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SERMON LXXXVII.  
THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD THE EARNEST OF THE  
CHRISTIAN'S GLORY.

ST. MATT. xvii. 1, 2.

"And after six days JESUS taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light."

SUCH was the one exception to the rest of our blessed LORD'S life on earth; elsewhere ever in the form of a servant, His Godhead veiled, His Majesty emptied: His whole life one humiliation and abasement. "Despised and rejected of men;" blasphemed by the world, disbelieved by His brethren, misunderstood by His own disciples; gathering to HIM those whom "the FATHER drew" by the unseen might of His Divinity, His Majesty was felt, not seen: "never man spake like this Man," was the answer of the servants sent to take HIM; "we have heard HIM ourselves, and know that This is indeed the CHRIST, the SAVIOUR of the world," acknowledged the outcast Samaritans; but though discerned by the eye of humility and faith, by the lowly and poor, and pure in heart, so was His Godhead hidden, that the world marvelled while it acknowledged: "They marvelled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth;" they were astonished, because HE taught as One having authority, and not as the Scribes. "When CHRIST cometh, will HE do more miracles than this man doeth?" and they who were not of His sheep, were offended alike at His words and His works. His miracles they said were wrought through Beelzebub; of His words they said, "How hath this man letters, having never learnt? and they were offended at HIM." They said HE "blasphemed," because HE so lowly, Whose "father and mother they knew," said, "I am the SON of GOD." Even after they had felt His presence, and were stricken to the ground by His words, "I am HE," they "took HIM and bound HIM."

Such was the great contradiction of strength amid weakness, Infinite Wisdom within a form of earth, Infinite Power in our house of clay, Infinite Holiness in "the likeness of sinful flesh;" GOD taking man, the "Word became flesh." It could not be but that the hidden holiness of the Godhead should flash forth, uttering itself in the FATHER'S works, the FATHER'S words; kindling the flame of faith, and hope, and love, in those whose hearts the FATHER had prepared; shining into the blinded eyes, that they might see; opening the sealed ear, that it might hear; melting the heart of stone, that it might love; but hidden still, putting forth secretly the healing virtue which went out of HIM; drawing, by an invisible power, those natures which were capable of its attraction, yet so that to

others it appeared “without form or comeliness,” as (if we may reverently so speak) the loadstone, which has such attractive force, that it imparts to other things the power to attract, is outwardly a dark shapeless mass, undistinguishable from other forms of earth.

So would HE cure our pride, whereby we fell, through His lowliness: suffering, reproach, shame, want, weariness, all the degradations of men’s sin (sin itself alone excepted), His portion in life; all gathered together, and heaped in one, by man’s malice and Satan’s rage, at His death. Amid all this humiliation, once only was the hidden glory permitted, in tempered Majesty, to shine forth; once only was HE manifested to His disciples, “as HE was,” while hidden from the world.

This one showing-forth of His unseen glory was just before His suffering; it prepared doubtless the three chosen witnesses to witness also His bitter agony and humiliation. All around relates to suffering. Just before our LORD promised this vision, HE had rebuked St. Peter, who would not that HE should suffer; bad warned His disciples that His kingdom was to be through suffering; that they who followed HIM, must suffer; to “follow HIM,” was to “deny self, and take up His cross;” to “save life,” was to “lose it;” to “lose it,” was to “save it.” Lest this should be too heavy tidings, our LORD promised that some of them should see the end of those sufferings; they should “not taste of death, till they saw the SON of Man coming in His kingdom;” before they were called upon to “drink His cup, and be baptized with His baptism,” they should see that wherein this momentary affliction was to issue, the exceeding glory of their LORD, in which, having “suffered with HIM,” they were also “with HIM to be glorified.” It was when HE “was to be received up” shortly after, we are told, HE “steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” The only subject, whereon Moses and Elias spake with HIM, was that whereof “the law and the prophets” foretold, “His decease, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” “After six days,” the Holy Gospel continues, “JESUS taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and taketh them to a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them.” Apart from the world, nigh unto heaven, they saw the promised vision; for they saw HIM, as we shall all see HIM, in that glory wherein HE shall return to judge us, in the human form which HE had taken, yet shining with His own glory, and the glory of His FATHER; shining “as the sun” of righteousness; they saw Moses and Elias, “the law and the prophets,” bear witness to HIM while present, and still more, by their vanishing away, leaving JESUS alone, of Whom Alone the FATHER’S voice said, “This is My beloved SON, in Whom I am well pleased, Hear HIM;” and whereas Peter, in the bliss of that glorious sight, said, “It is good for us to be here,” and longed to “build three tabernacles;” he was taught that Moses and Elias were but as servants, his LORD alone the SON; he saw HIM, for an earthly tabernacle, enshrined in the tabernacle of the cloud, as HE shall again “come in the clouds of heaven;” he was taught that man’s only good is to be where his SAVIOUR is; not to choose for himself, but to be with HIM, in the mount apart, or in the agony of the garden, or following to the Cross, to be, if HE so vouchsafe, in pain and suffering now, with the hope of “the glory which shall be revealed,” whereof he had seen the outskirts.

