

LECTURE VI

“The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them.”
JOHN xvii. 22.

THE glorified Lord in heaven is to be represented by His Church on earth; and we have seen how this is to be effected by His people's life. We turn now to the second point proposed for consideration.

II. The glorified Lord is to be made manifest in His people's Work. At the right hand of the Father the Redeemer works; and, as His people are to represent Him in the world, they must represent Him not in life only, but in work. Their work also must be moulded upon His work, and more particularly upon that “Intercession” of His with the Father which consists, as we have seen, not in prayer alone, but in such a continuous and varied application of the blessings of redemption as may establish His Divine-human kingdom upon earth in all its completeness, strength, and beauty. One thing, however, the Church has to do which is not needed of her Lord. He is “perfected”; she is not. She has still to press on to the goal that has been already reached by Him; and her work thus naturally divides itself into two great

branches — first, for herself; and secondly, for the world.

1. The Church's work for herself. For it is a mistake to imagine that the activities of the Church are to bear only or even chiefly upon those who are beyond her pale; or that she has discharged her duty to her Lord when, by means of ministers, missionaries, and workers of many different kinds, she has become a centre of Christian action among men. She has another and still more imperative duty to perform — that of so building up, purifying, and adorning her own inner life that, in herself and by what she is, she may worthily represent that Redeemer who, in the combined perfection of His Divine and human natures, is ever before God, with His people in Him. But enough has been already said upon this point. What we have to think of now is the relation of the Church's Life and Work to one another.

Here it is of importance to remember that of the power by which the best work is done, character is always the highest and the noblest element. In that Sermon on the Mount in which our Lord unfolded the greatest mysteries of His kingdom, every one of the Beatitudes with which He begins has reference to character. For the activities of the Church there is no Beatitude. Our Lord would unquestionably have blessed these also in their proper place. Yet something more deserving of cultivation was to be first attended to; and not until the Beatitudes are ended do we read, "Neither do men light a lamp, and put it

under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth to all that are in the house. Even so let your light (the light of those in whom the Beatitudes are realised) shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."¹ Character precedes power. The general teaching of the New Testament is in conformity with this principle.

It was so in the case of our Lord Himself. When the fourth Evangelist describes the deepest and most characteristic feature of His Person, it is in the words, "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men"²—an order of things which the Church of the present day would be under a strong temptation to reverse. And throughout the Gospel in which these words occur our Lord Himself, in carrying on His work, continually refers "the Jews" not so much to what He said as to what they beheld in Him, for the manifestation of His Father's glory and the revelation of His Father's will.

As with Him, so also with His disciples. The scene of the Foot-washing, spoken of in the previous Lecture for another purpose, is in this respect peculiarly instructive. Immediately connected with those parting discourses by which the disciples were prepared for the work before them, it comes first, not second, in the transactions of the touching and memorable night when it occurred. The disciples were to cleanse one another before they proceeded to execute their task. It is hardly necessary, however, to refer to particular passages. In the structure, strain, and spirit of every one

¹ Matt. v. 15, 16.

² John i. 4.

of its various parts the whole New Testament guides us to the same conclusion. Important as the sacred writers knew their message to the world to be, they never fail to exhibit the conviction that it was even more important to the churches; that, while they had no doubt to convert unbelievers, it was still more imperatively required that they should edify believers and carry them on unto perfection; and that the different members of the Body needed to be compacted into one, each working well in its own place, and all working smoothly together, before the Church could successfully accomplish her mission. Hence the exhortations to growth in every Christian grace with which the New Testament Epistles abound; hence the joy and thankfulness with which every manifestation of that growth was hailed by the Apostles and apostolic men who wrote them; hence the prominence continually assigned to that order of things which, embodying the precept of our Lord, first makes the tree good that its fruit may be good also; and hence, to take only one noteworthy example from the writings of St. Paul, when that Apostle tells us of the object which the ascended Lord had in view by the gift of His various ministries, the conversion of the world is not mentioned. Everything has relation to the Church. Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers are given "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the

measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ . . . from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together . . . maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love." ¹

The lesson taught by passages such as these had been also taught by type and figure under the Old Testament dispensation. The Golden Candlestick of the Tabernacle was, as we learn from the Apostle John, an emblem of the Church as well as of the Church's Head; ² and it was not the least interesting arrangement connected with it that not only would its lamps appear to have burned by night when no work needed to be done within the sanctuary, but that the wicks of the lamps were so trimmed towards the stem of the candlestick as to throw their light upon it rather than into the surrounding space. Each lamp, to whichever side of the candlestick it was attached, had the same commission as its fellow-lamps, and all were to mingle their rays around that elaborately wrought stem, the gold and knops and flowers of which were seldom under any other eye than that of God! What a lesson for the Church! Why shall she concern herself so exclusively as she does about shining for the world's good? Why not shine for the sake of shining, and without thinking of the world? Why not send up songs in the night although there be no ear of man to hear? Why not clothe herself in her bridal garments although there be no eye of man to see? The Lord Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church. Can the Church be wrong in often thinking exclusively of

¹ Eph. iv. 11-16.

² Rev. i. 20.

Him, of the duty that she owes Him, and of the manner in which she can increase His happiness? Can there be either error or sin should lamp often shine on lamp, church on church, congregation on congregation, Christian on Christian, as if there were no one in the world but themselves? as if they had simply to rejoice in each other's beams, to heighten each other's brilliancy, and to create a larger, purer, sweeter body of light than there would otherwise be for God alone?

Thus it was in the bright dawn of the Church's history, when all that believed continued steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and, breaking bread at home, did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. The infant community was not thinking then—it had, indeed, had no time to think—of anything beyond itself; but the Lord added to it day by day those that were being saved.¹ We need a revival of this spirit in our day. If, on the one side, the activities of the Church seem to increase her strength; on the other side, these very activities, by engrossing almost all her thoughts, are wearing her down to the level of the world, and thinning the heavenly life-blood by which alone she can be sustained. We have too little of the spirit of devotion, of meditation, and of prayer. Multitudes are ready to speak for Christ, or to sacrifice themselves in labouring for His cause. But the utterances are too few that come from sitting at His feet or leaning on His breast. Both the Church and the

¹ Acts ii. 46, 47.

world are the poorer for this. The home is not all that it should be when our attention is fixed mainly on the busy Martha. More even than of her ought we to think of Mary, who has chosen "the good part that shall not be taken away from her."¹

Would that the different branches of the Christian Church could see this more clearly than they do! The late Dr. Arnold of Rugby said, "If half the energy and resources which have been turned to Bible Societies and Missions had steadily been applied to the reform of our own institutions, and the enforcing the principles of the Gospel among ourselves, I cannot but think that we should have been fulfilling a higher duty, and with the blessing of God might have produced a more satisfactory fruit."² Dr. Arnold did not, in thus speaking, undervalue either Bible Societies or Missionary exertions. But he felt that these, however earnest, depended for their strength upon a prior element—the vigour and purity and depth of the Divine life out of which they spring. What was true then is not less true now, when outward agencies have been indefinitely multiplied, and thousands are unceasingly endeavouring to discover what new agencies they can bring into the field. Let them do so, and may God prosper every genuine and wise effort of the kind. But, beyond and above them all, it is the primary duty of the Church to ask herself whether she *is* what she ought to be. Is she sufficiently "one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic"? Is she manifesting to men, as the chief features of her

¹ Luke x. 42.

² Letter to Rev. J. Tucker in 1826.

condition, to strike and win them, those beauties of holiness which sparkle like the dewdrops of the morning? To these things, more than to all Bible Societies and Missions to the heathen, the Church needs in the first instance to direct her thoughts. We may plant new churches both at home and abroad; we may gather increasing funds; we may employ fresh agencies till each sex and age and profession and condition of life has its special religious provision made for it; and we may be encouraged by the hopes and prayers of thousands of humble followers of Christ, who, amidst all discouragement, console themselves with the reflection that such efforts cannot be in vain. It is very touching and very beautiful; and doubtless the efforts are not in vain. But the result is trifling in comparison; and it will and must remain so until the Church sees more distinctly than she does that she herself, and not her work, is the great Mission to the world, and until she spares neither labour nor sacrifice to exhibit a more perfect representation of that Divine life and love without which all she either does or suffers, or tells of her doing and suffering, is no more than "sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." To her the conversion of the world has certainly been committed, but only to her while she reveals herself to it as the Bride of Christ. "Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city."¹

2. The Church's work for the world. The true rule, as we have seen, is, First be, then do. But the Church is not to delay doing. Her doing will even react upon

¹ Isa. lii. 1.

her being. So essentially is action involved in the nature of her calling that, just as the discharge of every separate function of the natural body tends to the strengthening of the whole body, so Christian action in any department strengthens life, even while it cannot be efficient unless it springs from life. St. Paul proceeded upon this principle when he commended the Corinthian Christians, because they "first gave their own selves to the Lord," and then "to him by the will of God";¹ and when again, in exhorting the Philippian to the cultivation of whatsoever things are true, or honourable, or just, or pure, or lovely, or of good report, he enjoined them first to "think" of these things, and then to "do" them.² After the "thinking" the "doing," and that both as to its matter and its manner.

