procession of the sun and stars, the mountain's everlasting slopes, smiling upwards with pastures till they frown in storms,—will seem the expressions of Eternal Thought. Well would it be if this first absorption of nature into the substance of faith enabled them permanently to grow harmoniously together. But the universe, which ought to be the abode, becomes to us the rival, of the living and indwelling God. Its inflexible steadiness, its relentless march, so often crushing beneath the wheels of a blind law the fairest flowers of beauty and the unripened fruits of patient hope, look so unlike the free movements of a living and loving mind, that the decrees impressed on finite matter begin to contest the sway of the Infinite Spirit. Other sorrows than any mentioned yet,—sorrows *not merited* or self-incurred,—and which even fancy cannot plausibly link with any sin, come upon us; and as we cannot sincerely meet them with *humiliation*, we need some other guide from infidel despair. The order of Cause and Effect crosses and conflicts with the order of Moral Law. This is plainly seen in the history of the physical sciences; whose exclusive pursuit first lowers the conception of God to that of the primal force, or at best the scientific director of creation; and then lapses, consistently enough, into a fatalistic atheism. And the same thing is keenly felt in that in-

explicable distribution of suffering in human life, which, in every age, has perplexed the faith and saddened the love, of hearts not alien to God. How must this controversy be ended in our souls, between the *physical* God omnipotent in nature, and the *holy* God who reveals himself in Conscience? I will not say here what may be the solution which the thoughtful may draw from a devout Philosophy; only that it must be one which charges no evil upon God. Whatever cannot be glorified into good, let it be referred, so far as it is not from the human will, to that negative datum, that shapeless assemblage of conditions, which constitute the *ground* of the Creator's work; but it must be withheld *on any terms* from him who is the perfectly and only Good. He must be ever worshipped, not as the source, but as the antagonist, of ill; the august and ever-living check to its desolating power, who never rides upon the whirlwind, but that he may curb the storm. It is only in this view that He can have pity on our sorrows; for who could *pity* the sufferings which he himself, without the least necessity, invents and executes? That cry on Calvary, "My God, my God, why hast thou *forsaken* me?"—was it not a cry for *rescue*, —rescue as from a *foreign* foe, from a power *un*divine? And did it not then burst from One who felt the anguish of that hour as the inrush of a tide from which the barrier of God's volition had withdrawn? And so the faith which *gave way* in that momentary cry is just the opposite of this; a faith that no evil is let loose without his will; that he knows the utmost it can do, keeps it ever in his eye, and will yield to it no portion of his holy and affectionate designs; that he has *considered all our case*, and will not fail to bring it out clear, if we are true to him. *Trust* has no other bearable meaning than this; for

else it would only say that God, being the unquestionable cause of evil, is not malicious in producing it, and would thus merely silence a doubt impossible in a Christian, aud scarcely pardonable in the grossest heathenism. *Trust* therefore in the ascendancy of divine Thought and Affection in the universe, serene confidence in their perfect victory, I take to be the essence of the Christian faith respecting nature. The *particular* thought of God that may be hid amid events, moulding their forms and preparing their tissues for some growth of incomparable beauty, it may be impossible to trace; but He is there and never leaves his everlasting work; which is the same in the shrine of conscience, in the mind of Christ, and through the sphere of universal nature.

Now to interpret life and all visible things in the spirit of this Trust; to raise the mind oppressed by the sense of material necessity: to meet the tendencies towards passiveness and despair, and, for the consolation of memory and the kindling of hope, show where the order, not of a hard mechanism, but of beauty, love and goodness is everywhere enthroned;—this also is the duty of a Church. In this relation we must contradict the doctrine of mere science, which proclaims *Force*, rather than *Thought*, as the source of all: we must counteract its purely causal and fatalistic explanations; must detain in the living present, that God whom it would allow to recede indefinitely into the Past, and must lean upon Him as the nearest to us in our weakness, the most loving in our sadness, and the Rock beneath our feet in our alarms. We agree together to sustain each other in this sacred trust; to withstand the godless doubts and grievings suggested by our lower mind; to defy nature's inexorable Laws to disguise for us the supernatural light and love

within; and to feel the hardest matter of life, as well as the severest work of conscience, burning at heart with his dear spirit.

This triple group, however, of Endeavour, Humiliation, and Trust, are never found apart from a sister Spirit, in whose features you trace more human lineaments, and in whose hand is borne the lamp of

Service.—An individual mind, alone in the universe with God, might hold the latent germs of all that is human, and yet, in that solitude, could hardly enter, perhaps, on the real experience of endeavour, humiliation, or trust. It is only amid *other* minds, in the reflection of eye upon eye and soul upon soul, that we so read our impulses, and decipher our inspirations, as to be really capable of the religious life. Society, which opens the sphere of mutual sympathy, touches also the springs of reverence and worship. And I entreat you to notice *how* it is that the companionship of our fellows operates to bring out these individual affections. We hear much in this connexion about the *natural equality* of souls, implied in their common source and common work and common end, and are referred to this evident brotherhood as the true basis of both fraternal love to one another and filial acknowledgment of God. And, no doubt, this identity of spiritual nature *is* indispensable to all sympathy and all devotion;—not, however, as their positive and exciting cause, but only as their *negative condition*. Like only can comprehend like: and if the being next me had *not* the same nature and the same [illegible]nces with myself, I should have no key by which [illegible] him; he would belong to an unintelligible [illegible]d fellow-feeling could have no place. But the [illegible]here required is not in the minds as they *are*,

only as they *might be.* Their circles of *possibility* must coalesce; the same capacities must sleep within them, and the same Law must rule over them. This similitude of *kind,* the silent assumption of which lies in all our affections, merely expresses an ultimate and unrealized *tendency,* to which present and actual facts will continually approximate. Meanwhile, these facts present a very different picture;—not of *resemblance* between man and man, but of variety so vast and contrast so startling, as almost to perplex our faith in the unity of nature. Now it is precisely this *inequality of souls* which is the *positive awakener* of all our higher affections. No man could love or venerate in a universe stocked with mere repetitions of himself; the endless portrait would be a barren weariness. He pities what is below him in happiness: he reveres what is above him in excellence: he loves what is different from him in beauty. His affections rest on those whom he blesses and those who bless him,—on his clients and his God. At the shock of lower lives and the startling spectacle of higher, he is driven to moral recoil and drawn to moral aspiration; in the one case invested with armour for the resistance of evil, in the other equipped with wings to soar after the good. Whatever is purer and nobler in another than in ourselves opens to us a new possibility, and wields over us a new authority; and thus it is that, ascending through the gradations of souls which culminate in Christ, we find ourselves carried thence at a bound over the chasm between finite and infinite, and present at the feet of the Most High, saying, "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints; who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for Thou only art holy!"