And truly did this vision live with them; and when our LORD showed to St. Peter that "he must shortly put off this tabernacle," and "stretch forth his hands and be girded "to the Cross, even as his Master was, that vision "when we were with HIM in the holy mount," was still before his eyes, when he saw "the power and coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST," and was "eye-witness of His Majesty." He, too, after his Master's pattern, and by his Master's strength, "for the joy which was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the shame;" yea, and shall sit with HIM hereafter on His throne.

But not for the Apostles' sake only, was the glory of the LORD thus revealed. In them the whole Church since saw it, and to us, as to them, it is given, as a support of faith, a kindling of our hope. To us too it is a witness of our LORD'S Divinity; nay more, of His Divinity and Humanity together; it is to us a faint gleam (such as while in the flesh we can hear) of that ineffable mystery, how man can be taken into GOD, how GOD can dwell in man, and fill him with the Glory of the FATHER. We believe that our LORD was "GOD and man," "Very GOD and Very man;" yet ancient heresies have shown how difficult is that true faith, which can neither fall short of His Divinity, nor take offence at His Manhood; can see HIM to be man, but believe HIM to be GOD; or believing HIM to be GOD, can believe HIM to have taken this, our frail, mortal substance, soul and body; to have been "perfect GOD and perfect man," to have had a human will ever subject to the Divine Will, and yet HIMSELF to have been that Will of the FATHER; two natures, yet One Person; "GOD and man," yet "One CHRIST." And not only this, but it shows us how, now also that the indwelling Godhead deifies His human nature, yet is HE Man still; penetrated with GOD, yet not absorbed into GOD; shining above the brightness of the sun, so that the beloved disciple fell as one dead, yet withal known to His disciples, so that Peter called HIM Master; how, dwelling in that unapproachable light, ONE GOD with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, His Manhood is not lost; amid the ineffable glory of the eternal Godhead, HE is man still. His outward earthly form of suffering hindered not that the Godhead, which shone through in His Transfiguration, should dwell therein in "all" Its "fulness bodily;" that Body, now spiritual, life-giving, Deified, hinders not the closeness of His unspeakable union with the FATHER, but is in GOD.

Great is the comfort to us, that HE, our High-Priest, our Intercessor, is thus glorified, is thus present with GOD, and is GOD; well may we, in our miseries, "come boldly to the throne of grace," assured that HE, Who in the Eternal Presence bears the marks of His sufferings for us still, will remember us, whom by His most precious Blood HE redeemed; that HE, the well-beloved SON, can "save to the uttermost those who come unto GOD by HIM." Yet does this mystery, in a still more definite way, open to us the greatness of our future hopes; it gives a glimpse of that which we have no thought to conceive, "the good things" which GOD has, "in His boundless mercy, in store for those who love HIM."

It is, that our LORD took our nature upon HIM, not only in it to render the obedience in which we had failed, to pay the debt we owed, to loose us from him whose "lawful captives "we were, but to sanctify it. "For their cause," HE says, "I sanctify

Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth;" and, "Both HE that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one." By His perfect obedience as man, and His sinless birth, HE became the author of a new race, who should be partakers of His holiness, as before of Adam's transgression; should be in HIM, as before in Adam. HE partook of all which was ours save sin, that HE might make us partakers of all which was His—His holiness, His life, His incorruption; whence the Apostle addresses Christians, as not merely "sanctified," but as "sanctified in HIM." he speaks of HIM as "made unto us sanctification;" not merely as causing us to be sanctified by any outward means, but being HIMSELF our sanctification, by dwelling in us, imparting HIMSELF to us; and we are "sanctified," not by HIM only, but "in HIM," in that we are re-born in HIM, are made verily and indeed members of HIM.

