

Passiontide Sermons
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SERMON IV.

THE ACCEPTED OFFERING.

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Heb. x. 5, 6, 7.

Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy will.

IN the old Liturgies and in old English divines this Sunday, the fifth in Lent and the second before Easter, is often called Passion Sunday. The name has disappeared from the pages of our Prayer-Books, but enough, or more than enough, remains in them to justify it. The Service for the day looks onward to Good Friday. The Gospel describes that climax of the struggle between our Lord and the adversaries at Jerusalem which made all that followed—humanly speaking—inevitable, and which revealed to His murderers, in language which they well understood, the awful claims of their Victim. The Epistle looks at the result in the light of Christian experience and Christian history: it speaks of the power of an Atoning Blood, the Blood of One Who is both Priest and Victim, in contrast with the impotent and fruitless blood-shedding of bulls and goats slain at the altar of the Jewish temple. Thus we see the note of the Passion is already sounded; the subject is approached on its historical as well as on its practical and experimental side, and accordingly, under the guidance of the text, we do well, though at a distance, to stand this afternoon in view of the Cross, and reflect upon one element of its awful meaning.

“When He cometh into the world He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me.” Here is a Speaker and His utterance—a Speaker Who can be only One, and a quotation of some words very familiar, I should suppose, to most of us. Let us, for the sake of clearness, reverse the order of ideas in the text. Let us first of all examine the drift and meaning of the passage quoted, and then the use which is made of it by the speaker in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

I.

Now, the passage quoted occurs in the fortieth Psalm, which, no doubt, simply because it contains this very passage, is used on the morning of Good Friday. The fortieth Psalm is traceable, as both the language and the allusions would lead us to believe, to the age and hand of David. To argue that the reference to the “roll of the book” is an indication of its having been written about the time of Josiah's reformation, is as prudent as it would be to argue that an old English writer, referring to the privileges of Parliament, could not have

written before the reign of Charles I-, on the ground that Parliamentary privilege was then undoubtedly a matter of very general discussion. The language is, in point of form and structure, suited to the age of David: the circumstances are those of the close of the sad and suffering years when David was still persecuted by Saul, but already knew that his rescue and his triumph could not be long deferred. Like two other Psalms of the period, this is a Psalm at once of praise and of complaint—complaint that there was still much to apprehend, praise that so much had been done so mercifully. David can only compare the miseries of the past to a deep morass, where there was no resting-place for his feet, and in which he felt himself sinking, until God “brought him out of this horrible pit, out of the mire and clay, and set his feet upon a rock.” God had, moreover, put a new song in his mouth—had given him a heart and a tongue for praise, and for the encouragement of his brethren and dependants; and he sincerely feels that God’s mercies to him have been so many and so vast, that if he “should declare them and speak of them they would be more than he is able to express.” How shall he express, if he can express, his gratitude, and the sorrow for past wrong, and the hearty self-devotion which true gratitude calls forth? It would be natural for him to think—and for a moment he does think—of the regular provisions for expressing the needs and moods of the human soul which were afforded by the Jewish ritual. There were sacrifices of slain beasts, and bloodless offerings of fine flour: the burnt-offering to obtain the Divine favour; the sin-offering to make propitiation for wrong. But no, it will not do; the Psalmist’s mind rests upon these ancient rites only to set them aside. In his deep trouble, it seems, he has been permitted to catch sight of the outline of a higher Revelation than that of Moses, and to learn, that whatever might be their provisional use and import, these slaughtered bulls and goats, these burnt-offerings and sin-offerings, could not really affect man’s relations with God.

“Sacrifice and Minchah Thou wouldst not,
But mine ears hast Thou pierced;
Burnt-offering and sin-offering Thou requiredst not.
Then said I: Behold, I come
With the roll of the Book which is written concerning me,
To do Thy will, O God.”

