

failed; His plans had been completely frustrated; His work had ceased. Never had man, according to the world's view, been so entirely and irrecoverably defeated. After His ministry of three years, what was the result of His words and works? His nation rejected Him, and preferred to Him Barabbas, who was a robber. The highest spiritual authority of the land pronounced Him a blasphemer. The Scribes, the Pharisees, the High Priest, the representatives of the law of Moses, of the covenant, and of the Temple, judged him worthy of an ignominious death. Roman justice thought Him too unimportant to protect Him against the hatred of His enemies, and to provoke the displeasure of the people they sought to conciliate. So He was crucified between two malefactors. His very disciples forsook Him and were scattered. The world rejected Him, and saw, in His death on the cross and in His burial, the conclusion and final destruction of His work and mission.

Remember this, and then listen to the words of the risen Jesus. With what royal and calm emphasis He asserts His omnipotence in heaven and earth. In perfect assurance of victory, He sends messengers, not merely to His own people, whose language He had spoken, whose Scriptures He unfolded and fulfilled, who had witnessed His miracles, and listened to His words, but to all the nations of the world, to bring them into the obedience of His faith. And consider whom He entrusted with this work. The very disciples who had been offended in Him, and had deserted

Him in the hour of trial; Peter, who had denied Him thrice; Philip, who knew so little of Him, though He had been so long time with them; Thomas, so full of gloomy doubt and obstinate unbelief; such disciples, weak and ignorant, He sends forth, relying on them as strong and invincible. And what are the weapons with which they are to conquer? The sword is the Word; the foolishness of preaching, the message of Christ and Him crucified. And all the protection He gives them is a hostile world; all the resources He places at their disposal are not power or wisdom, not wealth or eloquence, but His own hidden yet perfect omnipotence, His real spiritual and all-sufficient Presence.

Truly Christ's kingdom is not of this world. Here is the weakness of God, which is stronger than man. The sheep whom Jesus sent forth in the midst of wolves are protected by an unseen Lamb, and they gain the victory with weapons which man's reason can neither discover nor appreciate. The commission which the risen Saviour gave to His disciples,¹ which no worldly ear heard, and which would have appeared to Jew and Greek an idle dream and foolish pre-

¹ "A century and a half after the Incarnation Celsus ridicules the idea of a universal religion as a manifest folly. . . . Christ founds a world-wide religion, and He promises to be the present invigorating force of that religion to the end of time. Are we not too accustomed to this language to feel the full force of its original meaning? How startlingly must it not have fallen upon the ears of apostles! . . . Can we imagine such a command of our Lord upon the lips of the best, of the wisest men whom we have ever known?" LIDDON, *Bampton Lectures* p. 117.

sumption, has now been tested by eighteen centuries. But we believe its divine truth and power, not on account of the evidence of history—that is, because we see—but because by the Holy Ghost we know that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of the Father; because by faith we see Him whom the world seeth no more; because we have experienced in our hearts that Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour.

There are two aspects of the command of Christ Go and teach, or disciple, all nations, which claim our attention. (1) The universality—all nations. (2) The spiritual character of the commission—teach, instruct, make them disciples, learners, in My school.

I. When Jesus was on earth, He did not go to all nations, but confined His ministry to Israel. While He was with His disciples, He said unto them, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any of the cities of the Samaritans enter ye not." You remember how very emphatically He dwelt on the limits of His commission when the Syrophœnician woman implored His help, and He replied, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The exceptions which He made in obedience to the guidance of His heavenly Father, and the spirit of love and joy with which He received the Gentiles, who were thus brought to Him by God, explain to us sufficiently the nature and reason of the limitation. It was according to the divine purpose, according to the method of God's dealings with Israel and the

nations, that Jesus should first go to His own people, preaching to them the gospel of the kingdom, and endeavouring to gather them under the wings of His mercy and holy love. He was Israel's Messiah and King. He was sent first of all to the children. He was a minister of the circumcision, to fulfil the promises made unto the fathers. He visited the vineyard which God had planted. The Angel of the Covenant came to His temple. But Israel itself was chosen in Him for the salvation of the world. And even during His earthly ministry in Israel, Jesus thought with joy and love of the Gentiles who should come to the light, and enter the fold of divine peace. There is something very marked and thrilling in all the instances (recorded in the Gospel) of Gentiles received by Jesus.

