

Passiontide Sermons
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SERMON VIII.
THE APPEAL OF THE CRUCIFIED JESUS.
Preached at St. Paul's on Palm Sunday, April 9, 1876.

Rom. x. 21.

But to Israel He saith, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

ST. PAUL is quoting the prophet Isaiah; and Isaiah is speaking to Israel in the name of God. "But unto Israel He saith, All day long have I stretched out Mine Hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." The Hebrew word compares Israel to a refractory animal; and St. Paul dissolves this expression, or the translation which he uses, into the two words "disobedient" and "gainsaying." To this people, which knew not how to obey God, and which continually criticised Him, God condescends to say that He stretched out His hands. As applied to a Being without body, parts, or passions, this language cannot of course be explained by what it means in man. The gesture of stretching out the hands is everywhere understood by human beings; the phrase is natural to all human language. To stretch out the hands is to make appeal or entreaty with silent imploring earnestness; and this appeal God made to His disobedient and gainsaying people—so says the prophet in substance, so echoes the apostle—all the day long.

All the day long! It is a pregnant expression, which may well have enlarged its scope with the lapse of time. It opens one vista to a Jewish prophet; and another to a Christian Apostle; and another, it may be, in practice to us of to-day.

(α) All the day long! It was a long day, which lasted from the work of the great lawgiver in the desert to the captivity in Babylon: some nine centuries at the least. They were centuries marked by vicissitudes of success and failure, of depression and buoyancy; and as they passed, one after another, they developed, with new circumstances, new features in the national character. The Jew of the later monarchy was in many respects a different man from his ancestor who had first crossed the Jordan. But so far as his resistance to God's will and contradiction of God's servants went, he was entirely unchanged. A later Psalmist could sing: "To-day if ye hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness. When your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known My ways." Such was Israel in the desert, under the eye and guidance of the great lawgiver; fresh from the deliverance from the Egyptian bondage; fresh from the wonders of Sinai. Such too was Israel in the Land of Promise, first under the judges, and then under the kings. The history of this people viewed from a moral, as distinct from a merely political standpoint, is a long paroxysm of rebellious folly. It frivolously threw aside its Divinely appointed government, in order to keep pace with the political fashions

of the Pagan nations around. It drove for a while the greatest of its monarchs from his throne and capital: and ten tribes rose in successful insurrection against his son. It broke up the unity of the covenant race; and then it broke away, first in this direction and then in that, from the religion of the Covenant. No idolatry seemed to be unwelcome to a race which had learnt the awful Unity and Spirituality of God. The hateful nature-worship (for such it was) which Jezebel had imported from Tyre; the cruel rites of Moloch, the imposing falsehoods, half myths, half philosophies, which were popular among the ruling races on the Euphrates and the Tigris, were pressed to the heart of the people of revelation; and at last the end came. But during all those centuries the God of Israel had stretched out His Hands in loving entreaty to the nation which requited Him with disobedience and contradiction. Sometimes by prophets, sometimes by great rulers, sometimes by splendid successes, sometimes by tragical reverses, He bade them feel that He was there, behind the clouds which seemed to hide Him from them,—a Providence of unwearied, watchful compassion.

In later ages—when this first day of their history was over—Israel could bear to be told the truth about its own ancient perverseness, and the loving and repeated appeals of God. Bead such a Psalm as the 106th, written probably by a psalmist of the date of the Captivity, who has learnt spiritual wisdom in a hard personal experience. It is little more than a catalogue of alternate sins and mercies—the sins of Israel, the mercies of God. After an exulting description of the great deliverance from Egypt, each offence of Israel in those early days shapes a separate stanza in the poem; each offence is graver than the preceding. They follow in a tragic series: the demand for quails, the rebellion of Korah, the worship of the golden calf, the contempt for the report of the land of promise, the degrading Baal-peor worship, the friendly relations with the accursed races of Canaan; ending in the guilt of even human sacrifices. And then the history is summarised:

“Their enemies oppressed them:
And had them in subjection;
Many a time did He deliver them,
But they rebelled against Him with their own inventions
And were brought down in their wickedness.
Nevertheless, when He saw their adversity,
He heard their complaint.
He thought upon His covenant, and pitied them
According unto the multitude of His mercies:
Yea, He made all those that led them away captive to pity them.”

