

CHARLES KINGSLEY

THE WATER OF LIFE,
AND OTHER SERMONS

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Charles Kingsley

The Water of Life, and Other Sermons

SERMON I

THE WATER OF LIFE

(Preached at Westminster Abbey)

Revelation xxii. 17

And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.
And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of
life freely.

This text is its own witness. It needs no man to testify to its origin. Its own words show it to be inspired and divine.

But not from its mere poetic beauty, great as that is: greater than we, in this wet and cold climate, can see at the first glance. We must go to the far East and the far South to understand the images which were called up in the mind of an old Jew at the very name of wells and water-springs; and why the Scriptures speak of them as special gifts of God, life-giving and divine. We must have seen the treeless waste, the blazing sun, the sickening glare, the choking dust, the parched rocks, the distant mountains quivering as in the vapour of a furnace; we must have felt the lassitude of heat, the torment of thirst, ere we can welcome, as did those old Easterns, the well dug long ago by pious hands, whither the maidens come with their jars at eventide, when the stone is rolled away, to water the thirsty flocks; or the living fountain, under the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, with its grove of trees, where all the birds for many a mile flock in, and shake the copses with their song; its lawn of green, on which the long-dazzled eye rests with refreshment and delight; its brook, wandering away—perhaps to be lost soon in burning sand, but giving, as far as it flows, Life; a Water of Life to plant, to animal, and to man.

All these images, which we have to call up in our minds one by one, presented themselves to the mind of an Eastern, whether Jew or heathen, at once, as a well-known and daily scene; and made him feel, at the very mention of a water-spring, that the speaker was telling him of the good and beautiful gift of a beneficent Being.

And yet—so do extremes meet—like thoughts, though not like images, may be called up in our minds, here in the heart of London, in murky alleys and foul courts, where there is too often, as in the poet's rotting sea—

'Water, water, everywhere,
Yet not a drop to drink.'

And we may bless God—as the Easterns bless Him for the ancestors who digged their wells—for every pious soul who now erects a drinking-fountain; for he fulfils the letter as well as the spirit of Scripture, by offering to the bodies as well as the souls of men the Water of Life freely.

But the text speaks not of earthly water. No doubt the words 'Water of Life' have a spiritual and mystic meaning. Yet that alone does not prove the inspiration of the text. They had a spiritual and mystic meaning already among the heathens of the East—Greeks and barbarians alike.

The East—and indeed the West likewise—was haunted by dreams of a Water of Life, a Fount of Perpetual Youth, a Cup of Immortality: dreams at which only the shallow and the ignorant will smile; for what are they but tokens of man's right to Immortality,—of his instinct that he is not as the beasts,—that there is somewhat in him which ought not to die, which need not die, and yet which may die, and which perhaps deserves to die? How could it be kept alive? how strengthened and refreshed into perpetual youth?

And water—with its life-giving and refreshing powers, often with medicinal properties seemingly miraculous—what better symbol could be found for that which would keep off death?

Perhaps there was some reality which answered the symbol, some actual Cup of Immortality, some actual Fount of Youth. But who could attain to them? Surely the gods hid their own special treasure from the grasp of man. Surely that Water of Life was to be sought for far away, amid trackless mountain-peaks, guarded by dragons and demons. That Fount of Youth must be hidden in the rich glades of some tropic forest. That Cup of Immortality must be earned by years, by ages, of superhuman penance and self torture. Certain of the old Jews, it is true, had had deeper and truer thoughts. Here and there a psalmist had said, 'With God is the well of Life;' or a prophet had cried, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and buy without money and without price!'

But the Jews had utterly forgotten (if the mass of them ever understood) the meaning of the old revelations; and, above all, the Pharisees, the most religious among them. To their minds, it was only by a proud asceticism,—by being not as other men were; only by doing some good thing—by performing some extraordinary religious feat,—that man could earn eternal life. And bitter and deadly was their selfish wrath when they heard that the Water of Life was within all men's reach, then and for ever; that The Eternal Life was in that Christ who spoke to them; that He gave it freely to whomsoever He would;—bitter their wrath when they heard His disciples declare that God had given to men Eternal Life; that the Spirit and the Bride said. Come.

They had, indeed, a graceful ceremony, handed down to them from better times, as a sign that those words of the old psalmists and prophets had once meant something. At the Feast of Tabernacles—the harvest feast—at which God was especially to be thanked as the giver of fertility and Life, their priests drew water with great pomp from the pool of Siloam; connecting it with the words of the prophet: 'With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.' But the ceremony had lost its meaning. It had become mechanical and empty. They had forgotten that God was a giver. They would have confessed, of course, that He was the Lord of Life: but they expected Him to prove that, not by giving Life, but by taking it away: not by saving the many, but by destroying all except a favoured few. But bitter and deadly was their wrath when they were told that their ceremony had still a living meaning, and a meaning not only for them, but for all men; for that mob of common people whom they looked on as accursed, because they knew not the law. Bitter and deadly was their selfish wrath, when they heard One who ate and drank with publicans and sinners stand up in the very midst of that grand ceremony, and cry; 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, Out of him shall flow rivers of living water.' A God who said to all 'Come,' was not the God they desired to rule over them. And thus the very words which prove the text to be divine and inspired, were marked out as such by those bigots of the old world, who in them saw and hated both Christ and His Father.

The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. Come, and drink freely.

Those words prove the text, and other texts like it in Holy Scripture, to be an utterly new Gospel and good news; an utterly new revelation and unveiling of God, and of the relations of God to man.

For the old legends and dreams, in whatsoever they differed, agreed at least in this, that the Water of Life was far away; infinitely difficult to reach; the prize only of some extraordinary favourite

of fortune, or of some being of superhuman energy and endurance. The gods grudged life to mortals, as they grudged them joy and all good things. That God should say Come; that the Water of Life could be a gift, a grace, a boon of free generosity and perfect condescension, never entered into their minds. That the gods should keep their immortality to themselves seemed reasonable enough. That they should bestow it on a few heroes; and, far away above the stars, give them to eat of their ambrosia, and drink of their nectar, and so live for ever; that seemed reasonable enough likewise.

But that the God of gods, the Maker of the universe should say, 'Come, and drink freely;' that He should stoop from heaven to bring life and immortality to light,—to tell men what the Water of Life was, and where it was, and how to attain it; much more, that that God should stoop to become incarnate, and suffer and die on the cross, that He might purchase the Water of Life, not for a favoured few, but for all mankind; that He should offer it to all, without condition, stint, or drawback;—this, this, never entered into their wildest dreams.

And yet, when the strange news was told, it looked so probable, although so strange, to thousands who had seemed mere profligates or outcasts; it agreed so fully with the deepest voices of their own hearts,—with their thirst for a nobler, purer, more enduring Life,—with their highest idea of what a perfect God should be, if He meant to show His perfect goodness; it seemed at once so human and humane, and yet so superhuman and divine;—that they accepted it unhesitatingly, as a voice from God Himself, a revelation of the Eternal Author of the universe; as, God grant you may accept it this day.