The Lord marvelled at the faith of the Roman centurion, and of the Syrophœnician woman. He exclaimed, "I have not found such faith, no, not in Israel!" He said, "O woman, great is thy faith!" With what trembling emotion was His soul filled when He heard of the Greeks who had come to the feast, and who wished to see Him! "The hour is come," He said, "that the Son of man should be glorified." In the tone of confiding friendship, He said plainly to the woman of Samaria what He had not said so simply to Israel—"I that speak unto thee am He." There is a tone of affectionate yearning in the words—"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring!"

Jesus loves Israel with a special love. Nothing—

not their unbelief and rejection of the Messiah—can change the peculiar position of Israel in God's plan and kingdom. Jesus is Israel's Messiah and King; His relation to them is peculiar and unique. But it is for the sake and for the benefit of the whole world that Israel was chosen. And now the time had come. The gospel of salvation was to be preached to the whole world; He who had formerly said, "Go not," now utters the command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." He throws open Samaria and all regions, even to the uttermost ends of the earth. The rejection of Israel's Messiah results in a twofold dispersion. In judgment, the Jews are scattered among all the nations of the earth; in love and mercy, in blessing, the Church is sent to all peoples and tongues.

"All nations." The words, and the conception of universality, have become very familiar to us.

This comprehensiveness, this universality of thought, love, and design, is from above; it is not human, but divine. No human mind ever rose to the height of this conception, no human heart ever expanded to the comprehensiveness and breadth of this affection, no human imagination ever dreamt of a union so vast. Let us not be mistaken. In modern times unbelievers have decked themselves with borrowed ornaments; the Egyptians have beautified themselves with Israel's glory. The true ideas of fraternity and equality come exclusively from revelation. Only Israel, of all nations of antiquity, knew the true

dignity and the true purpose of humanity. Only the Church, since the advent of our Lord, possessed the true spirit of humanity and character of catholicity. Let us remember the Bible facts and teaching; let us believe the testimony of the sure Word, the simple and grand truths of revelation, which must outlive the errors and theories which, under various forms, rise against them in every age.

The Bible, and the Bible only, taught firmly and clearly the *unity of the human race*.

"God, who giveth to all life and breath and all things, hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations." Thus Paul preached at Athens. Significant is the place where the apostle made this declaration, for Athens represents the wisdom of the world; and in every age the highest earthly wisdom needs to be taught by the Word of God. We believe in the unity of the human race on the testimony of Scripture; whether science assents or contradicts is a matter of indifference to us, as far as our faith and knowledge and certainty are concerned. We are one race, Scripture teaches; and in this fact are involved wonderful and important truths.

First, as we are the children of Adam, all human beings are equal, created in the image of God, forming one family of mankind, called to light and holiness and blessedness. As all truths, this great truth is confirmed and illuminated by the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Him there is neither Jew nor Greek, Scythian nor barbarian. There is no inferior race, stamped to servitude and ignorance. The whole world of humanity, descended of Adam, loved by the Father, has its centre in the man Christ Jesus. All families on earth are to be blessed in the Son of man.

This equality is, alas! also an equality in sin and in condemnation. The whole human race, forming a unity, fell in Adam. By the sin of one man, the many were constituted sinners. It is the whole world which is lost. Mankind, even the whole family of Adam, has departed from God, and is in a state of sin, condemnation, misery, and death. In Adam all have sinned, and death has come upon all. Here alone we have disclosed the solution of the marvellous fact of the universal prevalence of sin and misery; here we behold the source of the many rivers of selfishness, pride, lust, of moral evil, which run through the whole territory of human history.