It is therefore precisely through the diversity of minds

that the unity of the Divine law reveals and asserts itself within us; and the common end of life to all is felt. And it is on this same inequality of souls that Christianity, as a religion of love and mutual aid, builds all its work. On the one hand, the strong must bend to the weak; and on the other, the weak look up to the strong. In both cases there is self-denial,—self-renunciation from pity, in the former,—from obedience, in the other. In both there is reverence for what is divine; with the one, for a godlike capacity in the low; with the other, for a godlike reality in the lofty. When the differing ranks of minds read off their relations in these opposite directions, the whole compass of Christian service is given. Within the Church therefore the eye must be trained to discern this rank, the affections to own it, the will to obey it. Disguised under a like exterior of life are souls divided by immeasureable intervals; and it is strange and even terrible to think what secret differences lurk beneath the common gloss and gaiety of the same assembled numbers. How superficial is the kindred of the utterly earthly, who sees no *reality* but in the means of ease, the course of material interests, and the colours thrown up by the shifting game of external life; with the saintly sufferer, before whom these flit as unsubstantial shadows, and nothing is real but the spirit-drama that is enacting in the midst and the great Will that plays the everlasting part. Yet we often move about where both of them are found, and speak with them face to face, and believe them much alike. Can we not catch from our Lord, who looked with divine perception straight into the heart of the widow and the Samaritan, some portion of that insight which detects the heroes and despises the impostors of the present? Why should we leave it to history to

find out and glorify the good? If they are with us, they are the most precious of all God's gifts; let us know them ere they die, and feel that the earth is sacred where they tread. Above all, in every Church, the only classification known should be of character and age: and in using these as grounds of mutual service, provision should be made for teaching the child, for lifting the suffering, for confirming the weak, and for supplying duties proportioned to the strength of the strong.

And while this angel of Service stands to her watch, a glorious Spirit is at her side and closes the train; with an undying flame from her lamp of

COMMUNION.—The relations of service are far from being limited to the present and its intercourses. Our life is but the focus of living light into which the Past and the Future condense their interests. The ranks of minds by which we help each other, run up both the directions of time, and cover the two worlds of mortals and immortals. We are ourselves disciples of an ancient and a foreign prophet; and as we pronounce the word "Christian," we feel the spark of his transmitted inspiration uniting us with a long chain of generations, and fusing Christendom into one life and one Church. We are disciples also of an *ascended* prophet; nor is it possible for any one to bow down in soul before the divine law of which he has made us conscious, to burn with the aspirations which it kindles, and touch upon the peace of entire surrender, without feeling assured that he is created on the *scale of immortality*, and that the risen Christ is indeed, as the Scripture saith, the head of an immortal host. It is a faith which fails chiefly to those, who, in looking at human life, miss its grandest elements, and are little familiar with the highest and characteristic

features of our nature. Ask the confidants of great souls,—the bosom-friends of the holy,—and they will tell you that life eternal is the only lot at all natural to the children of the Highest. And the more you grow faithful to your own most solemn experience, and learn to trust your noblest love, the more will that amazing prospect assume proportion to the terms of your daily thought. The happy instinct of purified affections is ever one of hope and ready faith. And when I simply remember what faculties, what conceptions, what insight, are implied in a being to whom a *Church* is possible at all; when I think what a scene in the universe must be opened to a mind ere it can *pray*; when I reflect how the Infinite God must estimate one whom He thinks it worth while to put on trial amid the theatre of free souls;—all sense of difficulty recedes from the Christian doctrine of an hereafter; all rules drawn from other races of creatures sink absolutely away; and man appears no less ennobled above them than if, like the Angel of the "Revelations," he were standing in the sun. Under the influence of this truth, the natural kindred of souls is infinitely extended and deepened; exalted into independence of change; and glorified by the hope of sympathy and connexions ever fresh. The blessed family of God colonises, not only the banks of the time-stream that passes by, but the Alpine heights from which it flows, and the blessed isles of the ocean to which it tends.

This sense of Communion between all ages and both worlds, it is the business of a Church to cherish. Within its walls, and by its ways, must the mind be surrounded by the atmosphere in which this faith may thrive and grow,—this family tradition of noble souls be guarded and handed down. For this end, neither the mediation

of argument nor the directness of authority will avail so much as the just and holy discipline of the conscience and affections. To nurture the love of greatness and goodness in the past; to awaken confidence in the intuitive estimates of the pure and pious heart; to glorify the dark places of the world with some light of thought and love; to vindicate the sanctity of death against the pretensions of its physical features, and penetrate its awful spaces with the glow of prayer and hope;—is the true method of clearing away the mists from holy expectation, and realising the communion of Saints.

See then in complete array, the five *wise* Spirits of the soul that must stand through the night of the Bridegroom's tarrying, with their ever-constant lights of Endeavour, Humiliation, Trust, Service, and Communion. To maintain them at their vigils is the proper end of every Church that would maintain the Christian attitude of life. Am I asked, by some theologic wanderer, what then is special to *this* Church? I say, chiefly this, that these five lamps, and these alone, we believe to be held in angel hands, and fed with the eternal aliment of truth; nor will they ever give of their oil to nurture the emptied lamps, which many foolish servitors of the bridegroom have brought, and which now are flickering with their last flame, and expiring in the smoke of error. A pretty late hour in the watches of this world has struck: many of the interests and controversies that once dazzled with their flame have been self-consumed: and when, to find how the night rolls, we look up to heaven and observe the altered place and half-inverted form of the eternal constellations, we know that a morning hour is drawing on. It behoves every Christian Church to be awake and set itself in order for a coming age, in which, as I be-