And what is Life? And what is the Water of Life?

What are they indeed, my friends? You will find many answers to that question, in this, as in all ages: but the one which Scripture gives is this. Life is none other, according to the Scripture, than God Himself, Jesus Christ our Lord, who bestows on man His own Spirit, to form in him His own character, which is the character of God.

He is The one Eternal Life; and it has been manifested in human form, that human beings might copy it; and behold, it was full of grace and truth.

The Life of grace and truth; that is the Life of Christ, and, therefore, the Life of God.

The Life of grace—of graciousness, love, pity, generosity, usefulness, self-sacrifice; the Life of truth—of faithfulness, fairness, justice, the desire to impart knowledge and to guide men into all truth. The Life, in one word, of charity, which is both grace and truth, both love and justice, in one Eternal essence. That is the life which God lives for ever in heaven. That is The one Eternal Life, which must be also the Life of God. For, as there is but one Eternal, even God, so is there but one Eternal Life, which is the life of God and of His Christ. And the Spirit by which it is inspired into the hearts of men is the Spirit of God, who proceedeth alike from the Father and from the Son.

Have you not seen men and women in whom these words have been literally and palpably fulfilled? Have you not seen those who, though old in years, were so young in heart, that they seem to have drunk of the Fountain of perpetual Youth,—in whom, though the outward body decayed, the soul was renewed day by day; who kept fresh and pure the noblest and holiest instincts of their childhood, and went on adding to them the experience, the calm, the charity of age? Persons whose eye was still so bright, whose smile was still so tender, that it seemed that they could never die? And when they died, or seemed to die, you felt that **THEY** were not dead, but only their husk and shell; that they themselves, the character which you had loved and revered, must endure on, beyond the grave, beyond the worlds, in a literally Everlasting Life, independent of nature, and of all the changes of the material universe.

Surely you have seen such. And surely what you loved in them was the Spirit of God Himself, —that love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, which the natural savage man has not.

Has not, I say, look at him where you will, from the tropics to the pole, because it is a gift above man; the gift of the Spirit of God; the Eternal Life of goodness, which natural birth cannot give to man, nor natural death take away.

You have surely seen such persons—if you have not, *I* have, thank God, full many a time;—but if you have seen them, did you not see this?—That it was not riches which gave them this Life, if they were rich; or intellect, if they were clever; or science, if they were learned; or rank, if they were cultivated; or bodily organization, if they were beautiful and strong: that this noble and gentle life of theirs was independent of their body, of their mind, of their circumstances? Nay, have you not seen this,—*I* have, thank God, full many a time,—That not many rich, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but that God’s strength is rather made perfect in man’s weakness,—that in foul garrets, in lonely sick-beds, in dark places of the earth, you find ignorant people, sickly people, ugly people, stupid people, in spite of, in defiance of, every opposing circumstance, leading heroic lives,—a blessing, a comfort, an example, a very Fount of Life to all around them; and dying heroic deaths, because they know they have Eternal Life?

And what was that which had made them different from the mean, the savage, the drunken, the profligate beings around them? This at least. That they were of those of whom it is written, ‘Let him that is athirst come.’ They had been athirst for Life. They had had instincts and longings; very simple and humble, but very pure and noble. At times, it may be, they had been unfaithful to those instincts. At times, it may be, they had fallen. They had said ‘Why should I not do like the rest, and be a savage? Let me eat and drink, for to-morrow I die;’ and they had cast themselves down into sin, for very weariness and heaviness, and were for a while as the beasts which have no law.

But the thirst after The noble Life was too deep to be quenched in that foul puddle. It endured, and it conquered; and they became more and more true to it, till it was satisfied at last, though never quenched, that thirst of theirs, in Him who alone can satisfy it—the God who gave it; for in them were fulfilled the Lord’s own words: ‘Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.’

There are those, I fear, in this church—there are too many in all churches—who have not felt, as yet, this divine thirst after a higher Life; who wish not for an Eternal, but for a merely endless life, and who would not care greatly what sort of life that endless life might be, if only it was not too unlike the life which they live now; who would be glad enough to continue as they are, in their selfish pleasure, selfish gain, selfish content, for ever; who look on death as an unpleasant necessity, the end of all which they really prize; and who have taken up religion chiefly as a means for escaping still more unpleasant necessities after death. To them, as to all, it is said, ‘Come, and drink of the water of life freely.’ But The Life of goodness which Christ offers, is not the life they want. Wherefore they will not come to Him, that they may have life. Meanwhile, they have no right to sneer at the Fountain of Youth, or the Cup of Immortality. Well were it for them if those dreams were true; in their heart of hearts they know it. Would they not go to the ends of the earth to bathe in the Fountain of Youth? Would they not give all their gold for a draught of the Cup of Immortality, and so save themselves, once and for all, the trouble of becoming good?

But there are those here, I doubt not, who have in them, by grace of God, that same divine thirst for the Higher Life; who are discontented with themselves, ashamed of themselves; who are tormented by longings which they cannot satisfy, instincts which they cannot analyse, powers which they cannot employ, duties which they cannot perform, doctrinal confusions which they cannot unravel; who would welcome any change, even the most tremendous, which would make them nobler, purer, juster, more loving, more useful, more clear-headed and sound-minded; and when they think of death say with the poet,—

“Tis life, not death for which I pant,
’Tis life, whereof my nerves are scant,
More life, and fuller, that I want.’

To them I say—for God has said it long ago,—Be of good cheer. The calling and gifts of God are without repentance. If you have the divine thirst, it will be surely satisfied. If you long to be better men and women, better men and women you will surely be. Only be true to those higher instincts; only do not learn to despise and quench that divine thirst; only struggle on, in spite of mistakes, of failures, even of sins—for every one of which last your heavenly Father will chastise you, even while He forgives; in spite of all falls, struggle on. Blessed are you that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for you shall be filled. To you—and not in vain—“The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him drink of the water of life freely.’

SERMON II

THE PHYSICIAN'S CALLING

(Preached at Whitehall for St. George's Hospital.)

St. Matthew ix. 35

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

The Gospels speak of disease and death in a very simple and human tone. They regard them in theory, as all are forced to regard them in fact, as sore and sad evils.

The Gospels never speak of disease or death as necessities; never as the will of God. It is Satan, not God, who binds the woman with a spirit of infirmity. It is not the will of our Father in heaven that one little one should perish. Indeed, we do not sufficiently appreciate the abhorrence with which the whole of Scripture speaks of disease and death: because we are in the habit of interpreting many texts which speak of the disease and death of the body in this life as if they referred to the punishment and death of the soul in the world to come. We have a perfect right to do that; for Scripture tells us that there is a mysterious analogy and likeness between the life of the body and that of the soul, and therefore between the death of the body and that of the soul: but we must not forget, in the secondary and higher spiritual interpretation of such texts, their primary and physical meaning, which is this—that disease and death are uniformly throughout Scripture held up to the abhorrence of man.

