

A FAREWELL
PASTORAL LETTER

TO HIS

PARISHIONERS

AND

MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION,

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

TWO SERMONS PREACHED IN

ST. PAUL'S, BEDFORD,

ON

SUNDAY, MARCH 13TH, 1870,

BY THE

REV. M. F. SADLER, M.A.,

VICAR.

BEDFORD:

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MY DEAR BRETHREN IN CHRIST,

After a residence, as your pastor, of some years among you, I have now to say the hardest word which I have had to say to you, for I have to bid you farewell. I have determined to take leave of you not merely privately, or in a sermon only, but by a letter which may embody the outline of my teaching, and also contain reasons for many of the things connected with the service of Almighty God which I have introduced amongst you.

And now, as regards my teaching.

In the first place, I say it with a deep sense of the unworthy way in which I have discharged so unspeakably great a duty, but still I say it with the utmost confidence, I have preached among you "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." I have continually told you that no merits of your own,—no, nor any merits attaching to what God's grace may have wrought in you, can in any way be accepted by God as a satisfaction for sin.

No repentance which God may have wrought in you, no matter how deep the conviction of sin which attended it, and bowed you down; no matter what floods of tears it drew from you, no matter how abasing the shame which made you hang down your head, when you thought of the hated past—no repentance, I say, no matter how genuine and lasting, can stand you in

the stead of Christ's Blood; for repentance is only that in you which makes you feel the need of such Blood as the Blood of Jesus to wash you. No faith, however vividly it realizes to you the Person and Work of your Saviour, can stand you in the stead of this Blood, for faith is only that in you which makes you embrace the loving mercy of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. No spirit of obedience to God's law can stand in the stead of the Blood of Jesus, for it is, after all, not your own righteousness, but the righteousness of God in you. It is God working in you by His Spirit, that which you could not work in yourselves, if all the universe, without God, were to help you.

I have then, I say it in all confidence, preached habitually, that the Blood of Christ, and nothing else, can save from all sin, but remember, I pray you, *how* I have endeavoured, God helping, to set forth, "Christ, and Him crucified." I have striven to set Him forth as He is set forth in the Scriptures. I have consequently proclaimed with all my poor strength the Greatness and Glory of His Person as the only Begotten Son of God. The Holy Ghost always sets forth, in the pages of Scripture, the Person of Christ before He sets forth His atoning work, and it must be so, for the whole saving power of the work of Jesus on the Cross, depends upon Who He is. He is not the Only Begotten Son of God because He saved us, but He saved us because He is the Only Begotten Son of God.

Again, if you would trust in Christ with an intelligent trust, knowing in whom you trust, and so making sure the ground of your trust, you must know and realize Who He is: You must not only know the love which His heart bears towards you, but you must know that He has power behind His love, as it were. If the best man who ever lived were to love you with all the love of which man or angel is capable, that love could

not save you. Jesus has saved you, because His love towards you was not the love of man only, but the love of the Only Begotten Son of God.

For this reason the Scriptures set forth the Person of Jesus before either His work or His love; for it is the Person of Christ, as the Only Begotten of the Father, which gave its efficacy to His work, and its saving power to His love.

It is because of this that I have so often insisted on the union of two natures in the person of the Saviour. How He is, in very deed. "God manifest in the flesh;" How His God-head is the very nature of the Eternal God, and yet that He has a "reasonable soul and human flesh," His flesh of the same substance as yours and mine, and His human soul like yours and mine in all but sin, and yet that He is not two, but "One Christ." I desired that you should trust not only with all your hearts, but with all your reasoning and intelligent souls, and so I have set before you the Saviour as He is set forth in Scripture, and in the Creeds of the Church; laying the greatest possible emphasis upon Who He is, as the foundation of what He has done for us.

And then I have preached prominently the Person of Christ, because the Scriptures inseparably connect the very being of Christ amongst us with the love of the Father. The Two First Persons in the Ever Blessed Three stand in the relation of Father and Son to one another. And because of this the Father has a property, as it were, in his Co-equal and Co-eternal Son, because He is His Father, and so when the Father gave the Son, He gave what was, in a sense His Own—His own Offspring—His own express Image, and this is what Christ means when He says, "God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Begotten Son," so that if we preach aright the Person of the Son of God that He is the Only Begotten of His Father, we

cannot forbear connecting with it the Love of the Father, in giving His own Offspring—His own Image—to save a lost world.

