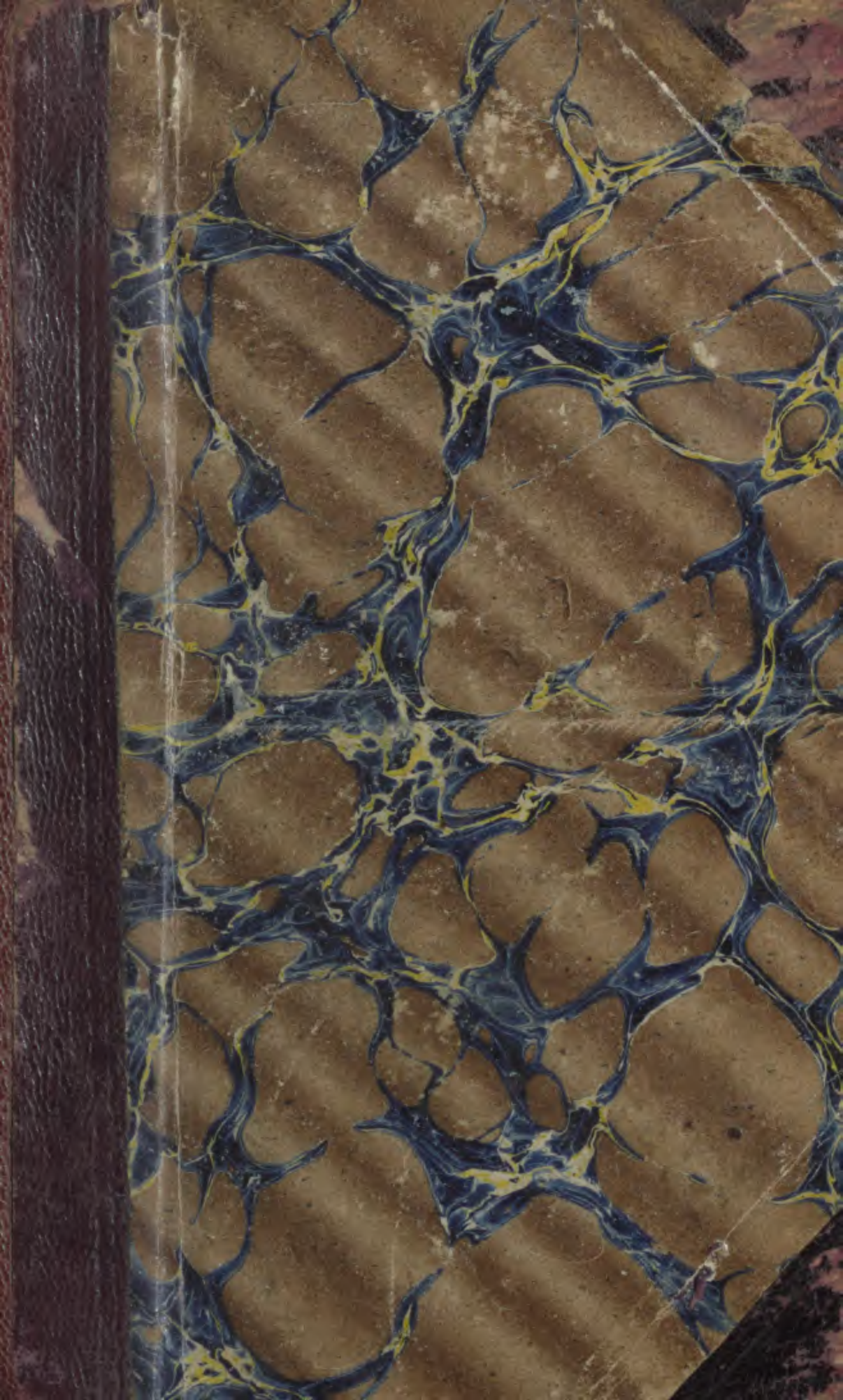

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FOLLOW PAUL AND FOLLOW CHRIST.