Moreover—and this is noteworthy—the Gospels, and indeed all Scripture, very seldom palliate the misery of disease, by drawing from it those moral lessons which we ourselves do. I say very seldom. The Bible does so here and there, to tell us that we may do so likewise. And we may thank God heartily that the Bible does so. It would be a miserable world, if all that the clergyman or the friend might say by the sick-bed were, 'This is an inevitable evil, like hail and thunder. You must bear it if you can: and if not, then not.' A miserable world, if he could not say with full belief; "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Thou knowest not now why thou art afflicted; perhaps thou wilt never know in this life. But a day will come when thou wilt know: when thou wilt find that this sickness came to thee at the exact right time, in the exact right way; when thou wilt find that God has been keeping thee in the secret place of His presence from the provoking of men, and hiding thee privately in His tabernacle from the spite of tongues; when thou wilt discover that thou hast been learning precious lessons for thy immortal spirit, while thou didst seem to thyself merely tossing with clouded intellect on a bed of useless pain; when thou wilt find that God was nearest to thee, at the very moment when He seemed to have left thee most utterly.'

Thank God, we can say that, and more; and we will say it. But we must bear in mind, that the Gospels, which are the very parts of Scripture which speak most concerning disease, omit almost entirely that cheering and comforting view of it.

And why? Only to force upon our attention, I believe, a view even more cheering and comforting: a view deeper and wider, because supplied not merely to the pious sufferer, but to all sufferers; not merely to the Christian, but to all mankind. And that is, I believe, none other than this: that God does not only bring spiritual good out of physical evil, but that He hates physical evil itself:

that He desires not only the salvation of our souls, but the health of our bodies; and that when He sent His only begotten Son into the world to do His will, part of that will was, that He should attack and conquer the physical evil of disease—as it were instinctively, as his natural enemy, and directly, for the sake of the body of the sufferer.

Many excellent men, seeing how the healing of disease was an integral part of our Lord's mission, and of the mission of His apostles, have wished that it should likewise form an integral part of the mission of the Church: that the clergy should as much as possible be physicians; the physician, as much as possible, a clergyman. The plan may be useful in exceptional cases—in that, for instance, of the missionary among the heathen.

But experience has decided, that in a civilized and Christian country it had better be otherwise: that the great principle of the division of labour should be carried out: that there should be in the land a body of men whose whole mind and time should be devoted to one part only of our Lord's work—the battle with disease and death. And the effect has been not to lower but to raise the medical profession. It has saved the doctor from one great danger—that of abusing, for the purposes of religious proselytizing, the unlimited confidence reposed in him. It has freed him from many a superstition which enfeebled and confused the physicians of the Middle Ages. It has enabled him to devote his whole intellect to physical science, till he has set his art on a sound and truly scientific foundation. It has enabled him to attack physical evil with a single-hearted energy and devotion which ought to command the respect and admiration of his fellow-countrymen. If all classes did their work half as simply, as bravely, as determinedly, as unselfishly, as the medical men of Great Britain—and, I doubt not, of other countries in Europe—this world would be a far fairer place than it is likely to be for many a year to come. It is good to do one thing and to do it well. It is good to follow Christ in one thing, and to follow Him utterly in that. And the medical man has set his mind to do one thing,—to hate calmly, but with an internecine hatred, disease and death, and to fight against them to the end.

The medical man is complained of at times as being too materialistic—as caring more for the bodies of his patients than for their souls. Do not blame him too hastily. In his exclusive care for the body, he may be witnessing unconsciously, yet mightily, for the soul, for God, for the Bible, for immortality.

Is he not witnessing for God, when he shows by his acts that he believes God to be a God of Life, not of death; of health, not of disease; of order, not of disorder; of joy and strength, not of misery and weakness?

Is he not witnessing for Christ when, like Christ, he heals all manner of sickness and disease among the people, and attacks physical evil as the natural foe of man and of the Creator of man?

Is he not witnessing for the immortality of the soul when he fights against death as an evil to be postponed at all hazards and by all means, even when its advent is certain? Surely it is so. How often have we seen the doctor by the dying bed, trying to preserve life, when he knew well that life could not be preserved. We have been tempted to say to him, 'Let the sufferer alone. He is senseless. He is going. We can do nothing more for his soul; you can do nothing more for his body. Why torment him needlessly for the sake of a few more moments of respiration? Let him alone to die in peace.' How have we been tempted to say that? We have not dared to say it; for we saw that the doctor, and not we, was in the right; that in all those little efforts, so wise, so anxious, so tender, so truly chivalrous, to keep the failing breath for a few moments more in the body of one who had no earthly claim upon his care, that doctor was bearing a testimony, unconscious yet most weighty, to that human instinct of which the Bible approves throughout, that death in a human being is an evil, an anomaly, a curse; against which, though he could not rescue the man from the clutch of his foe, he was bound, in duty and honour, to fight until the last, simply because it was death, and death was the enemy of man.

But if the medical man bears witness for God and spiritual things when he seems exclusively occupied with the body, so does the hospital. Look at those noble buildings which the generosity of our fellow-countrymen have erected in all our great cities. You may find in them, truly, sermons

in stones; sermons for rich alike and poor. They preach to the rich, these hospitals, that the sick-bed levels all alike; that they are the equals and brothers of the poor in the terrible liability to suffer!

They preach to the poor that they are, through Christianity, the equals of the rich in their means and opportunities of cure. I say through Christianity. Whether the founders so intended or not (and those who founded most of them, St. George's among the rest, did so intend), these hospitals bear direct witness for Christ. They do this, and would do it, even if—which God forbid—the name of Christ were never mentioned within their walls. That may seem a paradox; but it is none. For it is a historic fact, that hospitals are a creation of Christian times, and of Christian men. The heathen knew them not. In that great city of ancient Rome, as far as I have ever been able to discover, there was not a single hospital,—not even, I fear, a single charitable institution. Fearful thought—a city of a million and a half inhabitants, the centre of human civilization: and not a hospital there! The Roman Dives paid his physician; the Roman Lazarus literally lay at his gate full of sores, till he died the death of the street dogs which licked those sores, and was carried forth to be thrust under ground awhile, till the same dogs came to quarrel over his bones. The misery and helplessness of the lower classes in the great cities of the Roman empire, till the Church of Christ arose, literally with healing in its wings, cannot, I believe, be exaggerated.

Eastern piety, meanwhile, especially among the Hindoos, had founded hospitals, in the old meaning of that word—namely, almshouses for the infirm and aged: but I believe there is no record of hospitals, like our modern ones, for the cure of disease, till Christianity spread over the Western world.

And why? Because then first men began to feel the mighty truth contained in the text. If Christ were a healer, His servants must be healers likewise. If Christ regarded physical evil as a direct evil, so must they. If Christ fought against it with all His power, so must they, with such power as He revealed to them. And so arose exclusively in the Christian mind, a feeling not only of the nobleness of the healing art, but of the religious duty of exercising that art on every human being who needed it; and hospitals are to be counted, as a historic fact, among the many triumphs of the Gospel.