Holding all this, I have never dared so to set forth the love of Christ, as if He loved sinners more than His Father does. I have never dared to describe God the Father as all sternness and all justice, and God the Son as all love and compassion. I have never dared to represent God the Father as an angry God, armed with a flaming sword, and God the Son throwing Himself between His Father and sinners, and receiving on Himself the blow aimed at sinners. On the contrary, many, many times in your hearing have I uttered words to this effect, that all the love and compassion which dwells in the breast of the Son of God, He derives from that Father of whom He is at once the Only Son and the express Image. I humbly trust that I have sown, in some breasts, some seeds of the love of God by this setting forth of the adorable Person of the Son of God.

I have thus set forth the Son of God crucified; but I have not stopped at the crucifixion, but have gone on to set forth Christ risen; for I read (Rom. v, 10), "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His Life," *i.e.* by his Risen Life—by the New Life which He received at His Resurrection, and which life He imparts to the members of his mystical body, as the natural body receives the life from the head (Coloss. ii, 19).

I have set forth Christ crucified as your only hope, and only source of peace, when you look back upon the past and see how very far short you have come of the Christian life and walk as set forth in the Scripture; and as your only hope and only source of peace, when you look into your own hearts and see how much there is there which requires atonement and satisfaction to be made for it. But I have never dared so to preach Christ

crucified as if, because He was crucified, you need not be crucified too. I have never dared to preach Christ bearing your sins upon His cross, as if, because He did so, you need not take up and bear *your* cross. Christ is the Door, and Christ is the Way, but not so as to prevent you finding the gate that leadeth to life to be "strait," and the way to eternal glory to be "narrow."

No, if there be truth in the Bible, Jesus Christ died for your sins in order that you might put your sins to death.

I have, then, preached Christ as crucified so that you might have your past uncharitableness—your past evil speaking—your past uncleanness—your past drunkenness—your past dishonesty—if, that is, you make restitution) your past ungodliness—fully and freely forgiven, and no more remembered against you; but I have, along with all this, preached Christ crucified, in order that you might cut off sins as close and cleaving, and by long habit, as much a part of yourselves as a right hand or right eye, for I read that it was He, Who was crucified for us, Who said, "If thy right hand or right eye offend thee cut them off and cast them from thee;" and I read that He who was crucified for us said, "If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

There is another point also connected by some with the preaching of Christ crucified which I have not preached, because it is not to be found in the New Testament. I allude to the doctrine of what is called "Imputed Righteousness," that the Active and Passive Righteousness of the Redeemer is put down in God's books, as it were, to the account of the sinner, so that whilst the sinner himself is filthy and defiled by sin, the righteousness of Christ is thrown around him as a cloak to hide his filthiness from the all-seeing eye of God. Now, though it may be, in a certain sense, true to say that Christ is our covering, or robe or cloak, yet,

at the best, it is but a part of a much greater truth, which greater truth is the one set forth in our Lord's parable of the "Vine and the Branches," (John xv, 1-8,) which is that Christ is in the Christian and the Christian in Christ. When Christ says of Christians "I am the Vine, ye are the Branches," He implies that Christians are much more in Him, and much more closely united to Him, than a man is united to his garments. There is no close and intimate connexion between a man and his cloak, but there is a very intimate connexion indeed between a vine branch and the vine. Again, I find that St. Paul, next to our Lord the greatest teacher in the New Testament, never speaks of Christ being our garment or robe only, but he sets forth a far deeper thing to show how close Christ comes to us when he compares Christ to the Head of a body and His people to the members of the same body. A man's limb is surely united more closely to the man's self than his garments are.

Now this is the reason why I have not preached prominently "imputed righteousness," or Christ as "our robe," because, even though that it may be to a certain extent, true, still the truth that Christ is the Vine, or Christ the head of the body, is a greater, deeper, higher, more evangelical truth, because it sets forth a closer and holier connection betwixt Christ and the Christian.

It is a greater thing to be in Christ, as a branch is in a vine, than to be in Christ, as a man is in a robe, because a branch has a vital union with the vine—it partakes of the life of the vine. And it is assuredly a still greater thing to be in Christ, as a limb or member is in the same body as the head, because the member or limb is bound up in the same bundle of life with the head.

So that I have not bid you rest in such a doctrine as that of imputed righteousness, because it is not suffi-

ciently *evangelical*. It does not set forth the *FULNESS* of Christ. There is another way of regarding Christ as the all-in-all of the Christian, which brings Him closer to us, which is, that Christ is our Head, and we the members of His mystical body.

In accordance with this, and as a necessary part of this great truth, I have set forth Christ as the mystical food and sustenance of the Christian. If I am to be true to my Master, and to account His blessed words as "spirit and life," then I must say what He has said respecting Himself being the "bread of life"—respecting the bread which He gives, being "His flesh," and that he who "eats the flesh of the Son of man, and drinks His blood," by so doing, dwells in Christ and Christ in him.