For (1) as to its matter, the Church has to represent her glorified Lord by carrying out, as His representative, the work of which He laid the foundation when He was on earth. It is true that He is now in heaven, and that she represents Him glorified as well as Incarnate. But that does not alter the character of her work; it simply increases her power in prosecuting it. It gives her a more elevated spirit, and more confident assurance of success. Whatever belongs, therefore, to the idea of priestly work, belongs to her commission; and a fundamental conception of that work is service of man—the service of humility, gentleness, meekness, love, and self-sacrifice. Men tell us that it has not always been so when the priestly idea has been rampant. They bid

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 5.

² Phil. iv. 8, 9.

us look back upon the past that we may see there what a Church calling herself a priestly Church became—proud instead of humble, cruel instead of tender, selfish instead of loving. The charge cannot be denied; and from some sides of the picture the mind shrinks with dismay and horror. But there are other sides of the picture to be kept in view when we endeavour to form a general and impartial judgment. Protestants have no interest in denying the good that was done even by a corrupt and worldly Church during the centuries of her undisputed sway. They can have no pleasure in believing that darkness then covered the earth, or that selfishness ruled instead of love. And, after all, the picture when really studied is far from being one only of gloom. There was light in the midst of darkness, and love in the midst of selfishness. The secular world then consisted for the most part of tyrants on their thrones, and of fierce, reckless, lawless barons in their castles. The poor were ground to the dust by brutal authority against which they had no protection from the State. They found protection in the Church. In her, notwithstanding all abuses, there was law, order, mercy, charity; and when men and women, weary of the corruptions and abominations around them, sought rest, they found it in her bosom. There was help in her for woes for which there was otherwise no helper; and when monks and nuns gave bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, and clothing to the naked; when they visited the sick man upon his bed of languishing, and the prisoner in his loathsome dungeon, and told of One

who had loved His people even unto death, and of a Church which was still His messenger upon earth for works such as He had done, the hungry and the thirsty, and the naked and the sick, and the prisoner, touched by the living hand, moved by the living voice, looked up and said, "We believe in the love of Him whose love is taught us by your love, whose pity by your pity." The representative of the dying, living Lord was fulfilling her commission, and the fruits appeared.

This was priestliness, that priestliness about which so much is spoken without thought as to the real meaning of the word. Whatever may advance the welfare of our fellow-creatures falls within its sphere of operation, subject only to the condition that it exhibit the spirit of a Master, not merely as He was on earth, but as He is in heaven, spiritual and glorified. When the Church keeps this in view there is no human want or weakness strange to her. It is her part to heal every wound and to wipe away every tear.

Of the amount of harm done by forgetfulness of this truth it would be difficult to speak aright. Both at home and abroad ministers and missionaries are not unfrequently driven by force of circumstances to make the material welfare of those among whom they labour one of the first objects of their regard. On the mission-field they have to teach men to plough, to sow, to reap, to build, to clothe themselves, to read and write and cipher. At home they have to arouse a feeling on behalf of elementary education, and light, and air, and cleanliness, and efficient drainage. They are apt to

enter upon all this work, questioning whether they are justified in doing it; while, on the other hand, multitudes around them cry, "Now, we understand and value you; this is practically to promote human welfare, and is far better adapted to human needs than what is called Preaching the Gospel." The workers may dismiss their hesitation. The patronisers of their work may withhold their compliments. When work of this kind is done from the Christian motive, and is animated by the Christian spirit, it is a preaching of the Gospel. Our High-priest in heaven—"the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"—healed the sick and fed the hungry multitudes. He would do the same thing now through His people, as they carry on His priestly work. In His name they are still to help, strengthen, and comfort all. They are to find their joy in taking upon them the sorrows of others; in dying for others they are to live. A heavy responsibility has been incurred by those who have presented to men a different idea of priestliness. A no less heavy responsibility is incurred by those who disown the term because they say it has a different meaning.

The remarks now made apply with peculiar emphasis to the mission-field. To no part of their work are the thoughts of Christian men more earnestly turned at this moment than to that which bids them "go and make disciples of all the nations."¹ It cannot surprise us that it should be so, for the world is waiting to be christianised. The cry for help is heard from the darkest continents and the remotest islands of the sea;

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19.

while the taunts of the scoffer have been almost silenced by the self-sacrificing lives and martyr deaths of many devoted missionaries. The question is rising from innumerable lips, How shall we best advance the cause of Missions? The true answer is by the Church's more fully realising her relation to all human wants; in other words, more fully realising her call to be the priesthood of humanity. No lower thought, no thought of the conversion of individual souls in one place or another, will maintain the missionary spirit at its proper height, or will clothe it with its appropriate power. The Church must be animated by the belief that she is elect not for her own sake, but for the world's; and that her life is to be a priestly life, in the name of the Heavenly Father, for the spreading of that "kingdom" which, bringing men to God, brings them also to one another, and lifts them into that ideal sphere of the holy, the beautiful, and the loving which is as yet consummated only in the Great High-priest in heaven. To the missionary spirit "duty and reason and warm human sympathies yield each their contributory native energy; but more constraining than these, because more deeply seated, is the sense of a personal identification with that which impels towards a transcendent ideal, a vast Unknown of God's embracing love as the historical destiny of men.

"For we spin the lives of men,
And not of gods, and know not why we spin.
There is a fate beyond us." ¹

¹ From a thoughtful paper on "The Missionary Appeal" in the

This "historical destiny" of the human race is but another expression for the Biblical idea, "The Tabernacle of God is with men";¹ and in that Tabernacle, wide as the world, and with its veil rent from top to bottom, the whole Church, when alive to her vocation, is to stand a ministering priesthood; until, in the most extended sense of the term, "all Israel shall be saved."

(2.) In connexion with the point before us the manner as well as the matter of the Church's work demands a moment's notice, for in the glorified Lord we see what the one no less than the other ought to be. Even upon earth our Lord paid supreme regard in what He did to the means as well as the end; and His Temptation in the wilderness, in the different parts of which were summed up all the trials of His approaching work, is in this respect peculiarly instructive. The third temptation in particular, in which Satan showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and promised that they should be His if He would only fall down and worship him, was essentially a temptation to despise the means if He might secure the end. It was the greatest temptation of the three, and one which, yielded to by the Church in after times, has done more harm to the cause of Christ than all the efforts of her adversaries. Yet our Lord repelled it with indignant scorn, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."²

Church Quarterly Review for July 1890. Comp. also *The Priesthood of the Laity*, by Bishop Webb, a

small book full of valuable instruction.

¹ Rev. xxi. 3.

² Matt. iv. 10.

Were the means impure, the kingdom established through them would be impure also; were they of the earth, the kingdom could not be heavenly. The lesson is needed now; for there are methods, too often resorted to by persons both clerical and lay, who from their position cannot fail to represent the Church, which have little correspondence with either the Person or the Work of the Church's glorified Head in heaven. The sensational advertisement; the vulgar coarseness of not a little pulpit language; the appeals to sinful vanity or pride, for the purpose of forcing money out of the pockets of the miserly; the dexterous management by which godless patrons are obtained to countenance religious meetings—these and many devices of a similar kind are not the way to make a Christian impression on the world. They rather render any true conception of Christianity impossible. They poison Christian growth at its very root. They make truth a lie. The Church of Christ will never accomplish her object by such means.

Apart, however, from all thought of methods of this kind, which would be unworthy of notice were they not so common, the point before us throws light upon the only means by which the Church can make a deep impression on the poor and outcast. She is to represent the personal Redeemer. How can she do it except through the persons and the personal exertions of her members? We talk of salvation through a preached Gospel, but we have no right to expect the result of preaching from the outward word alone, apart from the living personality of those who utter it. It is the living

word, the Gospel as it comes in love from the loving heart, that speaks with power. We need not undervalue great schemes of Christian benevolence. Love may proclaim itself from the platform, and vast assemblies may be moved to tears and liberality. But the true work of love is personal. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."¹ Such love must be the soul of any work that is to leave a deep impression behind it, or in the spirit of our Lord to secure His end. Tears stirred in any other way will soon be dried, and a tide of liberality flowing from any other influence will soon ebb.