If there be any one—especially a working man—in this church this day who is inclined to undervalue the Bible and Christianity, let him know that, but for the Bible and Christianity, he has not the slightest reason to believe that there would have been at this moment a hospital in London to receive him and his in the hour of sickness or disabling accident, and to lavish on him there, unpaid as the light and air of God outside, every resource of science, care, generosity, and tenderness, simply because he is a human being. Yes; truly catholic are these hospitals,—catholic as the bounty of our heavenly Father,—without respect of persons, giving to all liberally and upbraiding not, like Him in whom all live, and move, and have their being; witnesses better than all our sermons for the universal bounty and tolerance of that heavenly Father who causes the sun to shine on the evil and the good, and his rain to fall upon the just and on the unjust, and is perfect in this, that He is good to the unthankful and the evil.

And, therefore, the preacher can urge his countrymen, let their opinions, creed, tastes, be what they may, to support hospitals with especial freedom, earnestness, and confidence. Heaven forbid that I should undervalue any charitable institution whatever. May God's blessing be on them all. But this I have a right to say,—that whatever objections, suspicions, prejudices there may be concerning any other form of charity, concerning hospitals there can be none. Every farthing bestowed on them must go toward the direct doing of good. There is no fear in them of waste, of misapplication of funds, of private jobbery, of ulterior and unavowed objects. Palpable and unmistakable good is all they do and all they can do. And he who gives to a hospital has the comfort of knowing that he is bestowing a direct blessing on the bodies of his fellow-men; and it may be on their souls likewise.

For I have said that these hospitals witness silently for God and for Christ; and I must believe that that silent witness is not lost on the minds of thousands who enter them. It sinks in,—all the more readily because it is not thrust upon them,—and softens and breaks up their hearts to receive

the precious seed of the word of God. Many a man, too ready from bitter experience to believe that his fellow-men cared not for him, has entered the wards of a hospital to be happily undeceived.

He finds that he is cared for; that he is not forgotten either by God or man; that there is a place for him, too, at God's table, in his hour of utmost need; and angels of God, in human form, ready to minister to his necessities; and, softened by that discovery, he has listened humbly, perhaps for the first time in his life, to the exhortations of a clergyman; and has taken in, in the hour of dependence and weakness, the lessons which he was too proud or too sullen to hear in the day of independence and sturdy health. And so do these hospitals, it seems to me, follow the example and practice of our Lord Himself; who, by ministering to the animal wants and animal sufferings of the people, by showing them that He sympathised with those lower sorrows of which they were most immediately conscious, made them follow Him gladly, and listen to Him with faith, when He proclaimed to them in words of wisdom, that Father in heaven whom He had already proclaimed to them in acts of mercy.

And now, I have to appeal to you for the excellent and honourable foundation of St. George's Hospital. I might speak to you, and speak, too, with a personal reverence and affection of many years' standing, of the claims of that noble institution; of the illustrious men of science who have taught within its walls; of the number of able and honourable young men who go forth out of it, year by year, to carry their blessed and truly divine art, not only over Great Britain, but to the islands of the farthest seas. But to say that would be merely to say what is true, thank God, of every hospital in London.

One fact only, therefore, I shall urge, which gives St. George's Hospital special claims on the attention of the rich.

Situated, as it is, in the very centre of the west end of London, it is the special refuge of those who are most especially of service to the dwellers in the Westend. Those who are used up—fairly or unfairly—in ministering to the luxuries of the high-born and wealthy: the groom thrown in the park; the housemaid crippled by lofty stairs; the workman fallen from the scaffolding of the great man's palace; the footman or coachman who has contracted disease from long hours of nightly exposure, while his master and mistress have been warm and gay at rout and ball; and those, too, whose number, I fear, are very great, who contract disease, themselves, their wives, and children, from actual want, when they are thrown suddenly out of employ at the end of the season, and London is said to be empty—of all but two million of living souls:—the great majority of these crowd into St. George's Hospital to find there relief and comfort, which those to whom they minister are solemnly bound to supply by their contributions. The rich and well-born of this land are very generous. They are doing their duty, on the whole, nobly and well. Let them do their duty—the duty which literally lies nearest them—by St. George's Hospital, and they will wipe off a stain, not on the hospital, but on the rich people in its neighbourhood—the stain of that hospital's debts.

The deficiency in the funds of the hospital for the year 1862–3—caused, be it remembered, by no extravagance or sudden change, but simply by the necessity for succouring those who would otherwise have been destitute of succour—the deficiency, I say, on an expenditure of 15,000*l.* amounts to more than 3,200*l.* which has had to be met by selling out funded property, and so diminishing the capital of the institution. Ought this to be? I ask. Ought this to be, while more wealth is collected within half a mile of that hospital than in any spot of like extent in the globe?

My friends, this is the time of Lent; the time whereof it is written,—'Is not this the fast which I have chosen, to deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the poor that is cast out to thine house? when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? If thou let thy soul go forth to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul, and make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and as a spring that doth not fail.'

Let us obey that command literally, and see whether the promise is not literally fulfilled to us in return.

SERMON III

THE VICTORY OF LIFE

(Preached at the Chapel Royal.)

Isaiah xxxviii. 18, 19

The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee.

I may seem to have taken a strange text on which to speak,—a mournful, a seemingly hopeless text. Why I have chosen it, I trust that you will see presently; certainly not that I may make you hopeless about death. Meanwhile, let us consider it; for it is in the Bible, and, like all words in the Bible, was written for our instruction.

Now it is plain, I think, that the man who said these words—good king Hezekiah—knew nothing of what we call heaven; of a blessed life with God after death. He looks on death as his end.

If he dies, he says, he will not see the Lord in the land of the living, any more than he will see man with the inhabitants of the world. God's mercies, he thinks, will end with his death. God can only show His mercy and truth by saving him from death. For the grave cannot praise God, death cannot celebrate Him; those who go down into the pit cannot hope for His truth. The living, the living, shall praise God; as Hezekiah praises Him that day, because God has cured him of his sickness, and added fifteen years to his life.

No language can be plainer than this. A man who had believed that he would go to heaven when he died could not have used it.

In many of the Psalms, likewise, you will find words of exactly the same kind, which show that the men who wrote them had no clear conception, if any conception at all, of a life after death.

Solomon's words about death are utterly awful from their sadness. With him, 'that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; as one dieth, so dieth the other. Yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence over a beast, and all is vanity. All go to one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?'

He knows nothing about it. All he knows is, that the spirit shall return to God who gave it,—and that a man will surely find, in this life, a recompence for all his deeds, whether good or evil.

'Remember therefore thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.'

This is the doctrine of the Old Testament; that God judges and rewards and punishes men in this life: but as for death, it is a great black cloud into which all men must enter, and see and be seen no more. Only twice or thrice, perhaps, a gleam of light from beyond breaks through the dark.