And towards the close of the period the inexhaustible tenderness of God for Israel is nowhere more fully unveiled than in Hosea, the prophet who describes the sins of the ten tribes with such unsparing accuracy:

“How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me. My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the firmness of Mine anger. I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.”

So it was throughout: Israel’s sin, followed by God’s pleading love and pardoning mercy—not once or twice, but again and again, until at last the very flower of the nation was drafted away for a while into the dark prison of Babylon; and here once more, on a greater scale than ever, the same cycle of sin, warning, pardon, and deliverance was re-enacted. “All the day long have I stretched out My Hands unto a disobedient and

gainsaying people.”

(β) All the day long? The briefer dark day of the Captivity was perhaps more present to the thoughts of Isaiah than the long day of Israel’s earlier history of mingled triumphs and reverses. If Isaiah is glancing backwards he is looking forward too. In the last twenty-seven chapters of his prophecy he has his eye upon all that will pass in Babylon long after he himself has been gathered to his fathers. Across the increasing degradation and final catastrophe of the intervening period, he sees the captives at home in the great heathen city. Some indeed may sit down and weep by its waters when they remember Zion; hanging up their harps upon the trees that are therein, and refusing to charm the ear of the conqueror with the songs of Zion,—the Lord’s song, in a strange land. Some may say, with that great captive who wrote Psalm cxix., “It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn. Thy statutes.”” But with a large majority it is otherwise. They are thoroughly at their ease in this metropolis of Pagan magnificence and crime; accommodating themselves with facile readiness to the habits and morals of their masters; forgetting Jerusalem; forgetting the faith of their forefathers. Isaiah, as he gazes into the future, describes

“A people that provoketh Me to anger continually to My face;
That sacrificeth in gardens,
And burneth incense upon altars of brick;
Which remain among the graves,
And lodge in the monuments;
Which eat swine’s flesh,
And broth of abominable things is in their vessels:
Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me;
For I am holier than thou.”

God has been stretching out His Hands to these men, in judgments which, hard as they were, were an earnest of mercy; but suffering seems to have said as little to Israel as its brighter day of glory and success. God has other appeals in store; prophets like Daniel, statesmen like Ezra, will speak in His Name: immense political catastrophes, like that which made the Persian kings masters of the East, will be a stretching out of the Hands of God to Israel. But Israel has retained or recovered little of its ancient self: nothing, it would almost seem, except its self-righteousness. It has no reverence for the Divine Law, no submissive silence with which to listen to the Divine Voice. The prophet exclaims, almost in despair, in his Master’s Name, “All the day long have I stretched out My Hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.”

(γ) All the day long! St. Paul finds the expression ready to his hand in the page of Isaiah; and for St. Paul it means that new epoch which, when he writes, has already opened upon the world. “The day,” in St. Paul’s sense, is the day or age of the Messiah; the years which have passed since Christ and His Apostles have spoken to Israel. When St. Paul writes, indeed, a generation of Jews has already grown up to manhood since the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ: a generation of those lost sheep of the House of Israel, to whom alone our Lord proclaimed He was, in the first instance, sent. What has become of this generation, or of their immediate predecessors—what, I ask, has become of it—as it listens to the Divine Message, as it gazes on the outstretched Hands of God? “There is a remnant,” says the Apostle in reply, like that in Elijah’s day, saved “according to the election of grace.” But of the great majority he adds: “The rest were blinded, or hardened;” they repeat under new circumstances the obduracy of the Egyptian Pharaoh. They have seen or heard of the miracles of Christ; they have felt the force of His appeal