But, thirdly, the unity of the race is a blessed fact, when we remember that the Son of God became man. He entered our circle, He took upon Him our nature: the Word was made flesh. Let, therefore, the whole world rejoice; every one that is descended of Adam, that bears the human image, let him take courage, let him breathe hope, let him say with gratitude and joy, "Unto us a Child is born, a Son is given."

Man is created in God's image; the whole race is one family, fallen in Adam. Unto the whole race

Christ is sent: He is given unto man as man; a new centre to the whole family of mankind.

Now Scripture, and Scripture only, teaches this grand truth about mankind. Here alone is the true idea of humanity; here alone is true catholicity.

The foundation is in the five books of Moses and the Prophets; the fulfilment is in Christ, as revealed by evangelists and apostles.

Who can read the first three chapters of Genesis without feeling: no human wisdom discovered, no human imagination invented, this sublime history? Contrasted with heathen mythologies and with modern speculation, how simple, and grand, and full of light are the disclosures of the Scriptures! Here we see the source of the manifold streams of sin and misery which meet us in history. The universal prevalence of sin is accounted for, and through the awful darkness and enigma of sin shines the original dignity and high destiny of man, and the still more glorious and sublime promise of redemption.

Moses explains to us the diversity of the human race. The sons of Noah are Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and the whole history of the world was foreshadowed in the inspired prediction of Noah. The dispersion of the nations at Babel (a fact, of which historical evidence is continually increasing in strength and variety) is the preparation for the election of a peculiar people. But never is the unity of the race, or the world-wide love of God, lost sight of. The purpose of God is constantly announced—"The whole earth

shall be filled with My glory." And not merely is the history of Israel connected with the history of the race, and Abraham traced back to Noah and Seth and Adam; but before the history of the chosen people commences, God takes a farewell record of the nations, inscribing the names of their tribes in the Scriptures—thus assuring us, that though for a season He permits them to go their own way during the times of ignorance, yet He is also the God of the Gentiles, and hath foreordained their ultimate blessing and incorporation into His kingdom on earth. The Book of Genesis is the true book of humanity. The promise to Abraham is, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The glory of Shiloh, as predicted by Jacob, is, "To Him shall the nations be gathered." The jubilant tone of all psalms and prophets is, "Praise Him, all ye nations; Messiah is a light to lighten the Gentiles. Distant isles shall know His truth; all heathen people shall forsake their idols, and walk in the light of Jacob." Israel is the central nation; Israel's Messiah, Centre of Israel and of the world; Jerusalem, not Rome, is the God-chosen centre of catholicity.

The purpose of God, world-wide in its final aim, appears at first hidden in the election of one nation.

Israel was separated from all other nations; God isolated them. He fenced them round by His marvellous dealings, and by the peculiar law which He gave them. They dwelt apart, in every sense of the word. They were not sent forth as ambassadors of

God's truth. Their mission was not, to be aggressive. The light was to burn in Judea with an intense and concentrated brightness, and the promise given to Israel was, that all nations would be attracted by Jerusalem's glory, and come to worship Israel's God.

The nations of the world, for whose sake Israel was chosen, await yet the restoration of God's people, through whom they are to be blessed. When Israel returns unto Jehovah and their King David, then the ancient predictions shall be fulfilled—all lands and kingdoms will be filled with the knowledge of God; the reign of the Son of man shall commence, and from the river to the great sea the Lord shall be worshipped and glorified. Not till then shall the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of God and of His Christ. Then shall the Lord be King over the whole earth; the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven; the whole family of mankind serves Christ; Israel is the firstborn, the elder brother of many nations.