David, the noblest and wisest of all the Jews, can say once that God will not leave his soul in hell, neither suffer His holy one to see corruption; Job says that, though after his skin worms destroy his body, yet in his flesh he shall see God; and Isaiah, again, when he sees his countrymen slaughtered, and his nation all but destroyed, can say, 'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of the morning, which

brings the parched herbs to life and freshness again.’—Great and glorious sayings, all of them: but we cannot tell how far either David, or Job, or Isaiah, were thinking of a life after death. We can think of a life after death when we use them; for we know how they have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ our Lord; and we can see in them more than the Jews of old could do; for, like all inspired words, they mean more than the men who wrote them thought of; but we have no right to impute our Christianity to them.

The only undoubted picture, perhaps, of the next life to be found in the Old Testament, is that grand one in Isaiah xiv., where he paints to us the tyrant king of Babylon going down into hell:—

‘Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!’—Awful and grand enough: but quite different, you will observe, from the notions of hell which are common now-a-days; and much more like those which we read in the old Greek poets, and especially, in the *Necyomanteia* of the *Odyssey*.

When it was that the Jews gained any fuller notions about the next life, it is very difficult to say.

Certainly not before they were carried away captive to Babylon. After that they began to mix much with the great nations of the East: with Greeks, Persians, and Indians; and from them, most probably, they learned to believe in a heaven after death to which good men would go, and a fiery hell to which bad men would go. At least, the heathen nations round them, and our forefathers likewise, believed in some sort of heaven and hell, hundreds of years before the coming of our blessed Lord.

The Jews had learned, also—at least the Pharisees—to believe in the resurrection of the dead.

Martha speaks of it; and St. Paul, when he tells the Pharisees that, having been brought up a Pharisee, he was on their side against the Sadducees.—‘I am a Pharisee,’ he says, ‘the son of a Pharisee; for the hope of the resurrection of the dead I am called in question.’

But if it be so,—if St. Paul and the Apostles believed in heaven and hell, and the resurrection of the dead, before they became Christians, what more did they learn about the next life, when they became Christians? Something they did learn, most certainly—and that most important. St. Paul speaks of what our Lord and our Lord’s resurrection had taught him, as something quite infinitely grander, and more blessed, than what he had known before. He talks of our Lord as having abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light; of His having conquered death, and of His destroying death at last. He speaks at moments as if he did not expect to die at all; and when he does speak of the death of the Christian, it is merely as a falling asleep. When he speaks of his own death, it is merely as a change of place. He longs to depart, and to be with Christ. Death had looked terrible to him once, when he was a Jew. Death had had a sting, and the grave a victory, which seemed ready to conquer him: but now he cries, ‘O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?’ and then he declares that the terrors of death and the grave are taken away, not by anything which he knew when he was a Pharisee, but through our Lord Jesus Christ.

All his old Jewish notions of the resurrection, though they were true as far as they went, seemed poor and paltry beside what Christ had taught him. He was not going to wait till the end of the world—perhaps for thousands of years—in darkness and the shadow of death, he knew not where or how.

His soul was to pass at once into life,—into joy, and peace, and bliss, in the presence of his Saviour, till it should have a new body given to it, in the resurrection of life at the last day.

This, I think, is what St. Paul learned, and what the Jews had not learned till our blessed Lord came. They were still afraid of death. It looked to them a dark and ugly blank; and no wonder. For would it not be dark and ugly enough to have to wait, we know not where, it may be a thousand, it may be tens of thousands of years, till the resurrection in the last day, before we entered into joy,

peace, activity or anything worthy of the name of life? Would not death have a sting indeed, the grave a victory indeed, if we had to be as good as dead for ten thousands of years?

What then? Remember this, that death is an enemy, an evil thing, an enemy to man, and therefore an enemy to Christ, the King and Head and Saviour of man. Men ought not to die, and they feel it. It is no use to tell them, 'Everything that is born must die, and why not you? All other animals died. They died, just as they die now, hundreds of thousands of years before man came upon this earth; and why should man expect to have a different lot? Why should you not take your death patiently, as you take any other evil which you cannot escape?' The heart of man, as soon as he begins to be a man, and not a mere savage; as soon as he begins to think reasonably, and feel deeply; the heart of man answers: 'No, I am not a mere animal. I have something in me which ought not to die, which perhaps cannot die. I have a living soul in me, which ought to be able to keep my body alive likewise, but cannot; and therefore death is my enemy. I hate him, and I believe that I was meant to hate him. Something must be wrong with me, or I should not die; something must be wrong with all mankind, or I should not see those I love dying round me.

Yes, my friends, death is an enemy,—a hideous, hateful thing. The longer one looks at it, the more one hates it. The more often one sees it, the less one grows accustomed to it. Its very commonness makes it all the more shocking. We may not be so much shocked at seeing the old die.

We say, 'They have done their work, why should they not go?' That is not true. They have not done their work. There is more work in plenty for them to do, if they could but live; and it seems shocking and sad, at least to him who loves his country and his kind, that, just as men have grown old enough to be of use, when they have learnt to conquer their passions, when their characters are formed, when they have gained sound experience of this world, and what man ought and can do in it,—just as, in fact, they have become most able to teach and help their fellow-men,—that then they are to grow old, and decrepit, and helpless, and fade away, and die just when they are most fit to live, and the world needs them most.

Sad, I say, and strange is that. But sadder, and more strange, and more utterly shocking, to see the young die; to see parents leaving infant children, children vanishing early out of the world where they might have done good work for God and man.

What arguments will make us believe that that ought to be? That that is God's will? That that is anything but an evil, an anomaly, a disease?

Not the Bible, certainly. The Bible never tells us that such tragedies as are too often seen are the will of God. The Bible says that it is not the will of our Father that one of these little ones should perish. The Bible tells us that Jesus, when on earth, went about fighting and conquering disease and death, even raising from the dead those who had died before their time. To fight against death, and to give life wheresoever He went—that was His work; by that He proclaimed the will of God, His Father, that none should perish, who sent His Son that men might have life, and have it more abundantly. By that He declared that death was an evil and a disorder among men, which He would some day crush and destroy utterly, that mortality should be swallowed up of life.

And yet we die, and shall die. Yes. The body is dead, because of sin. Mankind is a diseased race; and it must pay the penalty of its sins for many an age to come, and die, and suffer, and sorrow.

But not for ever. For what mean such words as these—for something they must mean?—

'If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.' And again, 'He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.'

Do such words as these mean only that we shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day? Surely not. Our Lord spoke them in answer to that very notion.

'Martha said to Him, I know that my brother shall rise again, in the resurrection at the last day.

Jesus said unto her, I *am* the resurrection and the life;' and then showed what He meant by bringing back Lazarus to life, unchanged, and as he had been before he died.