From the thought of the work of the glorified Lord, therefore, it would seem that many branches at least of the Church of Christ have a lesson to learn in our day which, when learned, may be the means of introducing a new era in their history. Let us be thankful that they are learning it. Their brotherhoods, their sisterhoods, their "settlements," the dwelling of their ministers amongst the poor, the daily personal contact with hearts often more sad than wicked, or often saddest in their wickedness, the labours unseen by human eye, the sacrifices uncomplained of by those who make them—these and other efforts devised by the spirit of

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 4-7.

faith and love are producing, and will produce, an effect, the extent of which we cannot as yet measure. While we guard against their abuse, let them grow. They have the thought of the personal Redeemer and the experience of many Christian centuries to commend them to our regard. They are an approach to the idea of the priesthood of the Church.

III. The glorified Lord is to be manifested in the Worship of His people. We can no more conceive of the Church without worship than without life or work. In nothing do Christian men find more necessary or suitable expression for their feelings. By nothing do they exercise a more powerful influence on the world. Let any branch of the Christian Church make the subject one of careful inquiry, with a view to the improvement of her worship, should improvement be thought necessary, and in doing so she takes a step that will certainly be followed by the most momentous consequences.¹ When, accordingly, we ask how the Ascended Saviour is to manifest His glory in His people, and by means of them to carry on His work on earth, the thought of the Worship of the Church immediately forces itself upon us. What are the principles upon which it rests? and What is the spirit which ought to mark it? The answer to the second question depends upon the answer to the first. In making this inquiry, too, it would be foolish to forget the lessons of Christian history, or to aim at the construction of theories

¹ This step was taken by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1880. The inquiry continues.

founded upon our own conceptions of man's religious need, and of the manner in which Christianity may be best applied to it. The Christian Church has worshipped, and has maintained her life by worship, for nearly nineteen centuries. During that long period we may rest assured that, under the influence of the Spirit, she has come to clearer conceptions of what her worship means, has eliminated mistakes, supplied deficiencies, and done much to shape her offices of devotion into a harmonious and consistent whole. When, therefore, we endeavour to ascertain the principles by which she has been guided in the construction and arrangement of her worship, our appeal must be less to abstract theory than to theory illustrated and enforced by historical fact. In making such an appeal several important considerations meet us; and all of them will be found to lead up to the exalted and glorified Lord.

1. The worship of the Church has always been and must be a common worship. There is no doubt a worship of the closet which is the Christian's "vital breath" and "native air," and without which the spiritual life cannot be maintained in health and vigour. There is also a worship of the family, arising out of those sanctified family affections which cannot tolerate the thought that any member of the home-circle shall be missed from the family in heaven.¹ Both these forms of worship the Church of Christ approves of and inculcates as most necessary and binding duties upon

¹ Comp. Lightfoot's remarks by the Gospel, *Comm. on Philip-*
on the hallowing of Family life *pians*, Introd. p. 56.

every Christian man and Christian family. But neither the one nor the other, nor both together, are enough. Christians need a common worship. They are the Body of Christ; and only in that capacity can they either perform the functions of the Body, or enjoy the privileges which flow through the Body as a whole to its separate parts. They are not merely individual personalities, each having its own distinct line of connexion with the Head. They are sharers of a common life, and are united to one another by a bond similar to that which unites them to their Lord, and in their Lord to the Father of all. One of the truths most strenuously insisted on throughout the whole of the first Epistle of St. John is this, that only in the fellowship of Christian men with one another is their Christian standing realised and perfected: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us;" "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him;" "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God."¹ From the beginning to the end of the Epistle the same strain of thought prevails. It is not in the fellowship of Christ alone that we fully occupy our Christian position. There must be added to this the fellowship of the saints. The latter as well as the former is necessary to the unfolding and perfecting of the Divine life within us.

If so, that common worship, which is as much the

¹ 1 John i. 3, ii. 10, iv. 7; comp. also i. 7, iv. 11, 12, 21.

expression of common life as individual worship is of individual life, is binding upon every Christian. It depends in the first and highest instance upon no thought of benefit received or to be received, but upon the fact that, as Head of the Body, the Redeemer does not stand alone. He has taken up all His people into Himself, and His glory cannot be thought of without them. Through them and in them He fills all things.¹ Apart from them He has not that fulness, that fulfilling, of all which was from eternity the predestined consummation of His Mediatorial Being.

The social element is thus as deeply involved in any correct conception of Christ Himself the glorified Lord as the individual element. We do not make it: it is made for us. We cannot dissolve it without, in separating ourselves from the Body, also separating ourselves from the Head, which acts through the Body. Just as without the individual element there is no individual life, so without the social element life, cut off from the channel through which the grace of the Head penetrates to every member, languishes and dies.

Nor is this to maintain in any objectionable sense the proposition so frequently branded as narrow and offensive, *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. It is only to maintain that beyond the Church there can be no *salus*, no salvation, worthy of the name. If that word means simply escape from condemnation, it is impossible to say by how many forms of a stunted or eccentric Christianity salvation may be reached. It is even impossible to

¹ Eph. i. 23.

say whether it may not be reached without a conscious Christianity at all. But, if we interpret the word in its true and proper sense, as conformity to the will of God, to the example of Christ, and to the inheritance of heaven; if we understand by it the redeemed life ideally perfected in the soul, then it may be truly urged that to such salvation communion with the Church is absolutely required. Only in fellowship with men can the human character be developed into the strength and harmony which it may naturally attain; and any sound principle of nature is not less sound in grace.

Were there time to discuss the question, it might be shown that the considerations now adduced afford the only sure ground upon which to vindicate at least the partial use of prescribed forms of prayer in the public services of the Church. No argument against extemporaneous prayer can be safely rested either on the confusion of thought or tastelessness of expression by which it is too often marked, or on the need which the officiating minister has of help in the performance of his duties. Where such defects exist they may be corrected by increased spirituality of heart or by the study of the best models of devotion; while a minister must be ready to bear any burden belonging to his office. But extemporaneous prayer, however tasteful, and however it may proceed from the most fervent spirit of devotion, can never be the Church's voice. We can never hear in it those common utterances that, sanctified by centuries of Christian usage, proclaim the faith and hope and love of ten thousand times ten

thousand souls, which, amidst all the varieties of their outward condition, have been really one.

2. The worship of the Church is designed in the first instance to promote the glory of God rather than to procure benefits for His worshippers. This is, indeed, the mission of universal nature, and nature fulfils her mission. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth forth His handiwork."¹ The sun and moon and stars, the multitude of the heavenly bodies, the unnumbered creatures that people earth and sea and air, the mountains and the valleys, the rivers and fountains of waters, the trees of the forest, the flowers of the garden, and the grasses of the field, with one voice proclaim His praise.² Amidst this general song man cannot alone be silent; and least of all man redeemed, taught to know God as a Father, and to look forward to heaven as a home. He must take his part in the universal choir. Even when he would ask no favour, when he would utter no want, when he would tell no tale of sorrow into a sympathetic ear, he must praise. "Let them praise the name of the Lord; for His name alone is exalted: His glory is above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto Him. Praise ye the Lord."³

If this be the spirit of Old Testament worship, the same spirit, though in a still higher degree, ought to mark the worship of the New Testament. And it does so. Upon this point the Revelation of St. John affords

¹ Ps. xix. 1.

² Comp. Ps. cxlviii.

³ Ps. cxlviii. 13, 14.

us peculiar guidance. The worship there set before us is penetrated throughout by the thought of magnifying the name of God and of the Lamb for what they themselves are in all the glory of their perfections and works. In that book the four living creatures, representing redeemed creation, are introduced to us as having no rest day or night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord,—God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come"; and they are immediately followed by the four and twenty elders, who fell down to worship Him that sitteth on the throne, casting their crowns before the throne, and saying, "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power; for Thou didst create all things; and because of Thy will they were, and were created."¹ Nor is this all; for no sooner has the sealed book been opened by the Lamb than a new note is struck, the note of redemption, but still in praise; until gradually the song extends from the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders to the ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels round about the throne; and from them to "every created thing which is in the heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them,"—all of which, now brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, unite in saying, "Unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever."² In scenes like these, whatever may be the

¹ Rev. iv.² Rev. v.

peace, the joy, and the triumph of those who thus praise God, it is not so much of themselves that they think as of Him from whom flow all their blessings.