to prophecy, to history, to conscience. That Loving Providence, Who has watched so forbearingly over centuries of disobedience and scorn, has at last taken Flesh and become visible, and exchanged the secret appeal of ages for the tones of a human Voice: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" And then He adds: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." He again comes to His own, and His own receive Him not. Throughout the day of His ministerial life He stretches out the hands of compassion and entreaty to a disobedient and gainsaying people. They disobey and they malign Him; He is in league (they say) with Beelzebub; He is a Samaritan, and has a devil. And when He is gone it fares with the servants as it had fared with the Master. Stephen, before his Jewish judges, exclaims that Israel is at least true to its history: it is rebellious and gainsaying to the end. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of Whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." After His conversion, after those rude experiences of Jewish bitterness and violence which he encountered in almost every city where he preached the Faith of Christ—and which he describes so vividly in his first letter to the Thessalonian Church—St. Paul saw that Isaiah's words had not yet lost their force; that it was still true that God was stretching out His hands more earnestly, more persuasively, than ever before, and to a people which was fixed, as it seemed, for the most part, and fixed determinedly, in disobedience and contradiction.

(δ) All the day long! There was one day, of twenty-four hours, within this last period, unlike any other before or since, and it is more than probable that St. Paul had this day in his mind when he quoted the words of Isaiah. You know, brethren, what I mean: the day of the Passion; the day of Calvary. From the first moment of our Lord Jesus Christ's mental Agony in the Garden on the preceding evening begins this supreme appeal to the heart and conscience of Israel and of the world; and it lasts until He has bowed His Head at three o'clock in the afternoon, and given up the Ghost. It lasts through the Agony and Bloody Sweat, through the treason of the false apostle, through the details of the arrest by the armed mob; it is eloquent for all who have ears to hear, as the Divine Prisoner is brought before Annas and Caiaphas; as He is spat upon and buffeted in the palace of the High Priest; as, denied by the first Apostle, He is led away to Pilate, and sent from Pilate to Herod, and mocked by Herod, as if He, the Eternal Wisdom, were a fool, and sent back to Pilate. This appeal, I say, becomes more and more urgent and impassioned, as He Who makes it is rejected in favour of the robber Barabbas, is publicly scourged by the Pagan magistrate, is crowned with thorns, robed in purple rags, and invested with a reed for His sceptre, and shown, already covered with wounds and blood, to the angry populace. Nor does it cease as He is condemned to die; as He carries His Cross along the Way of Sorrows to the place of death; as they nail Him to it, and lift Him up on it between earth and heaven. Nay, rather, as early teachers of His Church have felt—it may suffice to name Origen and Augustine—at that moment, and for the three hours which follow, Isaiah's words are fulfilled as never before. For now these Hands—the Hands of Providence and Compassion—are literally stretched forth upon the Cross; the Divine Attributes which have watched over Israel's destinies are become visible in the Incarnate Son. God's relations with the human history of fifteen hundred years, and of

the centuries which are to follow, are epitomised into a short day. Now, as before, He stretches out His Hands; it is His own act, though others are empowered to carry it out. Others nail Him to the Cross, and yet He can say, "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Now, as before, His Hands, outstretched in anguish and death, appeal mutely to a people of disobedience and contradiction. True! there is the little group of faithful ones: the Mother in her agony, the beloved Disciple, the thief who prays for a remembrance at the gate of Paradise, the centurion who owns the Son of God. But the multitude rage around in coarse, visible, audible rebellion and blasphemy; alas! true to their ancestral spirit. The chief priests and the people vie with each other in the insults which they offer. "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself." "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." His dying Eye looked down upon a surging mass of rebellion and contradiction. Israel at the foot of the Cross was what Israel had been throughout the ages; in the wilderness, in Babylon: and over this unhappy race the Divine Sufferer must cry, "All day long have I stretched out My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people."

II.

And we too, brethren, have our place, whatever it be, somewhere on Mount Calvary. As St. Paul told the Galatians, many years after the event, "Before your eyes Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified, among you."

Christ crucified belongs to no one age or place. For true Christian faith time and place are not of much account. Faith bridges over the intervening lands and seas, and lives on the holy sites where Jesus was born, and died, and rose, and ascended into Heaven. Faith leaps across the centuries at a bound; the modern period, the middle ages, the primitive times. Faith sees and experiences over again all that the Apostles saw and experienced. Then faith detaches Christ crucified, if I may so say, from geography and from chronology, and thrones Him in the Christian consciousness where He is independent of the local associations of space and of the sequence of time; where He hangs, as it were, for all time between earth and heaven on the Tree of shame, in awful but glorious isolation, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. What then is the appeal which Jesus Christ makes, with His Hands stretched forth upon the Cross, to the hearts of us Christians? It is twofold.