Surely, if that miracle meant anything, if these words meant anything, it meant this: that those who die in the fear of God, and in the faith of Christ, do not really taste death; that to them there is no death, but only a change of place, a change of state; that they pass at once, and instantly, into some new life, with all their powers, all their feelings, unchanged,—purified doubtless from earthly stains, but still the same living, thinking, active beings which they were here on earth. I say, active.

The Bible says nothing about their sleeping till the Day of Judgment, as some have fancied. Rest they may; rest they will, if they need rest. But what is the true rest? Not idleness, but peace of mind.

To rest from sin, from sorrow, from fear, from doubt, from care,—this is the true rest. Above all, to rest from the worst weariness of all—knowing one's duty, and yet not being able to do it. That is true rest; the rest of God, who works for ever, and yet is at rest for ever; as the stars over our heads move for ever, thousands of miles each day, and yet are at perfect rest, because they move orderly, harmoniously, fulfilling the law which God has given them. Perfect rest, in perfect work; that surely is the rest of blessed spirits, till the final consummation of all things, when Christ shall have made up the number of His elect.

I hope that this is so. I trust that this is so. I think our Lord's great words can mean nothing less than this. And if it be so, what comfort for us who must die? What comfort for us who have seen others die, if death be but a new birth into some higher life; if all that it changes in us is our body—the mere shell and husk of us—such a change as comes over the snake, when he casts his old skin, and comes out fresh and gay, or even the crawling caterpillar, which breaks its prison, and spreads its wings to the sun as a fair butterfly. Where is the sting of death, then, if death can sting, and poison, and corrupt nothing of us for which our friends have loved us; nothing of us with which we could do service to men or God? Where is the victory of the grave, if, so far from the grave holding us down, it frees us from the very thing which holds us down,—the mortal body?

Death is not death, then, if it kills no part of us, save that which hindered us from perfect life.

Death is not death, if it raises us in a moment from darkness into light, from weakness into strength, from sinfulness into holiness. Death is not death, if it brings us nearer to Christ, who is the fount of life. Death is not death, if it perfects our faith by sight, and lets us behold Him in whom we have believed. Death is not death, if it gives us to those whom we have loved and lost, for whom we have lived, for whom we long to live again. Death is not death, if it joins the child to the mother who is gone before. Death is not death, if it takes away from that mother for ever all a mother's anxieties, a mother's fears, and lets her see, in the gracious countenance of her Saviour, a sure and certain pledge that those whom she has left behind are safe, safe with Christ and in Christ, through all the chances and dangers of his mortal life. Death is not death, if it rids us of doubt and fear, of chance and change, of space and time, and all which space and time bring forth, and then destroy. Death is not death; for Christ has conquered death, for Himself, and for those who trust in Him. And to those who say, 'You were born in time, and in time you must die, as all other creatures do; Time is your king and lord, as he has been of all the old worlds before this, and of all the races of beasts, whose bones and shells lie fossil in the rocks of a thousand generations;' then we can answer them, in the words of the wise man, and in the name of Christ who conquered death:—

'Fly, envious time, till thou run out thy race,
And glut thyself with what thy womb devours,
Which is no more than what is false and vain
And merely mortal dross.
So little is our loss, so little is thy gain.
For when as each bad thing thou hast entombed,
And, last of all, thy greedy self consumed,
Then long eternity shall greet our bliss
With an individual kiss,

And joy shall overtake us as a flood,
When everything that is sincerely good
And perfectly divine,
And truth, and peace, and love shall ever shine
About the supreme throne
Of Him, unto whose happy-making sight alone
When once our heavenly-guided soul shall climb,
Then all this earthly grossness quit,
Attired with stars, we shall for ever sit
Triumphant over death, and chance, and thee, O Time!

SERMON IV THE WAGES OF SIN

(Chapel Royal June, 1864)

Rom. vi. 21–23

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is a glorious text, if we will only believe it simply, and take it as it stands.

But if in place of St. Paul's words we put quite different words of our own, and say—By 'the wages of sin is death,' St. Paul means that the punishment of sin is eternal life in torture, then we say something which may be true, but which is not what St. Paul is speaking of here. For wages are not punishment, and death is not eternal life in torture, any more than in happiness.

That, one would think, was clear. It is our duty to take St. Paul's words, if we really believe them to be inspired, simply as they stand; and if we do not quite understand them, to explain them by St. Paul's own words about these matters in other parts of his writings.

St. Paul was an inspired Apostle. Let him speak for himself. Surely he knew best what he wished to say, and how to say it.

Now St. Paul's opinions about death and eternal life are very clear; for he speaks of them often, and at great length.

He considered that the great enemy of God and man, the last enemy Christ would destroy, was death; and that, after death was destroyed, the end would come, when God would be all in all.

Then came the question, which has puzzled men in all ages—How death came into the world. St. Paul answers, By sin. He says, as the author of the third chapter of Genesis says, that Adam became subject to death by his fall. By one man, he says, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. And thus, he says, death reigned even over those who had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression.

That he is speaking of bodily death is clear, because he is always putting it in contrast to the resurrection to life,—not merely to a spiritual resurrection from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; but to the resurrection of the body,—to our Lord's being raised from the dead, that He might die no more.

Then he speaks of eternal life. He always speaks of it as an actual life, in a spiritual body, into which our mortal bodies are to be changed. Nothing can be clearer from what he says in 1 Cor. xv., that he means an actual rising again of our bodies from bodily death; an actual change in them; an actual life in them for ever.

But he says, again and again,—As sin caused the death of the body, so righteousness is to cause its life.

'When ye were the servants of sin,' he says to the Romans, 'what fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

This is St. Paul's opinion. And we shall do well to believe it, and to learn from it, this day, and all days.

The wages of sin and the end of sin is death. Not the punishment of sin; but something much worse. The wages of sin, and the end of sin.

And how is that worse news? My friends, every sinner knows so well in his heart that it is worse news, more terrible news, for him, that he tries to persuade himself that death is only the arbitrary punishment of his sin; or, quite as often, that the punishment of his sin is not even death, but eternal torment in the next life.

And why? Because, as long as he can believe that death, or hell, are only punishments arbitrarily fixed by God against his sins, he can hope that God will let him off the punishment. Die, he knows he must, because all men die; and so he makes up his mind to that: but being sent to hell after he dies, is so very terrible a punishment, that he cannot believe that God will be so hard on him as that. No; he will get off, and be forgiven at last somehow, for surely God will not condemn him to hell. And so he finds it very convenient and comfortable to believe in hell, just because he does not believe that he is going there, whoever else may be.

But, it is a very terrible, heartrending thought, for a man to find out that what he will receive is not punishment, but wages; not punishment but the end of the very road which he is travelling on.