David will not, then, offer the old sacrifices; at any rate, he will not offer them as the best he has to give; he will bring to God’s Footstool something else, something better. What is it? “Mine ears hast Thou pierced,” says the Hebrew text of the Psalm. “A body hast Thou prepared me,” says the passage as quoted in the Epistle from the Greek LXX. translation of the Psalm. How shall we reconcile the discrepancy? Not to detain you with explanations which I could only mention to set aside, let us observe that in many cases the old Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, which the New Testament writers so frequently quote, is, like all good translations, not always a literal rendering, but a paraphrase, especially in places where to render literally would be to be unintelligible. The Greek reader would never have understood all that the Hebrew poet meant by “piercing the ears.” David meant to express very vividly that God had given him a sense and power of obeying His recognised Will; and in order to make this full meaning obvious to his readers—obvious to the utmost range of its applicability—the Greek translator of David renders, “a body hast Thou prepared me:” a body where with to render Thee a perfect, unstinted service. The idea of entire willingness to acknowledge

and obey the Will of God is expanded into the idea of a body prepared for absolute surrender to that Will. It is, no doubt, a very free paraphrase; yet, on that very account, it is an admirable translation of the thought, if not of the language; the thought, the meaning, is plain enough. Real self-surrender to the Will of God is surrender of the life, of the body, of that which is outward and belongs to sense, as well as of that which is inward and belongs to spirit; it is surrender of the life, as distinct from any of its accessories, to that Perfect Will Which rules the universe.

When David proposes to express his thankfulness in this way, it is plain that he thinks of God as a Person. This would be a trite remark to make under ordinary circumstances; but it is not, perhaps, altogether superfluous just now, when a brilliant and light-hearted essayist, airily discussing the relations which he presumes to exist between the Bible considered as literature and the great truths of Christianity, has recently gone so far as to say that the God Whom Israel served was not a Person at all; that He was in the belief of Israel only “an abstract, an eternal Power, or only a stream of tendency, not ourselves, and making for righteousness.”¹ By this novel and circuitous expression the writer hopes, when speaking of God, to escape the necessity of using a metaphysical term like Person. He has a great dread of what he calls metaphysics, and a corresponding impatience of all that side of Divine Revelation which belongs to the sphere of the supersensuous, and which can only be brought home to the human understanding in language which inspired writers like St. John and St. Paul, or great Church assemblies and teachers have borrowed from the philosophy of abstract being. He is acute enough to see, and honest enough to admit, that to profess belief in a Personal God is to be just as deeply committed to a metaphysical doctrine as to profess belief in the Holy Trinity, or in the Consubstantiality of the Son; he sees that St. John and St. Paul were not less really metaphysicians in their way of speaking about God and our Lord than were Councils and Fathers; and that to talk of a Person carries us at once into the very heart of metaphysics. So, to go to the root of the matter, and get rid of what he so much dislikes, he would call God a Power or a Tendency—as distinct from a Person,—and he even, persuades himself that the early writers in the Bible thought of God in this way too. They were not, he says, metaphysicians; and when we talk of a Personal Cause and Ruler of the universe, we are using language which is strange to them. Now certainly, if it be meant that the idea of Personality, as it is elaborated, for instance, in Bishop Butler,² is not presented to us thus sharply and consciously in the Hebrew or Christian Scriptures, there is no room for controversy. But the point to observe is that although the idea of a Person is not philosophically drawn out in Scripture, it is irresistibly implied in the entire Scriptural account of God. If a person,—unless when used in a narrower, exceptional sense of the glorious Three Who co-exist everlastingly within the Unity of God,—if, I say, a person ordinarily means a separate consciousness, will, and character, these three things are found from the very first in the God revealed by the Hebrew Scriptures, whether the word which collects and implies them in later language be there or not. Who can go through the Psalter and seriously imagine that the Being to Whom all that praise, that penitence, those tender expostulations, those passionate assurances, those earnest deprecations and entreaties, are addressed, was conceived of by the hearts which sought Him in Israel as only “an abstract Eternal Power or stream of tendency, not ourselves, making for

¹ Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, chap. i.

² Butler, *Dissertation I.: Of Personal Identity*.

righteousness”? Put this definition in each of the places in the Psalter—in the fifty-first Psalm, or in this fortieth Psalm, where the word GOD occurs—and see what will be the moral and, I may add, the literary result. Certainly if I say, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God!” I do not, I cannot, conceive myself as addressing any mere Power or tendency;—who would protest his readiness to do its will to a magnetic current, or to a political enthusiasm, or to a force which it would be metaphysical, and therefore wrong, to think of as conscious, or as having a real will or character at all? Depend upon it, my brethren, in this matter the common sense of mankind at large may very fairly be trusted. A real God is necessarily a Personal God; to talk of God and deny His Personality is to play tricks with language; there is no real room beyond belief in a Personal God for anything but atheism.