Such is the purpose of God, as revealed in the prophets before the advent of Christ. Such was the expectation of all faithful Israelites. They waited for the Messiah, who would redeem His people, and be a light to lighten the Gentiles; who would bring all nations to join Israel in the worship and obedience of Jehovah. That they themselves, as a nation, would reject the Messiah, and that between the first advent in humility and the second in glory a long interval would intervene, was hidden to their view. The two

events appeared to them as one; they expected Messiah to come and reign, to usher in the last days of fulfilment. As two mountain heights seen from afar merge into one, the long distance between them being concealed, so they beheld only one advent. The mystery of the Church was not revealed as yet.

Israel's rejection of the Messiah must have appeared to human reasoning as the frustration of God's plan, as a dark enigma, as a sad and fatal termination of the history of God's kingdom. But Israel's unbelief cannot make void the promises of God. The fall of Israel becomes the occasion of a new and more wonderful manifestation of divine grace and power and wisdom. God hath not cast off His people. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance. All Israel shall be saved, and then from Zion, as a central source, streams of blessing shall flow into all lands. But during the period of Israel's national rejection, God's merciful purposes are carried out through a new creation of His love and power—the Church of Jesus Christ.

Simultaneous with the rejection of the Gospel by Israel is the origin of the Church. Not, as even apostles at first imagined, are Gentiles added unto Israel, and incorporated into the nation; but the Church is the body of Christ; gathered from among all nations by the Holy Spirit, and united with Him, who is the Head, the glorified and exalted Redeemer. In the Church is neither Jew nor Greek. Chosen from among all nations and tribes, the Church is in the

world a light and a witness, testifying of the grace of God bringing salvation, which hath appeared, and of the judgment and glory which shall be manifest at the second advent of our Lord. The object and mission of the Church is to gather, through her testimony of truth and love, a people who by faith are saved, and by the Holy Ghost are separated from the world, serving God, and waiting for the return of Jesus.

The Church is in and for the world, yet not of it. She has been delivered from this "evil age." She is to be and labour among all nations; yet she is above all nations, having her citizenship in heaven, and waiting for the manifestation of the kingdom of Christ.

She is to benefit the world as light and salt, irradiating the darkness of God-estranged humanity, and preventing the rapid development of its intrinsically evil character; yet the Church always remains to the end of this dispensation distinct, and in reality opposed to the nations among whom she lives, and whom she blesses. Like her Divine Master, she is not of the world. God has chosen her out of the world. There are many Christians among the nations; according to the divine purpose there will be Christians among all nations. But there are no Christian nations. There is no nation during this dispensation, who in repentance and faith and renewal has died to the spirit of the world, who in meekness of heart, as children of God, inherit the earth, who believe God's truth and seek God's glory, who pursue spiritual and holy methods, and prize heavenly and substantial realities.

The Church of Christ is born out of the death of natural life. She is rooted in Golgotha. She commences with the first day of the week in the power of a new, a resurrection life. How can nations, the majority of whom are not regenerate, and whose whole spirit, aim, and method are worldly and not heavenly, ever be regarded as Christian? How can we so far forget the character and dignity of Christ, as to imagine that during the last centuries the kingdoms of Europe have fulfilled the promise of Christ's reign on earth, of the Father's kingdom, in which His name is hallowed, and His will is done?

Jesus predicted: "Ye shall be hated by all nations for My name's sake." Yet the Church loves all nations; she yearns over all human beings, whatever their age, condition, culture. She instructs kings, and teaches wisdom, judgment, and equity to senators. She testifies to the rich of mercy and humility and charity. She ministers especially unto the lonely, the sorrowful, and the afflicted, directing them to the true Fountain of peace and of consolation, to the only Rest and Strength of the weary. And in the exercise of her heavenly and catholic mission she is independent of outward position and circumstances. The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church; and from the catacombs, where the persecuted disciples of the Crucified met, His name went forth victorious, to destroy idolatry and heathenism, and to subdue thousands of hearts to the only blessed Master. The Church of Christ can speak in simplicity to the most

ignorant and degraded tribe, and bring the light of divine love to illumine the night of barbarism and superstition; and she is able to enter into the thought of the most cultured; and, possessing the wisdom which is from above, she is able to interpret aright the elements and presentiments of truth, and to satisfy the nobler aspirations and longings which, amidst the errors and sins of humanity, testify alike of our fall and grandeur. And though few believe her report, and she expects that the spirit of the world, opposed to God and Christ, will yet manifest itself more fully and intensely, she is full of hope, knowing that the kingdom and the power and the glory are God's, that Christ shall appear and reign with His saints, that all nations shall yet praise the Lord, and the whole earth be filled with His glory.