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1 Corinthians xi. 1.

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

"What would St. Paul have said?"—so, we are told, John Wesley asked a hundred years ago—"What would St. Paul say if he were to come to life again in this his own cathedral?" So Wesley asked, and so every thinking man amongst us may ask himself, as he reflects on all the changes this cathedral has seen since it was first dedicated to God in the name of that great Apostle. "What would St. Paul have said, had he stood where we are now assembled, when the first little Saxon church was raised on this hill amidst the ruins of the heathen temple of the great goddess Diana? What would he have said, if he had seen the vast Gothic cathedral which succeeded, with its endless aisles, its gigantic spire, its gorgeous ceremonial, the passionate devotion of multitudes flocking to its golden shrine, or the great council of the nation here gathered together to hear the trial of Wycliffe? What would he have said, yet again, had he stood under Paul's Cross when Latimer, with an energy equal to his own, was preaching to princes and people, righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come? What would he have said in the generations that followed, had he seen its walks and porticos occupied with buyers and sellers, and the tables of the money-changers, and the loungers and intriguers of

court and city? What would he have said, had he been present when this great edifice, as we now see it, rose purified from its ashes, and the people of London met within its walls to give thanks for deliverance from the triple scourge of war, pestilence, and fire? And what, above all, would he have said *now*, in the face of this vast congregation, such as Wesley's heart would have rejoiced to see, such as the Apostle himself would have counted as a crown of glory amongst the offerings of the Gentile world?"

To this last question alone I now address myself. The rest concerns only our judgment of those who are dead and gone; but it concerns ourselves to ask, What would St. Paul say to *us now?* Doubtless, something very different from what each of us would expect; doubtless some "quick, sharp, two-edged" saying, striking us, as it were, on both sides at once. We know not, we venture not to imagine what he *would* say. But we know what he *has* said; and out of all the many sayings which his Epistles have preserved to us, let me fix on one which you have heard this evening, let us say for him, what he then said for himself—what this cathedral through all its changes would say to us, if its walls and stones could speak,—"*Be ye followers of Paul, as he was of Christ.*" "*Be ye followers of Paul, be ye followers of Christ.*"

My brethren, the two lessons thus conveyed, are almost a summary of the whole New Testament. *How can I be like Paul?* This is the question which ought to rise in each one's mind as he reads the Epistles. *How can I be like Christ?* This is the question which ought to rise in each one's mind, as he reads both Epistles and Gospels.

Let me first draw out the general force of these two injunctions, and then give them two special applications in the Apostle's own words. I.—*Be ye followers of Paul.* How, it may be asked, in what sense, in what way, can *we* be like St. Paul? How can we, in our age, with our callings, be like a man who has been dead and buried centuries ago—whose language, thoughts, and occupations were wholly different from ours? Can the nineteenth

century be changed into the first? Can we, with our fixed and manifold pursuits, be like a man who spent his life in preaching and wandering to and fro over the world? No. There are hundreds of points in which we cannot be like him. Those wonderful deeds of his eventful life, which are represented round the dome above your heads, cannot be brought down again to earth, and acted over again by us now. But, for all this, we can still be followers of St. Paul. He can still be our Apostle, —nay, more, he is more capable of being an example and a teacher to us than he has been to almost any previous age of the world. We may apply his own words: "If he be not an Apostle to others, yet doubtless he is to us."[1]

He is truly the Apostle of Englishmen,—not in any false or fanciful sense, as though our forefathers (as some used to imagine) had derived their Christianity directly from his preaching; not because this great cathedral, in the centre of our greatest city, has been called after his name; but because he is the Apostle most needed for our special failings, most congenial to our peculiar excellences; because there is a real likeness between the freedom and truth of the English character and the freedom and love of truth which is the fibre and tissue of the teaching of St. Paul; because there is a real likeness between the wide, complex variety of the English Church and Commonwealth, and the wide, comprehensive, spacious sympathy of him, who suffered with each, and rejoiced with each, of all his innumerable converts. When we are most truly Englishmen; when our best qualities as Englishmen are called forth; when we are most manly, most vigorous, most practical, most generous,—then we are most truly followers of St. Paul.