We then are indeed concerned in all which His sacred Humanity did, suffered, yea, and wherein it was glorified, not only because it was necessary to our redemption, that HE Who paid our price should be without sin; but because it is our nature, it belongs to us, or rather we to It, as It to HIM; and what HE bestowed upon It, wrought by It, and in It, HE did for our sakes, that through It, it might overflow to us His members. In It the Holy Spirit dwelt, that HE might afterwards dwell in us: "I sanctify myself for their cause," HE saith, "that they also may be sanctified." So then we are partakers of all which is His. As HE was, in His human nature, "conceived by the HOLY GHOST," so are we "born from above of water and the Spirit;" as HE suffered, so in HIM have we "suffered in the flesh;" so did Apostles "suffer with HIM," "with HIM were crucified;" as HE died, so are we "dead with HIM;" HE was buried, so we "by baptism into His death;" as HE rose again, so are we "co-risen with HIM." Nay, as HE shall come again to judge the quick and dead, so, in some mysterious way, "the saints shall judge the world;" as "His kingdom shall have no end," so "shall they reign with Him "for ever and ever." All has HE made ours, save the descent into hell, "whither HE went that we might not;" yea, and when we too shall pass to the unseen abode, for the saints it is to "be with CHRIST." As HE has ascended into heaven, so have we been "made to sit together in heavenly places in HIM." HE was the true light dwelling among us, that we might be "light in HIM;" what of ourselves we could not have, HE gave us—remission of sins, redemption, freedom from wrath; but more than this, HE gave us what is His, Sonship, that as HE was the SON by Nature, so in HIM should we be real though adopted sons; inheritance of heaven—that as HE is by right "heir of all things," so should we be co-heirs in HIM; righteousness—that we might be not accounted only, but made, not righteous only, as man might be, but be "made the" very "righteousness of GOD in HIM;" the FATHER'S love—that we who were by nature alienated and hateful, and (fearful as it is to say) "haters of GOD," should be loved by HIM as sons, nay more, should be loved in HIM Who is the well-beloved SON, should be "accepted in the Beloved." And HE Who has given us all these things, what should HE withhold from us? "HE Who hath given us His SON, how should HE not with HIM freely give us all things?" And so, as the voice from heaven was for our sakes, as for our sakes HE prayed to the FATHER, so for us also was manifested that excellent glory on

the holy mount; for so the Apostle says, "as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly." Such was GOD'S eternal purpose towards those who are His: 'HE did predestinate them to be conformed to the image of His SON.' "HE shall change our vile body that it should be like unto His glorious body," that body which was then so glorified, that His very disciples' eyes could not bear to look on it, such shall ours be. Such are the glories, such the bliss, which GOD has in store for them who love HIM, not only to be *with* GOD, to be before His holy throne, beholding His blissful Countenance, saying, with angels and archangels, Holy! Holy! Holy! to be by HIM upheld in life, but ourselves to be full of GOD, to live in HIM, having His life in us, to "shine as the stars," through His pure light penetrating our then spiritual bodies, shining from within us as it then transfigured the body which for us HE deigned to take, and making us "all light, and in no part dark," to be glorious through His glory, blessed through His bliss, to love through His love within us Who is love, to be not ourselves only, but to be "partakers of His Nature."

Oh blessedness beyond all thought; oh unutterable riches of the mercy of GOD, to be for ever not our own, but to be His, His by creation, His by redemption, His by recreation, but His too by His Indwelling, His Life, His Love, His Glory, His Light, His Wisdom, His Immortality, within us; yea all but His Infinity, and That the endless Object of our enraptured contemplation,—never cloying, never exhausted, because HE is infinite; to be wholly His, in HIM, and yet because we cannot contain HIM, to have HIM without us, to gaze on with loving adoration and adoring love; by HIM and through HIM and in HIM to be enabled to see, love, hold, receive HIMSELF; ever receiving, yet never sated; ever contemplating, yet never wearied; ever loving with unchanging, unbroken, undistracted love, because our whole selves shall be in every part, action, affection, indwelt by HIM. Oh unutterable blessedness, to be so wholly, inseparably, closely His.