This, accordingly, has been the spirit of the Church, in so far as she has expressed it in her Service-books, throughout all her history. "Lift up your hearts unto the Lord"; "We have lifted them up unto the Lord." The low dull tone so often marking our Public Worship has never been the tone of any Christian liturgy. Nothing strikes one sooner in the old Service-books than the absence of confessions except on special days or seasons of repentance. The service of the Church was almost exclusively joyous. Her worship consisted nearly altogether of Psalms, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed (itself a Psalm)—

Creed of the saints and
Anthem of the blest—

a few versicles, a few Collects, the lections from Scripture, and these interspersed with anthems, responsories, and hymns. It was one chant, culminating in the Eucharist, the peculiar sacrifice of thanksgiving. It was one effort to set forth "God's most worthy praise," when the Church forgot for the moment her own necessities in contemplating the love which passeth knowledge.

Here again, accordingly, we are led to the thought of the glorified Redeemer. His life on earth was praise; and when, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the sacred writer brings Him before us "crowned with glory and

honour," surrounded by His people, it is in the words of the Psalmist, "In the midst of the congregation will I sing Thy praise."¹ Suffering from many weaknesses and trials, the Church on earth has much to ask for. Even in heaven she will have constant need of that prayer which is the longing of her heart after the fountain of all goodness and beauty. But the first thought which she associates with Him in whom she stands is praise; and the more fully the Spirit of her Lord becomes her Spirit, the more must she feel that the key-note of her worship is not prayer for blessings needed in the future, but adoration and thanksgiving for those that have been made hers already.

3. The worship of the Church is primarily, and it has been historically, intended for the edification of saints rather than the conversion of sinners. Not to convert the world did Christians of old gather together in private chambers, or catacombs, or dens of the earth, or basilicas, or cathedrals, or parish churches, but to strengthen their own faith, to deepen their own convictions, and to enjoy the consolations provided for them amidst their trials. In very ancient times the place of preaching to the unconverted was even *outside* the Church, in the *narthex* or *atrium*; and hence St. Ambrose shut the doors of his church against Theodosius.² The principle has been too frequently lost sight of; many think too little of it even now. Multitudes regard the Christian

¹ Heb. ii. 12; Ps. xxii. 23.

² See an excellent paper on "The Principles of Christian Wor-

ship" in the *Transactions of the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society* for 1887, by the Rev. James Cooper of that city.

sanctuary as a place in which, if they have not to be converted, they have at the best simply to receive instruction. It does not occur to them that there is something strange in receiving the same instruction for fifty years, or even for a lifetime, in "ever learning, yet never being able to come to the knowledge of the truth."¹

No doubt there is a certain amount of truth in this view of Christian worship. In every Christian congregation some are to be found who, though baptized, have practically fallen away from Christ, and who may be led by the services in which they take part to repentance and faith, while even the true members of Christ have in many ways to be edified and comforted by the preacher's words. Yet surely the conversion of men is not the chief thing aimed at in Christian assemblies. In no proper sense does such an aim express the idea of the Church. It is the idea of a mission to the heathen. Were the members of any Church in a condition of heathenism; were the ministers who guide their worship missionaries to the heathen, the conception would be right. Such, however, is not the case. By the very fact of their coming together as they do, and prior to their doing so, both ministers and people are supposed to be one in Christ; and their common function is to help one another to a deeper understanding of their Lord, and to bestow upon one another some gift of mutual faith.² In this lies the fundamental idea of their meeting as they do, and it is of no moment to them whether any part of the world is present with

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 7.

² Comp. Rom. i. 12.

them or not. Better, perhaps, if the world is absent. They may then be more unrestrained, more at ease, less liable to the chill which threatens to paralyse the heart when its emotions are certain to be misunderstood by those who witness them.¹

Our Lord Himself appears to have felt thus at the institution of the Supper; for, as the Evangelist reports the scene, "When *therefore* Judas was gone out, Jesus saith, Now is the Son of man glorified;"² after which He proceeded to pour forth upon His disciples, in a way previously unexampled, the fulness of His love. The conclusion is irresistible. The worship of the Church is the expression of Christian feeling for the edification of Christian men.

4. The Worship of the Church must express itself, as it has always expressed itself, in form. We are to serve God as men, with our whole nature, and not merely with a part of it. To say, therefore, that we will serve Him in spirit, though not in outward acts embodying that spirit, is to refuse to Him one great

¹ It is well known that the feeling of the Ancient Church did not allow her to go on to the celebration of the Eucharist till the heathen, and even the catechumens, had been sent out. The principle is to be found in our Lord's words in Matt. vii. 6. His example has been spoken of in the text.

Where the ancient Liturgies are used, the deacon still bids the catechumens depart, and it is generally allowed that the Mass

has its name from a proclamation of the kind—in the Latin *rito ite, missa est*. The Mass followed that dismissal. Our children in Scotland remain in church during the celebration of the Supper, because they are not strangers. These also are not strangers who, though they may not communicate on the special occasion, do communicate on other occasions or at other hours.

² John xiii. 31.

part of the being which He has given us, and all of which He claims. Nature herself thus becomes our teacher as to the necessity, and even in some respects as to the regulation, of religious forms. And St. Paul recognised this when, referring to a disputed ceremonial at Corinth, he said, "Doth not even nature itself teach you"?¹ In Christian Worship, accordingly, as in all other worship, there has always been more or less form, ceremonial, ritual; and it could not possibly have been otherwise. The instinct of the human heart was sufficient to be, so far at least, the Church's guide.

But the main principle, at once justifying and demanding form in the worship of the Christian Church, is the fact upon which her very existence rests—that of the Incarnation. Whether we think of our Lord's existence upon earth or of His glorified condition in heaven, the Incarnation involves as a fundamental verity that the outward, the formal, and the visible are the complements, not the opposites, of the inward, the spiritual, and the invisible. So far are the latter from losing their essential character when they pass into the former, that then only do they reach a stage in complete correspondence with our human condition. We may make them opposites. In the weakness of the flesh we may substitute the one for the other; and the experience of many Christian centuries has warned us of this danger; but the danger does not lie wholly in that one direction. It has also shown itself in an exclusive devotion to the spiritual in its narrower sense; and, if

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 14.

consequences as fatal to the Church's life have not followed, it is probably because the last-mentioned tendency has been that of the few and, as such, checked by that of the vast majority of Christians.¹ In themselves the logical consequences of either error are equally dangerous and equally near. The duty of Christian men, therefore, is to guard against both errors, and only by recognising the claims of the outward as well as the inward can they be preserved from both. The *body* as well as the spirit of man has been for ever consecrated by Him who took to Himself a "true body" as well as a "reasonable soul," and who still retains the one not less than the other, even in that estate of glory in which man's nature has been for ever perfected. Outward worship is thus not something either devised by man or bestowed by God, in order that spiritual religion may be helped onward to perfection. It is an essential part of spiritual religion in its highest sense.

The appeal made to us by every flower of the field may thus with equal propriety be made by every well-considered arrangement of the sanctuary. In admiring the colours of the lily we may forget Him who has arrayed it with a greater glory than the robes of Solomon. Would we have remembered Him more if the glory had been less? The whole question as to the amount of form appropriate to the services of the Church is one to be determined by a Christian wisdom which remembers both that national temperaments

¹ Comp. Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine*, iv. 153.

differ, and that what is suitable to men or congregations at one stage of progress is not always suitable to them at another. We may easily have too much ritual, but one thing we ought never to forget, that the spiritual is not secured by its absence, and that the carnal is not necessarily connected with its presence. As man the Lord Jesus Christ has consecrated ritual. As man exalted and glorified He has not less consecrated such elements of dignity, beauty, and glory as, appearing in it, may fittingly express these characteristics of His own exalted state.

