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“The Obedience of Faith.”



"THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH."

SEVEN SERMONS

DELIVERED ON HIS

VISITATIONS TO THE CHURCHES IN HIS DIOCESE,
DURING 1848-9,

BY THE

RT. REV L. SILLIMAN IVES, DD.,
BISHOP OF NORTH CAROLINA.



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JOHN F. TROW,  
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TO  
THE FAITHFUL AND THE PENITENT  
IN THE  
Diocese of North Carolina,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS

Inscribed

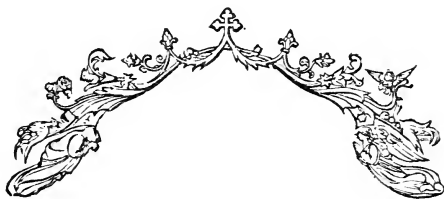
BY THEIR

BISHOP,

with his blessing upon them, and his earnest request for their prayers, that he may be found among them, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" in this life, and participating in the rewards of humble and obedient devotion to the Cross of Christ in the life to come.

*Salisbury, May 23, 1849.*





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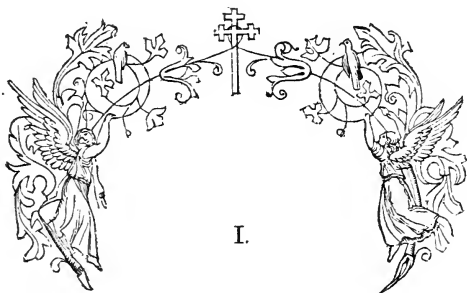


# SERMON I.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN DISCERNED ONLY BY FAITH.







I.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN DISCERNED ONLY BY FAITH.

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ST. MATT. xiii. 31, 32.—The Kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs.

“WE walk by faith, and not by sight,” says St. Paul. And he speaks for all true Christians, inasmuch as all, to be true Christians, must walk by *faith*. The very fact that, when God commands, man must obey, is enough to show this. But the strongest features of God’s revelation to man show it, indeed make it indispensable. Nothing can be more certain, than that man must believe simply upon the word of God,—must believe where he cannot comprehend; and obey merely because he believes. Otherwise no obedience would be rendered, as the very nature and constitution of Christ’s Kingdom are ut-

terly incomprehensible, wholly above sight, and open only to an humble and obedient faith.

Take the text, and you will see how exactly it accords with what I have said. It is meant to illustrate both the outward being of the Church, and its inward life. And what is there in either that man can comprehend? Or what is there in the comparison employed, which was designed to enable him to comprehend them? "The Kingdom of heaven," or the Church, is likened to the least of all seeds, which grows to the greatest of herbs. But who can understand how this is? Experience may assure us of the fact—assure us that the apparently small seed will, under certain circumstances, produce the largest plant. But what is there to the eye of sense, which can give the promise of such a result? The same question, surely, may be asked in reference to the nature and progress of the Church, which the mustard seed was intended to illustrate. Its beginning exhibited nothing to justify the expectation of its growth.

I. Look at this beginning in the great mystery of the *incarnation*—when God first became man in the womb of the blessed Virgin. This, to human reason, is "the least of all seeds;" or, as the Jews understood it, a comparatively very small thing.

Other systems have been introduced with some-

thing sudden and remarkable;—calculated to make a strong impression;—to intimidate opposition;—to inspire confidence, and gain for them, at once, a firm hold upon the public mind. The Jewish polity had its birth amid the signs and wonders upon Egypt;—made its appearance invested with a commanding power;—stepped from its very cradle with all the energy of manhood. The same may be said of the imposture of Mahomet. Its first stride showed the vigor and determination of success. It took the mind of the nation by surprise. It awoke opposition only to see it tremble and submit. Its blow was too sudden for resistance to rally. It was too staggering for the prostrate foe to regain his footing. Not so with the Gospel of Christ. Intimations of its coming were given centuries before its advent. A long succession of prophets were sent to prepare men's minds for its reception. Rites and ceremonies established to foreshadow its certain approach. A herald dispatched to announce it near at hand. Thus was the Jewish mind, yea, the mind of the civilized world, wrought up to a pitch of most intense expectation. We know how this expectation was met. An infant, born of poor parents, in an obscure town, and under circumstances calculated to excite pity, rather than respect, is all that distinguished the advent of "the Kingdom of heaven." And yet that Kingdom, ac-

according to prophecy, is to take possession of mankind—to subdue the pride of kings—upturn opposing kingdoms, and place the neglected infant of Bethlehem on the throne of the world. What a stumbling-block to sense! What a demand upon implicit faith!

But this is the most superficial view of the matter. The true mystery lies deeper. Men are told that God and man unite in the infant Christ;—that the blessed Virgin, lying in a manger, is “the mother of God”—“perfect God and perfect man,—God of the substance of the Father, and man of the substance of His mother;”—that our manhood is actually taken into God, and is manifested to the world in the infant son of Joseph and Mary. And is thus “manifested, to destroy the works of the devil;” to set up a kingdom of life and peace, that may shield returning men from the fatal empire of disorder and death; and finally bring upon that empire an everlasting destruction. Here is the mystery of “Godliness”—the mystery of “the least of all seeds!”—to sense, the child of poverty and meanness; to faith, the incarnate God. To sense, nothing to insure the fulfilment of lofty prophecy; to faith, every thing which heaven could give. To sense, feebleness and want and dependence; to faith, the strength and fulness of the self-existent God. And while sense has stood for

ages, stupidly inquiring, "How can these things be?" faith has realized, and is still realizing, and will realize for ever her glorious vision. Not one jot nor tittle of it all shall fail. The Star of Bethlehem is already "the light of the world." "The least of all seeds is already grown to the greatest of plants."

Thus has it been with the outward being of Christ's Kingdom in the world. The same is true of the inward life of its subjects.

II. Let us examine the point. We come into the Kingdom through a new-birth—of water and the Holy Ghost. As the Son of God took our manhood into His divinity, when conceived and born of the Virgin Mary, so His Godhead, in a certain sense, becomes united to our humanity when we pass through "the washing of regeneration." For we then become "temples of the Holy Ghost;" we "put on Christ;" are united to Him as the branch is united to the vine; and are thus "partakers of the Divine nature." Here again we have, to the eye of reason, "the least of all seeds." An unconscious infant, by the use of a little water, and a few solemn words, made a member of Christ's body, and a recipient of His spirit and life; made to undergo "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness."

Reason is baffled, and objects. Nothing has been done, nothing is seen to signify so great a change.

The infant appears and acts as it did;—appears and acts like children unbaptized. How then can we believe that a sanctifying power has passed upon it? a divine energy has been put within it? Yes! here is an awful mystery! But it began, and with tenfold depth, in the birth of the infant Saviour! If, in the new-born Son of the ever Virgin, faith is required to acknowledge the presence of “very God and very man” united, how should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that your own infant child should come from the laver of regeneration with a new and heavenly nature! When the shepherds saw the helpless babe—helpless like other children—encircled by the protecting arms of the Virgin-mother—their eyes looked upon the mighty God. Why then should we refuse to recognize in infants new-born unto Him, a communication, however invisible to sense, of his nature and life? The mustard seed may be smaller even than other seeds, and yet have, in its hidden folds, the life of a perfect and wide-branching tree.

We may here give an answer to those who make regeneration depend, in a degree at least, upon the exercise of reason; and hence deny it to baptized infants. The whole scheme of our recovery, as well as our fall, is independent of reason. Our fall was certainly so. Our minds gave no assent to the state of sin in which we were born;—why should they, to the

state of salvation in which we have our new-birth? As to the foundation and conditions of it, they surely could not. The incarnation of the Son of God, and the way of our union with Him, were both above our conceptions, and determined upon without our knowledge and choice. What is there in our actual restoration to Him, or our new birth into His Kingdom and fellowship, which should demand a different agency?—demand, necessarily, the exercise of reason, or the convictions of the understanding? We were placed out of this Kingdom and fellowship without our consent,—why not be restored without it? Our moral ability to serve God was taken away without our agency,—why not be given back on the same terms? It was taken from our unconscious infancy,—why not restored to our unconscious infancy? Taken from us, at our natural birth from the first Adam,—why not restored to us, at our spiritual birth into the second Adam? In truth, it must be so.