And this in their several degrees, is, it must reverently be said, although they know it not, realized in His faithful servants now. This is the special gift of the Sacraments of our LORD, that they are not only means of grace, but that they invisibly join us on to HIM; the one is the means whereby we are born of GOD, born of the Spirit, though invisibly, as really as we are washed with the water visibly, born sons of GOD, because we are made members of the ever blessed SON; by the other, our LORD HIMSELF comes invisibly to us, is HIMSELF the living Bread whereby we live, HIMSELF "dwelleth in us, and we in HIM," is HIMSELF "eternal life in us." We, as I said, have been made partakers of His Death, Passion, Resurrection, Life; we also, if we be faithful, are being made partakers of His glory, for this the Apostle expressly says, that "we with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the LORD," contemplating HIM, and seeking by prayer and daily diligence to have His image, line by line, retraced in us, are "being changed into the same image from glory to glory, through the LORD the Spirit." Through that indwelling glory did the face of St. Stephen shine like the face of an angel; even now do we sometimes see the faces of GOD'S saints gleam with unearthly purity and love; even now as the parting spirit sometimes sees heaven open, and hears and almost feels

the brushing-by of the angels' wings who shall carry it, or knows the room to be full of angels, or sees the Redeemer HIMSELF, so does the body catch the light it is approaching; even now, ere we resign the sacred remains to be sown in dishonour, the solemn peace and holy calm spread over them, seem to tell us by Whom they were inhabited; yea, that though quitted by the soul, they are not forsaken by HIM Whose temple they were; they seem yet, like the parted spirit, to "live to HIM;" the evening so closed in, seems the dawning of the Resurrection. Nay, so instinct with divine life have been these tabernacles wherein GOD dwelt, that, as we know, the touch of the bones of Elisha, on whom "a double portion" of his great Master's "Spirit rested," shot instant life into the body of the dead, so that, as an image of the resurrection, "it revived and stood on its feet;" and what happened once only under the old dispensation, has been more frequent since the Holy Spirit more fully dwelt in man; and the death of GOD'S martyrs has by HIM been glorified; the dead have protected the living; they who themselves "seemed to perish" by persecution's sword, held back the persecution which threatened His servants yet in the flesh.<sup>1</sup>

Such is a portion of GOD'S designs towards us, as realized in those who are His; such the unutterable mercies "to those who" will "receive HIM;" for them His SON sanctified our nature; by His indwelling Spirit HE communicates to them that holiness which HE gave it; HE sanctifies their whole body, soul, and spirit; HE spiritualizes their very bodies, that they may "become like His glorious body." But there is a fearful, and one must dread, a far more frequent contrast to all this; how this implanted life gradually becomes extinct; the Spirit is gradually quenched; instead of the body becoming spiritualized, the soul becomes carnalized, fleshly; instead of the countenance being hallowed by the Holy Spirit, it seems rather to betray the workings, one must fear often, the indwelling, of that bad spirit which was once cast out, but, with the seven worse spirits, has been allowed to return; instead of holding out an earnest of the joys of heaven, the life, the words, the thoughts, the actions, the very look, seem to speak of hell. The reality of the Indwelling of the Divine SPIRIT in those who obey HIM, throws an awful light on the reality of that of which our LORD also spake, the indwelling of the evil spirit in those who obey *him*. "They dwell there;" a sevenfold spirit of evil as opposed to the One, but sevenfold, SPIRIT of TRUTH; so that as the souls of the saints are led by the indwelling "SPIRIT," and HE rules their life, exalts their senses, fills their minds, sanctifies their thoughts, is the Author of their actions, so in the souls of those who have emptied themselves of HIM, Satan dwells, rules their actions, prompts their words, moves their limbs, is at last the living Death within them, filling their every part, is the spirit, whom their soul and body obey. Their threefold nature remains, body, soul, spirit; but the spirit is of evil. As the actions, thoughts, life of the perfected saint, are GOD'S within him, so are the will, actions, joys, of the completed sinner, Satan's; he is but the instrument, whom the inhabiting spirit moves at will. Not that one must judge individuals; but one

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<sup>1</sup> The Arian persecution against St. Ambrose. See St. Augustine's Confessions, ix. 7, and Notes, Oxford Transl.; Church of the Fathers, c. iii.