We have seen that the worship of the Christian Church must be common worship; that its leading idea is the glory of God; that it is designed for the edification of believers rather than the conversion of unbelievers; and that it must find utterance in appropriate forms. But these general considerations, however important in themselves, only prepare the way for a true conception of what may be regarded as the central idea of Christian worship. In perfect harmony with what has been said of the Church's Life and Work, her Worship is a repetition by the Church on earth of all that is involved in our Lord's presentation of Himself in heaven to His Father. In His glorified condition our Lord is the first-born among many brethren. In His combined Divine and human natures He offers Himself as a continual oblation to the Father.¹ But His people are in Him, and He is in them. In Him they have access to the Father. In Him they

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 28.

have the support and nourishment of their spiritual life. And it is by now partaking, in ever-increasing measure, of His Spirit that they receive the spiritual education by which they approach continually nearer to the standard of the perfect man in Him. All education, however, proceeds upon the principle that the point to be ultimately reached must regulate the earlier steps by which we gradually reach it. From the fact that the public school is an image of the world in which the boy is afterwards to play his part, it derives its chief value as an institution for the discipline of the young. The more perfectly it reflects the future, the less it forgets that the boy is "the father of the man," the more successfully will it accomplish the end in view. The same rule holds in regard to the kingdom of God. That kingdom, as manifested in the future, will only be the development and completion of its manifestation now. We are as yet in the infancy of our being; our manhood is to come; but our infancy and manhood are bound together by the closest ties. The knowledge that we are to possess, the feelings that we are to cultivate, the hopes that we are to entertain in heaven are the knowledge, the feelings, and the hopes by which we are to be marked on earth. It follows that the scenes of our spiritual manhood must supply the rules for the training of our spiritual youth. As Christian worship here is a preparation for the worship of the Church of the first-born hereafter, the one must be a reflection or reproduction of the other in which we are to engage in the heavenly sabbatism. So far as the imperfections

of earth permit, the Church of Christ is already come to the Mount Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem, and the innumerable company of angels ; and, to be a meet inhabitant of such a dwelling and companion for such an assembly, she must even now catch their spirit and sing their song.

The worship of the Christian Church is thus again no mere independent arrangement, provided by the goodness of God to guide us to communion with Him. It is no mere token of His love which might have been replaced by another equally precious and effective. It flows from communion with the Father through the Son as an already existing reality, and it is because it flows from that communion that it leads us to it. Hence it is that from the very beginning of her history the Church has instinctively regarded the Sacrament of Holy Communion as the central act of her worship. The statements of the New Testament, with regard to the religious exercises of Christians when they met together for worship,¹ followed as they are by the earliest accounts of these assemblies preserved for us in Christian history, leave no possibility of disputing the fact. The question is, How are we to explain it ? And the only answer that can be given is, that in the Sacrament of the Supper the Church realised to a greater extent than in any other of her ordinances both her own deepest, that is, her sacrificial life in her glorified Lord, and His peculiar presence with her as her nourishment and strength and joy. She lived in

¹ Acts ii. 46, xx. 7 ; 1 Cor. xi. 20.

Him as glorified; and in a far higher than ordinary degree Holy Communion, by His own institution, gathered up into itself and applied to her the chief ideas and blessings of His glorified life. In heaven He was surrendering Himself, with all His people in Him, to the Father. Through the spirit of His own Divine-human being, He communicated from thence those Divine-human influences by which His people were enabled to make His surrender of them a free and cheerful surrender of their own. That sacred rite, therefore, in which all this was most clearly represented and most powerfully applied necessarily came to occupy its central position in the Church's eyes, and to be regarded by her as her "great, distinctive, and supreme act of service."¹ Not simply because it commemorated the most momentous event in the life of Jesus upon earth, and certainly not with the faintest idea that she was receiving benefits in a merely mechanical and outward way (*ex opere operato*²), was the Church led to her view of the Eucharist, but because the Communion Table was, more than any other spot, the meeting-place of heaven and earth, where the King met His guests in closer than common fellowship and with richer than common blessing. What was thus the case in early Christian times has continued to be the idea of the Church throughout her history. It was not on superstitious grounds, but as the most perfect expression by

¹ Freeman, *Principles of Divine Service*, i. p. 165.

² It is the thought of the dead Christ that connects itself with

the thought of the *opus operatum*. The thought of the living Lord directly contradicts and negatives such an idea.

the members of the Body upon earth of the attitude in heaven of Him in whom they lived, that the Eucharist became the keynote of Christian Worship.

Not only, however, does the central position occupied by the Holy Communion in the Church's services show us, in the most striking manner, the light in which she looked at her worship as a whole, the same thing is hardly less strikingly illustrated by the tone and spirit of her Common Prayer. Her ordinary offices for this purpose would seem, in general character, often in the very words, to be really an echo and reminder of her sacramental office, to which they thus in turn became tributary streams. And her acts of Public Worship are felt, when the connexion thus pointed out is seen, to be but a cementing of the eucharistically applied union between the glorified Lord and the members of His Body.¹

From what has been said we learn the Church's own testimony to her belief (whether reasoned out or largely instinctive it is unnecessary to ask), that in its primary conception her worship on earth is moulded upon the worship of heaven,² and that its great aim is so to manifest the glorified Lord that He Himself may be more deeply rooted in that life of hers which is to be the counterpart of His own.

One other remark upon this subject may be made. It shows us not only what the substance of our worship,

¹ See this point treated with great fulness and learning by Canon Freeman in the work above mentioned, vol. i.

² Comp. Medd, *The One Mediator*, p. 389; Wilberforce, *On the Incarnation*, p. 209.

but also what the nature of its accessories ought to be—of the buildings used for it, of the colours and ornaments employed in them, of the very tones of the teacher's voice, and the style of the congregation's music. These ought all to be brought as near as possible to the harmony and beauty, to the liveliness and joy, which we associate with the heavenly kingdom. There are few things in the history of religion more melancholy than to see multitudes led by the shoutings of an ignorant fanaticism to resist the changes in this direction which are urged wholly for their sakes, and from which, if introduced without extravagance, they would be the first to profit. Let us not, however, be afraid. Let us only be more careful to test the purity of our own motives. Let us be tolerant to a spirit for the nursing of which we are ourselves in no small degree responsible. Above all, let us build, in every improvement introduced into the Worship of the Church, not upon the shifting sands of a superficial and, it may be, temporary æstheticism, but upon principles lying at the very root of the Christian faith, and flowing out of our holiest and most reverential thoughts of Him who, Himself the Rock of Ages, gives a rock-like stability to every just expression of His Spirit. Of that Spirit Worship is an expression. It may be the poetry rather than the prose of the Christian life.¹ But it is all the more precious and powerful if it be:—

We find within these souls of ours
Some wild germs of a higher birth,

¹ Palmer, in Herzog's *Encycl. Gottesdienst.*

Which in the poet's tropic heart bear flowers
Whose fragrance fills the earth.

God wills, man hopes ; in common souls
Hope is but vague and undefined,
Till from the poet's tongue the message rolls
A blessing to his kind.

IV. The glorified Lord is to be made manifest in the Confession of His Church.

Our Lord came into the world to confess His Father before men, to be a Witness to His being and character and aims. When defending Himself against the opposition of the Jews, He said: "I can of Myself do nothing: as I hear I judge: and My judgment is righteous; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."¹ When Philip in a moment of despondency exclaimed, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us," He replied, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."² And when Pilate asked Him, "Art thou a King then?" He answered, "Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."³ St. Paul speaks of our Lord as having "before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession";⁴ while St. John, in his Gospel, describes Him as One who has "declared the God whom no man hath seen at any time,"⁵ and, in his Apocalypse, as "The faithful Witness," as "The

¹ John v. 30.

² John xiv. 8, 9.

³ John xviii. 37.

⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 13.

⁵ John i. 18.

Amen, the faithful and true Witness.”¹ There is, indeed, no more characteristic aspect in which our Lord is set before us in the New Testament than that of witnessing.

A similar confession then, a similar witnessing, is demanded of the Church when she manifests her Redeemer's glory and carries on His work. It is true that the Church of Christ bears this witness in everything that she is and does,—in her life, her work, and her worship. But that she is to bear it also in word is clearly indicated by such passages of the sacred writings as speak not only of confession by the individual believer,² but of the open acknowledgment of a common faith. Thus we read that Christians are to be baptized “in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”;³ that to salvation a public profession of faith is necessary;⁴ that we are exhorted to “hold fast our confession” and the “confession of our hope”;⁵ and that St. Paul even seems to present us with an early confession of faith in a rhythmical arrangement of parts, when the “great mystery of godliness” is described as “He who was manifested in flesh, justified in spirit, seen of angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.”⁶

Passages such as these point to an open proclamation of her faith on the Church's part, whatever be the particular purpose to which her Confession may be applied. It could not be otherwise. All strong emotions of our

¹ Rev. i. 5; iii. 14.

² Phil. ii. 9-11.

³ Matt. xxviii. 10.