(α) It is an appeal addressed to our moral sense on behalf of God's standard of holiness as against the laxity or sin of man. And He makes this appeal to us by the force of His own Example. Brethren, there are two methods of teaching duty: by word of mouth or precept, and by personal conduct or example.

The first is necessary, indispensable; but the second is more effective than the first. Teaching by precept is a method common to the saints and the philosophers. Teaching by example is a high prerogative of the saints. Teaching by precept begins with the understanding, and may or may not reach the heart. Teaching by example begins with the heart, and the understanding cannot fail to learn its lesson at a glance.

Now Jesus Christ our Lord used both methods. Between the Sermon on the Mount and the Last Discourse in the Supper-Room He was continually teaching by word of mouth; sometimes multitudes, sometimes single souls; sometimes His disciples,

sometimes the Jews; now those who listened, and again those who refused to listen. "Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little," as men could bear the light of Heaven—this was His method. But side by side with the method of precept He employed the method of example. All through His life He reinforced His precepts by the eloquence of His conduct; but He gathered up all these lessons, or the most difficult of them, into one supreme appeal to the dormant moral sense in man, when He raised Himself on the Cross and stretched out His Arms to die.

And what are the excellencies upon which this Crucified Teacher lays most stress? They are chiefly, brethren, what we call the passive virtues. Not that He would depreciate the active virtues which Pagans admired and practised; temperance, justice, courage, generosity. But there were other virtues which the old heathen world did not deem virtues at all, but only half-vices, only poor-spiritedness and weakness, and of the beauty of which the Jews themselves made small account. Such are the two which the Collect of to-day mentions as especially taught us by the Passion of Christ, humility and patience. Yes, humility, so hard for us to learn, is taught us by Him Who, being in the Form of God, did not claim other than His own in claiming equality with God, "yet made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the form of a slave, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And patience—so necessary, sooner or later, for all of us, if we would be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing"—when He Who might have prayed to His Father, and presently been sent more than twelve legions of angels, "was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before his shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth:" when He, the alone Immaculate, when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered, threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. And, closely akin to this, resignation to the Divine Will. The words in the garden, "Not My will but Thine be done," answer to the words of prophecy: "In the volume of the book it is written of Me, that I should fulfil Thy Will, O my God; I am content to do it;" and thus all is surrendered without reserve—reputation, friends, comfort, life. Not, as I have hinted, that Christ on the Cross teaches only passive virtue. Of the Seven last Words, one teaches us to work and pray for our enemies; a second, to be considerate towards those who go wrong; a third, to be dutiful to our parents; a fourth, to thirst for the salvation of others; a fifth, to pray fervently when under a sense of desolation; a sixth, to persevere till we have finished what God has given us to do in life; and the last, to commit ourselves, by a conscious act, both in life and death, into the Hands of God.

(β) Secondly, Jesus Christ, with His Hands stretched forth upon the Cross, makes an appeal to our sense of what He has done for us.

Why is He there? Not for any demerit of His own; not only, or chiefly, to teach us virtue. He is there because otherwise we are lost; because we must be "reconciled to God by the Death of His Son." He is there because He has first, by taking our nature, made Himself our Representative, and then, in this capacity, is bearing a penalty which, in virtue of those moral laws whereby the universe is governed, is due to our sins. It is no arbitrary or capricious substitution, whereby He thus suffers, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." For He already represents our human nature, just as Adam represented it: He acts for us as a parent might act for a young family: He suffers for us as a parent would suffer for his child. We claim our share in this His representative

Nature by that act of adhesion which we call faith; and He answers and ratifies our claim by His gifts of grace through the Christian Sacraments. Thus when He suffers, we too suffer by implication; when He dies, we share His Death; when He makes satisfaction to the eternal moral laws for the misdeeds of that nature which He has assumed, we who wear it, and have been the real culprits, make satisfaction too. "God made Him to be sin for us, Who know-no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And thus we are "justified freely by HIM grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood."