Again, he is the Apostle especially of our age, of our temptations, of our knowledge. Are any of us inclined to think that religion is worn out,—that Christianity is too contracted for these broad, enlightened times? Some forms of religion, some forms of Christianity may have

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 2.

become so; but not the religion of apostolic times,—not the Christianity of St. Paul. He was truly the Apostle of the Gentiles,—that is, he is the Apostle of all the vast and unknown future, which the Christian Church, by his guidance, pledged itself to receive. Whatever other Christian teachers may have done, then or since, St. Paul is always looking, not backward, but forward. He "counts not himself to have apprehended;" he "forgets those things which are behind; he reaches forward to those things which are before." He went beyond his own age; he went long, long beyond the ages that followed; he stands on the verge of our age; but he is still beyond us, and tells us, by the words which he has left us, that, however far we have advanced in enlightenment and liberality, he has gone before us still. It is not that we need his warnings less than our fathers did, but we can understand them better.

Look, I beseech you, at that fourteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which was read in church two Sundays ago. Have we outgrown the lessons of that noble doctrine of apostolic toleration? Are we more able to bear with those who differ from us, more tender to the rights of conscience, than he who said,—"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind:" "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" "It is good not to eat meat, or to drink wine, or to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended or is made weak."

In this, and in many like instances of what St. Paul said and did, we have the best proof of the divine inspiration with which he spoke, of the divine mission which sent him forth. He was a prophet of the future, as well as an apostle of the past. He brought out, in bold relief, the onward, onward march of Christianity. He divided the essential from the unessential—the eternal from the temporal—and therefore, "weak as was his bodily presence and speech" on earth, yet now across the space of many centuries he can still make his voice to be heard. To all of us he can still say, "Be followers of me." His example is

still needed; his teaching is not exhausted. He is one of modern days, like ourselves. He has trodden the same path hitherto; we need not fear that he will fail us hereafter. He shows that he could understand our independence and our freedom. Let us trust him when he urges upon us his devotion, his purity, and his boundless charity.

II. But this is only half the text. The Apostle's example not only calls us to be like himself, but it reminds us that he was what he was through a grace and a strength greater than his own. "Be ye followers of me, even as *I am of* CHRIST."

In various ages, and from various points of view, there have been those who would have parted the Apostle from his Lord, the Epistles from the Gospels. Doubtless there was a difference. The disciple is below his Master. The application of the Gospel is a different thing from the Gospel itself. But, nevertheless, St. Paul always sends us back to Christ and the Gospel. As surely as the dome of this church is crowned by the golden cross, glittering high above all, to remind us that this is a temple, not of Paul, but of Christ; so surely is Christ and the Cross of Christ the aim and object of all the labours and teaching of St. Paul. "Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ." *Be ye followers of Christ.*—In many forms, but the same in substance, this is the burden of all his epistles. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."[1] "Walk in Him."[2] "Conformed to the image of Christ."[3] "The cross of Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world."[4] "I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me."[5] So spoke the Apostle again and again. He is but an ambassador, a servant, an instrument of Jesus Christ. To carry on in his own life a copy, however faint and imperfect, of what Christ had said and done—this was his highest ambition. To be one with Christ in heart and spirit, now and hereafter—this was his highest hope of salvation. And to this same ambition, to this same hope, he calls us still.

[1] Rom. xiii. 14. [2] Col. ii. 6. [3] Rom. viii. 29.
[4] Gal. vi. 14. [5] Gal. ii. 20.

"How, then"—again the question occurs—"how are we to be like Christ—to follow Christ—to apprehend Christ—to have Christ formed within us?" We, with all our sins and infirmities about us, how are we to approach the All-wise and the All-holy?