That the wages of sin, and the end of sin, to which it must lead, are death; that every time he sins he is earning those wages, deserving them, meriting them, and therefore receiving them by the just laws of the world of God. That does torment him, that does terrify him, if he will look steadfastly at the broad plain fact—You need not dream of being let off, respited, reprieved, pardoned in any way. The thing cannot be done. It is contrary to the laws of God and of God's universe. It is as impossible as that fire should not burn, or water run up hill. It is not a question of arbitrary punishment, which may be arbitrarily remitted; but of wages, which you needs must take, weekly, daily, and hourly; and those wages are death: a question of travelling on a certain road, whereon, if you travel it long enough, you must come to the end of it; and the end is death. Your sins are killing you by inches; all day long they are sowing in you the seeds of disease and death. Every sin which you commit with your body shortens your bodily life. Every sin you commit with your mind, every act of stupidity, folly, wilful ignorance, helps to destroy your mind, and leave you dull, silly, devoid of right reason. Every sin you commit with your spirit, each sin of passion and temper, envy and malice, pride and vanity, injustice and cruelty, extravagance and self-indulgence, helps to destroy your spiritual life, and leave you bad, more and more unable to do the right and avoid the wrong, more and more unable to discern right from wrong; and that last is spiritual death, the eternal death of your moral being. There are three parts in you—body, mind, and spirit; and every sin you commit helps to kill one of these three, and, in many cases, to kill all three together.

So, sinner, dream not of escaping punishment at the last. You are being punished now, for you are punishing yourself; and you will continue to be punished for ever, for you will be punishing yourself for ever, as long as you go on doing wrong, and breaking the laws which God has appointed for body, mind and spirit. You can see that a drunkard is killing himself, body and mind, by drink.

You see that he knows that, poor wretch, as well as you. He knows that every time he gets drunk he is cutting so much off his life; and yet he cannot help it. He knows that drink is poison, and yet he goes back to his poison.

Then know, habitual sinner, that you are like that drunkard. That every bad habit in which you indulge is shortening the life of some of your faculties, and that God Himself cannot save you from the doom which you are earning, deserving, and working out for yourself every day and every hour.

Oh how men hate that message!—the message that the true wrath of God, necessary, inevitable, is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men. How they writhe under it! How they shut their ears to it, and cry to their preachers, 'No! Tell us of any wrath of God but that! Tell us rather of the torments of the damned, of a frowning God, of absolute decrees to destruction, of the

reprobation of millions before they are born; any doctrine, however fearful and horrible: because we don't quite believe it, but only think that we ought to believe it. Yes, tell us anything rather than that news, which cuts at the root of all our pride, of all our comfort, and all our superstition—the news that we cannot escape the consequences of our own actions; that there are no back stairs up which we may be smuggled into heaven; that as we sow, so we shall reap; that we are filled with the fruits of our own devices; every man his own poisoner, every man his own executioner, every man his own suicide; that hell begins in this life, and death begins before we die:—do not say that: because we cannot help believing it; for our own consciousness and our own experience tell us it is true.' No wonder that the preacher who tells men that is hated, is called a Rationalist, a Pantheist, a heretic, and what not, just because he does set forth such a living God, such a justice of God, such a wrath of God as would make the sinner tremble, if he believed in it, not merely once in a way, when he hears a stirring sermon about the endless torments: but all day long, going out and coming in, lying on his bed and walking by the way, always haunted by the shadow of himself, knowing that he is bearing about in him the perpetually growing death of sin.

And still more painful would this message be to the sinner, if he had any kindly feeling for others; and, thank God, there are few who have not that. For St. Paul's message to him is, that the wages of his sin is death, not merely to himself, but to others—to his family and children above all.

So St. Paul declares in what he says of his doctrine of original or birth sin, by which, as the Article says, every man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth against the spirit.

St. Paul's doctrine is simple and explicit. Death, he says, reigned over Adam's children, even over those who had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression; agreeing with Moses, who declares God to be one who visits the sins of the fathers on the children, to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him. But how the sinner will shrink from this message—and shrink the more, the more feeling he is, the less he is wrapped up in selfishness. Yes, that message gives us such a view of the sinfulness of sin as none other can. It tells us why God hates sin with so unextinguishable a hatred, just because He is a God of Love. It is not that man's sin injures God, insults God, as the heathen fancy. Who is God, that man can stir Him up to pride, or wound or disturb His everlasting calm, His self-sufficient perfectness? 'God is tempted of no man,' says St. James. No. God hates sin. He loves all, and sin harms all; and the sinner may be a torment and a curse, not only to himself, not only to those around him, but to children yet unborn.

This is bad news; and yet sinners must hear it. They must hear it not only put into words by Moses, or by St. Paul, or by any other inspired writer; but they must hear it, likewise, in that perpetual voice of God which we call facts.

Let the sinner who wishes to know what original sin means, and how actual sin in one man breeds original sin in his descendants, look at the world around him, and see. Let him see how St. Paul's doctrine and the doctrine of the Ten Commandments are proved true by experience and by fact: how the past, and how the present likewise, show us whole families, whole tribes, whole aristocracies, whole nations, dwindling down to imbecility, misery, and destruction, because the sins of the fathers are visited on the children.

Physicians, who see children born diseased; born stupid, or even idiotic; born thwart-natured, or passionate, or false, or dishonest, or brutal,—they know well what original sin means, though they call it by their own name of hereditary tendencies. And they know, too, how the sins of a parent, or of a grand parent, or even a great-grandparent, are visited on the children to the third and fourth generation; and they say 'It is a law of nature:' and so it is. But the laws of nature are the laws of God who made her: and His law is the same law by which death reigns even over those who have not sinned after the likeness of Adam; the law by which (even though if Christ be in us, the spirit is life, because of righteousness) the body, nevertheless, is dead, because of sin.

Parents, parents, who hear my words, beware—if not for your own sakes, at least for the sake of your children, and your children’s children—lest the wages of your sin should be their death.

And by this time, surely, some of you will be asking, ‘What has he said? That there is no escape; that there is no forgiveness?’

None whatsoever, my friends, though you were to cry to heaven for ever and ever, save the one old escape of which you hear in the church every Sunday morning: ‘When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.’

What, does not the blood of Christ cleanse us from all sin?

Yes, from all sin. But not, necessarily, from the wages of all sin.

Judge for yourselves, my friends, again. Listen to the voice of God revealed in facts. If you, being a drunkard, have injured your constitution by drink, and then are converted, and repent, and turn to God with your whole soul, and become, as you may, if you will, a truly penitent, good, and therefore sober man,—will that cure the disease of your body? It will certainly palliate and ease it: because, instead of being drunken, you will have become sober: but still you will have shortened your days by your past sins; and, in so far, even though the Lord has put away your sin its wages still remain, as death.

So it is, my friends, if you will only believe it, or rather see it with your own eyes, with every sin, and every sort of sin.

You will see, if you look, that the Article speaks exact truth when it says, that the infection of nature doth remain, even in those that are regenerate. It says that of original sin: but it is equally true of actual sin.

Would to God that all men would but believe this, and give up the too common and too dangerous notion, that it is no matter if they go on wrong for a while, provided they come right at last!