I could not pretend to set forth the *FULNESS* of Christ, and take no notice of the strongest and most startling words in the New Testament, those in John vi., which set forth that fulness under the term "eating the flesh of the Son of man and drinking His blood," in order that we may have His life in us.

I have, of course, connected this eating of Christ's Flesh and drinking His Blood in a heavenly and spiritual way, with the penitent and faithful reception of the Lord's Supper, because I cannot suppose that Christ would tell us at one time that we must eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, and then shortly afterwards offer to us just before His crucifixion, when He ordained the Lord's Supper, things to eat and to drink, which He called His Body and His Blood, and not have meant us to connect the one with the other.

But, in fact, as a minister of the Church of England, I have had no choice in the matter. If I had neglected to tell you, from this pulpit, that your union with your Saviour must be cemented by the heavenly and spiritual reception of His Body and His Blood, at His table, I must have told you the same thing from the altar,

because whenever I administer the blessed sacrament there, I am obliged to say to you "Dearly beloved in the Lord * * as the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith, we receive that Holy Sacrament, for then we spiritually eat the Flesh of Christ and drink His Blood: then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us; we are one with Christ and Christ with us," &c.

Another consideration, too, has forced me to connect the cementing of this union of the Christian with Christ with the Holy Communion, which is this, all such benefits as feeding on Christ, as our bread, eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and having His life in us, must depend entirely upon the will of God the Father, and I felt that I dare not say that God the Father, who assuredly has a will of His own, is at all likely to impart these high benefits to the Christian whilst he is living in wilful neglect of the means of grace and pledges of love, which the Son of That Father ordained on the eve of the day on which He redeemed us by His Blood.

In connection with this, I have felt that the terms in which both Christ, Himself and His apostles spake of both Sacraments, are such that I could not possibly regard them as mere outward ordinances—as bare signs to remind us of some grace which God usually confers at some other time, than that in which we receive the Sacraments; and so I have habitually led you to look upon Baptism and the Lord's Supper as means of grace, not as signs of profession—because I always find them in the New Testament spoken of as connected with grace from Christ, never as means by which we are to show forth our faith or our religion.

It is as hard, I assure you, for me as it is for you to believe what Christ and His Apostles say of two such simple unpretending rites; as that, in the one, we should be "buried with Christ," and "put Him on," and be "sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by

the word;" and that in the other we should eat the Flesh and drink the Blood of the Son of Man; but what am I to do if, that is, I take the New Testament to be inspired? Two ways are open to me. I may either go over each place in which Christ or the Holy Spirit ascribe great things to the due and right reception of these two simple ordinances, and explain each place away in a seemingly spiritual but really rationalistic or infidel way, or I may take these places as they stand, as literally as I can, and consider that Christ knows all the needs of my nature better than what I do, and that He has some deep reason for connecting Salvation with two such simple rites, and that His words must be nearer to the hidden truth than any which I can substitute for them.

Now I believe that the latter is the only way honourable to Christ. I dare not say or teach that when Christ says "water" He means repentance, or conversion, or the Holy Spirit. I dare not say that when Christ says "Except ye eat the FLESH of the Son of man, ye have no life in you," that He means nothing more than "Except ye partake of my SPIRIT ye have no life in you."

Christ and His Apostles say, most abundantly, that we must partake of His Spirit, and this is the very reason why I dare not so interpret His words respecting "eating His flesh;" as if they only meant "partaking of His Spirit," for I must believe that He had some deep reason for saying that we must not only partake of His SPIRIT, but eat His FLESH, and so I dare not treat His discourses as if they were so loosely worded that we are at liberty to substitute for one another, words so diametrically opposite in their meaning as "flesh" and "spirit" are.

One other matter of importance requires notice before I quit this part of the subject. I have preached the Incarnation, I said. Now in preaching this I have

of course proclaimed that the Eternal Son came amongst us, not as a disembodied spirit, but in the flesh, for He was "manifest in the flesh," and having thus assumed, not only our higher and more spiritual, but our fleshly nature also, He sanctified and spiritualized it, and raised it up in His own person to the highest place in the universe, i.e. to the right hand of God. Now it is hardly possible to realize this truth of the Incarnation, without realizing certain of its belongings; for certain matters are intimately connected with it by the Spirit of God, which, as set forth in the Bible, are very wonderful and mysterious. One of these is that as we receive our sin through our natural connection with the flesh of the first Adam, so we must receive a corresponding remedy from connection with the very human nature of the Second Adam.