(1.) Whatever of spiritual life may operate within us, must be communicated from without us. The plant, however large and vigorous from the richness of the soil, cannot have been generated from it. The life and character, and perfection of the whole and of every part, must depend upon the seed deposited in the ground. So the fruits of the Spirit from our hearts cannot be produced, no matter how these

hearts may be cultivated, except from the gifts of the Spirit imparted to them. For the simple reason that as born into the world, nothing is within us that can possibly produce these fruits. There are sinful passions within us. But I hardly need say, they tend only to the works of the flesh—that “they are not subject to the law of God, neither, in themselves, can be.” We have within us, it will be said, a mind, which, by its force, can bring to our aid the power of truth. But this mind is blinded by the senses, and cannot act independently of their influence,—so that God’s Word calls it “carnal,” and declares it to be unable to “discern the things of the Spirit.” Till the senses, then, are recovered from the dominion of sin, the mind must be in bondage, subject to delusion, and forced to administer to the power of evil. I know we are born with a will, and that this is the main-spring of every good action. But to be so, its motions must be controlled by the reason and conscience. These, however, as I have said, are under an evil bias, and hence the unregenerate will has no prompting but to sin. I repeat, then, that we have nothing within us at our birth, to enable us to discern—to desire—or to pursue the ways of God. And I may add, it must always be so, though ten thousand years were the measure of our lives, except as we receive gifts from above. Indeed, the longer we



live, under the defilement of our birth, the greater will be our distance from God, and the greater our difficulties of return to Him—for then the power of inveterate habits will give to the natural passions and desires, a still more terrible proclivity to sin and ruin. At whatever stage of our lives, then, help may come to us, it must come from God—without our solicitation, and, indeed, against our will; as the first thing to be done for us, is the subjugation of the will, and, consequently, the disenthralment of the mind, through the cleansing and rectifying of the senses.

(2.) And when can that thing more reasonably be done for us, than at our infancy,—before the will becomes strengthened by actual resistance to God's claims, and the affections bound down to earth by actual submission to its false demands? And when can we have better assurance that *it is* done for us, than at our new-birth, by water and the Holy Ghost, into the body of Christ?—When, from having been “born in sin,” we have “a death unto sin”—from having been “children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.” For then it is—as is most significantly set forth in the Christian's collect—that the only begotten of the Father, having taken our nature from the blessed Virgin, incorporates us anew into Himself—regenerating our spirits, and restoring to us the title and grace of adoption, which were for-

feited in the fall of the first Adam; thence enabling us, by the communication of the Holy Ghost, to advance, day by day, to greater holiness of life—and thus to “grow up into Himself, in all things, which is the Head.”

If this be not so, the sacramental system of the Book of Common Prayer is utterly out of place—made to occupy a false eminence—and to encourage false hopes! If this be not so, the sacramental system of the Gospel—the solemn teaching of our blessed Lord about the fitness of infants for His Kingdom—and the necessity of baptism for salvation—and the blessed union which it establishes between the soul and Himself—would seem to be a grand delusion to blind His followers, rather than the gracious words that lead to eternal life! The impiety of such a thought is enough, one would think, to startle even *sense* itself from its dreams of self-sufficiency! But the true Christian walks by *Faith*. And he is not only willing to do so, but is compelled to do so. The blessings of God’s dispensation of mercy and grace can be reached in no other way.

(3.) How did Adam and Eve regain, through the promised seed, that which they lost by the power of sight, except through *Faith*? How did Abel obtain that blessing, which Cain lost by confidence in his own reason, except through the offering of *Faith*?

How did Abraham receive the blessing of circumcision, or a child in his old age, or the declared approbation of God, in offering his son, and going when commanded into an unknown land, except through "the obedience of Faith?" How did Naaman, the Syrian leper, obtain that cleansing in the waters of Jordan, which he had well nigh lost by the pride of reason, except through the submission of *Faith*? How did the children of Israel escape the angel of death, and the fury of Pharaoh, and the bite of deadly serpents—and any of them finally reach the promised land, except by the power of an implicit *Faith*? How did parents receive from Christ the cure of their sick and possessed children, except through an obedient Faith? How, in short, did the first disciples cleave unto their Master?—the apostles go forth to their fearful work?—confessors to their sufferings?—and martyrs to their crowns?—except through the strength of that "Faith which works by love and purifies the heart?"

In all this, the manifest cause is to the promised and expected result, as the least thing to the greatest! There is nothing of sufficient significance to satisfy either sense or reason acting under sense. Faith alone can be assured—Faith alone can penetrate the obscurity and move forward—Faith in the "inward and spiritual." however small "the outward

and visible"—Faith that can overcome giants and remove mountains—yea, more, can remove *self* and substitute God—can rest upon His simple word without argument—rest upon its literal meaning where the pride of reason would turn it into figure, and cast dishonor upon God's power; as if that could not make any meaning true.

In thus calling us to "the obedience of *Faith*," God teaches us some most essential lessons.

1. To look upon the Christian life as having its foundation in *humility*. Men, we admit, are naturally proud and self-relying—unwilling, in spiritual things, to believe on the simple authority, and to be guided by the absolute will of another, however much their salvation may demand it. Now, had Almighty God employed their powers as necessary to their new-birth—their knowledge and wisdom and energy as essential aids in restoring them to a state of salvation—the inevitable result would have been their self-trust;—the strengthening of that very passion by means of which they were first cast out of His favor. While, on the other hand, the scheme, upon which we have here supposed Him to act—viz., the restoring of us to His Kingdom and fellowship by means, in their operation, wholly inscrutable to our minds—tends to humble our self-conceit, and produce in us that childlike state of heart, without which our re-

generation would be no blessing. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of heaven.—Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of heaven." For that which humbles self, exalts God, produces a reverence for His authority and presence which alone can insure obedience to Him; and the farther we seem to ourselves, to be from God, by a real sense of guilt and insufficiency, so much the nearer are we actually to Him, in likeness and favor, and so much the more do we realize the awfulness of His presence, the depth of humility being the true measure of holiness. And our humility to be deep, must rest in an abiding conviction, that our guilt and insufficiency shut all hope of help from ourselves, and that God's wisdom and mercy, in the plan of redemption, have respect only to His glory and our great necessity.

2. We are taught, secondly, that our reason, as well as our senses, is placed under the discipline of *Faith*. Not that reason should not be employed, but that it must first be sanctified—be put into subjection to the Holy Ghost—made to acquiesce in the mysteries of the Gospel, however incomprehensible, because God hath appointed them. And that this is done through the instrumentality of Faith—Faith which receives and relies upon divine institutions for

divinely promised ends, without being able to discern their power, or detect their secret operation. That our reason may be duly placed under the discipline of such a Faith, our heavenly Father hath made the sacrament of our restoration to Him, or adoption to be his children, a deep and fathomless mystery, something like the condition of our life and sanctity in the first Adam, where all was made to depend upon an act which in itself bore no intelligent relation to the fearful results consequent upon its commission. This placing of reason, through the power of the Holy Ghost, under the guidance of Faith at our regeneration, so far from excluding it from the work of salvation, only fits it for this work—takes it from a state of subjugation to evil, strips it of self-confidence, sanctifies its powers, and gives it, through Faith, a heavenward direction. I use the term Faith in its true Gospel sense—as a *moral* perception, and not a mere mental exercise—as “a believing from the *heart* ;” a power “that works by *love*.” The mind is not wholly excluded, but made subordinate to a trustful heart—an affectionate longing—a divine sympathy—the confiding spirit of adoption. “We love Him, because He first loved us.” And we rely upon Him, because we love Him. Under the discipline of such a Faith, the reason becomes a powerful instrument in “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

3. Another lesson is, that God would have us to rely upon His *grace*, rather than His *means* of grace. In other words, He would teach us, by the simplicity and powerlessness of "the outward and visible sign" of His sacraments, to direct our minds to "the inward and spiritual grace;" to look from the material to the real; from the worthlessness of the creature to the power and presence of the Creator;" from the flesh of a new-born infant to "the mighty God manifest in the flesh;" from the water of baptism to the Holy Ghost of baptism. There is a proneness in mankind to rest in what is merely external—to calculate results from what is manifest to the senses. Hence, large assemblies—great preachers—loud voices—exciting scenes, are often more relied upon for religious effects than "the still small voice" of the Spirit. So, in their regeneration, had men been required to do some "great thing," they would have been tempted to trust that thing rather than the invisible power of God which it was designed to convey. Hence the wisdom of our heavenly Father, as displayed in the simplicity and apparent powerlessness of the sacraments and ordinances of His Church. The lesson is twofold. We are taught (1) the folly of such as distrust, and delay to act upon, the appointments of God, to the great peril of their souls; and (2) the still greater folly—if possible—of others,

who turn aside from these appointments, and risk their salvation upon means of their own devising. Thus Faith is shut out, and men walk by sight. Thus God is dishonored, and the pride of human reason dares ascend His throne of Judgment.