⁴ Rom. x. 10; comp. 1 Cor. xii. 3. ⁵ Heb. iv. 14; x. 23. ⁶ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

nature find utterance in words as well as deeds. When we believe we speak.¹ Blot out to-day every Confession that the Church has framed in the past, she would be compelled to begin framing a new one to-morrow; and she would do this, in the first instance at least, with no thought of discipline, but simply to glorify God, to satisfy her own feelings, and to make her position known. Such is the general principle lying at the root of all Confessions of Faith. But the whole question is at this moment stirring so deeply the heart of the Scottish churches that it may be well to ask whether any light is thrown upon it by that work of the glorified Lord on earth which we are here considering. One or two preliminary observations must be made.

1. A Confession, properly so called, of the Church's faith is the Confession of the whole Church. To imagine that it may be the Confession of the office-bearers, though not at the same time of the members of the Church, is to limit it to a body which does not constitute the Church; is to draw a distinction between office-bearers and members in a way unknown to the New Testament; and is to say that that embodiment of Divine truth proclaimed to men in order to win them to Christ may cease to interest them as soon as they have been won to Him. To maintain, too, that a Confession is only for the few is to destroy its vitality, and to doom it to gradual extinction. The few will soon cease to care for what they are taught to regard as

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 13.

intended for them alone. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ does not live for the few. She lives for all, and she proclaims One who is a Saviour for all. She knows that, wherever there is a human soul, that soul possesses faculties, affections, and feelings which may be trained to the highest possible religious development, and she cannot for a moment acquiesce in the idea that it is not entitled to the fullest light. From the belief that her message is universal, she draws at once her enthusiasm and her hope. Whatever cannot tell on all must soon lose its value in her eyes; and to think that any part of her Confession is for her office-bearers, but not her members, is to hasten the arrival of an hour when that part shall be no longer regarded as living and present truth.

2. A Confession thus intended for the Church as a whole must spring from the Church as a whole. It cannot be framed on the supposition that different sections of believers, attaching different degrees of importance to different parts of revelation, may each contribute their share to that common stock of theological statement which is to be afterwards accepted as the Confession of the Church's faith. So framed it would fail in unity, and no attempt to arrange its parts upon a definite system could be successful. Some parts would almost necessarily be inconsistent with other parts, and the document could not possess that logical coherence which is essential to power over the minds of men. It would also be no Confession of the Church, and we could only learn from it that one section was

with equal right adopted by one party and another by another in the common Body.

3. For the same reason the relation of men towards a Confession, which is looked on as a test of membership, but parts of which perplex them, cannot be lightened by encouraging them to think that they are not bound to receive it all; and that they need only fix their attention upon those parts which, for one reason or another, have for them peculiar attraction. It might then easily happen that, while no single part failed to secure defenders, the sum of the parts had no defender. To avoid this danger it is difficult to lay down any other principle than that all the parts of a Confession which is regarded as a test must be equally authoritative. Even the attempt to distinguish between fundamental and non-fundamental articles will be useless, unless the Church in her collective capacity draws and expresses the distinction. The distinction is a sound one. It may be considered as an axiom of Protestant Theology, and its truth is not now denied. But it cannot be left to each individual to draw the line of distinction for himself, or we shall be in the same hopeless confusion as before.

4. The attempt often made at the present day to draw a broad line of demarcation between theology and religion is entirely irrelevant to this discussion. Who denies that theology is not religion, or that religion is not theology? Since the days when our Lord denounced the wise and prudent, and commended babes, the distinction has been illustrated and acknowledged by every

age; and to place it in the forefront of an argument upon the question with which we are dealing is to resort to what, in that connexion, is either a truism or a delusion. It is a truism if it simply mean that religion is an internal and spiritual, not a merely outward and formal force. It is a delusion if it mean that we may dispense with positive statements of religious truth, and may be satisfied with cherishing pious feelings. Distinct as theology and religion are, they are indispensable to each other. To a greater or less extent they must co-exist if the end of either is to be attained. Without a theology religion becomes a human speculation. Without religion the most comprehensive system of theology becomes a lifeless husk. The language often heard, even from orthodox theologians, that all the benefit to be derived from any doctrine of the Church may be obtained by simply resting upon the fact contained in it, and without inquiry into the bond between the fact and its result, is little better than the language of indolence or despair. We must form an intelligent conception of the manner in which a fact operates before we can fully experience its effect. The doctrine of the forgiveness of sin is contained in every theory of the Atonement, but to urge that we may be content with this assurance, without asking how the forgiveness is brought about by the means proposed, is to deny thought its rights, and can lead only to a vague mysticism, or to the impression that the whole matter is unreal. However true, therefore, in itself, the distinction between theology and

religion may be, it is of no value in the present argument.

5. It may be thought by many that more aid in the solution of the question before us is to be found from drawing a distinction between the words of our Lord Himself and the later and more elaborate statements of theology. Upon this point an eminent Theologian of the Church of England has recently expressed the hope that "as the centuries pass Christian thought will . . . come nearer in love and insight to the simple teaching of our Divine Master."¹ Perhaps it will; we may even share the hope that to some extent at least it may. But no equalising of the differences of different Confessions will be thereby effected. For, in the first place it is impossible to admit the desirableness of laying aside, as if it were without bearing on our present position, of the whole history of theological development between the time of our Lord and the present hour. And, in the second place, even were we to attempt to do so, we should not be successful. The words of the Divine Master cannot be understood by us in the more vague or general sense in which they were at first apprehended by His hearers. Words have no fixed meaning of their own; and they can only be understood in the light of that condition of mind to which we have been brought by the course of past and present history. Unless, therefore, we use the words of Christ in an avowedly ambiguous sense they must be interpreted; and, so interpreted, they will necessarily take the hue

¹ Bishop Moorhouse, *The Teaching of Christ*, p. 148.

of the theological propositions which, differing in different minds, have become a part of ourselves. We may have recourse to the simpler expressions desired, but we shall be compelled to interpret them, each for himself, by the lessons of his Christian experience. Why not do openly what we must do secretly?

Instead, then, of engaging in speculations like these, it may be suggested that an entirely different question ought to occupy the Church's mind. All past attempts to meet our difficulties in connexion with this subject have failed. May there not be a better way? Proceeding upon the views of our Lord and of His work taken in these lectures, we venture to ask,—not, How shall we distinguish between an elaborate and simple theology? but, How shall we distinguish between the conclusions of theology as a science, and the extent to which these conclusions ought to be embodied in a Creed or Test? Upon this important aspect of the question the following observations may be made—

1. The Church must have a Creed. It would seem to be impossible for her to do without one. In the first place, she has to proclaim her faith to the honour of Him from whom it comes; in the second place, she has to make clear to herself what she believes; and, in the third place, she has to be a witness to the world that she knows her faith, and is not ashamed of it. To each of these ends a Creed is necessary.

2. Numerous doctrinal statements enter into the ordinary idea of a Creed upon which not only are Christian men not agreed, but upon which no agreement

can be looked for. If these statements are to fulfil their purpose they must come from the deepest convictions of the Church, and must be clear to those who utter them. They must also be adapted to the habits and modes of thought by which those are marked who, whether within or without the Church, are expected to acknowledge their power. Ambiguity can never satisfy an earnest mind, and to take refuge in it is simply a form of dishonesty. Both for her own and the world's sake the Church is under the highest obligation to speak as plainly and as incisively as she can think. Her language, too, must be cast in a mould corresponding to the general mould of thought in her day, or she will make no impression. The seed may be ripe and sound, but the soil may not be adapted to its growth; and, instead of germinating when sown, it will in that case wither and die. The moment these principles are admitted, and it is difficult to see how they can be denied, it will be seen that men of different countries and of centuries far distant from one another can never hold in a living way a variety of minute doctrinal statements, the product it may be of a peculiar country and a peculiar age. Let us take the case of the East and West, and let us suppose that Christianity, in the early years of its history, had penetrated the Eastern instead of the Western half of the globe; that the Eastern instead of the Western mind had formulated and arranged its truths into orderly propositions; and that, after centuries had passed, the East had resolved to Christianise the West. Can any one believe that, in such circumstances, the Confession

brought by Eastern missionaries to the West would have resembled the Confessions of the Reformed or Lutheran Church? Would it have been adapted to our minds, or to our way of looking at God, man, and the universe? Would it even have been understood by us? It would rather have been a strange tongue. The illustration may appear extreme, but it is undeniable that differences, if not quite so radical, yet hardly less important for the present question, meet us within the churches of the West.