Another is that our very bodies are so sanctified by union with Christ's Body that we are said by an Apostle to be "Members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones," and that on this account, above all others we must recognize the holiness of our very bodies, for the Apostle says very expressly; "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ." (I. Corinth. vi. 15.) And if you refer to the context of this passage you will see its unspeakable practical importance, for he is warning Christians against the commission of gross and deadly sins.

And now, respecting another point or feature of my preaching, which is of the utmost practical importance, viz., my preaching of "conversion." There can be no doubt whatever that some Christians have that which others have not. They have apparently, (and some of them at a definite time,) passed through an ordeal which others have not. They have a marvellous insight into *certain* truths (but by no means all) which others have not. They can speak about certain of the Doctrines of grace (those especially which relate to the corruption of

man, and the atoning work of the Redeemer) in a way which shews that they have had some internal teaching about these things. They have, or seem to have, a regard for the souls of others, which others have not.

Now I have preached this change in almost every Sermon. I have implied that some Christians are, compared with others, in a marvellously different spiritual state of consciousness respecting God and Christ: but I would now, in all solemnity, remind you of the way in which I have set before you this truth. I have certainly not preached "conversion" as it is usually preached—or as it is popularly understood. When speaking of the change which a nominal Christian undergoes, when he becomes a true one, or an unspiritual man undergoes when he becomes a spiritual man, or a sinful man undergoes when he becomes a holy man, I have called this change by another name—a name which appears to me marvellously lost sight of in the vocabulary of the religious world. I have called this change not "conversion" but "repentance." The word "repentance" is far more frequently used to denote a change from the world to God, and from sin to holiness, than "conversion." Christ first preached "repentance." His forerunner, John, first preached "repentance." St. Peter and St. Paul called what they preached "repentance." St. Paul never uses the word "conversion," always the word "repentance." For "repentance" is the deeper word of the two. The word "repentance," in the New Testament, always implies an *internal* change. It always implies a change of heart, or mind. "Conversion," on the contrary, means simply turning—turning in the middle of a walk.

I do not say that "conversion" is not a proper word, but unquestionably "repentance" is both the deeper word and the word more frequently used by the inspired writers, and so I have used it.

And that there is a sensible difference between the two terms, a very little consideration will convince

you. Repentance carries with it the idea of more humility—more self-abasement—more holiness than conversion. It associates with itself less of the idea of change of mere views, or opinions, and more of the idea of change of heart. You can imagine a “converted” man—(one, at least, who professes to be so) proud, censorious, uncharitable, to a certain extent self-indulgent, but you cannot imagine a penitent man to be any of these things. It is not at all, as things go, an incongruity for a converted man, even whilst he utterly disclaims all righteousness of his own, to shew by every muscle of his face, that he is on the best terms with himself; but not so the penitent man: the very first idea you connect with repentance is humility.

Now this is why I have endeavoured to call the great change, not by its popular name, but by the name it bears both in the Bible and in the Prayer Book. There may be (and we are in danger of) great mistakes about conversion, but there can be NO MISTAKE ABOUT REPENTANCE.

Another reason why I have not preached “conversion” as it is usually preached, is for the sake of morality.

If I were to preach “conversion” in the style in which many do, I should by it upset the distinctions between “right” and “wrong.”

If I were to say to you “till you are sensibly converted: nothing you do is of any avail to bring you to God. Your morality is so much decent heathenism, your strivings to be pure and right-minded, and honest and truthful, are so much Pharisaism: your works of kindness and charity are so many splendid sins. Till you are converted, and know it, and can describe the process, and have felt peace, you are yet in a state of heathenism, or worse, and your conversion is entirely the work of God, brought on by His power when He likes and as He likes—and nothing you can do can forward it.” If I were to preach in this way I should, as far as I can

see, upset the distinctions between right and wrong; because the natural effect of such preaching would be to make you say, “I see from all this that till God converts me, I may live as I like, I am told that nothing I can do in my present state is pleasing to God, and that I cannot change myself. Why should I trouble myself about either doing my duty or avoiding sin, or keeping myself pure and truthful, or even about behaving myself decently, except so far as it concerns my temporal interest.”

Now it is this which has made me hesitate to preach conversion in the way in which it is usually preached.

I have felt, and strongly felt, that the Bible does not allow me to preach the need of conversion by so expressing myself as to encourage the belief that all that a man does, before his conversion, is a matter of indifference either to God or to the state of his own soul.

Then, too, there are two other matters, which have made the preaching of conversion, as it is usually preached, a matter of difficulty to me. First, I know several persons, who, as far as I can judge, have never gone through any ordeal or struggle, or received any sudden enlightening, or been deeply convinced of sin; and I know others, who from their mode of expressing themselves, I believe have gone through all this, and yet the one, *i.e.* those who have not been thus changed and enlightened, are, I am sure, if we are to judge from the Bible, in a higher *Evangelical* as well as moral state than the latter, *i.e.* those who have been what is called converted.