Be it our prayer, my brethren, to escape this fatal presumption. Be it our wisdom so to humble our pride, and restrain our self-will, as diligently to use the means of God's appointment,—trusting to His blessing for the required and promised result.

4. In conclusion, we are taught, in being called to "the obedience of *Faith*," the true character and bearing of our Christian state; that we are living in a world, and preparing to enter upon a world, whose mystery Faith alone can penetrate—whose reality it alone can comprehend. What can sense or reason know of that which really constitutes ourselves?—Of the vital power which keeps up life and motion in the mass of living things around us?—Of the intellectual principle which directs this life and motion to particular ends?—Of the spiritual energy stirring up within us desires for a higher and an endless life? What can they know of the invisible world in which we dwell?—Of those spiritual beings and realities which encircle us, and shape our eternal destiny?—And of that destiny itself, in its height of bliss or depth of woe—with all the fearful motives which the



contemplation of it brings back, to restrain our disobedience, or excite our love and service? Alas! sense and reason are here confounded. What is worse, they are blinded and misled by "the things which are seen." They are drawn out after shadows, decoyed into regions of darkness, forced into false positions, hurried to wrong conclusions—plunged into manifold miseries—made guilty of daring presumptions—made to decide where God alone can judge—made to hope where God hath promised despair. Such are reason and sense in this world of mystery, without the guidances of Faith. But let Faith become their guide, and "light at once springs up for the righteous and joyful gladness for such as are true-hearted."

Let Faith guide in the sacrament of our regeneration—let her eye discern, under "the outward and visible sign," "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness"—and then a light will dawn upon us, to reveal, ere long, the whole region of spiritual existence. Then shall we find ourselves already in heavenly places with Christ Jesus—as already "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an immeasurable company of angels,—to the general Assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven—and to God, the Judge of all, and to the

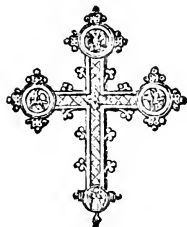
spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel."

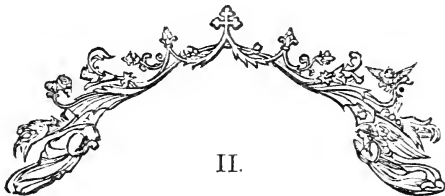
"Wherefore we, receiving a Kingdom," which, however feeble to the eye of sense, "cannot be removed, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."



## SERMON II.

HOW TO INSURE THE FRUITS OF REGENERATION.





## II.

### HOW TO INSURE THE FRUITS OF REGENERATION.

---

ST. MARK IV. 28.—First the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear.

IN the Christian life, it is very important to understand, not only what God does for us, but also what He requires us to do for ourselves, in order to make His work effectual. It is most true, that “He works in us both to will and to do;”—that from His nature, communicated to us at our regeneration, proceeds whatever is pleasant and acceptable in His sight;—that “the life which we live by Faith on the Son of God,” is the life of Christ imparted to us at our new birth of water and the Holy Ghost. Still it is no less true, that this life, though perfect at first, like the God-man in the infant Saviour, is nevertheless capable of, as it requires, (to keep its ascendancy over the body of death.) development or increase, as “He grew in wisdom and stature;”—and that this development or increase is made to depend upon our

own fidelity ;—and is gradual and slow, like the growth of the healthy plant—“First the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear.”

I shall make no other attempt to show you how this is, than simply to point out some of the best means to accomplish it. But before I proceed to this, let me urge upon you the endeavor to realize the awful importance of the work of Salvation ;—how vastly that work rises, in its claims upon us, above every other work on earth—and in respect not only to ourselves, but also to our infant children. We are prone to consider Godliness as suited only to persons of full age—and that it is idle to impose its duties upon children. But put the question on the lowest ground, and our mistake here may at once be shown to be fatal ; to be instrumental to a loss which can never be regained. It is true, the graver duties and attainments of the Christian life are not to be expected of childhood ; no more than those of the ripe scholar are to be looked for from the boy in the rudiments of knowledge. Still, because the boy is not capable of performing the duties of the learned Professor, you do not hesitate to proceed in his education, on the ground that he has a mental capacity for this high office. So in regard to all the avocations of man, we act on the presumption that the child is capable of being fitted for them—and that ordinarily he will not

be fitted for them, without early and assiduous culture. But shall childhood be considered capable of every thing but Religion? And shall man be compelled to seize upon it to mould the body and mind for the duties of an earthly state, and still be allowed to neglect it with impunity, when the soul and eternity are at stake? Take another view. The main obstacles to a holy life arise out of habits of sin—out of a long indulgence of evil passions; and attach themselves most firmly to adult age. So that adult age has to be brought down to the humility and teachableness of childhood in order to be fit to enter the Kingdom of Heaven;—“Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

You say, perhaps, that the grace of God alone can bring the mind and heart into a fit state for a successful training in Religion. And you take it for granted that children are incapable of this grace. You are right, as we have already shown, in your convictions of the necessity of God's grace. But how did you learn that children are not capable of receiving it? Surely not from Jesus Christ. He declares, that “whosoever receiveth not the Kingdom of Heaven as a little child, he cannot enter therein.” Surely not from the Holy Catholic Church. She declares, that infants are made “children of grace,” and thanks

God that He regenerates them with the Holy Ghost." Surely not from the dictates of common sense. This declares that the infant heart, not yet under the influence of an absolute will, is certainly as fit a receptacle of God's Spirit, as the heart of the adult actively and stubbornly set against Him. Hence there being no reason why children may not be trained for Heaven, but every motive that can possibly induce to it, let me repeat my exhortation, that you will, first of all, endeavor to realize that the most solemn concern of life, both for yourselves and for your children, is the work of salvation. And hence that your duty towards them begins with their infancy. Now what is this duty?

I. I said, it begins with their infancy. I should have said it begins before their birth. As many of the obstacles to a Christian life are entailed upon us by the vices or neglects of our parents;—just as physical diseases are often fixed upon the constitution in the same way. Hence God declared from Mount Sinai, that the sins of the fathers were to be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. What an awful consideration for parents! How does it admonish them to cleanse themselves from all iniquity; lest they entail upon their unoffending offspring, a tendency to particular sins which may embarrass and vex their whole lives, if not insure or



enhance the misery of their eternal state! The duty therefore to our children, must begin before their birth; or we shall find the difficulty of their after training greatly increased. As the husbandman experiences great trouble in properly cultivating a field, left full of unsubdued weeds and briers when the seed was sown. Parents must take the first step with themselves—must submit their own hearts to the refining and purifying discipline of the Gospel—must become penitent and prayerful and obedient, that their offspring, proceeding from a sanctified origin, may enter into life with passions and dispositions less obstinately set against the obedience of Faith.