Yes! it was in entire self-surrender to the Holy Will of the Personal God that David learnt a higher service than that of the mass of his countrymen. He learnt to think less highly of the material than of the moral, of the outward than of the inward, of the partial than of the complete. No doubt, to many an Israelite the series of Temple sacrifices appeared in the light of a regular tariff, by complying with which, under varying circumstances, His worshippers set themselves right with God in a business-like way. So much fine flour, so many heifers, bulls, or goats, such and such expenditure, and all would be settled. Doubtless there were numbers who rose far higher than this, who read in the Jewish ritual its inherent and intentional imperfection, and something perhaps of what was to succeed it. But when David sings, as in this fortieth Psalm, he is like one of those higher Alps which the beams of the rising sun have lit up while the valleys at its feet are still wellnigh in twilight. Yet he was not alone or the first in this his early illumination. Probably he was himself thinking of Samuel’s remonstrance with Saul, when, after the conquest of Amalek, the latter would have compounded for moral disobedience by animal sacrifices. “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.” Probably he had heard of that famous reply of Balaam to the king of Moab, which was referred to by Micah in a later age for the benefit of degenerate Israel. To the question—

“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,
And bow myself before the High God?
Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings,
With calves of a year old?
Will the Lord he pleased with thousands of rams,
Or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my first-born for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

the reply ran thus:—

“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;
And what doth the Lord require of thee,
But to do justly, and to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with thy God?”

And in his later life, when in his deep repentance for his darkest sin, a flood of light had again broken upon his soul, David himself again cries, Thou desirest no sacrifice, else

would I give it Thee: but Thou delightest not in burnt-offerings. The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." It is in the same sense that Asaph, in his vision of God's judgment of Israel, hears Him say, "I will not reprove thee for the sacrifices of thy burnt-offerings, because they were not always before Me. . . . Thinkest thou that I will eat bulls' flesh, or drink the blood of goats?" It is thus, too, that God expostulates with Judah by the mouth of Isaiah: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts: I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." It is in this sense that He asks later by Jeremiah: "To what purpose cometh there to Me incense from Sheba? or the sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto Me." "I desired mercy," He says by Hosea, "and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." The contrast runs in a deeper note in Amos: "I hate, I despise your feast days: I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer Me burnt-offerings and meat-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take away from Me the noise of thy songs: I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

The common drift of all these passages is—not that the Old Testament sacrifices were worthless; God Himself had appointed them, and, as the Apostle says, they "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh"; that is to say, they did all that was necessary in an outward system to preserve the covenant relation between the Israelites and God. But these passages do assert with vivid energy, with tremendous force, that in the service of the Perfect Moral Being the material and outward is worthless, or worse, if it be not promoted, inspired, by the moral and the inward; that no sacrifice, however costly—which is after all only a tax upon property, or time, or strength—can take the place of that gift of itself by a conscious and immortal spirit, which is the one true homage it can yield to the Perfect Author and Sustainer of its being. What God will have is a broken heart, according to David; it is justice, mercy, humility, according to Balaam and Micah it is streams of judgment and of righteousness, according to Amos; it is the piercing of the ears to hear, the offering of the body to express obedience, the coming to do One Will—and only One; again, according to David, it is the gift of the inmost life by His sincere penitent, by His accepted servant.

It is easy enough to mis-state and pervert this, as well as all other truths. If the Jewish sacrifices had their uses, although they could not confer grace, much more have Christian works of mercy, Christian offerings of time, money, work, devotion, their place in every true Christian life. Nay, they cannot be dispensed with; but they are useless if they do not proceed from that greater all-including gift of self to the Perfect Will which God really values. They can never be substituted for this gift of gifts: this gift of the personality, of the life, of the inmost being, to the Author of our existence.