II. The spiritual character of the commission— "Teaching them."¹

¹ *Μαθητεύειν*, make disciples. There is no contrast between *μαθητεύειν* and *διδάσκειν*; the one is only the commencement and initiation of the other. It is only by the *Word* that we are brought as learners and disciples unto Christ. What else but the preaching of the gospel, the voice of the Shepherd, brings men into the school of Christ, there to be instructed and trained? In what other way did Christ gain the apostles, or the apostles gather the first congregations in Jerusalem and in the house of Cornelius, among Jews and Gentiles? We are told that the three thousand continued steadfastly in the doctrine (*διδασχῆ*) of the apostles; yet it was that very doctrine which had disciplined them. They that had gladly received the word of Peter (*τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ*) were baptized. (The idea of instruction is in the term, as for instance, Matt. xiii. 52—"Every scribe which is instructed (*μαθητευθείς*) unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which brought forth out of his treasure things new and old.")

Men are to be taught. The Word is the sword of the Spirit. By the Word the heart is conquered, and the Word is the bread which nourishes and strengthens the soul. Truth is the element which separates or sanctifies the people of God, even as it is by the Word of truth that they were first begotten to be the first-fruits of His creatures. The apostles received the Word; "Thy Word," as the Lord Jesus says to the Father, "which I gave to them." Jesus has not entrusted us with ceremonies and rites; He has not invested His apostles with an official authority, by which to excite men's fears, and persuade them to blind submission. He has not commissioned us to bestow benedictions and apply remedies which are not understood by the people, deriving their efficacy from the human mediators, and exerting it in a magical manner. Christ said to Peter, "Feed My sheep." But He never said to the flock, "Obey Peter." He said to His apostles, "He that heareth you heareth Me." But in these words He gave a new promise; He did not institute a new legislation. Nowhere does Christ say to the Church, "He that heareth the apostles heareth Me." For whereas the faithful and obedient apostles are comforted by the assurance that their word is not their own, but the Master's who sent them, the people, who through them obey the truth, feel the authority of *God*, hear the voice of the *Shepherd*, see the countenance of *Christ*. Heaven-high above all apostles and ministers, visible and accessible to all, even the youngest and weakest disciple, is the

Head of the Church—the Lord Jesus Himself. The commission is, Teach them. Make them learners. Tell them as plainly and simply as human language can express it, the mysteries of the kingdom. Keep back nothing that is profitable; testify of Me; preach the gospel; you have no other instrument, influence, or power.

Thus it was always with God's people. There is no book like Scripture in which men are so constantly exhorted to think, to consider, to reason, to learn, to meditate, to remember. There is no book so opposed to all blind obedience and assumption of external authority. There is no book so opposed to the pride and selfishness of an esoteric school, keeping the people in subjection and partial ignorance. God teaches Israel. What no human wisdom or ingenuity could have discovered, God reveals to them; but His words are simple and clear. He commands them to listen, to read, to repeat it frequently, to teach it to their children, to make it the subject of meditation and topic of conversation. Read especially the Book of Deuteronomy, the Psalms, the Book of Proverbs, and you will see that from the beginning God made His children disciples, learners. In no language are there so many and so profound words for knowledge, judgment, understanding, and meditation as in Hebrew, and all used in connection with the *Word of God*.

If it be said they had ceremonies, I reply, The expression is ambiguous. They had no ceremonies in the sense of rites performed by a privileged class,

who alone possessed the knowledge of their significance, or outward observances, which, instead of channels, were substitutes for knowledge and inward possession of truth. God appointed in Israel symbols, and they were explained in His Word; and the prayer of God's saints was, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonders: the secret, hidden, and essential meaning of Thy law."