lieve, the strife will be something very different from that whence existing churches obtain their several names. It is not without some view to that Future of the Church that I have called the five Spirits, *spirits of the soul*, and have shown them to you as they rise from our nature itself. I might with equal truth have called them *characteristics of Christianity*, and have evoked them by appeal to Scripture, and the analysis of Christian history. But we are on the verge of a time, when the mere use of an external authority, however just and moderate its application, will cease to be of much hearty avail; and only *those* elements either of Scripture or of Christian history will have any chance of reverent preservation, which find interpretation and response in the deeper experience of Man. Whoever keeps fearlessly true to these may feel secure; but none can say what else will survive the perils of the present and the coming time. What mean the strange movements of Catholicism on the one side, and a pantheistic Socialism on the other, between which every form of mere Protestantism is growing weaker, day by day? Are they not a reaction against the extreme individuality, the disintegrating tendency, of modern Christianity; whose unions, born in the transient enthusiasm of reformation, cannot maintain themselves against the habits of freedom they have created, or live upon the dogmas they refuse to change? Are they not both an attempt, only prosecuted in opposite directions, to recover some centre of human cohesion, more powerful than interest or judgment, around which the scattered sympathies and dissipated energies of society may be collected? In this common quest, the one reproduces an authority dear to the Memory of Christendom, the other pours out prophecies dazzling to the Hopes of all

men; the one adorns the *old* earth, the other paints a *new*. The field seems clearing fast to make room for these great rivals; and in their mutual position the signs are not few, that they portend a mightier contest than Europe has seen for many an age. The hosts are already visibly mustering. On the one hand the venerable Genius of a *Divine Past* goes round with cowl and crozier; and from the Halls of Oxford and the Cathedrals of Europe gathers, by the aspect of ancient sanctity and the music of a sweet eloquence and the praises of consecrated Art, a vast multitude of devoted crusaders to fight with him for the ashes of the Fathers and the sepulchres of the first centuries. On the other, the young Genius of a *Godless Future*, with the serene intensity of metaphysic enthusiasm on his brow, and the burning songs of liberty upon his lips, wanders through the great cities of our world, and in toiling workshops and restless colleges preaches the promise of a golden age, when priests and kings shall be hurled from their oppressive seat, and freed humanity, relieved from the incubus of worship, shall start itself to the proportions of a God. Who shall abide in peace the crash and conflict of this war? He only, I believe, whose allegiance is neither to the antiquated Past, nor to the speculative Future; but to the imperishable, the ever-present Soul of man as it is; who keeps close, amid every change, to the reality of human nature which changes not; and who, following chiefly the revelations of the Divine will to the open and conscious mind, and reading Scripture, history, and life, by their interpreting light, feels the serenity and rests on the stability of God.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND CHURCH OF THE FIRST-BORN.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN

HOPE-STREET NEW CHURCH,

LIVERPOOL,

ON

SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 21, 1849.

By CHARLES WICKSTEED, B.A.,

MINISTER OF MILL-HILL CHAPEL, LEEDS.

A SERMON.

Hebrews xii. 22-24.

"*But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,* to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, *and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*"

Of all the desires of the present time, there is no one more profound and general than the desire for Christian unity, communion, and fellowship. Indeed, the craving for agreement, for, as it were, spiritual identity, for the support *in* conviction, and the comfort *from* conviction, that according numbers seem to impart, has characterised the history of Christianity through its whole extent. On this has been founded the determination of the Roman Catholic Church, to preserve at all costs, at costs often most painful to itself, its spiritual and formal unity: and in this have originated the imitative efforts of the various protesting churches which have sprung from it.

But taught by the experience of ages, taught by the resolute and the ever-recurring intellectual differences of mankind, the unity at which, for the most part, the present age is aiming, is a unity of feeling, a fellowship of labour, a communion of love. The old desire for unity took the form of Proselytism. Each Church supposing itself to be constructed especially and exclusively after the heavenly type, it could realise no other and no better unity than the conversion of all mankind to its standards, and the introduction of the whole race within the veil of its Temple. Much of this aim and expectation is to be met with still. The Roman Catholic Priest goes about, hoping to bring his Protestant neighbours back into the true faith, and rejoicing in the prospect which he thinks begins to dawn, that unity may be yet achieved in England, by the return of the Church and the nation into spiritual submission to the Papal See. The clergyman of the English Church may still be found, ignoring the existence of Dissent in his parish, talking of the number of souls under his care, of spiritual destitution, of there being only one church or two churches, one school or two schools, in such and such a population, while there may be an equal number of other churches and other schools maintained for like holy purposes, but to whose very existence, as they are not within his spiritual precincts, he chooses to be blind.

But though these are very important phenomena, and show that the old dream of the outward comprehension of all the inhabitants of a country under the same forms and symbols, in the bosom of the same outward Church, is being dreamed among us still; yet such is not the tendency of the general and independent elements of society. The liberal churchman is beginning to regard

his Church as a religious community among religious communities, and only desires permission for it to take and keep its ground, as others are to take and keep theirs too. The Wesleyan probably never did regard his conference or association as the ultimate or general form of Christian government and fellowship, but if he ever did so he must now be taught, by the rapid course of events, to regard this view of it as untenable. The Independent earnestly struggles for his theory of Congregationalism; but so far is that theory from tending to a comprehension within the limits of one outward Church and Formulary, that it rests upon the basis of the independence of each society. Added to these signs of hopelessness of, or indifference to, universal dominion on the part of the separate bodies, is the increasing desire to unite on principles which are sufficiently wide, and for purposes which are sufficiently general, to allow each body to retain its own peculiar standing-point.

The modern desire of union and of fellowship, then, takes the form, not so much of proselytism as of comprehension; is founded, not so much on the expectation of bringing all communions into one Church, as of bringing all Churches into one communion. It is distinguished by the effort, while seeing the points of difference, to discover the points of agreement, and, while recognising the right of intellectual and theological variety, to bring out into practical relief the reality of a moral harmony. The organisations by which it has been attempted to combine parties otherwise differing, for the expression of some common feeling or the achievement of some common object, however imperfect in their conception, or incomplete in their accomplishment, are indications of the existence of this desire. Contemplated in this light, the

Evangelical Alliance itself is not without its interest. For, whatever may be its exclusions, and whatever its narrowness, it yet at least attempts to penetrate through the mere Episcopalianism of the Churchman, the mere Congregationalism of the Independent, the mere Methodism of the Wesleyan, to a common Christianity, deeper and more vital than anything involved in these points (important as in themselves they may be), and so far even this, in many respects exclusive and limited, association bears witness to the growing desire of our times for peace combined with liberty, independence combined with concord, and the love of truth combined with the love of each other.