God has made us free; He has endowed us with the majestic and awful distinction of a freedom which is independent of circumstances; He has given us, as a necessary element of that freedom, the power of setting Him, the Master of the universe, aside, and of choosing the service of His enemy; and we can only use this His great gift aright in one way, viz., by deliberately giving ourselves to Him. To give income to any amount without this gift of self; time, trouble, health, without this gift of self; obedience to religious rules and scrupulous use of religious ordinances without this gift of self, is to

give that which He will not accept. Our religion must begin from within; it must begin with the surrender of that which is most properly ours to give; it must begin with the gift which includes all else as opportunity or prudence shall dictate, or it is on a wrong tack, and will get us into trouble. Even of our spiritual nature we cannot safely offer fragments; faith, hope, feelings, aspirations, assurances, are not trustworthy if they do not involve and issue from a conscious self-abandonment to the claims of God; if they do not echo, with its Christian paraphrase, the language:—

“Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not,
But a body hast Thou prepared me.
Burnt-offerings and sin-offerings Thou requiredst not—
Then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy will!”

“I come to do Thy will, O God.” There are times in every earnest life when these words express—or seem to express—the deepest feeling of the heart. “It is for nothing outward, O my God; for nothing that passes; for no human heart, for no human will, that I will henceforth live: but only for Thee. There is nothing that I can offer Thee that is not Thine already; I offer Thee that which alone I can refuse—myself. The times past of life may suffice for the rebellious sins, for the formal sacrifices, for the double-mindedness which has made me hitherto unstable in all my ways. I seek Thee now with my whole heart; I come to do Thy will.” Alas! who of us that has ever felt thus does not know, by a humbling experience, what has followed. Again and again, how the fervour has died away, and the old material sacrifices which would buy God off have been offered in place of the moral sacrifice which gives Him everything; how human wills, human jurisdictions, have disputed the supremacy of the Divine Will within the soul, till the protestation of our first devotion has become insincere and meaningless. Nay, let us each one think over what has passed within him this very day,—since we rose from our beds,—and see how far One Will has ruled words, actions, thoughts; how far, if this obedience of ours is all that we can trust to, we can hope for acceptance with the Eternal God. Surely this language, to be realised as well as used, to be expressed in undeviating obedience as well as on the lips, must belong to a stronger and more direct will than yours or mine,—to a Will which may encourage us to hope, if it humbles us when we attempt to imitate.

II.

And this brings me to the question: How is the passage applied in the Epistle to the Hebrews? It is taken out of its original, historical setting; and it is connected with a new set of circumstances. It is taken from David’s self-consecration in view of the throne which awaited him, and is applied to Jesus Christ as the High Priest of humanity, “taking upon Him to deliver man” by His Incarnation and Death. “When He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: in burnt-offerings and sin-offerings Thon delightest not; then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy will.” Thus it is a motto of the Divine Incarnation; an authoritative announcement of its spirit, its drift, its purpose; and it proclaims that repudiation of the sacrifices and priesthood of the Jewish Law which the Gospel involved, and which is explained and justified at length in this Epistle. Now, how can this transfer of language be accounted

for? Does it rest only on a shadowy coincidence, such as may be found, if we look for it, between any two periods, any two sets of circumstances, any two lives? Is it a quotation like those quotations which eloquent speakers in Parliament make from Virgil and Horace,—the embellishment and decoration of an idea which would else have had to be expressed in a mere commonplace and prosaic way? Or is it something more serious than this, and altogether different? Does it depend, in a word, in any real sense upon a principle,—upon a principle which can be ascertained and stated?

Observe, then, my brethren, that the Apostle makes this quotation in the very heart of an argument, and with a view to making it good. He is showing that the High-Priestly Service offered by Jesus Christ is unspeakably greater and more real than that offered by the sons of Aaron. He makes the Old Testament,—here as elsewhere,—witness against itself, or rather against that false notion about its containing a final revelation and system of worship which the Jews claimed for it. If this quotation from David had been, I will not say inapplicable, but fanciful or arbitrary, an opponent would naturally have rejoined that the argument of the Epistle broke down at a critical point; that language which was David's, and appropriate only to David, could not be placed in the mouth of Jesus Christ so as to sustain a grave inference as to the drift and character of His Incarnation. The writer then, we may be sure, meant that the language of the quotation really belonged to Jesus Christ. But the question still remains—how?