The former appear to have grown up under Christian influences, and to have served God from their youth—not with the lively feelings which they ought, but still to have *served God*.

The latter have gone wrong, or have cherished sin, and have been well nigh destroyed by it, and by God’s mercy have been brought back, and probably suddenly;

but if we are to take the marks of Christian character laid down in the Bible, they have not the Christian character of the former.

I say this with hesitation, inasmuch as I do not know the heart, but it appears to me to be the truth.

Another reason why I have not preached conversion as it is now popularly preached and understood, arises from what I have heard and read of the experience of those who have preached it.

I was lately reading of a successful revival preacher, of our own Church too, and it was said that he calculated that out of every ten, converted under his ministry, nine would fall back.

Knowing the state of those who do thus fall back, how far more hopeless it is, owing to the taste they have got for excitement, so that they cannot profit by—sometimes even cannot endure, sober Christianity, I have hesitated about so preaching conversion. May God forgive me if I have taught wrong on this matter, and remedy the wrong I have done, but I have endeavoured to guide my preaching by His word.

The next point that I shall advert to is my preaching of "sins," not, you see, of sin or of *sinfulness*, but of sins.

The word of God, whilst it rebukes all sin, of all sorts, does not lead us to consider all sins as alike. It leads us to look upon certain sins as "*deadly*" sins, and puts the especial ban of God upon them. Such are sins of the flesh, as adultery, and fornication, *i. e.* breaches of the seventh commandment—sins of malice—and sins of covetousness.

I have never hesitated, from false delicacy, to name the first of these sins, and to tell you plainly what God thinks about them, and how He will punish them.

I could not forbear doing so with my Bible in my hand.

I have never hesitated to tell you plainly that God sets a mark upon those who break the seventh command-

ment, which man does not. I have warned you (not so often as I ought) but I have repeatedly warned you lest you undo the effect of the word of God on this matter, by giving soft names to these sins. You do not know the sin you commit, for instance, in calling a profligate man a gay man, or by any allusion to these sins which would lead men to believe that you do not think those who commit them in danger of everlasting destruction.

I have spoken from this pulpit strongly against sins of malice, against evil speaking, against evil surmising and uncharitableness, in all its forms, even though so-called religious or converted people seem not to be delivered from them by their conversion. How could I forbear to do so, when I read of our Lord saying "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you." "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." (Matt. vi. 14.) When I hear St. John preaching "he that hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (I. John, iii. 15.) I have spoken equally strongly about covetousness. I have perpetually preached the necessity of constant almsgiving. How could I, if I were faithful, do otherwise, when I read our Lord's own account of how He will judge men at the last day. (Matthew xxv.)

I have not been careful to reconcile all that the Bible says about almsgiving with what it says about justification, because the Bible is not careful to do so.

Lastly—I have preached constantly that the one thing which the Christian is to look for, the one event he is to expect, the one day he is to prepare for, is the day of the Second Coming of the Son of Man.

I have preached constantly and earnestly that God has not given to man a lease of this world—that not we only who live on the world, but that the world itself is unstable, and will suddenly be changed—that the progress to which some men look with such hope, and the

institutions to which other men cling with such reverence, are alike transitory and uncertain—for this state of things, this mingled state of good and evil, will suddenly come to an end—for a day is certainly coming—it may be a hundred years hence, or it may be tomorrow—when we shall all awake, awake from our graves, or awake out of our sleep, or awake out of our day dreams.

We shall awake and stand before the Son of Man.

Such has been my teaching. In whatsoever it has been wrong may God keep you from receiving evil from it; in whatsoever it has been right may God cause it to dwell in your hearts; in whatsoever it has been wanting may God supply the deficiency, for His Son's sake.

And now, my brethren, I must address myself to set before you what the things are which, after one minister or another is removed, remain, and cannot (humanly speaking) be taken away.

Now, first of all, He remains Whose ministers we are. The servants go, but the Master remains.

And He remains far nearer to you than the greater part of you have any idea of.

If there be truth in God's Word, then Christ is more effectually present now than when He was living on earth, in Jerusalem or Galilee, preaching and working miracles.