must fear for them, and, at best, stand in awe if not fear, for ourselves; the way to life is narrow; how must one not fear for those who seem to be walking on the broad? "The way of life is above;" how not fear for those whose thoughts seem all below? "The way of life is in keeping GOD'S commandments;" how not fear for those who are habitually breaking them? The way of life, Scripture says, is "through much tribulation," "bearing hardness," "deeds of charity," "forgivingness;" how not fear for those who are "taking their ease," are luxurious, are penurious in charity, who seldom or never give, or who forgive not? We may not judge; but since there is a certain character which leads to Hell, in whatever way or degree any seem to partake of it, they must be objects of sorrowful concern to us. In whatever way any seem to partake of it—then, my Brethren, we have much need of anxious concern for ourselves too: in all, except reprobates and (if there be such on earth) perfected saints, there are the elements of both heaven and hell within; their old nature tending to decay and death, ever ready to break out, strengthened, in most, by former or present negligence or sloth or falls, and the new nature, by Baptism imparted, the day-spring of everlasting life, the life of CHRIST within us, the light of Heaven, which has been dimmed by sin, or fed with the oil of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, and through His blessed guidance, the oil of good works, of alms' deeds, of joy in GOD,—in most, a "dimly-burning flax," not yet "quenched," but through His long-suffering only, kept in life. All of us, young or old, in our several ways, have in us what would be earnest and foretastes of everlasting joy or of everlasting fire. All have what pertains to the nature of Angels and of Devils. All have the flesh; all, unless they be reprobate, have still some portion of the SPIRIT. In almost all, too likely, the flesh, in some grosser or more subtle form, has had its sway; in the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life:" in all, it is an unceasing enemy, chained, if it be so, only by GOD'S power blessing our faith, our love, our watchfulness, which HE gave us; in all, active; and most in those who know not its power, because they never strove to stem its tide; in all, to be subdued, if they would escape eternal death.

Between these two, then, lies the course of men; here only are we two selves; hereafter unity is to be restored, wholly good or wholly evil; either all to be transfigured into the glory of our LORD, or all to be debased to hell; all to be spiritual, or all carnal. And in this contrast of flesh and spirit all around us partake, and every thing may be made, on one side or the other, to minister to this conflict. As GOD created this our world for us, every thing was adapted for our twofold nature. As man is body and soul, so throughout nature and grace, the works of GOD and His word and His ordinances, there is one great contrast, of things outward and inward, of body and SPIRIT, of the lower form and the higher reality. And as GOD made man upright and obedient to HIMSELF, so would this inferior world have been obedient to man, and ministered to him; the things of sight would naturally have ministered to things unseen; the flesh been a helpmate to the spirit; eye, ear, touch, taste, would in every thing have seen, heard, felt, fed on, GOD; in HIM we had then "lived and moved and had our being," not as now, by nature, unknowingly and thanklessly, like the beasts which perish, but HE had been the breath of our life, the

centre of our being, the Sun to which our soul ever turned, our Life, whereon we hung. Creation had talked to us ever of the Creator; all had been lovely, and all loved in HIM; Nature had indeed “led up to Nature’s GOD.” But as man’s sin has marred nature, flesh and spirit, instead of harmonizing together, are at variance; man’s disobedience to GOD has made nature a rebel to him;<sup>2</sup> his will not being subject to GOD, neither are the things, once by GOD subjected to him, obedient to him any longer; his higher self having obeyed his lower, and disobeyed GOD, his spirit having been subject to his appetites, nature too is freed from her obedience to him; he is punished wherein he had offended; all around, beneath, in him, rebels against the rebel to his GOD. Henceforth flesh and spirit are in one endless conflict; every thing may become a means of seduction; the sun, moon, and stars which GOD ordained, as they walked in beauty, enslaved his soul, and bowed him down to them instead of their Maker; every thing beautiful became, in turn, an idol, yea, every thing hateful too; man ceased to fear GOD and to love HIM, and so since he must fear and love, he loved and feared the creatures of GOD with an unholy love and unholy fear; “glorifying GOD not as GOD,” he feared Satan, whose gifts he loved. He thanked Satan for GOD’S gifts, which he took at Satan’s hands; as GOD saith, “She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold which they made into Baal;” and so also he knew not GOD’S voice of awe, wherewith in trouble, or the terrors of our disordered nature, HE spoke to him, and called him to return, but sought the more to appease the master he had chosen, Satan; “their sons and their daughters have they sacrificed to devils.” “They have not cried unto ME in their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and rebel against ME.” “As for the word that thou hast spoken to us in the Name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee: but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out our drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers—for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But when we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and the famine.” Man must be like his GOD; and if he become not like the true GOD, he must make him false gods like himself, and in them worship unknowingly the god of this world, whose portion and doom he chooseth. The god of man’s natural heart is, like itself, evil; savage nations, who know no other god, worship an evil principle; hatred or love, beauty or loathsomeness, hope or fear, desire or aversion, possession or loss, success or failure, joyousness or suffering, rise or fall, to those who are not in GOD, alike alienate the more from GOD: as “all things work together for good to those who love GOD,” so to those who do not love HIM, do all to evil.