But besides this tendency towards a larger comprehension and wider terms of union, there is a growing dislike in most bodies, of denunciation and virulence. The firm adhesion of a man to that Church or that Body which is to him the depository of the purest forms of truth, is a subject of genuine respect. But there is less and less disposition to approve of the peculiarities of that division being made all-important, and theological intolerance has now to be combined with some striking practical excellence or moral power to be itself tolerated. The working classes of our large towns especially look upon the struggles and animosities of sects with indifference, and even with disgust, regarding that man as the best man who lives the best life, and that man as the purest Christian who most resembles his Lord.

Two things have principally contributed to this tendency: First, the growing disposition to ask what are the *essentials* of Christianity, and to separate from these the adjuncts or modifications which the convictions of

each body require it, in its own case, to make. According to the breadth or narrowness, the grandeur or pettiness, of our estimate of these essentials, will be the character for comprehensiveness or exclusiveness of the Church we found upon them. Thus, if to submit to the authority of a particular Church be necessary to the right reception of the Christian faith, then the essential element of unity is conformity. If the essentials of Christianity be a set of theological propositions laid down in a special ecclesiastical symbol, then there is no such thing as a Christian Church comprehending all, but only a Christian sect requiring that all shall belong to her. But if the essentials of Christianity are found out to be not in the things which distinguish Churches so much as in that which is common to all, then we may worship with a liturgy or without a liturgy, under the ceiling of a meeting-house or the roof of a church, under the ministry of clergymen ordained by Bishops, or ordained by Presbyters, or ordained by the voice of God in their own consciences, and in their people's choice; the essentials of Christianity will be alike within the reach of us all: and there may on earth be found such a thing as free thought combined with a common heart, individual liberty with universal charity, and Christ may say unto us all, "I am the vine, ye are the branches."

The second thing which has contributed to this desire for Christian union, and a perception of its possibility, is the influence of good men; the natural, catholicising tendency of their Christian tempers, and their holy lives. Persons who have been in the habit of supposing belief in certain doctrines essential to Christian character and Christian salvation, are *startled* from their position by the discovery that certain men, whose lives and characters

they venerate for their purity and goodness, and about whose salvation it is impossible for them to doubt, do not believe all these supposed essentials. These truly good men rise up before them in every branch of the Church; live long, holy, and beneficent lives; manifest the fruits of sincere truth-loving and heavenly hearts; and they cannot possibly conceive of such men being driven from the presence of their God, and living in the eternal sorrows of his displeasure.

In asking, then, who are the true Church below, we find a very good guidance in the light reflected from this other question, who are the true Church above? In inquiring whom we should consider our brethren and fellow-Christians here, our greatest help will be found in the answer of our hearts to the question, who are likely to be of the general assembly and church of the first-born hereafter?

Thus there grows up, almost unconsciously, within every man whose heart is open to the signs of human excellence wherever discerned, a sort of Church of the Soul, very different in its filling up and in its limitations from any of the fixed ecclesiastical divisions around us, which we exclusively call Churches. And we find ourselves anticipating as it were the conditions of heaven and the judgment of God, in settling (not indeed to the satisfaction of the logician, but in obedience to the yearnings of our own hearts) what are the essentials of Christian Faith and Life on earth, and who are the children of the kingdom here.

It will be my object, then, to-night, with a single eye to the end I have in view, and without scrupling to employ any plainness of statement which I may find necessary to my purpose—to bring this test before your

good sense, your conscience, and your affections, in the most palpable form I can command.

Let us, then, vary the ordinary tenor of address, and the customary appeals of argument and demonstration, and inquire for Christianity by inquiring for our fellow-Christians, and for the essential faith of Jesus Christ by inquiring for the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, a young French ecclesiastic of extraordinary piety and virtue commenced his career of public duty with the charge of a seminary devoted to those who had been newly converted to that branch of the Christian Church of which he was himself a conscientious member. Subsequently, he went into an unhealthy and desolate district where the greatest cruelties had been practised against those whom he was now desired to convert. The first demand he made of the king was, that all armies should be removed from the district, and that all persecution and oppression should immediately cease. He then set himself to the task of recovering the wanderers by kindness and persuasion to the bosom of that Church from which they had strayed. He lived a long life, but when removed from that district, he watched over it and all others similarly circumstanced, and whenever he heard of harshness and severity sent his remonstrance to the seat of power.

From this post of duty he was removed to the most fascinating and brilliant court of Europe. He was made tutor to a boy of great ability, but almost ungovernable pride and passion, but of whom it was important to the world that he should create an accomplished man and a virtuous Christian, for he was heir to one of the greatest monarchies of the earth. Here, amidst his pupil's bursts

of passion, he maintained an unbending dignity, and the proud boy soon learned to weep before him for his sins, to drink in his instructions with eagerness, to delight in him and to love him. Here royalty, too, received his calm but intrepid rebuke, and power acknowledged his sincere independence.

He was raised, but by no arts or efforts of his own, to an archbishopric. Here the still piety, which was part of his nature, was misapprehended. His principles and his doctrines were misinterpreted and condemned. A storm of calumny gathered round him. The smile of royalty was converted into a frown, the arm of patronage was changed into a weapon of offence—friendship turned away from him—that Church which he had so sincerely served, began to regard him as her enemy—and the revered head of it slowly and unwillingly pronounced his condemnation. In the midst of all this (gentle, susceptible, modest as was his nature), he held fast to his integrity. Immersed in a wearisome, protracted controversy, he preserved throughout his courage undaunted, and his charity unchilled. "God, who is the witness of my thoughts," says he to one of his greatest adversaries, "knows that, though differing with you in opinion, I still continue to revere you, to preserve unceasingly my respect, and to deplore the bitterness of this contention."