(1.) Upon the birth of children, our first thoughts should be for their eternal salvation—our first prayer, that their lives, and all their powers, may be consecrated to the service of God. To this end, we are to seize upon the earliest opportunity for their regeneration;—for their removal from a state of condemnation into one of salvation;—for their remission of sin—their ingrafting into Christ, and their endowment as children of His grace. Without this, as I have already shown, it is worse than useless to attempt to train them for the service of God. They must be in “a state of salvation”—must be in Christ—must be made partakers of His grace, before they can be

brought up in His "nurture and admonition." But this cannot be, except they are "born of water and the Holy Ghost"—except as "by one Spirit, they are all baptized into His one body." But when this is done, a new life is communicated to them. They become living branches in the vine Christ Jesus. The root of regeneration has struck into the soul. This root, however, while it has within it the life of the entire plant, has sent forth only the tender blade—which, for its mature growth, demands our utmost diligence and care. Duly to apply this diligence, and to observe this care, however, we must act under the conviction that "the blade" has actually taken root—that enough life and vigor have been imparted in their spiritual birth to enable children to work out their salvation—to justify them in thanking God that they have been called to this state of salvation through Christ, and in praying unto him that "they may continue in the same unto their lives' end"—enough to justify the Church in giving thanks for the regeneration of children with the Holy Ghost at their baptism, and in humbly beseeching God to grant, that as they are "dead unto sin and made alive unto righteousness, they may crucify the old man and utterly abolish the whole body of sin." Parents and sponsors must receive this, and act under a firm conviction of its truth, or they will never take aright the

first step in training their children for Heaven. Their prayers will be doubtful, their purposes feeble, their efforts unavailing. They must believe therefore, with the immortal Hooker, that the baptism, of which their children are made partakers, "is a sacrament which God hath instituted in His Church, to the end that they which receive the same, might thereby be incorporated into Christ, and so, through his most precious merit, obtain as well that saving grace of imputation which taketh away all former guiltiness, as also that infused divine virtue of the Holy Ghost, which giveth to the powers of the soul their first disposition towards future newness of life."

I know you cannot comprehend this. But I know, too, that you are not required to comprehend it; yea, that it would be fatal to your simple trust in God, were you able to do so;—would lead you to rely upon the means, rather than the Spirit of God, which alone can make them effectual—lead you to walk by sight, rather than by Faith. But why should the mystery make you hesitate? What can you believe that hath it not? Where can you go and not meet it? Is there deeper mystery in the fact that a newly baptized infant should have in it the power of spiritual life, than that a newly sown field should have in it the germ of a future harvest? It is true you can discern no change in the infant. But can you in the

field? What is there in that, if the seed be covered, which can enable you to distinguish it from any other field? Men are led into error, on the point of the baptismal regeneration of infants, by expecting from it, at that age, more than God has promised; by expecting the immediate results of all that has been imparted—by looking for fruit, where the blade only has had time to shoot forth. As if we were to object to the Godhead of Christ, because that Godhead was not made fully manifest in his infancy. Let us pray God, beloved brethren, to undeceive us in this matter—to enable us to realize that a new life has been imparted to our baptized children, though its effects are not yet fully seen. It is an awful thing to deny or undervalue the gifts of a Gracious God! Let us, then, struggle against the pride of sense—the unbelief of a too carnal mind—and humbly submit to God and His Church, and receive by Faith, what is so dark to reason—the truth of a new-birth, by the Holy Ghost, in our baptized children.

(2.) But, as I said, this new-birth implies a state of infancy;—that the root has only sent forth the blade, which, for its proper growth, demands early and diligent culture. The training of the child is first committed to the parent or sponsor. And here there is no time to lose. We may think that the first five or six years of childhood call for little anxiety

and care. But so far is this from being true, that I verily doubt, whether any other period of their lives has a more direct and fearful bearing upon their state after death. It has been well ascertained, by agricultural chemists, that applications made to the germ of plants are more effectual to the increase of the product, than when made at any future stage of their growth. The same may be true in respect to the divine life in our children. We must begin with its very germ. Our prayers must bring upon it the gentle dews of grace; our Faith point its first shoots towards Heaven; our Godly example support and lead them on; and our earnest teachings enrich and prune them; and our watchful industry free them from weeds and briers, and protect them from every harm. The plant of corn employed in the text to illustrate the gradual progress of grace and truth in man, has our earnest care, from the moment it appears above the ground. Without this care, we do not look for a vigorous growth. But how is it with our infant children? The same necessity certainly exists. But is the same care taken? Do parents act towards their little ones, as if they felt that they belonged to the family of God?—were blest with the spirit and privileges of adoption?—and that their training for God's service was committed to the parental hand? Are those little ones, from their

birth, the subjects of constant, united prayer? Are they carefully kept within the sacred fold? In the midst of scenes hallowed by the service and peace of God—surrounded by objects and breathed upon from hearts belonging to His Kingdom? Are their attendants and nurses so wisely chosen, as that the first things which they see, the first sounds which they hear, may convey to their minds impressions of purity, harmony, humility, gentleness, and Godly love? If not, the tender blade may never expand. And remember, "*first the blade.*" If the growth of this be arrested, the ear cannot well be looked for. But if, on the other hand, your prayers and efforts be such as to develop the hidden life in your children—cause the blade to spring forth—you will even then need *patience* in watching and guarding its upward growth. "Behold the husbandman *waiteth* for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long *patience* for it." You must act with the same wisdom,—must wait with patience for the fruits or decided marks of regenerating grace. And here again you are liable to be misled. The notion of sudden and marvellous changes in men's hearts has fastened itself so strongly upon this age, as to make people think, when they speak of regeneration, that it cannot have taken place, where it is not immediately followed by all the distinguishing fruits of the Spirit. You must guard against this

pernicious error—must keep the teachings of the text in mind—*first the blade*. To expect the mature piety of manhood in infancy, is as preposterous as to look for ripe fruit in the opening blade. And what are the marks seen in the blade of wheat, or any other grain, which enable us readily to distinguish it from the tares of the field? There is a difference, and a difference as real and as great now, as at the time of harvest; but do we perceive it? At the period of their first leaf, are not all plants so nearly alike, as to render it difficult accurately to distinguish them? Let us, then, not look for marks of regeneration in childhood, which belong only to adult age. Let us be satisfied with the promise of God and the discharge of our duty. Let us still “walk by faith.”

II. We come now to another stage in the education of baptized children—to the stage when they are capable of being formally taught. And here we will confine ourselves to the period between their beginning to learn the Catechism and their confirmation. The parent is still responsible. The father and mother still bound—no matter what may be the advantages of Sunday schools, or any other mode of infant teaching—to see to it that their children are duly trained in the knowledge and subjected to the discipline of Christ.

(1.) The first endeavor must be to impress upon

their hearts a sense of the importance of a future state. And this must be done more by example than precept. At least the precept must be enforced by corresponding example. It will be found impossible to make children feel the true value of the soul, while the scene of busy, anxious life around, is marked with little else than care for the body—to make them realize the awful magnitude of eternal interests, while the main anxieties and efforts of parents are concentrated upon the interests of time. Suppose a parent professedly on a journey to some distant place, should halt by the way—purchase lands and build houses, and seem to expend his thoughts and energies in throwing around him all the comforts and attractions of a fixed abode,—would he be able, by the utmost eloquence of words, to convince his children that they were only the sojourners of a day—mere travellers to a distant and better land? And still this would seem to be the expectation of parents in general. The truth however is, that if they would see their children earnest about the concerns of another life, they must show, by their actions as well as words, that they are themselves seeking it with their whole heart. That while the duties of their earthly state are not to be neglected, they so discharge them as that their hearts and chief treasures may still be in Heaven. This must be the case especially, in all the



arrangements they make for the education of their children, or preparing them to act their part in life. For, if children see that great efforts are made to fit them for worldly advancement, while little is done to make them wise unto salvation, they will inevitably conclude that their parents are more concerned about the present life, and are willing to sacrifice more for it (thus setting a higher value upon it) than they are for the life to come. If they see that every pains is taken, by toil and parsimony, to augment their earthly estates, and to teach them to hold to these estates with an unyielding hand, they cannot fail to receive the impression, and to act upon it, that their chief treasure is on earth. And "where their treasure is," you have better authority than mine for believing that "there their hearts will be also." O, who can so delude himself, as to suppose it possible that a child, brought up amid the language, the projects, the strivings, the harassings, and anxious forebodings of worldliness, can learn to "seek first the Kingdom of God"—to "set his affections on things above?" And yet, strange as it may be, this seems to be the only hope for the vast majority of baptized children!—the only notion which prevails of bringing them up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." But, be you assured, my brethren, that in such an atmosphere, and with such cultivation, the

blade of regenerated life will not put forth the ear. That nothing but barrenness and death to the spirit can here be looked for. If the heart of childhood is to be turned in earnestness to the awful interests of a future state, the present words and anxieties and actions of parents must all lead in that direction.