Would, my Brethren, that one could speak of this as past; as belonging to “the times of ignorance, whereat GOD winked,” to the Heathen only who knew not GOD; but the same dangers surround us now; we are set amid the same snares, and have the same

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<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, Confessions vii. 7, and note g. Oxf. Tr.

ensnaring hearts. Every thing within us and without may be hallowed to GOD; and every thing, within us and without, may be, and more often are, desecrated to Satan; every thing may, and does, minister to Heaven or Hell. Our health may minister to serenity of mind, or, more often, to self-confidence and want of sympathy, our sickness to resignation or to fretfulness; the most sacred losses to penitence, or to repining and feverish tossings, and discontent with GOD, or, again, to hard-heartedness; our good actions to self-display, or the love of HIM Whom in them we serve; our best earthly affections may be a love in and for God, or be idolatry and a subtle selfishness: our study of nature, and the laws imposed upon nature, may make us fall down and worship HIM Who gave those laws, or our own understanding, which discovered them, may be holy or godless; the enjoyment of natural beauties may be pure and holy, or may be mere excitement and sensual; the highest things may be made subservient to the meanest, or the poorest infirmities of our weak nature may minister to the highest; music may be the minstrelsy of the heavenly harps, singing the song of the LAMB, or it may be the excitement and voluptuousness of the day; our knowledge may be mere distraction amid the manifold things of sense, wasting our minds with the husks wherewith we feed it, or may tend to the love of HIM Who passeth knowledge; our eating and drinking may be with the beasts which perish, or they may be types of our heavenly food, our feeding of HIM Who is the Bread of life; unhallowed sleep is the image of eternal death; if we lay down to take our rest in HIM, it is repose in the everlasting arms, watched by Angels, "visited," it may be, "with His visitations to His own," the putting off of weakness; and our waking in the morning, the type of the Resurrection; nay, even that dryness of soul, under which GOD sometimes allows His servants to suffer, quickens but that thirst after righteousness, which He fills; the very loathsomeness of Satan's touch, defiling the imagination with the memory of former sins, but deepens the penitent's remorse, and that abasement which shall be raised up.

In the midst of such things is our life; day by day, and hour by hour, influenced by every thing around us; rising or falling, sinking or recovering, receiving impressions which are to last for ever; taking our colour and mould from every thing which passes around us and in us, and not the less because unperceived; each touch slight, as impressed by an invisible spiritual hand, but, in itself, not the less, rather the more lasting, since what we are yielding ourselves to is in the end the finger of GOD or the touch of Satan. In our rising up or our lying down; our labour or our refreshment; our intercourse with others, or our solitary thoughts; our plans for the future, or the duties of the day; our purposes and their fulfilments or their failure, our acting or our suffering, we are receiving moment by moment the hallowed impress of the Heavenly Hand, conforming our lineaments, one by one, each faculty of our spirit, and this poor earthly tenement of our bodies itself, to the image of GOD wherein we were re-created, or we are being gradually dried up and withered by the blasting burning touch of the Arch-fiend; each touch is of fire, burning out our proud rebellious flesh, or searing our life: some more miserable falls sink us deeper; some more difficult victories, won by GOD'S help over ourselves, the flesh, the world, and Satan, raise us on the heavenward path; but each