Not till the great day shall we know the full meaning of those last words of Christ, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Not till then shall we fully realize what truth there is in the promise, "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

The Lord Jesus Christ is in one and the same Person both God and man. Now inasmuch as He is God over

all, He is everywhere. Because He is God over all, He upholds us all in existence from one moment to another. We live and move and have our being in the Son of God. And inasmuch as this, His Godhead, is personally and inseparably joined to that glorious human Frame which was once crucified, then rose again, and then ascended; that Frame which yet retains the tokens of its past crucifixion, for it has in it the marks of five cruel wounds—four the marks of nails, and one the mark of a spear—Inasmuch, I say, as this Godhead is joined inseparably to this once crucified but now living and glorified Frame, it follows that where the Omnipresent Son of God is, there is the once Crucified Jesus, for the Loving and Gentle Crucified One and the Omnipresent Son of God are the same person. So that if God the Son be amongst you—the once crucified but now exalted Saviour is amongst you too.

The Son of God has a true human nature, a man's heart which beats with a man's love for his fellow-men, a man's soul with its purest affections, a man's memory which treasures up acts of regard and kindness; but because this manhood is taken into His Godhead, and His Godhead fills all things, as surely as we have His Godhead amongst us, so surely we have Him amongst us, Who so loved us that He submitted to be crucified for us.

You have Him ever amongst you Who wept over Jerusalem. You have Him amongst you Who, at the grave of Lazarus, wept for very sympathy, because He saw others weep. You have Him ever amongst you Who prayed for Peter who denied Him, and Who interceded for those who were nailing Him to the Cross, Who said to the sick man, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," Who allowed the woman, who was a sinner, to anoint His sacred feet, and reproved those who would have driven her away.

You have Him ever remaining in your midst, and

I assure you on the authority of His own word, that He is now the same as ever He was, for He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (Hebrews xiii., 8.)

So the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls will remain, as powerful as ever, as loving as ever, as quick as ever to discern the most secret desire to lay hold of His salvation. (Mark v., 25-34).

And He will remain, the One Shepherd, the One Bishop, the One Priest, the One Deacon, or worker, working all. One labourer may plant, and another may water, but none but He can give the increase, none but He can bring back the lost sheep—none but He can even teach—for none but He can open the understanding that men may understand the Scriptures.

So that the Chief Shepherd—the Head of the Church—the Saviour of the Body—the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world—He will remain.

Oh, my friends, believe this. It seems all we want to make us right, and to keep us right, to feel that the eye of Jesus is ever upon us, and the arm of Jesus ever ready to support us.

If we commit secret or open sin, or neglect prayer, or harbour malice, or envy, or turn our feet from God's house, or do dishonest things, it must be because we forget the presence of Jesus.

Then, in the next place, the Spirit of God will remain. I do not say that He will remain with each individual here present, for we pray, in daily prayer, that God may be pleased "not to take His Holy Spirit from us," but God has pledged His word that His Spirit shall remain with the Church.

No promise can be more express. "As for me," says God, in the Prophet Isaiah, speaking of our days, "this is my covenant with them. My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth

shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." (Isaiah lix. 21.)

If God has pledged that His Spirit shall remain with His Church, then the power of faith, and love, and holiness, remains among you.

If you do not realize all the truth of Jesus it is your own fault, for all the faith of the men of ancient days, all their power to apprehend the greatness of the Person, and the love and the power of the Son of God, which made St. Paul, and St. John, and St. Athanasius, and St. Augustine, what they were; all this power to believe was the work of God's Holy Spirit in them, and the same Spirit, unaltered, is vouchsafed to you. St. Paul had nothing more to work in him his faith which you have not, or may not have. St. Athanasius had nothing more in him to work in him his living apprehension of the glory of God's only Begotten, which you have not. St. Augustine had no other "Holy Spirit" to realize to him man's helplessness and God's grace, which you have not.

When you read the accounts of God's true Saints believing in God's faithfulness, in spite of all discouragements, and loving God with a love to which ours seems icy coldness; and so loving their brethren in Christ that they gave up power, home, property, friends, and all, to save souls; and when you read of them subduing their corruptions, as if their very lives depended on the victory, and praying to God and praising Him, as if all time spent otherwise seemed to them lost time; when you read these things, remember that they had no other Spirit in them to enable them to do all this, which you have not, or may not have. They had the same corruption to begin with, which you have, and they had the same Holy Spirit which is vouchsafed to you to subdue it.

Remember, I beseech you, what I have continually

taught you, respecting the gift of God's Spirit to the visible Church, and to each member of it.

Following the leading of Scripture, which is most express upon this point,* I have habitually taught you that God has shed forth His Spirit very abundantly in the Church—that a certain gift of the Holy Spirit is vouchsafed to all the baptised, but that this gift will add to their condemnation if they do not seek the Spirit in greater measure. God will never allow Christians, at the day of Judgment, to say that they have lost their souls because He has withheld this grace from them. He will shew you then, that, if you have sinned, it is in spite of His grace and Holy Spirit.