(2.) The next endeavor must be, to make children feel, that, as born into the world, they were neither fit, nor disposed to be made fit for a future state. That they were under the power of the devil and prone to worldliness and fleshly lusts; and that nothing short of the love of God, in the gift of his Son Jesus Christ, could rescue them from this power, and turn away their hearts from these deceitful lusts. Humility and self-abasement then, in respect to themselves, and grateful love and submission in respect to Almighty God, must be the consequent lessons. And these lessons must not be mere words. Children are not to be made humble by being told that they are sinners. You must make them feel that they are such—must show them, day by day, how wise and good and holy are the commands of God; and must take up their thoughts, words and deeds, one by one, and convince them, in view of these commands, how much their obedience falls below their duty as members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. Must show them how unseem-

ly is pride in sinners like themselves—how offensive to men—how hateful to God—how ruinous to their own souls. In order to be successful in your teaching, you must make all your care for them, and conduct before them, lead to humility. You must guard them from the love of dress—the habits of self-boasting—the influence of foolish flatteries—the tendencies to self-gratification,—must expose them to no ostentation in yourselves—no complaints against Providence—no arrogance towards your fellow men. But you must let them see, by your own lowly bearing and contrite spirit, that you feel what you teach of the sinfulness and ill desert of man. And then, when you point them to God, as the sole fountain of their blessings and hopes, the fulness of your own gratitude, and the alacrity of your own obedience, must convince them of the strength of their obligations, and prompt them with a glad heart, to offer their lives a sacrifice to God.

(3.) And here you must make them sensible how utterly unable to do this, they are in themselves; and what strength they have in their state of Salvation through Christ. How God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, by a united and marvellous act of condescension, have become pledged in Holy Baptism for their succor and defence;—how, to separate them from the curse of sin, the power of

Satan, and the delusions of sense, they have actually been brought, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant applied to them, by "the washing of regeneration," into the family of God the Father, into vital union with God the incarnate Son, and under the unerring teaching and grace of God the Holy Ghost. And here there must be no doubtfulness—no suppression of the truth—no leaning towards error;—but a clear and definite and decided inculcation of the great and solemn fact, that "as many of your children as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ"—"been made partakers of His death"—received "the fulness of His grace"—"a remission of sin by spiritual regeneration"—"a heavenly washing"—"a new birth unto righteousness"—"that being by nature born in sin and the children of wrath, they are hereby made the children of grace." They must believe this, and feel this, and thank God for it, or they will never be led to act up to their high privileges,—never consent to the holy discipline of Christ—never so love His Church and service as to yield themselves, their substance and their all, a willing sacrifice to His cause—never feel that, being bought with His precious blood, they are not their own; but are bound to glorify Him with their bodies and their spirits, which are His. But in order to give them this accurate knowledge, this dis-

tinct and actuating belief of their state of Salvation in Jesus Christ, your teaching must be that of *the Church*:—must be restricted to the truth of God as set forth in the Catechism and Liturgy, and expounded to you by her Priesthood. Otherwise, your efforts will only tend to confusion and uncertainty—to perplex the mind, weaken the faith, and render the way of life to your children more doubtful. Otherwise, your self-confidence will only acquire for you the unenviable distinction of having exalted yourself above the wisdom and authority of that Church, which God hath made “the pillar and ground of the truth.” Otherwise, your prayers and labors will secure for you only the reward of broken vows, violated trusts, and perverted privileges and powers.

God save us, my brethren, from the guilt of this self-delusion; and make us faithful to our vows in leading the children committed to us in the old paths of the Church, opened to us in the Catechism and Liturgy. But to accomplish this, we must, first of all, inculcate right views of the Church itself:—must teach, not as is sometimes taught, that it is a mere voluntary association, got up by man, for the regulation of mere external order, and characterized by mere external rites. But that it is the Mystical Body of Christ—instituted by Him as its Head, and animated by His Spirit as its life and power. That

it is set before men as the state of Salvation. That they are baptized into it, that they may be united to Christ, and made partakers of His righteousness and death. That they receive its teachings and sacraments, that they may be illuminated by His truth and transformed by His nature and grace. That they reverence and submit to its ministers; because to them is "committed the ministry of reconciliation"—because Christ gave them commission as His representatives—endowed them with the Holy Ghost—empowered them to remit and retain sins—sent them forth as His Father sent Him, to take possession of the world in His name, to receive its allegiance, and dispense pardon through His blood, and to represent and be the medium of His presence in His Church. Because, in short, they are the only commissioned, living instruments of God on earth, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man—unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Thus taught, children will perceive that their membership in the Church by Holy Baptism, is not a mere form, but an actual membership in Christ—an adoption into God's family—an heirship, giving title to all the glorious blessings in the Kingdom of Hea-

ven. That their spiritual state, through this sacrament, makes, in the most exalted and endearing sense, God their Father, Christ their Saviour, and the Holy Ghost their Sanctifier; separates them from sin—unites them to God—makes His service the great purpose of life; opens to them the way of obedience, and imparts the power of being faithful unto death. What more can sinful, dying, accountable creatures need? What more can they have? What more to be thankful for? What more to be answerable for? What more to kindle their love, to exalt their praise, to prompt their obedience, to give earnestness to their prayers, to lighten the burdens of their earthly lot; and make their hearts burn within them for the perfection of such a Heavenly Fellowship:—Yea, what more can parents and guardians ask to encourage, and animate, and insure their efforts to train their children to this deep and inspiring sense of their baptismal state!

But, remember, this cannot be done by simple words. Fervent prayer with and for them, attended by strict example, alone can insure success. Lips may inculcate; but glowing hearts and earnest lives alone have power to enforce. You may talk to children of the awful price of their membership in Christ, but it will avail little, while they see you careless about your own. You may descant upon the glory

of the Church as the Spouse and Body of Christ; may expatiate upon the fulness of her grace—the infallibility of her teaching—the dignity of her Priesthood—the majesty of her Discipline—the urgency of her claims—the solemnity of her decisions—the unspeakable privilege of being the object of her blessing—the deep wretchedness of resting beneath her curse:—All this, and more, you may urge upon your children; but what will be its power, should they behold you indifferent to the vows of the Covenant,—inattentive to the Church's teaching,—neglectful of her Sacraments,—jealous of her Ministry,—impatient under her restraints,—dissatisfied with her noble forms,—rejecting her daily service,—insensible to the blessing of her weekly Communion, and unmindful of her urgent wants. O what will be the power of words about the surpassing beauty, and excellency, and glory of the Church; her loveliness as our nursing mother, and the comely bride of our Saviour,—in whose bosom we have our life, and in whose arms we look for protection from the Angel of Death—when our heartlessness, and selfishness, and covetousness, stand out as a living and abiding testimony to the insincerity of our words! When, in the day of the Church's trial;—a day that demands our love, and constancy, and boldness, and self-sacrifice, we are seen hesitating and doubtful;—careless in our lives



and lukewarm in our devotion;—sacrificing the Church's interests for fear of losing the favor of the Church's enemies; clutching our gold (yea, that which belongs to God) and turning a deaf ear to the voice of her cry,—the cry of her needy children,—when Jesus says, “to the poor the Gospel is preached.”

O Brethren, we need not go further, to discern the cause of deadness to Christ in our baptized children; the cause why the blade of regenerating grace so seldom springs up, and bears fruit unto eternal life.

But there is a day of terrible retribution! A day, when the consequences of every neglect will be visited in just judgment upon the faithless soul! O Parents! O Children! let us prepare for that day. Let repentance, and prayer, and strict lives and alms-deeds, plead for mercy, through Christ, on the past, and for acceptance in the time to come.



SERMON III.

HOW TO BE CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.





### III.

#### HOW TO BE CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

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ST. LUKE xiv. 27.—Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

ALREADY have I given some general directions for the proper training of baptized children. I now design, however, to enter more into particulars. To take your thoughts back and fix them, so far as God shall give me power, upon some points more especially important in this solemn and difficult work.