Here we must dismiss the idea that the fortieth Psalm is Messianic in such a sense as the twenty-second; that is to say, that it has no original historical references, no ascertainable background in the history of Israel or of the Psalmist, and is throughout a prediction of the coming Person to Whom Israel looked forward. Nothing in Jewish history before the Passion of Christ our Lord corresponds with the description of the Ideal Sufferer of Psalm xxii.: but there is no difficulty in pointing to the circumstances in David's own life which correspond to the language of Psalm xl., while in this Psalm there are also expressions and thoughts which certainly are not Messianic. The Psalm was really David's: it describes a great crisis in David's life; how then does its language belong to the Christ coming into the world at His Incarnation? The answer to this must be found in the relation in which our Lord, as the Representative or Ideal Man, stands to the whole human family and to its noblest members. When St. Paul speaks of our Lord as the "Second Adam," or the "last Adam," he must mean that our Lord stood to the human race in a relation which corresponded, in some way, to that in which our first parent stood towards all his descendants. The text of the Book of Genesis implies that our first parent, as *the* man, was the antitypal head and representative of all later generations of men. And the Second Adam corresponded to the first in this: He too was to be the Type and Pattern of man, of renewed man, as the first Adam had been of the first creation. In a different manner, yet as really, He became representative of the race. He represented it, not as it was, but as it had been meant to be; He represented possible and ideal humanity, not actual, historical, fallen humanity. Therefore, in Him as "the First-born of every creature," the "Beginning of the creation of God," all that was noblest, truest, purest, best, in the thought and language of His predecessors, met and was realised. All the mysterious yearnings of poets and thinkers after an indefinable perfection, all the vague aspirations after an ideal which was ever floating indistinctly before the eyes of men in their higher moments, yet ever eluding them,—all the cravings for reconciliation between antagonistic elements and tendencies in our fallen nature were satisfied at last in this

Unique Sample of Humanity, Which included all the perfections to which men had aspired, Which excluded all the weakness and wrong to which man was liable. Everything that was best in human history was an unconscious prophecy of the, Perfect One; and the noblest things that could be said of man conceived of ideally, or as he had issued from the hand of his Maker, were said of the New Head of our race with literal exactness. Thus, when the Psalmist proclaims that God had “made man to have dominion over the works of His Hands, and had put all things under his feet,” St. Paul, seeing how, as a matter of fact, this ideal description is checked by the facts of man’s perpetual struggle with the forces of savage nature,—with the elements, with disease, with death,—refers it at once to the Second Adam triumphing over the whole world of sense in His unrivalled moral elevation, as in His Resurrection and Ascension into heaven. And so when in the text David says, “Lo, I come to do Thy Will,” it is in David’s mouth the language of hope and intention; but in the mouth of Christ it is the prediction of a Moral Career which could not be other or less perfect than this. David no doubt meant to be perfectly true; but he used language which, strictly pressed, was applicable only to a strictly Holy Being; just as pure and noble-minded children, in their enthusiasm, often say things with entire sincerity, which, as older persons see, involve more than they contemplate or bargain for. David said, “Lo, I come to do Thy Will,—mine ears hast Thou opened.” Yet he lived to become the murderer of Uriah and the paramour of Bathsheba; he lived to rise out of the profound misery of his moral degradation, as the typical penitent of Psalm li. But his higher aspirations were not lost; they belonged, in all their literal force and beauty, to the Real King of humanity, Who was to come of the loins of David in a later age. “When He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not,—a body hast Thou prepared Me. I come to do Thy Will, O God.” And this is one of the many points of view under which our Lord’s Death upon the Cross may and ought to be considered: it was the last and consummate expression of a perfectly obedient Will. In this He stood alone when all else had failed; He was faultless. We are told, indeed, that He, too, as Man, “learned obedience” by the road of experience, although this does not imply that He ever was disobedient, but only that “the things which He suffered” led Him as Man from one to another stage of moral intensity. “I do always,” He said, “such things as please Him.” “My meat is to do the will of Him That sent Me.”

Throughout His human Life—in childhood and in manhood; in privacy, and in public; among multitudes, or in the retreat of the desert; when speaking, or on His knees; when acting, or in repose; in hunger, or at the wedding feast; the idol of popular enthusiasm, or the scorn of men and the outcast of the people—He was true to this one unchanging law. He obeyed it to the last extremity: He was, as St. Paul says, “obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” “Therefore,” He said Himself, “doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My Life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from Me; but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from My Father.” Not that the tearing of soul and body asunder by a violent death; not that the mental anguish which He embraced in its immediate prospect cost Him nothing: He was truly human. “What shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: yet for this cause came I unto this hour.” “Remove this cup from Me: nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done.”