No matter? I ask for facts again. Is there a man or woman in this church twenty years old who does not know that it matters? Who does not know that, if they have done wrong in youth, their own wrong deeds haunt them and torment them?—That they are, perhaps the poorer, perhaps the sicklier, perhaps the more ignorant, perhaps the sillier, perhaps the more sorrowful this day, for things which they did twenty, thirty years ago? Is there any one in this church who ever did a wrong thing without smarting for it? If there is (which I question), let him be sure that it is only because his time is not come. Do not fancy that because you are forgiven, you may not be actually less good men all your lives by having sinned when young.

I know it is sometimes said, ‘The greater the sinner, the greater the saint.’ I do not believe that: because I do not see it. I see, and I thank God for it, that men who have been very wrong at one time, come very right afterwards; that, having found out in earnest that the wages of sin are death, they do repent in earnest, and receive the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. But I see, too, that the bad habits, bad passions, bad methods of thought, which they have indulged in youth, remain more or less, and make them worse men, sillier men, less useful men, less happy men, sometimes to their lives’ end: and they, if they be true Christians, know it, and repent of their early sins, not once for all only, but all their lives long; because they feel that they have weakened and worsened themselves thereby.

It stands to reason, my friends, that it should be so. If a man loses his way, and finds it again, he is so much the less forward on his way, surely, by all the time he has spent in getting back into the road. If a child has a violent illness, it stops growing, because the life and nourishment which ought to have gone towards its growth, are spent in curing its disease. And so, if a man has indulged in bad habits in his youth, he is but too likely (let him do what he will) to be a less good man for it to his life’s end, because the Spirit of God, which ought to have been making him grow in grace, freely and healthily, to the stature of a perfect man, to the fulness of the measure of Christ, is striving to conquer old bad habits, and cure old diseases of character; and the man, even though he does enter

into life, enters into it halt and maimed; and the wages of his sin have been, as they always will be, death to some powers, some faculties of his soul.

Think over these things, my friends; and believe that the wages of sin are death, and that there is no escaping from God's just and everlasting laws. But meanwhile, let us judge no man. This is a great and a solemn reason for observing, with fear and trembling, our Lord's command, for it is nothing less, 'Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not and ye shall not be condemned.'

For we never can know how much of any man's misconduct is to be set down to original, and how much to actual, sin;—how much disease of mind and heart he has inherited from his parents, how much he has brought upon himself.

Therefore judge no man, but yourselves. Search your own hearts, to see what manner of men you really wish to be; judge yourselves, lest God should judge you.

Do you wish to go on as you like here on earth, right or wrong, in the hope that, somehow or other, the punishment of your sins will be forgiven you at the last day?

Then know that that is impossible. As a man sows, so shall he reap; and if you sow to the flesh, of the flesh you will reap—corruption. The wages of sin are death. Those wages will be paid you, and you must take them whether you like or not.

But do you wish to be Good? Do you see (I trust in God that many of you do) that goodness is the only wise, safe, prudent life for you because it is the only path the end of which is not death?

Do you see that goodness is the only right and honourable life for you, because it is the only path by which you can do your duty to man or to God; the only method by which you can show your gratitude to God for all His goodness to you, and can please Him, in return for all that He has done by His grace and free love to bless you?

Do you, in a word, repent you truly of your former sins, and purpose to lead a new life? Then know, that all beyond is the free grace, the free gift of God. You have to earn nothing, to buy nothing.

The will is all God asks. Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ.

Freely He forgives you all your past sins, for the sake of that precious blood which was shed on the cross for the sins of the whole world. Freely He takes you back, as His child, to your Father's house. Freely, He gives you His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Goodness, the Spirit of Life, to put into your mind good desires, and enable you to bring those desires to good effect, that you may live the eternal life of grace and goodness for ever, whether in earth or heaven.

Yes, it is the Gift of God, which raises you from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; and if you have that gift, you will not murmur, surely, though you have to bear, more or less, the just and natural consequences of your former sins; though you be, through your own guilt, a sadder man to your dying day. Be content. You are forgiven. You are cleansed from your sin; is not that mercy enough? Why are you to demand of God, that He should over and above cleanse you from the consequences of your sin? He may leave them there to trouble and sadden you, just because He loves you, and desires to chasten you, and keep you in mind of what you were, and what you would be again, at any moment, if His Spirit left you to yourself. You may have to enter into life halt and maimed: yet, be content; you have a thousand times more than you deserve, for at least you enter into Life.

SERMON V NIGHT AND DAY

(Preached at the Chapel Royal.)

Romans xiii. 12

The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

Certain commentators would tell us, that St. Paul wrote these words in the expectation that the end of the world, and the second coming of Christ, were very near. The night was far spent, and the day of the Lord at hand. Salvation—deliverance from the destruction impending on the world, was nearer than when his converts first believed. Shortly the Lord would appear in glory, and St. Paul and his converts would be caught up to meet Him in the air.

No doubt St. Paul's words will bear this meaning. No doubt there are many passages in his writings which seem to imply that he thought the end of the world was near; and that Christ would reappear in glory, while he, Paul, was yet alive on the earth. And there are passages; too, which seem to imply that he afterwards altered that opinion, and, no longer expecting to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, desired to depart himself, and be with Christ, in the consciousness that 'He was ready to be offered up, and the time of his departure was at hand.'

I say that there are passages which seem to imply such a change in St. Paul's opinions. I do not say that they actually imply it. If I had a positive opinion on the matter, I should not be hasty to give it. These questions of 'criticism,' as they are now called, are far less important than men fancy just now. A generation or two hence, it is to be hoped, men will see how very unimportant they are, and will find that they have detracted very little from the authority of Scripture as a whole; and that they have not detracted in the least from the Gospel and good news which Scripture proclaims to men—the news of a perfect God, who will have men to become perfect even as He, their Father in heaven, is perfect; who sent His only begotten Son into the world, that the world through Him might be saved.

In this case, I verily believe, it matters little to us whether St. Paul, when he wrote these words, wrote them under the belief that Christ's second coming was at hand. We must apply to his words the great rule, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation—that is, does not apply exclusively to any one fact or event: but fulfils itself again and again, in a hundred unexpected ways, because he who wrote it was moved by the Holy Spirit, who revealed to him the eternal and ever-working laws of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, I say, the words are true for us at this moment.

To us, though we have, as far as I can see, not the least reasonable cause for supposing the end of the world to be more imminent than it was a thousand years ago—to us, nevertheless, and to every generation of men, the night is always far spent, and the day is always at hand.

And this, surely, was in the mind of those who appointed this text to be read as the Epistle for the first Sunday in Advent.

Year after year, though Christ has not returned to judgment; though scoffers have been saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? for all things continue as they were at the beginning?'—Year after year, I say, are the clergy bidden to tell the people that the night is far spent, that the day is at hand; and to tell them so, because it is true. Whatsoever St. Paul meant, or did not mean, by the words, a few years after our Lord's ascension into heaven, they are there, for ever, written by one

who was moved by the Holy Ghost; and hence they have an eternal moral and spiritual significance to mankind in every age.

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