In the midst, and in the pauses of this storm, he was performing the duties of his See with exemplary fidelity. A peace-maker among the divided, a rebuker of the dissolute, an encourager of the deserving, a father to the poor: surrounded by the pomp of a princedom, he lived the life of simplicity. The humblest village pulpit in his diocese knew the sound of his voice, and the presence of

his care. He would sit down in his walks with the rustic on the grass, and utter his pure words of counsel. He would daily have his almoners around him, to minister to the necessitous; and when the evening hour set in, he was found with his household in prayer. Throughout all these labours, sorrows, and painful remembrances, his only recreation was to walk. His conversation was directed to instruction. "I have still fresh in my recollection," says one, "all the serious and important subjects which were the topics of our discourse; my ear caught with eagerness every word that issued from his lips: his letters are still before me, and they bespeak the purity of his sentiments, and the wisdom of his principles. I preserve them among my papers, as the most precious treasure which I have in the world." His sense of friendship was intense and pure. "Good friends," says he, "are a dangerous treasure in life; in losing them we lose too much. I dread the charms of friendship. Oh! how happy shall we be, if, hereafter, we are together before God, loving each other in his love, and rejoicing only in his joy, and no longer exposed to separation." At length the hour of death approached him. He lay thinking of his friends, his flock, and his Church; receiving the consolations of his faith—hearing the selected words of the Scripture, and saying, "Repeat—repeat to me those holy words again." He died as he had lived, in sanctity—all his goods given to his students, to his clergy, to his guests, to works of piety, and to the poor.

This man was a Roman Catholic—his name was Fenelon.

In our own country, and nearer our own time, at the beginning of the present century, in a county bordering on

the Principality of Wales, there resided, in a not ignoble condition of life, a true servant of God, who took under his care the spiritual and the temporal wants of an extensive but humble neighbourhood. Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, he watched with anxiety over the morals, the faith, and the happiness of those about him. Frank and cheerful in his manners and habits, he was full of an earnest piety. He thought that the strictness which made no distinction between things absolutely immoral, and things that were innocent, or blameable only in their abuse, was prejudicial to the interests of sincerity and religion. He was so absolutely simple and good-natured, from the innocence of his own heart, so little prone to consider how others might view him, when he saw and meant no evil—that people who were accustomed to judge of seriousness of character by habitual length of countenance, scarcely appreciated the religiousness of his soul, as it really lay deeply within him. From a child he was devout. When in circumstances of danger his mother was in alarm, the infant monitor beside her said, "Be still, mother; God will protect us."

The generous liberality which compelled his parents, when sending him to school, to sew up his money in his pocket, lest he should give it all away upon the road, tempered with the wiser judgment of the man, continued with him in maturity. When the poor came to speak to him, he always, if possible, went out to them immediately, for he said, "the time of the poor is very valuable to them; besides, they are more sensitive to any apparent inattentions."

In the midst of all this simplicity and goodness, he was courted by the great for his talents, and for the fascination of his company, and his connexions opened out

to him the prospect of a brilliant and distinguished career. But there was one subject which pre-eminently engaged his interests, away from the engagements immediately around him. He thought much of the superstitions, ignorance, neglect and misery in which lands at a distance lay under the reign of Heathenism. He heard of a Brahmin who had gone to die on the banks of his sacred river—but to whom a British officer had given nourishment, and whom he had thus saved. The Brahmin lost caste by this occurrence, was avoided by his own countrymen, became dependent on the British officer, and each day, as he came for his subsistence, cursed the hand that had saved his miserable life. "Now," said he, "if I could only rescue one such miserable creature from this wretched superstition, I should think myself repaid for any sacrifice."

The dear claims of neighbourhood, friendship, old family associations, and old familiar habits—the still dearer claims of his relationship, as father, husband, brother, son—made him pause for a moment, but at length he accepted the arduous and honourable post that was assigned him in the eastern continent. For three or four years he laboured in that fatal clime, travelling from region to region, initiating and confirming in the mild faith of the Gospel, raising the character, and stimulating the zeal, of the Christian population, elevating the condition of the natives, noticing and remonstrating against their oppression or neglect, founding schools for their instruction, and endeavouring to bring the blessings of justice in their own tongue into their own neighbourhoods, till at length he killed himself by the labours that were too great for his strength, and left a Church in India sorrowing as for a father.

That man was a BISHOP OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH —his name was REGINALD HEBER.

An upholsterer in London had an only son. Having been successful in his business he left him considerable property. With this the son greatly enlarged an originally small estate, lived among his tenantry, and devoted himself to their good. The neighbourhood being unhealthy, he drained it—the cottages being badly constructed, he rebuilt them—the people being ignorant, he opened and supported schools. He encouraged the habit of attending religious instructions, and warned all those about him from places of intemperate or dissolute resort. His health being delicate, from the commencement of manhood he had often travelled for its improvement. On one of these occasions, attracted by the mournful incident which had left Lisbon in the ruins of an earthquake, his course was directed to the shores of Portugal. He was seized, when on the waters, flung into captivity, and confined in the nauseous dungeon of a jail in France. Here, meat was flung to himself and his fellow-captives as to dogs; they had no instruments wherewith to cut it, and they gnawed it off the bone in the ravenousness of their hunger. In the midst of the horrors of this captivity, he excited a most remarkable feeling of reliance on his honour—was presently permitted to be at large upon his word—and finally was sent home on the express condition that he would return to his confinement in France, if the English government refused to liberate a French naval officer in his place. This promise he would have fulfilled, if the government of his own country had not, by their compliance with the conditions, rendered his return unnecessary.

Years rolled by, and his life was marked by the same

attributes of sobriety, virtue, religiousness and benevolence, with the addition of great efforts on behalf of captives of war, with whose fate and sufferings he could now so acutely sympathize—till he was made High Sheriff of his county. In this official capacity he was, at Assize time, to be met with in the prison, examining into the condition and government of its every part, even to its inmost cell. "The distress of prisoners," he says, "of which there are few who have not some imperfect idea, came more immediately under any notice, when I was Sheriff of the county of Bedford; and the circumstance which excited me to activity in their behalf was, the seeing some, who by the verdict of juries were declared *not* guilty; some, in whom the grand jury did not find such an appearance of guilt as subjected them to trial; and some, whose prosecutors did not appear against them; after having been confined for months, dragged back to jail, and locked up again till they should pay sundry fees to the jailer, the clerk of assize, &c. In order to redress this hardship, I applied to the justices of the county, for a salary to the jailer in lieu of his fees. The Bench were properly affected with the grievance, and willing to grant the relief desired; but they wanted a precedent for charging the county with the expense. I therefore rode into several neighbouring counties in search of a precedent; but I soon learned that the same injustice was practised in them; and looking into the prisons, I beheld scenes of calamity, which I grew daily more and more anxious to alleviate."