This is that unveiling of the inmost Heart of the All-merciful—the mystery of the Atonement for sin. It is as opening this mystery to the eyes of Christians—as inviting them all and each to come and share it—that Jesus Christ stretches forth His Hands upon the Cross. "Come unto Me," He says, by this silent but expressive action, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden with your sins, and I will give you rest." It is the appeal of love: love the most tender, the most practical, the most disinterested. The most tender: for surely greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends—especially considering that "when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The most practical: since it was "love not in word, but in deed and in truth;" not merely profession, or merely feeling, but after the fashion of true love, the gift of self; and the gift of the best that self can give, the gift of life. The most disinterested; for we could offer nothing to provoke, nothing to reward it; we could and can give nothing that He has not first given us. It is to our sense of this love, so strong, so practical, so disinterested, that He appeals: can He appeal in vain?

Surely, when we review our lives seriously, that which must chiefly strike most men is God's persevering, overshadowing, ever-pleading mercy. Why has He given us life at all? Why has He, by His free grace, made us, when we could do nothing for ourselves, members of Christ, children of God, heirs of the kingdom of heaven? Why should we have been taught to repeat the Creed of His Church, to read His Word, to think about Him as an Example and a Saviour, while we were young? Or, if it has been otherwise with us, and we have only known Him at all in later life, and are only beginning to know Him now, why has He singled us out for this distinguishing mercy; roused us suddenly and sharply from some dream of worldliness or sin; struck clown some near relation, wife or child; cut off utterly some source of gain or amusement; bid us see the lightning of His judgments scorch some sinner at our side who was no worse than we; bid us gaze on some servant of His own, already bright with the lustre of His glory, who has had no greater advantages than we, or has had fewer or less; or has guided us, like Augustine, to some one verse in His Word; or has spoken to us by the voice of a friend, who little knew the full meaning of his utterance, some word which has pierced to the depths of our souls, and made life already a different thing to us? What is all this but the perpetual stretching forth of the Hands of the Crucified during all the past years of life, as we look back on it—the incessant appeal of the Uncreated Mercy? And how has it found, how has it left, us? It is still true of us, as of the Jews of old, that all the long day of life Christ has stretched out His Hands to Christians who bear His Name, but who, like their Jewish predecessors, are a disobedient and gainsaying people.

III.

In conclusion, there are two lessons which we may endeavour to make our own.

1. One is particular. Jesus Christ stretching out His Hands in patient compassion on the Cross is a model for all Christians who are in any position of authority. Not only for monarchs, or statesmen, or great officials, but for that large number of us who, in various ways, have others dependent on us, or under our government and influence. Some of us are parents, and have the most sacred duty of bringing up our children; others are schoolmasters, and have voluntarily undertaken to share that duty; others are heads of "houses of business," and have many clerks and young people under their control; others are masters or mistresses of families, and have domestic servants about them. Like the centurion in the Gospel, a great number of Christians are between the two extremes of society, between those who do nothing but command, and those who do nothing but obey; they are men under authority, having others under them, and they say to this one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to their servant, Do this, and he doeth it. It may be but a little brief authority in which we are dressed, but it is authority; and as such, like that of the Queen upon her earthly throne, it is ennobled as a radiation from that Divine Authority which reigns on the Throne of Heaven. It may be little enough in itself, as measured by our social scales of greatness, but be it little or great, it is charged with responsibility; it has a bearing—more or less direct and intimate—upon the eternal destinies of human beings with whom God, in His providence, has thrown us thus into contact. And here, I say, the model for Christian parents, masters, employers, governors, is rather Christ upon His Cross, in anxious pain, stretching out the arms of entreaty and compassion, than Christ upon His Throne finally dispensing the awards of judgment. Mere right, mere "law," mere insistence upon *meum* and *tuum*, may be all very well for a man of the world, now as in the days of Paganism. The children of the Crucified have caught sight, or ought to have caught sight, of a higher ideal. The love which will not take account of dulness or stupidity, not even of stubbornness and perverse-ness; the love which anticipates the disobedience and the gainsaying, yet stretches out its hands persistently in tender and incessant invitation; the love which is not baulked and chilled by one failure or by two, but which goes on as if it had not failed at all, stretching out its hands in acts of kindness and consideration; the love which gets no interest for its outlay of pain, and grief, and care, which yet shrouds its disappointment as it whispers after the Apostle, "The more abundantly I love you the less I am loved:" this is what Christians in any position of authority should aim at in dealing with those who depend on them. If all their efforts seem failures; if their exertions and their self-denials seem to bring in nothing but a fresh measure of misunderstanding and scorn; what is this but association with the Divine Sufferer on the hill of Calvary, stretching out His Hands through the long hours of His Passion to a disobedient and gainsaying people? Between His case and theirs there is indeed one point of difference, the importance of which is incalculable. Full as His Heart was of tenderness towards His murderers, He needed no mercy for Himself; the thought never could have occurred to His Human Soul that He too would be judged by the measure which He dealt out to others. With us—with the highest and the best—how utterly otherwise is it! How certain is it that "with what measure we mete it shall be measured unto us again!" For a Christian to be forbearing and considerate is hardly disinterested, for, if he be other than this, he cannot hope for the merciful forbearance of God.