We can only follow Him at a distance; even the Apostle could only follow Him at a distance; but at a distance, in some measure, we *must* follow Him if we are to be with Him hereafter. True, we cannot imitate Christ in the letter, but we must strive to imitate Him in the spirit: we cannot "put on" the outward garb and actions of Jesus of Nazareth, but we must strive to put on "the mind which was in Christ Jesus."[1] True, we cannot attain to this perfection; in a great part of His life He is to us rather the Likeness of God than the Example of man. But we can, and we must, set our faces in that direction; we must, and we can "*look* unto Jesus;" we can study in His life and character what is the highest mind and will of God, and what is the highest duty of man. He is, or He should be to us as a second conscience, to fix our wills, to calm our scruples, to guide our thoughts,—the conscience of our conscience, the mind of our minds, the heart of our hearts.

Our minds waver and fail. This great fabric has risen and fallen, and risen and fallen, and risen again—the states of society and religion which through all its stages it represented have risen and fallen with it. But the words and the life of Christ still remain fixed, recorded in the four Gospels. In those four short easy books, we have the real unmistakeable *Gospel*: the first and the last good tidings of Jesus Christ. Study, understand, follow Him as you see Him there—the true Image of what God is—the true Image of what man ought to be. *The Imitation of Jesus Christ.* (O blessed, all-embracing, all-containing Gospel!) This, and nothing short of this, is Christianity. By His holy Incarnation; by all the blessed steps of His most holy Life; by His Cross and Passion; by His precious Death and

[1] Phil. ii. 5.

Burial; by His glorious Resurrection and Ascension—we there see with our own eyes how we can through Him, and through Him only, be delivered from all blindness and hardness of heart; from pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, and from all the deceits and deadly sins of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

III. And now how shall we bring home this joint example to ourselves? how shall we concentrate on our own lives the rays of this double light; the greater light for ever going before, in the person of Christ our Lord, the lesser light for ever moving close behind, in our own Apostle St. Paul?—how shall it be made a fixed, definite, edifying, saving doctrine to us? We cannot exhaust the subject. Let us do what we can in the time that remains. We have not far to look. Turn from the text to the context. Turn, as you always should, in reading and hearing the Scriptures, from the words which you have heard or read, to the words which go immediately before or behind; and you will find in the two preceding chapters of this Epistle—to which this verse (wrongly separated by the division of the chapters) properly belongs—you will find laid down two fundamental principles of Evangelical religion, one for the service of God, the other for the service of man—the very lessons most to be learned from the teaching of Paul, and from the life and death of Christ.

1. The first is this:—"*Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*"[1] Truly, if St. Paul were to look round, as we imagined at the outset, on this sea of human heads, he might well say these very words, "Whatsoever ye do." Howsoever various your trades and occupations; whatsoever ye do, in commerce, in labour, in buying, in selling; wheresoever it be, in alleys or courts, or corners, by counters and shops, in crowded streets, or on the thronged river; *there* is what you have to do to the glory of God. *Here*, joining in the prayers and hymns, listening to the words of the Bible or the preacher, you are preparing

[1] 1 Cor. x. 31.

yourselves for the service of God. But *there*, in your daily life, is the true "Divine Service," in which we must all bear our parts—there, not by talking, not by feeling, but by "doing," we render to God the glory, the honour, in which He most delights; the glory of holy lives, the honour of honourable deeds, in the creatures that His hand has made. Truth and honesty amidst temptations to fraud; manly resistance to effeminate self-indulgence; justice, generosity, and charity amidst an unjust, ungenerous, intolerant world—these are what tell forth the glory of God, and the excellence of His handywork. Seclusion from the world, endeavours to serve God in solitary, eccentric courses—these are the counterfeits, the excrescences, the sour corruptions of true religion. It is the very pith and marrow of Apostolical and Evangelical doctrine, that to live with others, and to do the duty that has been set before us in the world, is the healthiest, holiest state for every human soul.