Your children are put into the school of Christ—are entered as his disciples. Taken out of the world—separated from the systems of men—they are placed under a system, distinct in its character—exclusive in its demands—Divine in its spirit—having the Incarnate God for its life, its Head, its redemption, its law, its example, its support, its comfort—its Divine Saviour—final Judge—eternal reward. To this system are our children consecrated—into this

body are they baptized—and henceforth we are under vows to see that they “grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ”—“that they take His cross and bear it after Him.” This becomes our highest duty towards them—our utmost claim upon them. Beyond this, we have no control over their thoughts, words and actions; no right to command them, nor to shape their course in life. We have given them, in the most impressive way, to Christ, and have bound ourselves, by solemn “vow, promise and profession,” to do our very best that they “may continue His for ever.” Now, we have no more right, in any manner, to employ or influence them, except for Christ, than had Ananias to keep back part of the price of the land solemnly devoted to God’s service: no more than if they had never been our children, but were the children of another, intrusted to our care. Indeed, this is our relation to them. We gave them to Christ in Holy Baptism. He returned them to us only to bring them up in His love and service. They are no longer our own; except as we are Christ’s. They are blest with a new-birth—are adopted into a new family—honored with a new name—placed under a new Head—consecrated to a new life. They are thus beyond our reach, except as we are beyond ourselves; are not our own, except as “we are not our own”—as we are washed

in the same laver—cleansed in the same blood—bound together in the same spirit—under the same Divine Master.

We see, then, the solemnity of our trust. To train disciples for Christ; to see that they take His cross, and bear it after him—for they that are Christ's must "crucify the affections and lusts." You will at once perceive that you have before you no easy task; no mere formal duty. It is true, you may teach your children to say their prayers—repeat the words of the Catechism, and be attentive to their outward duties, with very little trouble. But you are aware that the knowledge and observance of the rules of a family, are very different from true love and obedience to parents. That compliance with the regulations of a school may exist, without any sympathy with the mind, or participation in the pursuits of the master. Here the difficulty of your work begins to open upon you. You have not only to teach your children the precepts of Christ; but train them after His Spirit. Not only to make them do the same things which He, in their place, would do; but also induce them to act from the same emotion, on the same principle, and with the same end. In short, you are to act in Christ's stead—to instruct your children as He would instruct them, were he standing by your side; conform them to His will, and mould them to

His likeness, as He would draw them to Himself and make them one with Him—in temper, in desire, in pursuit—were He personally and visibly present as their teacher and guide. You see, then, how thoroughly you ought to be taught by Christ, yourselves, how constant should be your fellowship with Him, how exact your conformity to His spirit and laws, to enable you rightly to bring up your children in His “nurture and admonition.”

1. Of the instruction of their minds in the Catechism and Liturgy, I have already spoken; but now I have to speak more at large of what is infinitely more important;—the instruction of their consciences in the obligations and duties which this Catechism imposes. And here you will need the counsel of those set over you, in the Lord. With this counsel you are to educate the consciences of your children in the imitation of Christ. They must first be made to realize their union with Him. How that He took their nature, in the womb of the blessed Virgin, that they might be partakers of His nature in the waters of regeneration. That thus they are linked together with Him by one spirit, in one Body, and henceforth are to be governed by one will, as co-workers in the same cause, and joint-heirs of the same glorious inheritance. They are to be shown, that as Christ gave up His life to the will of the Father, for the good of



mankind, so their powers and affections and possessions are all consecrated to the same will, and for the same end. That they are to desire nothing, determine nothing, seek nothing, and do nothing for themselves merely, but all for the glory of God through Christ. And they are to be made sensible how just and excellent this is. How just, to devote faculties and affections and substance and one's whole life to God, when all were so mercifully ransomed by the precious blood of His own Son. And how excellent, to render such exalted devotion—to pursue such noble objects—to love and serve so glorious a Being! While, on the other hand, how ungrateful to withhold such love and service—how base and hazardous to prostitute such heavenly powers, to squander such noble gifts, to be careless of such an awful stewardship! Here, they must learn the horrible nature of sin—sin, that could lift up the soul in rebellion against a God of love—that could consign a soul to eternal torments—could make a soul so foul as to demand, for its cleansing, the blood of the incarnate God. Such sin they must be reminded that they renounced, and were cleansed from, through the virtue of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, in Holy Baptism. And that, to bring it upon their souls anew, after their regeneration, is to give it a tenfold malignity,—is to add to it the heinous guilt of “de-

filial the temple of God"—of "crucifying afresh, and putting to an open shame," the blessed Son of God. Thus must their young hearts be furnished with motives, in a spirit of self-sacrifice, to follow the Son, and do all to the glory of the Father. But to enable them to do this, to think and speak and act by this rule, with a good conscience, they must have a thorough knowledge of themselves—of their passions—their wills—their biases—their self-flatteries—self-deceits—besetting sins, and the like. To lead them to this knowledge, however, they must first be led to self-examination—to habits of searching scrutiny into what constitutes themselves—into the real fountain of their thoughts, words and deeds. And this duty must not be put off, under the notion that young children are incapable of it. The real difficulty, if it be deferred, will be found in after life—when the moral perceptions are blunted—the sensibilities become dead—the mind is entangled in its own sophistries—the conscience wrapt in a web of self-deceits—sins are palliated or forgotten—habits are confirmed—the will rendered stubborn—and the thoughts indisposed to turn from pleasing diversions without, to the sad and irksome duty of contemplating themselves.

Depend upon it, early childhood is the season to form habits of due self-examination. But even at

this ductile age, nothing will be effectually done without great pains. And this must be taken in the way of Christ's appointment. The most serious evil of our times is, the increasing disposition on the part of parents, to act in the training of their children independently of those, to whom the Holy Ghost is given "for the office and work of Priests in the Church of God." In this way, many, instead of being disciplined for Christ, are actually drawn away from His Kingdom, and separated from His grace and truth. If parents would not be instrumental to this sin, they must place their children, at this, the most critical period of their Christian training, under those whom Christ hath commissioned, and especially commanded, to feed the lambs of His flock. Still *they* have much to do; have not only to insure the attendance of their children upon the instructions of their pastor, but also to be steady, active co-workers with him in the education of their consciences; in teaching them to follow Christ. Rules, based upon their baptismal state and obligations, provided by the pastor, should be daily applied by themselves. Each child should be taken by himself, and encouraged to lay open all the secrets of his life, just as he would state to his physician every varying symptom of physical disease, in order to an intelligent application of remedies. The child, however, can in this way do but little

without guidance. Hence the parent, or spiritual director, must lead him to proper self-scrutiny, by suggestive questions. These must be gathered, by careful observation, from the daily life of the child; and must be so skilfully framed as to direct his attention within, and induce him to trace his desires and actions to their true fountain, and thus to detect his own sinfulness. But to insure this, parents must first see that the mind of the child is made familiar with our Lord's teaching, spirit, and example. Then, in the light of this knowledge, they must take his idleness, peevishness, impatience, self-will, self-boasting, fault-finding, self-apologies and the like, and show him how these sins are the fruit of pride, self-love, a spirit of self-indulgence, a lustful imagination, and so on. Things which our Lord abhorred, and taught his disciples to abhor and forsake for ever. Besides, as children advance to eight or ten years of age, they should be directed to take means for securing a more thorough and minute impression of their sins—particularly in cases where the application of previous rules has failed to correct the leading *constitutional* tendencies to sin—such means as the keeping of a daily record, to be reviewed once in every week, with suitable penitential exercises. This, or some practice akin to it, conducted under discreet, earnest guidance, will, by God's grace, prove a powerful instrument in

subduing the influence of sin, and moulding the character to the will and example of Christ.

By such means, faithfully and prayerfully used, children will be early led to a saving knowledge of themselves as disciples of Christ, and of their dangers and duties as sojourners in this world of temptation and sin;—will be made to understand and feel, that sins of the imagination and heart, which often God alone can know, are in His sight as foul and deadly as those of the flesh, upon which man has placed the mark of his sternest reprobation.