They are not diversities of gifts with the same spirit, but fundamental antagonisms of thought. . . . What they really denote is divers modes of Christian thinking, divers tendencies of the Christian intellect, which repeat themselves by a law of nature. It is no more possible to make men think alike in theology than in anything else where the facts are complicated and the conclusions necessarily fallible. The history of theology is a history of "variations"; not, indeed, as some have maintained, without an inner principle of advance, but with a constant repetition of oppositions underlying its necessary development. . . . Men may meet in common worship and in common work, and find themselves at one. The same faith may breathe in their prayers, and the same love fire their hearts. But men who think can never be at one on the great subjects of the Christian revelation. . . . Of all the false dreams that have ever haunted humanity, none is more false than the dream of catholic unity in this sense. It vanishes in the very effort to grasp it, and the old fissures appear within the most carefully compacted structures of dogma.¹

Nor are we entitled to say that the persons by whom these differences are exhibited have no right to a place

¹ Tulloch, *Some Facts of Religion and Life*, pp. 21-23.

in our Communion should they desire to join it. They embrace multitudes whose "work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ before God and our Father" call for the profoundest thanksgiving, and impose upon us the most solemn obligations both to be like them, and to hold Christian fellowship with them. Every Christian Church, however different from others, has produced men of the most exalted piety and self-devotion. We cannot even forget that differences quite as important as those spoken of existed among the Apostles of our Lord. Only a superficial examination of the facts would lead any one to maintain that the moulds of thought and types of teaching exhibited by St. James, St. Peter, St. Paul, or St. John are the same. They are not only distinct, but so distinct that it may be doubted whether either an earlier Apostle could have adopted the language of a later, or a later that of an earlier, as a satisfactory exposition of his own Christian views. The earlier might, indeed, have been educated to the platform of the later without abandoning one Christian conviction. The later might have recognised the truth of the earlier as a preparatory stage for his own higher development; but neither could have said to the other, Your Confession of faith, if extended into lengthened propositions, will be the same as mine. If then the mechanical mode of looking at the Bible, which has marked all branches of the Protestant Church to the present hour, has not only injured the Bible, but has seriously hindered the growth of the Church, the same remark may be made

as to the Church's creed. Scripture, Christian experience, and human nature teach us that to look for agreement in all the doctrinal statements of the Creeds of our modern branches of the Church is to look for an impossibility.

3. To what has been said it may be replied that different churches, like different voluntary societies, in order to fulfil the end of their existence, must express their peculiar doctrines in a manner appropriate to themselves. One great truth, or one particular aspect of truth, has taken so powerful a hold of them that they cannot be silent regarding it. For it their members have toiled and suffered and died. It has been graven with a pen of steel upon their memories. It has been written on their records with the blood of martyrs. Let them remember it; and let the remembrance stir them up to walk worthily of their fathers. But a distinct denial must be given to the statement that the Church is a voluntary society, and that her members are bound to submit to whatever conditions the society may impose, or leave it. The Church is not formed by believers who associate themselves together and lay down rules for the guidance of their mutual fellowship. The Church is founded and regulated by Christ, and no privilege of her members may be taken away by man. Each portion of the Church can only be what it claims to be in so far as it is a portion of the universal Church. Its members are baptized, not into the community to which they may specially belong but into Christ and, in Him, into the Church at large. When they sit down

at the Communion Table their communion is not only with the Head, but with all the members of the Body. Ministers are ordained to the ministry of Christ, and not merely to that of the Denomination in which they are to labour. The reasoning now contended against proceeds upon the false supposition that the individual precedes the Church, whereas the Church precedes the individual. When our Lord was in the world His whole Church was gathered up in Him, and His Apostles, in being united to Him, were united to the Church in Him. The same remark applies to all successive generations of disciples. They do not create the Church. They enter into the Church which has been waiting to receive them, and the privileges which they enjoy in her flow to them through her from her Head. The Church, therefore, is not entitled to lay down conditions which would exclude from her communion any of whom she has not reason to believe that Christ excludes them from communion with Him. She acts only in her Redeemer's name, and in the exercise of an authority which He bestows. For any particular Denomination to force out members on grounds on which it is not believed that Christ would Himself exclude them is to make light of those whom it may itself confess to be His little ones. It is no answer to this to say that they may go elsewhere. More cruel words could not be spoken by any theologian of that iron age of Creeds which we have not yet passed through. Such persons may not wish to go elsewhere. They may not have it in their power to go elsewhere. They have

no right, except under compulsion, to go elsewhere. Their dismissal may be equivalent to depriving them of the privileges of the Christian Church altogether.

4. These considerations point to the necessity of assigning a different place to those parts of the Church's Creed which are essential and those which are not essential to the unity of the Head and members. Not, indeed, in the sense of drawing that distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental articles of faith in the same Creed which, however true, we have already seen to be no practical solution of the difficulty. The non-fundamental articles ought to have no place in the Creed. They are not needed either for the fellowship of believers or for the manifestation of that personal Lord and Saviour on whom the Church calls the world to believe. The Church has other ways of bearing a testimony to them, and she does not depreciate them by declining to make them terms of communion. In the early Church the questions as to eating meats offered to idols, and the observance of the Sabbath, penetrated as deeply into the Church's life as most of those questions by which she has been rent asunder in later times. St. Paul recognised their importance, and maintained his own position in regard to them with a clear conscience and great firmness. But he did not allow them to break the Church's unity. "Let not him that eateth," he said, "set at nought him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own lord he standeth or

falleth. Yea, he shall be made to stand; for the Lord hath power to make him stand. . . . Let each man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”¹

Nor is there any ground to fear that in such a case those who attach importance to statements not made a test of membership will lose interest in them. There is rather reason to fear such a result when they are introduced into a Creed, but at the same time declared to be non-essentials. When they are grouped together in another way and set forth for another purpose they will retain their value. In point of fact experience teaches that refusal to admit the distinction now contended for has proved injurious to doctrinal theology, and that every approach made to it has been favourable to the study of doctrine. Nowhere so much as in Germany has theology in its wider sense been for long so completely separated from the idea of testing by it the right to either office or membership in the Church, and nowhere has it been more honoured and studied. We may disapprove of many of the conclusions that have been arrived at, but it cannot be denied that in that country the field of doctrine has been one of noble effort and achievement. Nowhere has theology, in a wide extent of its conclusions, been made more a bond of church communion than in Scotland, and nowhere in later years has it been less studied in a worthy manner.² It became a dead letter, a formal lifeless

¹ Rom. xiv. 3-5.

² The one school of native Theology which we had in Scot-

land (that of Aberdeen in the time of Charles I.) was destroyed by the enforcing of the National Covenant.

system. Genuine delight in it, zeal in pursuing it, almost vanished from the land; and only now, when the bonds of confessional stringency are at least practically relaxed, are there on every side symptoms that theology may revive, and once more become the subject of interest and debate. This result might have been expected. Men cannot inquire with the necessary freedom when every point of inquiry has been already settled for them and publicly accepted by them. They may be willing to meet any loss of worldly goods, but they shrink from the doubts and suspicions they may awaken. They have no wish to be branded with the odious term Heretic. Whereas, on the other hand, were the field clear, and did they feel that they might be welcomed as honest students in it, they could throw themselves with all their hearts into those theological struggles which have attracted so many of the best spirits of the past, and the cause of truth would eventually gain.

It is no sufficient answer to this to say, that "men are intended to deal with temptations, to feel the force of them, and to overcome them."¹ There is a balance to that truth in the words of the same writer, "Sources of temptation wantonly or needlessly created, are always to be condemned."² The question indeed turns upon the point, whether the temptation occasioned by putting into the Church's Creed what ought rather to find its place elsewhere is or is not a "wanton and needless temptation." Experience shows that it is, and

¹ Rainy, *The Development of Christian Doctrine*, p. 256.

² *U.S.*

that the Church ought to remove it. Nothing but uncertainty and confusion can arise from the statement that "in the confessions of the Churches there are two elements or two strata of confessional matter."¹ The remedy is to see that there shall be only one stratum, is to put into the Creed nothing but what is essential to the existence of the Church in the unity of her Head and members. Let speculation be free upon all other points.

The conclusion to which we are thus led seems to be, that a distinction ought to be drawn between Creed, as a test of office-bearing or membership, and those larger, wider, and more elaborate theological statements which the Church may yet by a majority, and therefore speaking as a whole, put forth as the expression of her faith on particulars not needed for Christian unity. Let her utter her testimony upon these points with all plainness and force; let her proclaim her sense of their importance; let her defend them in the face of opponents, and let her spare no effort to make opponents friends; but let her not say, as say she must when she makes them a Test, No one who does not receive them can be a member either with office or without office in our company.