Paul, the most energetic, the most enthusiastic of men, was yet ever employed in driving the enthusiasm of his followers into homely, useful, practical channels; with both hands, as it were, he is ever thrusting back his ardent converts into their proper spheres; he would not allow the Gentile to become a Jew, or the Jew to become a Gentile; Jew and Greek, slave and free, he conjured them, in whatever state of life they were, therein to abide with God.[1] On this he knew depended (humanly speaking) the hope, the safety, the life of the Christian religion.

What was true of the example of Paul was still more true of the example of Christ. He did not retire to the wilderness. He grew up amidst the pleasures and duties of a humble, happy home.[2] He "came eating and drinking."[3] He lived amidst the teeming population of Galilee; many coming and going, so that He had not leisure so much as to eat.[4] He lived and died in blessed companionship with sons and daughters of men. In labour and in festivity,

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 18—22. [2] Luke ii. 51. [3] Matt. xi. 19. [4] Mark vi. 31.

in moving multitudes and in crowded ship He found alike his Father's work. He belongs to no single class or profession of life; all may find something in Him to follow, something to remind them of their own; the consolations of the pastor,[1] the learning of the scholar,[2] the boatman on the water,[3] the clerk at the receipt of custom,[4] the courage of the soldier,[5] the justice of the judge,[6] the earnestness of the advocate,[7] the healing art of the physician,[8] the humble craft of the carpenter,[9] on each and every one of these the example and the blessing of Christ has rested.

These are the doctrines of which this Cathedral should remind you, wherever you see its dome and its cross rising above the smoke and stir and roar of London. These are the lessons which you have this evening heard from the Evangelical Prophet, as well as from the Evangelical Apostle. It is with this special service as with the solemn fast of which the Prophet spoke, most solemn, most beautiful it is for all of us, both for you and for me, to look on this multitude of worshippers, to hear that voice as it were the sound of many waters—to see "the old waste places" of this noble edifice turned to their rightful use. Only remember therewith the Prophet's warning. This solemn service may, he tells us, be no service at all. If we go forth from it to fierce "strife," and rancorous "debate," to "smite with the fist of wickedness," to indulge in unholy "pleasures," during the coming week, "wilt thou call this" a service, "a fast acceptable unto the Lord?" No. "Is not this the service that I have chosen," "to loose the bands of wickedness"—"to undo the heavy burdens"—"to break every yoke"—"to deal thy food to the hungry, and bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?" "If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke" of selfish prejudice, and the "putting forth the finger" of scorn, and "the speaking" idle "vanity"—if thou in thy station, O man,

[1] Luke iv. 18. [2] Luke ii. 46. [3] Luke v. 3.
[4] Matt. ix. 9. [5] Heb. xii. 2. [6] Matt. xxv. 32.
[7] 1 John ii. 1. [8] Matt. viii. 16, 17. [9] Mark vi. 3.

O woman, dost this according to thy measure and opportunity—if these, or anything like these, be the results of this service, then will it indeed have been to thee a revival of Gospel privilege and Gospel light,—"then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness shall be as the noonday; thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; thou shalt" indeed "build again the old waste places; thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in."[1]

2. This is the way in which we are to follow Paul and follow Christ, in the service of God. Now, secondly, how are we to follow them, in the service of man?

Here again, close by the text, we have the Apostolical example, the Evangelical doctrine to guide us.

"I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved,"[2]—or, as he says the same thing more shortly in the chapter which comes before, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."[3]

Yes; bold as the expression is, it is the Apostle's own. Not one uniform mode of doing good, not one scheme, cut and dried for all; but ten thousand ways, ever new, ever fresh, ever varying with the wants and characters of each.