And as Christ and the Holy Spirit remain, so does that most precious Book, which is the Holy Spirit's perpetual witness to Christ.

The Bible remains to you, and, humanly speaking, always will. So that, at any time, you can open its pages, and see what God has to say to you there.

But remember that the Bible on your shelves is no charm. It cannot benefit you unless you read it, and read it in a right spirit, *i.e.* a humble, teachable, prayerful spirit.

Unless you study its pages in this spirit, like all other gifts of God, it can be of no benefit. The good effect of all God's gifts depends upon the spirit in which they are received, or in which they are used.

Take heed then, I pray you, that the possession of

* The following places all imply some gift of grace to *all* in the Church. John i, 16, "Of His fulness have all we received." 1 Corinth. xii, 7, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." 11, "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man." 13, "By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body." 27, "Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular." Rom. xii, 3-5, "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Also, 11 Corinth. vi., 1-16. Gal. iii, 26-28, iv, 26. Ephes. iv, 7, "Unto every one of us is given grace." Coloss. i, 27-28.

Several other passages given at length may be found in my "Second Adam and New Birth." 3rd edition, page 132-134.

your Bible may never rise up in judgment against you. Read it daily—you that can read. Read it through. Do not read it as a matter of course, opening always to some one place, or some few places, but have a plan for reading it through.

And, as the word of God remains to you, so will the Sacraments, the pledges of God's love, and the signs and tokens of Christ's especial presence.

Thanks be to God, the ministers of His Church can add nothing to, or take nothing from, such a means of grace as the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

So far as it is a means of grace whereby the faithful are made partakers, in a heavenly and spiritual manner, of the Body and Blood of Christ, it is the same now as ever. What an Apostle gave eighteen hundred years ago, when he gave to his converts that sacred bread, THAT do we give, neither more nor less.

The Lord's Supper will continue to be administered to you as it has been. So that each Lord's day you will be invited to renew your union with your Saviour: and your union, or your renewal of your union with Him, will depend, under God, on yourselves—on your own repentance—on your own faith in Christ Crucified, and especially on your realizing that Christ has ordained that Sacrament, that in the faithful use of it you might be made partakers of His Body and Blood, and so that you may dwell in Him and He in you.

I particularly desire to remind you that the Blessed Sacrament is the same, under all circumstances, for this reason; I have known persons who had some feeling of dissatisfaction against a clergyman for something which he had done which they disapproved of, to absent themselves from the Lord's table, though they continued to attend the Church as usual.

This is exactly the contrary to what should be done under such circumstances. If there were but one Church in a place, and you so much disapproved of the doctrine

or private life of the minister that you could not profit under his teaching, still see to it that you attend the Blessed Sacrament, for why should the man's erroneous teaching, or even his immoral conduct, deprive you of such a wondrous privilege as the Holy Communion appears to be, if we are to judge of it by the terms in which it is spoken of in the New Testament.

There is a great contrast between such a means of grace as the Holy Communion and a Sermon, for the Sermon depends greatly, for its efficacy, on the personal qualifications of the minister—on his religious character, his prayers, his reading, his knowledge of human nature, even on his voice and manner; but the Holy Communion is in no respect the minister's. It is Christ's table. It is the Church's privilege. As long as you are not excommunicated for your sin it is your right.

Whatever then be your personal feelings towards the minister, never, for one moment, let them influence your approach to the table of the Lord. If you do, you commit the incredible folly of depriving yourself of the especial means of union with Christ, because you think your minister is in fault: you punish yourself for his error or sin.

The Holy Communion then will remain. Now, what is implied in the fact of the Holy Communion remaining?

It means that the most precious means of grace remains. It means that the most precious pledge of Christ's presence and love remains. It means that you have, and will continue to have, within your reach, the most effective way of pleading the Death and Passion of the Saviour before God the Father.

This precious gift of the Saviour remains with you then—remains the same as ever. Oh, see that it does not remain to your condemnation—which it will if you either absent yourselves from it because of unrepented and unforsaken sin, or if you partake of it in superstition, or formality, or hypocrisy.

And as the Sacraments remain to you, so does that Book of "*Common*" Prayer, according to which we worship God, with one mind and one mouth.

It is a great consolation to me to think that, in this matter of public prayer, you have been independent of me. Your devotions in this house of God, your prayers, your praises, your intercessions, in no way depended upon me. They are your own—for ours is "*common prayer*"—the prayer of the united congregation, and so I am not permitted to add anything to them, or take away anything from them.

In this matter of public worship you have been your own priests—for the prayers and psalms are yours—all known beforehand by you—and the greater part made your own by solemn and frequent response. They have in no way depended upon the state of my own heart, nor upon the frame of mind in which I was when I offered them. They were in no way the expression of my own private desires, or the reflection of my own private opinions.