sense, at every avenue, each thought, each word, each act, is in its degree doing that endless work; every evil thought, every idle word, and still more, each wilful act, is stamping upon men the mark of the beast; each slightest deed of faith is tracing deeper the seal of GOD upon their foreheads; "touch not, taste not, handle not," says Holy Scripture, and so teaches how every sense may minister to evil; by self-indulgence, by sensuality, by voluptuousness, by selfishness, in all the various forms of sin in which self bursts out, gross or refined, injurious to our neighbour, or hurting him only by bad example, detecting itself by outward acts, or poisoning secretly the well-spring of our own life, men are gradually grieving away the good SPIRIT of GOD; by anger, because HE is gentle; by envy, because HE is loving; by uncleanness, because HE is pure; by vanity, because HE resisteth the proud and dwelleth in the humble heart; by lying, because HE is the SPIRIT of TRUTH; by excess in eating and drinking, because these directly sensualize the soul, and HE is a HOLY SPIRIT; by overt sins of the flesh, because they are "defiling of His temple." And by the opposite to all these, His gracious Indwelling is the more invited, because HE is a loving SPIRIT, seeking to communicate HIMSELF to all who will receive HIM, and enlarging the more their souls, who act on His holy impulses, that they may receive HIM more; yea, and after we have fallen even deeply, by penitence, by fasting, by abstinence, by self-chastisement, by enduring, penitential prayer, by self-denying charity, by all which St. Paul calls "bearing hardness" or "revenge," HE will again burn out our filth by His heavenly fire, lightening our darkness, that we be not cast into outer darkness, consuming our dross, that we "perish not at His Presence" Who "is a consuming Fire," purifying our spotted sacrifice, though we be but "lame, and sick, and blind, and polluted," and unfit to be offered to the "Great King," hallowing it, and presenting it hallowed by His own holiness.

Such are we, such our life, our endless end: ourselves, in GOD'S purpose and mercy, fitted to be vessels of honour to His praise and glory, but liable by our own negligence or wilfulness, to become but vessels of His wrath: but middle path there is none; there are but two paths, the broad and the narrow; two guides, the Good Shepherd or the Destroyer; two ends, GOD or hell. If by GOD'S grace the flesh be subdued to the SPIRIT, then shall it also partake of the SPIRIT; it, too, which causes or bears suffering now, shall have its reward; it also has its share in the resurrection; so that the happiness of "the just made perfect," nay, of St. Paul himself, though present with his LORD, shall not be perfect until he receive again, as a spiritual body, the body of this death, which he brought into subjection, which he handled roughly, from which he longed to be delivered. Oh! mysterious greatness of our nature, that the disembodied spirit, even with CHRIST HIMSELF, and contemplating in HIM the Ever-blessed Trinity, should not yet have its fullest happiness, until this mortal flesh, conceived in sin, ever prone to rebel, the heir of corruption, be restored to it, purified, glorified, Deified; oh! strange condescension of GOD, that the SON of GOD should take our nature, fulfilling the fallen spirit's deceitful promise, "Ye shall be as gods," making us temples of His SPIRIT here, and hereafter conforming our vile bodies to be like unto His glorious Body, in which the fulness of the

GODHEAD dwelt bodily; oh! awful sacredness of this poor body, which men so defile, misuse, deck, trick out, pamper, surfeit, subject to vanity and corruption, that here it is to be by Baptism the dwelling-place of the Ever-blessed Trinity; into it our LORD HIMSELF deigns to enter; it hereafter is to become all spiritual; though a body still, it is to be attuned to the spirit, and the spirit to GOD, and soul, body and spirit are to be full of GOD, and partake of GOD! Oh! miserable deceitfulness of sin, which, when for the endurance of a few short years, all this eternal likeness, participation, oneness with GOD, are held out to it, will tempt the many to exchange all this, and the soul itself, for its passing, bitter pleasures, to forfeit the spirit, and corrupt the soul, until it becomes decayed, like the body itself, yea, body and spirit alike decayed, earthly, sensual, devilish; and that which was once the habitation of the Blessed Trinity, be the abode of all filthiness and uncleanness, the dwelling-place of devils;<sup>3</sup> its spiritual nature become fleshly, and the high prerogatives which it once had, remain only in that it is capable of an immortality of suffering.

Our LORD stretcheth forth His hands to bless us, but it is in the form of His Cross. His Transfiguration is our glory; it sets forth that glory to us, but also how it was to be won for us, by bearing the Cross for us; by us, by bearing ours after HIM, in His strength, and following HIM; His alone meritorious, ours acceptable, only because HE Whom in that holy mount we were bid to hear, commands us to take it up; ours, the emblem of the punishment which we deserve, yet for the sake of HIM Who bore it, which HE did not deserve, the penalty of our sin applies to us the merits of His sinlessness, conforms us to His sufferings, that we may also with HIM be glorified.