The statutes and commandments of the Lord were given to the whole nation. Every father was commanded to teach and explain them to his household. When thy son asketh thee, "What *mean* the testimonies and the statutes which the Lord our God has commanded us?" then instruction is to be given, that from early childhood men may know and understand the Word of God.

What a contrast is this to the mediæval Church, which withheld the Scriptures from the people,¹ and fed the souls of men with self-invented and complicated rites, performed in a language which was not

¹ Bengel, *Apophthegmata*;—"Fredericus Fulgentius, theologian in Venice, preached on the words, 'Have ye not read?' (Matt. xii. 10). 'If the Saviour were to ask this question to-day, all the people would have to reply, "No, we have not read, because we are forbidden to read." I have sought truth in the desert, in the cities, in society, in monasteries, at the Court of the Pope, who calls himself infallible, and have not found it anywhere. Yet at last I did find it, even in this book' (producing a New Testament, but putting it immediately back into his pocket); 'but you must not seek the truth there, for it is forbidden to read it.'"

The undeniable fact that the Church of Rome keeps the Scriptures from the people, ought to be quite sufficient to indicate her true character.

understood by the multitude! And how thoroughly false and unscriptural is the thought, which sees in this fearful apostacy and transgression of the divine will a wise adaptation to the rudeness and ignorance of the nations among whom the Church was planted! How far below the level of the Old Testament spirit are the priestly assumption and ritual method of the Papal Church! The Jews believed that the entrance of God's Word giveth light, it maketh wise the simple; and among them was many a Timothy, who knew the Scriptures from a child, because the Word of God is able to make even the most ignorant and feeble wise unto salvation. And this, as the greatest and fundamental blessing, was the promise of God—"And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers." Where the authority of Jehovah, of the Lord Christ, is fully acknowledged, His servants are not lords over God's heritage, but stewards of divine mysteries, teachers and witnesses of the truth.

When the Lord commanded His disciples to teach all nations, the apostles understood His meaning; the Old Testament and the example of Christ had prepared them for their future work. Jesus came as a prophet to Israel. He taught by word, and His works also were signs, showing forth His character as well as His power; teaching the nature of His kingdom, as well as announcing and attesting the authority of

His mission. The disciples had listened to Christ's teaching; so clear and simple, so penetrating, convincing, and comforting. He spoke with authority, but not with the authority demanding blind and inert obedience, but the authority of light, truth, love, which establishes a throne in the heart and conscience, and wields a sceptre of righteousness and constraining affection. His authority was divine, and therefore bringing liberty, light, and peace to all who submit themselves to Him. His authority separated not Him and His people, but linked them in strong and sweet bonds of fellowship; it was not external, oppressing them as a weight, but enabling them to mount as with eagle's wings into the region of divine life and blessedness. And the great channel of His authority, and quickening and renewing power, was the Word.

The apostles continued the ministry of the Word. Remember Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost. How easy would it have been for him to assume authority, and to dispense with teaching! How easy would it have been for him to point to the miraculous manifestations, and to claim obedience to the accredited messengers of the Messiah, and thus use the excitement of the astonished multitude to bring them under the sway of priestly domination! Instead of this, instead of any assertion of authority and power of the keys, the Apostle Peter teaches, and reminding his countrymen, to whom pertained the Divine oracles, of the Prophecy of Joel, of the 16th Psalm, which

testifies of the Holy One of God conquering death and the grave; of the 110th Psalm, in which, by the Holy Ghost, David calls his Son Lord, and beholds Him at the right hand of God—he declares the mystery of Christ's cross and resurrection, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. He taught the Scriptures. He first analysed the prophecies, and having brought before his brethren, as it were, the syllables into which the great Word, the all-comprehensive message, had been divided, he gathers them up in the full announcement of the great salvation. Thus was the Church founded through the teaching of Scripture. Men believed by the Holy Ghost the testimony of truth, the apostolic teaching of God's revealed and fulfilled promises. How different from the self-styled successors of Peter, who keep the Word of God from the people, and with "blind mouths" usurp authority over God's heritage!