2. In addition to this training of conscience, this habit of thorough self-examination, children must be led to esteem *prayer* as the means of supplying the infant soul with “daily bread,” as also of quickening it to a sense of its urgent necessities. Here, too, the fitting form of words must be used only to give suitable expression to the soul's ardent desires. These will most assuredly be awakened by the due education of conscience, already enjoined. But conscience cannot be duly educated without prayer. So that this must be made one of the earliest exercises of the child. To make this profitable, however, the child, before making confession of his sins to God, must be taught and assisted to recall them distinctly to mind, and to recount and dwell for a time, upon the various circumstances which have tended to enhance their guilt.

So also, in praying for mercy and grace, or in giving thanks for benefits received, an enumeration of the most important grounds of the duty should always precede its discharge.

Besides, the child should be instructed to go to it with a lively conviction that God is present when he prays, and knows every thought or impulse that rises in his heart; that Christ, his Lord and Saviour, condescends to hold communion with him—to guard him, by His angels, from the assaults of the devil—and to teach him, by His Spirit, to follow in the steps of His most holy life. In this way, while he uses a form, he will be shielded from formality. To induce him to frequency in prayer—indeed to “pray always”—he must be made to realize that he is always in danger. That his spiritual enemies never leave him,—never sleep,—never become weary in tempting him; that they are “about his path and about his bed;” go with him to his studies, to his amusements, to his meals, to his devotions, to the church, to the catechism; that they are busy with him when he least expects it,—when all is tranquil, and pure, and full of promise,—when he is alone on his knees, or is reading his Bible, or is examining his life, or praying for pardon, or lifting up his heart in praise;—that then they will come to vex him—to make his prayers irksome—or distract them with sinful thoughts—or tempt him to

think it "a vain thing" to offer them. He must be made to realize all this; and to realize, too, that the constant presence of his Saviour alone can keep him from harm. And that to have his Saviour thus with him, he must "pray without ceasing"—not once, or thrice, or seven times a day, but "without ceasing"—having the heart always above—the affections constantly fixed on God—the soul in one habitual posture of dependence and trust and supplication before Him. Such habits and their formation will be gradual, must knit the heart to Christ,—make his cross pleasant to bear,—His service, the chief delight of the soul,—His absence, and the power of sin, its greatest dread!

3. Besides self-examination and prayer, the child must be taught positive acts of self-denial. Not that, at this very early age, he is to be placed under a rigid rule of fasting or penance. But that he is to be gradually trained, as his state demands or will admit, to the cross of Christ. "Christ pleased not Himself." And he that would be Christ's disciple, must follow Him.

(1.) Christ *fasted*. Though free from every stain of sin, He fasted for days and weeks together. This He did as Head of the Church,—did, not only for our instruction, but also as having our nature; which, in His own person, He subjected to the will of God;—

did, not only to teach us that His religion was one of self-sacrifice, but much more to show our union with Himself, and to insure the divine and everlasting results of that union. The child, then, must be taught to follow Christ in *fasting*. Not because this act is, in itself, a ground of merit; but because it is important, as one of union with Christ, and obedience to Him;—as a law of the Church, acting under His Spirit,—as a necessary discipline of the body and soul,—necessary to that earnest, self-sacrificing life, which alone ends in a happy death, and an eternal fellowship with God. But then, this act must be something more than an occasional abstinence from food. It must be an abstinence from any innocent thing in which sense much delights;—an abstinence in dress—from company—much talking—amusements—natural levity, and, in respect to children, from those things in which they manifest a tendency to fault or excess. Fasting is to be resorted to as a remedy,—as a means of correcting errors in temper or conduct. When a child is often found guilty of a particular fault, he must be taught, in order to keep it in mind and to infuse energy into his efforts for its correction, to habituate himself to special acts of self-denial on its account. Besides, when a child evinces an over-fondness for any particular thing, he is to be made to feel that a due regulation of his passions and



desires requires him, occasionally, to deny himself that thing altogether, and always to moderate his enjoyment of it.

(2.) Self-denial, however, in the way of fasting, is not the only thing here to be observed. The age in which we live will be found addicted to particular sins; as presumption, want of charity, censoriousness, covetousness, luxury, political depravity, and the like. Now the parent, in educating his child in the school of Christ, must keep this peculiarity of the age in view;—must not only warn him, but train him against its influence. Parents, too, know themselves (if they be truly Christian parents) to be subject to constitutional infirmities—to have inherited peculiar biases to evil, which they, in their turn, have doubtless to a greater or less degree, entailed upon their offspring. Now it behooves them to watch these tendencies in themselves,—to mark their besetting sins, and to take special pains to guard their children against them;—to excite in their minds a hatred of them, and a love for the opposite virtues. For example, should a parent discover in himself a strong propensity to pride, avarice, or an inordinate indulgence of any appetite, he should recollect that this propensity is the one which will be likely to endanger his children, and hence the one to the eradication of which he should direct special efforts, by instilling

habits—as the case may be—of humility, alms-giving, or strict temperance. But this duty will be found difficult as respects many sins; both on account of the pleasure which parents often take, in seeing their children imitate themselves; and of the proneness in children to do it. Take the sin of covetousness. None can be more despicable in itself, nor more abhorrent to the discipline of Christ. Still, how hard it is to make parents see it in themselves, or when they see it, to induce them to inculcate the opposite virtue upon their children. But, hard as it may be, the parent, who would not entail the most fatal and abiding curse upon his children, must teach them to overcome this passion, by means of special liberality in alms-giving. So in respect to each vicious tendency in themselves, parents must seek to prevent its development in their children, by giving peculiar strength to the opposing virtuous dispositions.

(3.) This is not all. There is a long list of active virtues and graces which must be inculcated on their own account;—as duties made indispensable to the Christian life by the Gospel. Our blessed Lord spent his life in doing good. That active benevolence, which was a prominent point in His teaching, He forcibly illustrated by His acts; showed that He “looked not to His own things, but to the things of others also;” had respect, in His labors, not to His

own interests, nor the interests of His family, but to those of all mankind. Our children, as His disciples, must, in this, be taught to follow His steps. The task, I know, will not be easy. The natural selfishness of the human heart, and the apparently legalized selfishness of human pursuits, will make it hard to habituate the young to the beneficence of the Gospel. Who, now-a-days, admits or feels that another has a just claim to his time and exertions and possessions, except by his own bargain and consent? And yet, if he does not admit, and feel, and act upon the justice of such claim, he can be no follower of Christ—no obedient child of God—no good subject of the Kingdom of Heaven. In this day of self-worship and self-indulgence, then, the duty of leading our children to act upon the benevolent principles and under the benevolent spirit of the Gospel, will be a trying duty; and can be discharged only by special and constant efforts. It will not do to leave so important and difficult a work to the silent operation of religious principle. There is too much in the temper and habit of the age to oppose such principle. Nothing short of the daily performance of specific acts of love to men can give it triumph. You must not only teach children to live as did Christ, for others, but also accustom them to do it, by giving a share of their attention, as opportunity may offer, to the poor

and sick, and by continual offices of kindness towards those for whom Christ died.

Besides, they should be made to realize, that a portion of their income—at least *one-tenth*—belongs to God, according to the Divine law or tenure by which they hold the rest; that they have no more right to appropriate this to their own use, than to rob their neighbor of his lawful rent; and that, to make this self-appropriation, must convict them, at last, of the awful sin of sacrilege—of having taken from Almighty God that which was virtually consecrated to His service, and “consumed it upon their lusts.” Hence, children should be enjoined to lay apart for God, weekly and scrupulously, at least the *tithe*, which he has ever claimed, and which, under a dispensation of fewer blessings, and less self-consecration, was not withheld without fearful punishment. This habit will not only have the effect to shield them from heinous sin, but also be an instrument of thoughtfulness towards others, and a check to useless expenditure upon themselves;—will open their hearts—expand their affections—deepen their sympathies—obtain Christ's blessing—and help to make them His disciples indeed. But to insure so great a good, they must be instructed to give, for Christ's sake; to have his love and self-sacrifice continually before them; to keep in memory, that, “though He was rich, yet for

our sakes He became poor"—"emptied Himself" of the riches and glory of Heaven, and took the meanness and poverty and privation of earth. With this before their eyes, and Christ's love and grace in their hearts, they will feel, that to give and to labor for the good of men, is the most glorious privilege of their high calling—is to be impelled by the lofty motives which impelled the Son of God;—is to act under His guidance—administer to His cause—add lustre to His crown—share in His triumphs—and partake for ever of His glory and joy.