2. The other lesson is general. Jesus Christ stretching out His Hands upon the

Cross is surely a warning to us at all times, but especially at a season like this. Here we are, on Palm Sunday, at the very gate of the most solemn Week in the whole year.' How many Christians who spent this Week with us last year before the Cross of Christ, have since then passed into the eternal world! How many of ourselves, it may be, will never live to see another Holy Week; will look back from their place in eternity,—be it what it may,—upon this very week as an opportunity which will then have gone for ever. Who knows how it will be with each one of us? Brethren, Christ crucified does indeed stretch His Hands in entreaty and compassion, ready and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, all the long day of life. While there is life, there is hope, there is opportunity, there is heaven and happiness within reach of faith, of seriousness of purpose, of simpleness of heart. But the longest day has its evening; and after the evening comes the darkness of the night. Christ crucified, it has been said, has no Redemptive relations with the dead: He has either redeemed them, or they are beyond the reach of Redemption. As the soul passes the gate of eternity, the Pierced Hands of Christ, Which during the long day of life have been outstretched upon the Cross, seem to detach themselves, and to fold together as if for judgment.

“There is no repentance in the grave,
Nor pardon offer'd to the dead.”

Carry this thought, I pray you, into the solemnities of the coming Week. Begin now, on Palm Sunday, and accompany your Saviour through each stage of His bitter Passion, with the thought of eternity clearly before your souls. If the exhortations to which you listen from human teachers rouse conscience during these sacred hours into activity; if the scenes on which you dwell,—the scenes of woe and of victory, the Words, the Wounds, the darkened sky, the awful silence,—speak to your souls as if there had come over them some breath from another and a distant world; if, as on Tuesday next,¹ human art gives guidance or impetus to hallowed feeling, and, for a while, you lose sight of the material and transient present, in the keener sight of that world which is beyond sense, and which does not pass away,—O pray that these higher glimpses, emotions, convictions, may not die away like the vast array of unfruitful feelings which make up so large a part of life; pray that they may become resolutions, starting-points for a new, a changed, a higher level of existence, the reverse of past years of disobedience and contradiction. What will it avail to have thought much, felt much, hoped for much, in Passion-tide, if at Easter all, or nearly all, is forfeited,—if we disobey the Will and gainsay the Truth of our Crucified Master, just as before? Why should He, the dying Son of God, almost year by year, have to repeat the complaint of centuries over Christendom, over Christian souls, over your soul and mine, “All the day long have I stretched out My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people?” It need not be so, since He is more than willing to help us; it must not be so, unless all is to be irretrievably lost.

¹ The reference is to the special service held in St. Paul's Cathedral on the Tuesday Evening of Holy Week, when Bach's "Passion-Music" is rendered.