Look at the Bereans. They are commended in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scripture daily whether these things were so. The apostles preached; the people examined. They did not believe the gospel on the authority of the apostles; no such authority or mediatorial position was claimed by the messengers of Christ. They declared the Word of God, and the people of Berea are commended for their earnestness, activity, independence of mind, or rather dependence on God, in that they searched the Scriptures to convince themselves of the truth and reality of the

glad tidings declared to them. It is not an assertion of the right of private judgment, of the authority or sufficiency of reason; but an assertion of the only and all-sufficient authority of God, of the Scriptures, which are given by inspiration, and by which the Lord speaks to the hearts and consciences of men. Thus did the apostles make men learners in the school of Christ. Thus did they bring men under the immediate influence of divine teaching and authority. Thus it was that they never said, Believe us, believe the Church. The Church of Christ never speaks of her own authority; the moment she does so, she denies her character as a witness and bride. Christ is the Sun; the Church derives all her light from Him.

And, to show that there is no exception to this rule and method of teaching, we have both the record of the apostolic history, and the experience of modern missions, proving that no nation is so sunk in idolatry and vice, so degraded and ignorant, but the Word of God is able to penetrate the darkness with enlightening and healing power. The Word is the sword; let it not be sheathed, and rendered powerless in the ceremonies and traditions and concealments of human adaptation and policy. The truth can make all men free; we have no right to bring them into an intermediate region of tutelage and bondage. How flimsy appear the defences of pictures and ceremonies when considered in the light of Scripture! Did the apostles, coming to idolatrous

rude, and uncultured tribes, find it necessary to have recourse to images and ritual? did they think it wise and right to keep the people in a state of infantine passiveness and mechanical obedience? The people of Ephesus were superstitious heathen worshippers of the golden image of Diana, which, they said, had fallen down from heaven. They practised sorcery and magic. And how did the Apostle Paul treat them? How did he adapt himself and his message to their condition and capacity? Did he present to them half-truths, and give them a scanty instalment of the doctrines of life? No, he declared to them the whole counsel of God. God's truth is for all nations, and it alone can bring light to the mind, peace to the conscience, and the life of love to the heart.

The Church was founded by the Word of God. The apostles had received the Word from the Lord, from the Son, who is the perfect manifestation of the Father, and in whom all previous revelations find their fulfilment. The teaching of Christ was brought back to their remembrance by the Holy Ghost, who guided them into all truth, and they preached the Word of God, which is now, in the dispensation of the Spirit, essentially promise, gospel, salvation.¹ The Word is seed, spirit, and life; by and in the Word, the Holy Ghost quickens, purifies, and sanctifies. He causes the Word to dwell richly in the hearts of God's children, and to build them up.² The congregations which had been called into life by the

¹ 1 Pet. i. 25.

² 1 Pet. i. 23; Acts xx. 32.

Word needed nothing else for their preservation, growth, and comfort, but the *Word*; hence the apostles always commended them to the Word of grace, and exhorted them to let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly, while they took care to appoint faithful men, apt to teach, in order that the testimony of truth may be continued, and the Word of God grow and be glorified.