You know the rest—you know the heroic career of philanthropy which filled every town and county of Great Britain, and every country of the world, with the name of this great social benefactor. Devotedly attached to his

own views of Christian truth, in the work of Christian benevolence, to him Christian, Mussulman and Hindoo were all alike; he would have risked his life to save any. In a remote province of Russia, stricken by a fever caught by attendance on another, lay at length the philanthropist, at the goal of all his earthly labours. In his memorandum book he had been writing, "May I not look on present difficulties or think of future ones in this world, as I am but a pilgrim or wayfaring man that tarries but a night; this is not my home; but may I think what God has done for me, and rely on his power and grace."—"My soul, remember how often God has sent an answer of Peace, Mercies in the most seasonable times—how often better than thy fears, exceeded thy expectations. Oh! why should I distrust this good and faithful God? In His word, He hath said, 'In all my ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy path.' But, Lord! leave me not to my own wisdom, which is folly, nor to my own strength, which is weakness. Help me to glorify Thee on earth, and finish the work Thou givest me to do." "Suffer," he said to his friends as he was dying, "suffer no pomp to be used at my funeral, nor any monument, nor any monumental inscription whatsoever, to mark where I am laid: lay me quietly in the earth, place a sundial over my grave, and let me be forgotten." This man was a Calvinistic Dissenter—his name was Howard.

More than a hundred years ago a pious boy left a country parsonage, the abode of his father, and entered the Charter-house school in London. From thence he went to Christ Church College, Oxford. There he advanced, not only in the learning of the place, but in habits of Christian seriousness and piety, which were not of the place. Associating himself with a few others like-

minded with himself, they devoted a portion of their time to a study of the Scriptures and to serious reading. Always of a moral and religious disposition, he might be said to have obeyed the commandments from his youth. But this he soon began to feel was not enough. He began to visit the sick in prison and the poor in their homes; prayed and exhorted; avoided all trifling acquaintance; and commenced the religious observance of the ancient fasts of the Church, keeping Wednesdays and Fridays with a distinct religiousness. In the midst of all this he had much heaviness and fear—was often weak in his new faith, and of doubtful mind. Yet keeping his eye upon his object, he practised abstemiousness—underwent exposure to sudden changes of climate, heat and cold, fatigue and dangers, which were, under Providence, to prepare him for his work. Presently he stepped forth to awaken a drowsy, careless world, sunk in sin and sensuality. The conventionalism of society was shocked. Though a clergyman of the English Church, the door of the English Church was shut against him. But Newgate was open to him; the hill-side, and the high-way, and the market-place, were free to him; and submitting to be made thus vile, as he expressed it, against his own natural taste and liking, he preached with ardour the word of warning; and while he created great disquietude of heart in those who heard him, at the dreadful nature of sin and the just wages of it, he spake again to the storm and tempest of these souls, and immediately there was a great calm.

All these services were not rendered without great contradiction of sinners. The brutal people rose up against their benefactor; thereby showing what need they had of him. Alluding to the gradual growth of

these outrages, he says, "By how gentle degrees does God prepare us for his will! Two years ago a piece of brick grazed my shoulders. It was a year after that a stone struck me between the eyes. Last month I received one blow, and this evening two; one before we came into the town, and one after we were gone out; but both were as nothing; for though one man struck me on the breast with all his might, and the other on the mouth with such a force that the blood gushed out immediately, I felt no more pain from either of the blows than if they had touched me with a straw." At length he was surrounded with fellow-labourers in this cause, in this great and good cause of the conversion of the heathens at *home*. He made rules, he organised a society, he appointed districts, and preachers, and meetings. And he nobly says, "The thing which I was greatly afraid of all this time, and which I resolved to use every possible method of preventing, was a narrowness of spirit, a party zeal, a being straitened in our own bowels; that miserable bigotry which makes many so unready to believe that there is any work of God but among themselves. I thought it might be a help against this frequently to read to all who were willing to hear, the accounts I received from time to time of the work which God is carrying on in the earth, both in our own and other countries; not among us alone, but among those of various opinions and denominations. For this I allotted one evening in every month; and I find no cause to repent of my labour: it is generally a time of strong consolation to those who love God, and all mankind for his sake, as well as a means of breaking down the partition-wall which either the craft of the devil or the folly of men has built up, and of encouraging every child of God to say, 'Whosoever doth

the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.' "

No doubt in all this a strong will was manifested, and was accompanied by the exercise of no little authority. Considerable means poured in upon him to help him in the accomplishment of his extensive work. Selfish men were not slow to attribute to him the baseness which would have characterised themselves. But death, the great earthly judge, vindicated his character from this calumny, for he died possessed of nothing but his books.

This man, the spiritual father and regenerator of many thousand souls, was unwillingly the greatest SCHISMATIC the Church of England has ever known—his name was WESLEY.

I must touch upon two characters I wish still to call to your remembrance with much less detail. One there is, the record of whose life must have recently passed through the hands of many now present, who was worthy of being enrolled among those women who followed our Lord unto his death, and ministered to his last necessities. The gentle woman who could throw off the allurements of a life of refinement—who could submit to the distressing demands of public duty upon a shrinking nature—who could go with her spotless purity into the midst of the most abandoned of her sex, and appease the anger and calm the passions of guilty men—to whom the coarse ribaldry, the loathsome filth, and the tomb-like uncleanness of soul, which characterised the inmates of a jail, were no barrier to the sun-like beams of her penetrating Christian love—that woman—the observer of no ordinances, the acknowledger of neither Bishop nor Presbyter, member of neither Protestant

nor Catholic Church—could not have stood the test of any of the Churches. She was a QUAKER—and her name was ELIZABETH FRY.