Every face that looks up from this crowd is different from every other; it expresses a history of its own, a character of its own, a weakness of its own, a strength of its own. To every one, the Apostle, as he walked to and fro amongst you, would have been, as it were, a different man: he would have transformed himself into the thoughts of each; he would have borne with the infirmities, the errors, the superstitions, the unbelief of each. He would have thought no evil; he would not have been easily provoked by opinions or practices not his own; he would have quoted their own poets to the Gentiles; he would

[1] Isa. lviii. 3—12. [2] 1 Cor. x. 33. [3] 1 Cor. ix. 22.

have respected the scruples of the Jew; he would have won over Agrippa by his belief in the prophets; he would have won over the Athenians by their belief in the Unknown God.[1] No outward difference would have prevented him from seeing the good which lay beneath. He would have made straight for that good; he would have honoured it, confirmed it, and built it up; and so would have saved the soul, in the midst of which he had discovered it.

And is this example meant only for teachers, only for special times and places? Nay, my brethen; it is for all times, and places, and persons; for it is the example not only of Paul, but of Christ Himself. It is not only the way in which the Apostle came to teach us; but it is the way in which the Saviour came to redeem us. He too, in a still wider and nobler sense, "became all things to all men, if by any means He might save some." He saw through all the infirmities, miseries, errors, sins, of the whole human race, and of every human being, that under the ruins of our fallen nature there was a spark of good—that there was a living "soul, even beneath the ribs of death," worth seeking, worth saving, worth living for, worth dying for. He came with a gracious word and touch for each. You can read it in the gospels: each one in the Gospel story—that manifold story of human life—each one may see the likeness of himself, and how each one was in turn addressed, and called, and healed, and won by Christ. The humble publican He justified for his humility;[2] the woman who was a sinner He discovered by her love;[3] Zacchæus He blessed for his upright restitution of unlawful gains;[4] the silent, retired Lazarus He loved as his friend and host;[5] the sisters of Lazarus He loved for their noble hospitality and self-devotion;[6] Nathaniel he welcomed for his guileless life;[7] Peter for his ardent zeal;[8] the dying

[1] Acts xvii. 23, 28; xxi. 26; xxvi. 27.
[2] Luke xviii. 14.
[3] Luke vii. 47.
[4] Luke xix. 8, 9.
[5] John xi. 5.
[6] John xi. 5; xii. 7.
[7] John i. 47.
[8] Matt. xvi. 18.

thief for the flash of expiring hope;[1] the heathen soldier for his scanty but fervent faith;[2] the Jewish teacher for his earnest, though timid, inquiry.[3] Which of us is there who does not in one or other of these find a ground of hope for himself, and see the Saviour's love to the needs of his own soul, to the searchings of his own spirit?

And as Christ has done to us, as Paul has done to us, so ought we in our humble measure to do to our brethren, our fellow-creatures, our fellow-Christians, our fellow-countrymen, our fellow-citizens: so ought we humbly to hope, that they each in their turn will do to us, if by any means some of us may be saved.

Every one who tries to do good to others, every one who tries to do good to any of us, will have much to bear with, much to endure, much to forgive. He will meet with ingratitude, misunderstanding, ignorance, stupidity, prejudice, caprice, bigotry, pride, vanity. He will learn how hard it is to do good without doing harm; how hard to instruct without misleading. He will learn what barriers, mountains high, are raised between man and man by the selfishness, the dulness, the narrowness of the carnal, unregenerate, half-regenerate hearts, of ourselves and our neighbours. But over these and over all like difficulties we must walk straightforward with a high step, not stumbling at trifles; we must forgive, as we hope to be forgiven; we must suffer with Paul if we hope to be saved with Paul; we must die with Christ, if we hope to rise with Christ. We must do our work, willing that it should be done by others, as well as by ourselves;—not quarrelling with the means if the end is the same; feeling with the wants of others; understanding the thoughts of others; overcoming evil with good—overcoming error with truth—overcoming sin with goodness; seeking out what is good, forgetting what is evil.

These are the ways by which the world was redeemed; these are the ways by which the world was converted;

[1] Luke xxiii. 43. [2] Luke vii. 9. [3] John ii. 3.

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