It is, I repeat, a great satisfaction to me to think that, in this matter of public worship, you have been independent of me; I have had no responsibility, except to see that all things were done decently and in order.

One duty, however, connected with this matter, I have had, and I have endeavoured to fulfil it—which was to set before you the full spirit and meaning of the Service—how all of it, and particularly those parts which are popularly objected to, are in accordance with many express Scripture statements—how in the use of it we ask for many things which we should not be likely to ask for, unless petitions for such things were there ready to our hands; as, for instance, the petitions against gross, deadly, and disgraceful sins, which the Apostle of the Gentiles thought it not beneath him to warn even Primitive Christians against, and which I am afraid, many of us would, out of false delicacy, fail to pray

against if we had our option—thank God we have not.

And it is a great consolation for me to think that, though above 200 miles away from you, yet you and I will continue, Sunday after Sunday, (and some of us day by day), to join together in the same offering of prayer and praise, so realizing the Communion of Saints.

I dare say you have often heard of those who loved one another, and were separated for a season, vowing to each other that, at the same hour of each day, they would do the same thing. They would fix their eyes on the rising or the setting sun—they would gaze on some bright star—they would read over, at the same time, letters from each other, or a page of the same loved book, and so, though far away, they would strive to have communion by the same object exciting the same trains of thought.

And so it is sweet to think that you and I shall, on the same Lord's Day, and almost at the same moment, join together in the same praise of Jesus. Almost together, as if side by side, we shall sing the strain, hallowed by the devout use of fourteen centuries,

"Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ;

Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.

When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb:

When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

Together, on the same day, as if side by side, we shall beseech our Dear Redeemer "By the Mystery of His Holy Incarnation—By His Agony and Bloody Sweat—By His Cross and Passion—By His Precious Death and Burial—to deliver us."

Together shall we lift up heart and voice to Him, and say, "O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, Grant us thy Peace."

These things cannot be taken away. No matter who departs, still the Saviour, and the Spirit, and the

Church, and the Blessed Sacrament, the pledge of Christ's presence, and the Scriptures, and the Common Prayers and Praises of God's house, remain the same as ever.

They are ours—yours and mine—in possession. Oh, may they be ours—yours and mine—in enjoyment. And now, brethren, farewell, Farewell in the Saviour.

Look to Him—Love Him—Please Him—Follow Him—and all must be well.

Remember His words: all His words.

Remember Him when He says, "ye believe in God, believe also in Me;" and remember Him when He says, "Have peace one with another." Remember Him when He says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest;" and remember Him when He says, "Take up your cross, and follow Me."

I trust, that, when I hear of you, I shall hear of you "faring well in Christ."

I will not speak of hearing of such things as God only can know the reality of—such as your repentance unto life, and your faith, and your holiness, but I trust that I shall hear of a larger and still larger number gathering round the Lord's table. I trust that I shall hear of more and more amongst you visiting the sick, consoling the afflicted, teaching the ignorant, caring for the poor. I trust that I shall hear of more and more doing something for the Church, the spouse of Christ.

I trust that I shall hear of the offertory of this Church going on and prospering. We have now nearly £500 a year from it, but remember, if the ordinary congregation attending this Church give but sixpence a head each Sunday, you could have nearly £1000 a year to spend in the restoration of your Church, and the keeping up of your service, as well as in the cause of Missions at home and abroad.

I trust that I shall hear of this, your fine Parish Church, being completed.

I trust, indeed of this I am sure, that I shall hear of the Service of God in this Church, being more and more what it ought to be—a service enriched with all the accompaniments of grand and solemn Church music.

All God's gifts, especially His glorious gifts of Song and Music, should be laid at His feet by being consecrated to the Service of His Sanctuary.

Farewell, then, brethren in the Lord.

I came among you six years ago, as a stranger, and I soon found many friends among you, and, best of all, my Master's friends became mine.

I am especially thankful for this token for good, that the godly and religious, the active and the useful among you, have, with scarcely an exception, cleaved to me.

O ye, who know not only what Christ has done for you, but Who He is, God and Man in One Person; ye, to whom God has revealed one glimpse of the mystery of Christ's Holy Incarnation and the wondrous Sacramental connection betwixt it and the Church, His Mystical Body, speak often one to another of the things which God has taught you.

Pray above all things that these truths may find acceptance with your brethren. So shall what has been taught in feebleness bear fruit through God's power.

And so my teaching shall continue among you, and "This shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

I am, Dear Brethren,

Yours faithfully in Christ,

M. F. SADLER.