It is difficult sometimes to return in memory to the prejudices, the indifference, and the doubt with which great works have been regarded in their commencement: it is difficult to realise the state of feeling which made a given labour necessary, but which now no longer exists, the very labour which it called forth having driven it away almost from our recollections. But the corn of wheat, which first fell into the ground, abiding now no longer alone, but bringing forth much fruit, must not be forgotten. Not many years has the tomb closed over the remains of a humbler and less known labourer in the vineyard of God, than any that I have mentioned. Placed in early life upon one of those streams of social good, the channels of which Society scoops out for herself, and in which the majority of her sons are content, and wisely content, to bear their portion of the freight of human duty,—he of whom I speak devoted himself to the service of the Christian ministry. For many years he was happy and content to do the work of an evangelist among his neighbours and parishioners, shedding the light of a pure heart upon their daily lives, healing the bitterness of their sorrows by the overflowing balsam of his sympathy, and each week assembling them together to point out to them again the brightening way of truth and heaven. At length his heart was smitten with the thought of those who never saw him, and whom he never saw. Behind the goodly array of pure young faces, of sober manhood, and reverend old age, that stood before him in the Church—behind the attentive countenances, the cleanly robes and the decorous manners which the Lord's day

weekly called before him—his mind's eye saw a gathering group of guilt, intemperance, and crime—of sorrowing, sinning men and women, and of children, with their tears of pain drying upon their unwashed cheeks. In the very midst of those who came to him to hear the sounds of peace and holiness in that happy temple, his soul filled with the thoughts of those who never came. As he stood upon the steps of the doors which at his touch were to throw open to him homes of cheerful innocence and competence, radiant with a welcome to himself, his heart grew full and heavy with the remembrance of those at whose door he never stopped, and who never sat at good men's feasts. He thought of those great cities in his own young country, of those greater cities in other lands, older in sorrows, and more crowded with crime. His own more limited range among the poor of his prosperous, healthy village-town, satisfied not the craving of his sympathy with the wide-spread humanity that pined in neglected sorrow, and uncombatted vice. He threw up his easy, happy charge, he went to the nearest great city, to study and to alleviate its unseen woes, and to stir up the heart of philanthropy and religion to the obligation and necessity of this work. Now that Bishops organise large companies of Missionaries for this very work; now that Town Missions send forth their hundreds of labourers; now that almost every considerable society of Christians in our large towns bears a part in this holy undertaking, as an obvious and indispensable part of their Christian duty,—it is difficult to believe how new and strange this very work appeared, even to the best of men, twenty years ago—and how this apostle of the neglected, this remembrancer of the forgotten, toiled to convince men's judgments, and to satisfy their hearts

of the possibility of taking religion and hope into the very homes of the poor.

Yes! I remember him when he landed on these shores, with that countenance, the light whereof was a divine charity. I remember him when he came among us, new from the actual personal fulfilment of his own scheme, and about to return to it again, to die in it. Yes! I remember him, with his thrilling tones, and his overflowing heart, and his consecrated life, and I remember, too, that at that time there was no such thing in this country as a Domestic Mission to the outcast of society, and the neglected and forgotten of Christian assemblies, and that most men thought that there never could be!

This man, so full of purity, so rich in human tenderness, so affluent in divine forbearance—this man, the friend of the heroic Follen, the spiritual brother of the high-souled Channing, and yet the daily companion of the hardest and most neglected beings in the streets of Boston—was a UNITARIAN, and his name was TUCKERMAN.

Now to which of all these men will even the Bigot venture to deny a place within the Infinite Father's all-comprehending mercy?—a place in the reverent regards of the great human family? a place in the heaven of the just made perfect?—which of all these will he venture, in any assembly of the good and wise on earth, to declare unfit to share in the inheritance he anticipates for himself? Whichsoever of these sainted men is the object of his intolerant presumption, there is not one high soul in the world that will cry Amen to his anathema. And yet to the Roman Catholic I say, here, in this group, is to be found almost every possible form of schism from the unity of your Church! To the Church

of England man, I say, here are a Quaker and a Unitarian! To the Unitarian, I say, here is the professor of what you call the stern and gloomy faith of Calvin, here the submissive subject of the See of Rome! Notwithstanding, as surely as our Lord said of the little children, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," we may say of these men, of such is the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are writ in heaven! When you ask me, then, for the essentials of Christianity, I point you to the belief these men had in *common*! When you ask me for the Holy Catholic faith, I tell you, it is *there*! It was not the belief in transubstantiation in one, or the belief in episcopal ordination in another, or a belief in vicarious sacrifice in another, or the neglect of public religious ordinances in another, or the mental adoption of the doctrine of the divine unity in another—that made of him a child of God, and a true follower of Jesus Christ; but it was that which each had in addition, that which each had, I will say, in superiority, to these special characteristics of his individual faith—first, a hearty sincerity in the belief he did profess; and, secondly, an actual incorporation into his own spiritual being, of the life and mind of Jesus Christ.

There is one possible conclusion, however, from these considerations, against which I would earnestly warn you; it is the adoption, as any result of this survey, of that infidel and worldly latitudinarianism, which proclaims it as indifferent, what mode of faith the individual mind adopts or professes. The survey of the lives of these great and good men teaches us nothing of the kind. Each one of these men commenced, as the very basis of his spiritual existence, with being earnest and sincere in his own professions and belief. Each one of them laid the founda-

tion of his character in serious thought, and in honest confession.

We are not to stand before this noble army of holy men, and, as a result of the contemplation of their excellency and their glory, say, "then it is indifferent what form of Christianity we shall profess—any is sufficient, all are good." Do we suppose that was the spirit in which they formed their faith? On the contrary, these men wrought out their faith with the profoundest anxiety, and took reverently to their souls every word of God. Fenelon would have been no Fenelon had he been merely a conforming Catholic, and not a true and earnest man. Reginald Heber would have been no confessor had he been in heart a Unitarian or a Congregationalist.

These things cannot be. Nothing great or good is ever founded on a lie. These men were sincere; and though we may not be able to see how the specialities of their belief influenced their characters, they were without a doubt wrought deeply into the tissue of their souls, were not put on as a garment in which to go forth to meet the world, or in an easy indifference as to what profession they should make, but formed a genuine part of their individual religious being. It was this very earnestness, this profoundness and sincerity of individual conviction, that made Christianity to them so intense and vital an influence. They received the faith of Jesus Christ under that form which appeared to them, after grave reflection, to be the purest and the best; and henceforth it could exist as a personal influence in no other form whatever to their hearts. When will men see that he to whom all faiths are alike has no earnest faith at all? It is the very lesson of these men's lives that they had convictions, determinate convictions, convictions that

made them what they were, and that they were faithful to them.

It is indeed a holy and delightful thought, that we may also conclude, (without denying the reality, and to the men the necessity, of those special and distinctive peculiarities in which the common faith of Christ approved itself respectively to their consciences,) that the great saving power of their faith consisted, not in that which distinguished them from one another, but in that common treasure which lay at the foundation of all their differences, in that obedience to God, that love to Christ, that charity to man, that hope of heaven, in which they all rejoiced together; that carefulness of mind with which they sought the truth; that conscientious fidelity with which they maintained it; that vigilant self-discipline with which they applied its lessons: and that joyful hope with which they rested on its promises.