To attempt here to draw the line between what is to belong to the Creed or Test and what to the Confession would simply be an act of inexcusable presumption. No individual may dare to do it. All that can be done is to indicate that there appears to be a principle involved in separating the two things from one another.

¹ u. s. p. 263.

When this is admitted the subject of these lectures—the Ascended and glorified Lord—may come in to help us. In Him—risen, ascended, glorified, Son of man as well as Son of God, the revelation, the manifestation, of the Father—believers live. They live not in Him only as He was on earth but as He is in the heavenly and invisible world, as He is in a new superearthy existence, and as, in that existence, He is now by His Spirit present in His Church, as fully, distinctly, and powerfully, nay, more fully, distinctly, and powerfully present than when He tabernacled upon earth. It follows that this nature of the Lord's Being, in which is expressed not merely what He was but what He is, and out of which flows the existence, the nature, and purpose of the Church, ought to be the essential constituent of her Creed. Whatever else is there ought to range itself around a truth which is not only the first but the last, not only the beginning but the end, of the Church's faith. It was so once. The three ancient Creeds are full of the Person of Christ. Both in these and in the other parts of their contents they deal also more with facts than with speculations upon facts. Let speculation "grow from more to more," but let it belong as much as possible to the region of theology, as little as possible to that of Creed.

With what has been said the language of Scripture strikingly agrees. When St. Paul speaks of the confession which is "made unto salvation," he fixes at once on the thought of the risen or glorified Lord as its substance, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as

Lord,"¹ where the whole context shows that the word "Lord" expresses Jesus as one whom "God raised from the dead."² To the same effect the same Apostle, in another Epistle, describes his preaching, "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord;"³ declares in a third that "no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but in Holy Spirit;"⁴ and, when referring in a fourth to the glorious issue of Christ's work, sums it up in the words "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."⁵ In all these passages, dealing expressly with the public profession of the Christian faith, that faith is set before us as an acknowledgment that the Church believes and lives in an exalted and glorified Lord in heaven.

Along with this, indeed, it lies in the nature of the case that the Church ought to confess the practical purpose of her calling, in order that she may deepen her own sense of it, and let men see more clearly at what she aims.

How much more is to be taken into her Creed or Test the Church must herself determine. It will probably be found that much of what now claims entrance there belongs to the province of Testimony, of Confession in the larger sense, and that it may be safely left in the hands of theologians for further examination and definition. Thus we shall gain the two points mainly necessary to the soundness and progress of the Church's thought—fixity with regard to the great facts of Revela-

¹ Rom. x. 9.

² Comp. Godet *in loc.*

³ 2 Cor. iv. 5.

⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

⁵ Phil. ii. 11.

tion, and freedom within her borders to discuss all else. Without the former there can be no such thing as a Church. With the latter, discussion and debate within the Church will be full of promise. When different disputants have accepted the Church's main propositions as a Creed; when they are animated by the spirit of the Christian home which the Church opens to her children; when they have learned to sympathise with her perplexities, and to trust to the illuminating power of the Spirit promised to guide her into all the truth, then let them work out the problems which Christianity suggests. They will do so with profit to all, with harm to none. Remaining in connexion with the Church, and, through her, with her living and glorified Head in heaven, they will rest in peace until difficulties needing to be resolved and questions demanding an answer meet them. Then, in the bond of the Church's unity, let them struggle with these, and face every problem of the Christian faith. The scene of controversy may prove stirring; but, unity being still unbroken, the combatants will find that, so far from destroying one another, they will each rather sharpen, as iron sharpeneth iron, the countenance of his friend.

These lectures must close. They have been occupied with one of the greatest subjects to which we can direct our thoughts,—the Ascension, the Glorification, and the Heavenly Life of One of whom both Scripture and experience testify, that to Him the hopes of Humanity point, and that in Him alone its glorious destiny can be fulfilled. To this very greatness of the subject much of

the imperfection of the lectures may be traced. True theological definition, the true unfolding in ever larger measure of the height and depth and length and breadth of the Divine counsels for the race, must always be preceded by a wide religious movement of the mind. All that any single person can hope to do is, amidst innumerable shortcomings and imperfections, to direct men's thoughts to topics worthy of their regard, although they may be at the time neglected. If he can succeed in this he may prepare the way for that larger leavening of the Christian society out of which aspects of the truth may spring adapted to his particular generation or demanded by its peculiar problems. For every hint, therefore, helping us to a fuller conception and appreciation of God's plan for that education and perfecting of humanity at which its deepest instincts compel it to aim, it is our duty to watch and wait, "as they that wait for the morning." Of the ancient prophets, as they looked forward to the age which they had not yet seen, it is said in one of the most touching descriptions of the Bible: "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. To whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us, did they minister these things."¹ In a lofty discontent of soul with what was immediately around them they eagerly anticipated a better and a

¹ 1 Pet. i. 11, 12.

brighter future. That future, indeed, may now be said to have come, because Christ has come. Yet our Lord said even to His own disciples, "Can the sons of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast."¹ Under the Christian as well as under the Jewish dispensation there were to be dissatisfaction and discontent with the actual state of things, as well as longing for a more perfect manifestation of the Divine power and goodness than had yet been seen. Not that a more perfect revelation of the Divine Kingdom was to be expected than had been given in Him who was "Son of God and King of Israel" (that was impossible), but that the revelation in Christ Jesus was to penetrate the world until by means of it humanity reached its full-orbed life, its weaknesses overcome, its hopes fulfilled, and its longings satisfied.

Is there no cause now why the children of the bride-chamber should still fast and mourn? Can we say that we are at this moment satisfied with the state of Christendom, contented with our Christian privileges, desiring only to be quiet till the end comes with noiseless step, and we may close our eyes in peace, to open them in a still happier home? It cannot be. The world is around us in its misery. The ear is pained, the heart is sick, with its tales of wrong and infamy, with its dark places the habitations of horrid cruelty, with its oppressions that make wise men mad, with its

¹ Matt. ix. 15.

myriads of innocent children trained up in every form of vice and steeped in wretchedness. Worse than this, the very Church of Christ to which we would naturally turn for help seems powerless; the light of men, but her light dimmed; the salt of the earth, but the salt with its savour lost; hardly to be distinguished from a world that cares for little else than the newest luxury or folly; often ignoring if not denying the most characteristic doctrines of her faith, and eager to make that best of both worlds which seldom has any other meaning than making the best of this world, and letting the next world take its chance, while at the same time her different sections are busier contending with one another than with the common foe, without mutual forbearance, or sympathy, or helpfulness, or love.

Can we see all this without feeling that in the condition of things around us there is something wrong, that we need more than the repetition of the story in the midst of repeating which this state of things has come about, that fresh aspects of the truth are demanded upon which a fresh life may rest, and that we are all interested in discovering whether we have given His real place in what we are and do to Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge?

Among these aspects of truth, too much neglected, but full of power, the Ascension and Heavenly Priesthood of our Lord may certainly be included. The Ascension of the Great Head of the Church, in His human as well as His Divine nature, to the right hand of God, opens up to us a boundless prospect of what our

humanity shall yet be in Him, and conveys to us the assurance that whatever He desires He is able to effect, while there is nothing more imperatively demanded of the Church of the present day than the revival of that idea of her priestliness which flows directly from the fact that she lives in Him who is our High-priest in heaven. This idea has been left too long associated with periods of unscriptural domination on the part of the Clergy, and of ignorance and superstition on the part of the Laity. In spite of this it is alike true and fundamental. A clear perception and a bold enunciation of it lies at the very root of all that is most real, most forcible, and most valuable in the Church's work. Her duty is not to abandon a position to which she has been divinely called, because it has been abused, and may be abused again. It is rather so to occupy it that the fears of timorous friends may be dispelled, and the reproaches of opponents silenced. The aim of true priesthood is not money or station or power; it is love, work, self-sacrifice. The Anointing in Bethany was accepted by the Redeemer as His consecration, not to worldly honours, but to His "burying"; and to such a burying, not to ease and the high places of the earth, is the Church in her turn consecrated. She has not gained much by casting the thought of her priestliness aside. Let her return to the proclamation of it both in word and deed; and it may be that, when she again anoints her Lord, men will be more ready to listen to her message, till the world is filled with the odour of the ointment.