All means of grace have the character of the Word of God. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which the apostles delivered unto the congregation as having received them from the *Lord*, are His Word, showing His covenant, revealing His gracious purpose and wondrous acts, declaring and sealing saving truth. Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs is also the Word of God, whereby saints teach and admonish one another. So spiritual, according to the will of Christ and the teaching of the apostles, is the idea of the Church. To form the true and scriptural idea of the Church, we must start, not from the believer, or the congregation, or the complex of congregations, but from Christ the Head, who, by the Holy Ghost, gathers living souls round Him and unites them with Himself to be His body. The Church is the communion of believers, who, by the Holy Ghost, are one with Christ the Head. She is the body of Christ, the building of God, the spiritual house, the bride and wife of Christ.¹ Only saints, believers, the elect,

Rom. xii. 5; 1 Cor. xii.; Eph. i. 23; 1 Cor. iii. 9; Eph. ii. 21; v. 25-27; 2 Cor. xi. 2; Rev. xxi. 9.

are members of the Church; for the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, "The Lord knoweth them that are His."

True, the outward and visible associations of professed believers are like nets, which embrace both good and bad fishes, like fields, in which tares grow among the wheat, like a large house, in which there are vessels to honour, and some to dishonour. But although this is evil and sad, yet the wisdom and long-suffering of God are revealed also here. The true Church of Christ is thereby kept vigilant and humble, believers are stirred up to self-examination and earnestness, they take oil in their lamps; and through the faithful and spiritual ministry of the Word, there are added continually unto the true Church, not merely from among the Jews and heathen, but from among the dead and worldly, who only outwardly belong to the congregation of Christ. And the more fully we cling to the spiritual and heavenly character of the Church—the more distinctly and faithfully we declare that only the regenerate, who are joined by the Holy Ghost to the Head, are members of the mystical body, the greater will be our influence on those who, although among us, are not yet of us—the more shall we experience the present power and grace of our Lord, who raiseth the dead unto newness of life, and giveth light.¹

And thus our position is *essentially the same as that*

¹ Compare Chapter VII., on the Relation of the True Church to the actual Professing Church.

of the Apostolic Churches. The circumstance that the proportion of mere outward professors of what is called "Christianity" is immensely increased, does not alter the character and aim of the Church of Christ. In a world of sin and unbelief she is the witness and light sent by Christ. And the Word which she has received from her Lord she giveth unto the world.

Where the Word of God is, there is worship in spirit and truth; there are priests, who, through the eternal and blessed High Priest, live in the presence of God, offering unto Him the spiritual sacrifices which are holy and acceptable. Where the Word of God is, faith, love, and hope abound; believers grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Where the Word of God is, souls rejoice in the assurance of their salvation. By this Word of Truth souls are born again unto eternal life; so that Christ sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. And His word, though it appear contemptible in the eyes of Goliath, is the power by which God's Spirit convinces and enlightens the mind, and brings the proud thoughts and imaginations of man into subjection to the wisdom and truth of the living God. As Luther says, "Of all the sacred gifts bestowed on the Church, the Word is the first and greatest. It is the Word, also, which baptizes and blesses, which binds and looses." All things are given to us by that Word, of which Christ, the Eternal Word, is the spirit and life, and through which the Holy Ghost reveals and

glorifies the Saviour. "Christ only," and the "Word of God only," is the watchword of the little flock to whom pertain the promises of God.

Let nothing beguile us from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus. Let not the boast of antiquity, of comprehensiveness—let not the appearance of grandeur, vastness, splendour, disturb our minds. Let us not listen to the voice of her who sits as a queen; who speaks constantly of her authority, while she does not honour the Word of God's testimony. She boasts to be the guardian of the truth, and the only administrator of the blessings of the new covenant, while she persecuted unto death the witnesses of God's grace and the true pastors, who had compassion on the multitude, and taught them the salvation of Jesus. When they say, "Lo, here is the Church!" believe them not; for the true Church always says, "Look unto Christ; lift up your eyes, and behold your God; look unto the Saviour, all ye ends of the earth." When they teach the commandments of men, when they speak of time-hallowed ceremonies and sacred institutions of the Church, believe them not; for in like manner did the Pharisees make void the commandments of God by their own tradition, and we know that One is our Master, even Christ, and that we are all brethren. We know that the mystery of iniquity began even in the days of the apostles, and that in the dark pilgrimage of earth, not antiquity, but the sure word of prophecy, is the light and strength of Christ's people.