It is not for me, my friends, to speak of the holy lessons to which this temple shall, from week to week, be devoted, in the building up of human souls for the conflicts of earth, and the inheritance of heaven. But I believe I may with certainty specify two general objects in its erection; that it stands as an offering to sincerity, to the sacredness of the individual conscience, and as the provision of an altar for an honest and truthful sacrifice, such as they who come here may truthfully and earnestly offer: and that, in the next place, it stands in determined Protest against those accretions and additions which Churches too generally enforce upon Christian belief, as essential to salvation, and in restoration of that old and only catholic Christianity which is common to all Churches, though obscured and weakened in so many.

For we, too, in common with all the holy men whose

lives and characters we have been considering—we, too, believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth—we, too, in common with all these holy men, believe that he hath, in his merciful providence, sent Jesus Christ to turn away every one of us from his iniquities, and to be the way, the truth, and the life to us—and we, too, in common with all these holy men, look forward to a life beyond the valley of the shadow, where our sins and our sorrows shall be lost in the light of the benign presence of God; and trusting in the mercy of Him who forgiveth, we long, with them, to be prepared, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the holy spirit, and by love unfeigned, to join that blest assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.—AMEN.

NOTE.

In the above Sermon—designed to promote a feeling of catholic charity, in an audience consisting of a variety of denominations—the question remains unsolved, and indeed unattempted, Does any one of these forms of Christian doctrine accord more than the rest with the teachings of the New Testament, and is any one more conducive than the rest to the realization of Christian life and character? That this must be the case with some one or other of them, no one can doubt, for no one can pay attention to their several characteristics, and believe them to be identical in their essence or in their influence. That any one of them actually reaches the ideal standard which these two tests imply, is more than the writer at least is able to assert. He is much more disposed to believe that each of these forms of Faith contains a portion—and the purest and most vital portion—of Christian truth and influence; but that in actual development, that portion in each Church suffers from a relative exaggeration, or a relative neglect—the exaggeration leading to an exclusion of other important principles, necessary to be associated with it in an integral Faith—and the neglect leading to a gradual and half unconscious admission of other and inferior principles, which ultimately predominate and overwhelm it. The apparent result of this view is Eclecticism. But Eclecticism is an artificial and critical process, landing us in a result which is usually destitute of all homogeneity, a collection from without, under the guidance of the judgment,

rather than a natural integral production of the soul within. It is a kind of Peripateticism among the sects—alternately assimilating and rejecting the elements of actually existing Churches. Surely the old, but rarely realized, idea, of a recurrence to the New Testament itself, as containing the spirit of Christianity in its purest form, and to the life of Jesus Christ, as affording the only perfect instance of that spirit exemplified in humanity, involves a far sounder principle. It is a truth often overlooked in these discussions, but nevertheless to be borne carefully in mind, that no human being can tell on what proportion the peculiarities, the *differentia* of the Roman Catholic form of Christianity, entered into the composition of the mind and character of Fenelon—any more than he can tell in what proportion Calvinism entered into the spiritual fabric of Howard, or Unitarianism into that of Tuckerman. It may be—and this is probably nearer the truth—that the distinctive peculiarities of their special forms of faith were in each case the subordinate parts of their spiritual system—that the common essential Christian truth excluded from none of their systems, but, lying at the base of all, was the great element in their personal and actuating faith; and that this fact was precisely the influence which made them the excellent men they were—as it is probably the fact which seems to make men of the highest spiritual excellence almost always of one interior family and creed.

A great mind is able to penetrate beyond the outworks of its creed, and lay hold of the citadel. But ordinary minds rest in those very outworks. With them the accretions are the great thing: and therefore it is, that the purification of popular belief is a work of great necessity still, for in the subordinate and comparatively uninfluential elements of the various prevailing forms of Christian belief, pressed upon the notice of the general mind, as they are, by the very differences and antagonism they create, the ordinary mind takes its chief position, and of these it takes the firmest hold. The doctrine, then, of this Sermon—the salvability of all these good and great men of every Church, does not alter the duty of

preventing the saving truth, which they were able to discern and make their own through all that surrounded it, from being overwhelmed and paralyzed by accretions—preventing in fact the saving truth from being saving to the hearts of the multitude.

The truth appears therefore to stand thus: Each Christian Church contains within itself the means of salvation, and the essentials of Truth—but each contains them in various degrees of development, some having them more perfect in one direction, others in another. By the first of these positions, we are bound to a universal charity—by the second, to mutual help, correction and enlightenment. Far from monopolizing all Christian truth—still less all Christian excellence—and less still, all Christian salvation—for that religious body to which the writer belongs—he yet should say, if by so vague a word he could denote his own version of the Christian Faith, that among prevailing systems the theory of Unitarianism appears to him to be in itself the purest, the highest, and the most enduring; and when it shall have engaged in its development and application a larger number of the best minds of the community, and the attention of its adherents shall not be engrossed in its dogmatical defence (as by the necessity of its position is too much now the case), it must necessarily produce loftier and more extended spiritual results than the world has ever yet witnessed—that it must necessarily produce the highest characters, and the greatest number of them: that is to say, the belief in one undivided and infinite God, our Father, is in itself, and in its influences, necessarily higher and holier than the present scholastic division of that unity into natures and persons;—the belief that God was as fully manifested in Jesus Christ, as the Divine can be in the Human, affords a better support and guide to our spiritual nature, than the dogma that Christ himself was the Infinite God;—the desire to partake of the divine nature in Christ, and to grow up into a resemblance in all things unto him which is our Head, is a more holy and influential desire for the heart of man, than a reception of

the doctrine of a vicarious sacrifice, a substituted righteousness and a substituted punishment;—and, finally, a prospect of futurity, in which the fruits of the seeds sown in this life, whether they be good or whether they be evil, shall be reaped by each man in a world of greater light and higher progress beyond the grave, is in itself truer, and in its influences more efficient, than a belief in the ordinary twofold division of an everlasting Heaven and an everlasting Hell, into one or other of which each man is to depart at his resurrection.

This form of Christianity, then, which is at present distinguished from others by the designation "Unitarianism," is still, in the writer's opinion, a very noble thing to avow—a very righteous and holy cause for which to labour and to suffer reproach.

THE END.

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