This is what gives to every incident of the Passion, as described by the

Evangelists, such transcendent interest: each insult that is endured, each pang that is accepted, each hour, each minute, of the protracted agony, is the deliberate offering of a Perfect Will, which might conceivably have declined the trial. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will presently send Me more than twelve legions of angels?" And so when the suffering was over, He said, "It is finished," just as at the close of His ministerial life, and on the threshold of His Agony, He had said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." His Life and His Death were a long commentary upon the words, "Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God;" and He might seem to be expanding those words in reference to Himself. "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him That sent Me."

It is true, indeed, that it is our Lord's Higher and Eternal Nature which sheds over His Passion, as over all that He did and underwent here below, such extraordinary and inappreciable meaning and power. It is His Divinity Which makes His Blood so much more than that of a mere man; which gives its full meaning to the question, "If God spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" But that which was accepted in Christ, living and dying, acting and suffering, was Humanity—Humanity true to its Ideal—Humanity absolutely conformed to that Perfect Will Which rules the universe. Standing by the very terms of His Incarnation in the relation of a Representative to the human race, Christ dying in agony to express entire devotion to the Perfect Will, dies in intention for all of us, dies actually, and, if we will, effectively, for each of us.

"He loved me, and gave Himself for me." His might be justly described as an arbitrary substitution of the innocent for the guilty, if our Lord had been only a common specimen of the race for which He died, or if He had died against His will. He was, in fact, as the Head of our race, as qualified by natural law to represent us, as a father is to act on behalf of his own children; since in Him manhood was set forth in its widest and most universal character. And He freely made the most—if we may reverently so speak—of this His representative relation to the race; He did the utmost and the best for it with a generosity and love that knew no bounds. Thus He is "the Propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," because He was, by the very terms of His Being, qualified to represent a sinful race, He freely suffered what was due to its accumulated transgressions. As Isaiah says, "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him;" and St. Paul, that He hath "redeemed us from the curse of the law," that is, the curse incurred by breaking it, "being made a curse for us;" and that He has "made peace through the Blood of His Cross;" and He Himself, that He "came to give His life a ransom instead of many."

Brethren, if we know, indeed, how far above us it is to make the words "I come to do Thy Will" our own, we know the great life-business for a Christian is to see that ere he dies he is "sanctified through the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all," that he is "sprinkled with the Blood of Atonement," that he is "accepted in the Beloved." We do not need this priceless blessing less than did our fathers. The face of the world, its public buildings, its political parties, its social divisions and subdivisions, its science, its systems of thought, its literature, its very language, are perpetually changing, and with this perpetual change there is the fascination for active minds of interest—various, keen, absorbing interest. The face of the world changes from generation to generation, almost from year to year, with the ever quickening march of our modern civilisation; we live, it

is often said, at a much faster rate than did our fathers. But human nature, with its splendid aspirations and its practical impotence; with its burden of needs and woes, of shortcomings and uncertainties: the human soul with its strong temptations, with its facile dispositions, with its terrible pollutions, with its awful capacities, presentiments, destinies—these do not change. They are what they were when our rude forefathers struggled with nature on the soil of England, under Plantagenet or Saxon kings; they are what they were when the Eternal Christ, eighteen centuries ago, reddened the soil of Palestine with His precious Blood. Human nature does not change with the changes—social, intellectual, political, aesthetic—which take place around us: it remains a weak and defiled thing, nor can the tinsel of our life disguise its defilement or invigorate its weakness. It remains; and the eternal realities in which alone it can find purity and strength remain also. Think not that some of our modern philosophies have changed all that; as well might you suppose that the clouds and fogs of the past winter had annihilated the sun, as dream that Christ our Saviour, God and Man, is less than of yore our only Mediator, or we less than our predecessors entirely dependent upon His Redemptive work. To union with Him—with this one Perfect Life, this unfaltering obedience expressed in Death, with this accepted Head and Representative of our kind—all faith, all sacraments, all Christian instruction and Christian effort, must ever and increasingly tend; in the conviction that all sacrifices and offerings which are merely our own are worthless, but that His obedience unto Death, which we may share if we will, is the mighty earnest of our acceptance with the Father, and of our endless peace.