Such as HE manifested HIMSELF to the Church then, must we again see HIM: HE then will again stretch forth His arms to receive those whom HE will own as His: but how, in that day of awe, when, awakened by the Archangel's trumpet, we shall receive again our bodies, in them to receive the things done in the body, how shall we go forth to meet HIM? Shall we bring with us to the Day of Judgment, treasures of earthly wealth, prepared at best by the carefulness which HE forbids, by worldliness, "rising up early and late taking rest," and, amid this, hardheartedness or hardhearted neglect of His poor, and, too likely, refined evil-dealing? Or shall we go forth, in soft clothing and living delicately, careless about others' wants, and in all things thinking only or first of self; with the ambitious titles of dignity or fame, seeking pre-eminence, feeding our vanity or pride, and say to HIM, "Lo! these are the marks of Thy Cross," and hope that HE will recognise His mark upon us? Shall we hope that we shall be made like HIM in that Day, if we are in all things so unlike HIM in this? No! CHRIST must be followed, despising all things. HE would have us gain by losing, rich by poverty, blessed by suffering, honoured by shame, exalted through lowliness, be bound up by being broken-hearted, joy through sorrow, live through death, through labour enter into rest; for so HE emptied HIMSELF of the riches of His glory, to take on HIM our shame, and suffering, and lowliness, to be

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<sup>3</sup> St. Jerome.

“bruised for our transgressions,” to die that we might live. He follows a crucified MASTER, who is himself crucified to the world; he is crucified to the world, who seeks it not, loves it not, parts with its goods largely to CHRIST’S poor, seeks nothing in it but not to be defiled by it, to use it so as to be approved by his MASTER, to the glory of GOD.

It is not, then, to admire, to criticize, to speak of, that that holy mystery of your SAVIOUR’S Life has here been pourtrayed to you.<sup>4</sup> It is that in it you may behold the end of your existence, the reward of your daily warfare and cross, the glory which shall be revealed, faintly shadowed out to you. It is, that on entering this holy place, your thoughts may be the more lifted off” from the earth, you may long to be less earthly, less unlike HIM, may pray the more for that blessed coming of His kingdom, when they that are His shall be “caught up to meet their LORD in the air,” and be with HIM, not in three tabernacles, or in a passing vision, but be “for ever with the LORD.” It is, that returning home, you may carry on more cheerfully your daily strife with “the last of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life,” as having been lifted up to think of “the glory which HE had with the FATHER before the world was,” but which HE veiled in our flesh, that we through His Flesh might partake of It. It is, that you may be the more content to be lowly, as being the followers of HIM, Who once only manifested the glory which, ever dwelt in HIM, and then bade those who saw it, “Tell the vision to no man, until the SON of man be risen again from the dead.” It is, that as you approach the HOLY ALTAR, your faith may be strengthened, in that as when HE was in the flesh HE appeared but the son of the carpenter, had no form nor comeliness, but by the eye of faith was seen to be “the SON of the Living GOD,” so now what you behold, handle, taste, are elements of this world, but to the spiritual eye, touch, taste, they are the REDEEMER’S Body and Blood, whereby our sinful bodies are cleansed, and our souls washed, that soul and body may by His imparted Virtue be preserved unto everlasting life. It is, that when you return to the world, whether to do or to endure, in life’s daily duties or heavier trials, in childhood’s petty struggles, or manhood’s toils, or the weariness of age and sorrow, you may ever hear that voice of the FATHER, “This is My Beloved Son; hear HIM,” do what HE saith, hope for what HE promiseth, so when HE comes again, of you, as “accepted in the Beloved,” it shall be said, in your degree, “This is My beloved son;” to you, too, it shall be said, “Come, ye blessed children of My FATHER, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;” so shall you too be transfigured into that unutterable glory of His glorious Body, “according to that mighty power whereby HE is able to subdue all things to HIMSELF,” and shine like the stars for ever and ever; yea, and above the stars, for in His glory, Who made the stars, GOD of GOD, Light of Light, inapproachable but indwelling.

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<sup>4</sup> The Transfiguration of our Lord, after Raffaele, lately painted for the east window of the Church, for which this Sermon was written.