There remains one way of training the spirits of our children after Christ, which I must not omit. This is carefully to treat them, from their very cradles, as *Christians*, in the highest sense of that term; and hence to inculcate upon them the solemn truth, that there can be no moment of their lives, when the obligations of Christians, according to their age, are not strictly, and in their utmost weight, binding upon them. As a consequence of this truth, our duty is, to require of them, in the sanctuary of God, all those acts of reverence and humility expected of Christians—such as falling upon their knees on entering, and asking the Divine blessing; and observing throughout the most becoming postures and deportment. And to require that, on all occasions, they abstain from whatever, in word or act, may tend to lessen in

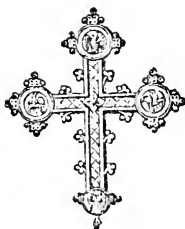
their minds the fear of God ; and practise such things as may inspire them “with an awful apprehension of His Divine Majesty, and a deep sense of their own unworthiness ;”—may fill them with the recollection, that God is always present marking their thoughts—listening to their words—weighing their motives—treasuring up their deeds, and every day preparing their account for judgment.

Christian Parents, though I have here descended somewhat to particulars, believe me, I have presented the very smallest sum of your duty to your children. Difficult and burdensome as it may seem, it is the least you can do for them, and be faithful to your vows ; the least you can do, and fulfil the solemn trust, which you have received from God and His Church. For nothing short of such training did your holy mother contemplate, when she enjoined upon you to “take care that your children be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him, so soon as they can say the creed, the Lord’s prayer, and the ten commandments, and are sufficiently instructed in the other parts of the Church Catechism set forth for that purpose.” And it is through your neglect to give this training, that you are led to disregard her solemn injunction,—led, *not* to “take care” that, at the proper age, your children are BROUGHT for the blessing of confirmation,—led, not to exercise upon them the

authority with which, for this purpose, she has intrusted you, and for which her Divine Head will one day call you to account; but are induced to leave them, at the critical period when submission is their only duty, and your guidance their special claim, to the false dictate of their own impulsive and undisciplined natures, or to the fatal influence of surrounding systems of error—systems which tend to lead them astray from that “state of salvation” in which the Church prays, and teaches them to pray, that they “may continue unto their lives’ end.”

The result is sad indeed. The result is what we see all around us;—multitudes of baptized children—not strengthened by the grace of Confirmation—not fed with that bread which alone can administer life to the soul—but with the awful vows of the covenant resting upon them, the blood of the covenant testifying against them—the spirit of the covenant stifled within them, or driven away from them;—the innocence of childhood lost—the tender conscience, the submissive spirit, the trustful heart, for ever gone;—the white robe of baptism soiled and rent and cast aside;—the living God forgotten—the dead world their idol—its spirit the life of their enjoyment—its follies the portion of their soul—its promises the only ground of their trust;—their love of earth increasing—their blindness of mind deepening—their infatua-

tion becoming more desperate, and their self-will more reckless and headlong every day:—while every day hurries them to that dreadful time, when “he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;”—while every day proclaims more loudly the warning of the final Judge—“Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man, according as his work shall be.”





SERMON IV.

THE CASE OF THE BAPTIZED WITHOUT SELF-DISCIPLINE.





## IV.

### THE CASE OF THE BAPTIZED WITHOUT SELF-DISCIPLINE.

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REV. iii. 3.—Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard and hold fast and repent.

NOTWITHSTANDING the strong motives and abundant means for training baptized children in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” and thus securing to them the blessings of “a state of salvation,” they are too frequently left to grow up in the ways and to realize only “the wages of sin.” Their condition is a truly melancholy one. They have passed the season allotted by the divine Head of the Church for laying the foundation of their present and eternal peace, without profit. The endowments of divine grace have been neglected,—the susceptibilities of childhood have passed off,—its innocence become tarnished,—its affections and energies been given to the world. This, of itself, is enough to make their condition sufficiently sad and discouraging. But it is attended

with other evils. While they have been idle, their spiritual enemies have been busy,—while they have neglected the grace of the covenant, their spiritual enemies have been active in taking it away. So that they have actually lost sight of what they “have received,” in mercy from God.

I. In the first place, they have become more or less insensible to their “state of salvation.” The facts here are too significant to require comment. Where great blessings are bestowed, disregard can indicate nothing short of great insensibility to their value. It will not do to say, that this disregard may arise from timidity, or self-distrust. Parents never take such an excuse for the disobedience of children. Kings never extenuate, on this principle, the disloyalty of their subjects. The truth is, that in the case of sinful men, baptized into Christ,—of condemned servants of sin, raised to the condition and endowed with the privileges of the sons of God,—nothing but the most fearful insensibility to their state, can account for their ungrateful disobedience! They surely cannot see the glories of their spiritual inheritance, or they would not be found in this eager devotion to worldly things: cannot realize the depth of an Almighty Father’s love, or they would not give their hearts thus blindly and intensely to a senseless idol; cannot understand what the Son of God gave up and suffered

and wrought out in "agony and bloody sweat," or they would not dare expose themselves to the revenging power of that justice, which could demand a God for sacrifice!—cannot be sensible of the amazing gifts of the Holy Ghost, conferred in the covenant of their redemption, or they would not trample under foot the Son of God, and do despite to the Spirit of Grace! Had the wretched Esau been sensible, from the first, of the value of his birthright, he would never have sold it for a mess of pottage, and never have been called to bewail his folly with a perpetual grief. Had the miserable prodigal continued alive to the privileges of a son, he would never have wandered from his father's house, and taken up with the portion of harlots and the husks of swine, in a land of famine; never have been forced, by a suddenly awakened sense of his misery, to urge the self-humbling petition, "make me as one of thy hired servants." "Madness," saith Solomon, "is in the heart of the sinner." How sadly, how forcibly is this shown to be true, by the insensibility of many of the baptized to the blessings of their Christian state!

II. But what is still more awful, though a necessary attendant, these undisciplined Christians are insensible to the heinousness of sin. They may not have lost all disgust for the grosser sins,—may not have become reconciled to drunkenness and fornica-

tion, and other criminal indulgences of the flesh. They must have sunk low indeed to have no dread of these. But they think little of sins of the heart. Pride and envy and revenge and uncharitableness and lustful feelings and love of gain, and the like, they can indulge with little or no self-reproach. Indeed they often plead for the gratification of their desires and passions, because they are natural. So entirely are they under the influence of their carnal nature, as to defend its right to their time and thoughts and energies, in despite of their spiritual birth, and of its high and absorbing and antagonist claims! The truth is, the minds of such Christians have become so accustomed to yield to the spirit of the world, in which they were born in sin, and so little used to regard the Spirit of Christ, in whom they have their "new-birth unto righteousness," as requiring of them a much higher or stricter life, that they are prone to take the New Testament language in a low and unnatural sense. When our Lord speaks of the awful consequences of not bearing one's cross—of being angry with a brother—of loving riches—of exalting one's self—they imagine that He must have reference to some sin of which they have not yet been guilty. What our Lord says about "the strait gate and narrow way," their worldliness at once converts into something sufficiently broad and capacious,

at least, to embrace themselves. When He lays down the rule of self-denial, solemnly affirming that "father and mother, wife and children, houses and lands, yea, all that a man hath, must be forsaken" to gain fellowship with Him, and eternal life in Heaven, they immediately take refuge under some figurative application, or one that restricts the awful saying to an earlier age of the Church. And when He presses the matter, and warns those "who lay up treasures for themselves," and shows "how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven," they forthwith turn a deaf ear, and rush blindly on, trusting to some extraordinary interposition of mercy for their final escape. Thus they live on, from year to year, the victims of self-delusion—the blinded advocates of sin—heaping up treasures on earth—living unto themselves—regardless of the price of their ransom—of the warnings of their Saviour—of the rights of His Kingdom—the claims of their heavenly birth—the high and difficult attainments of those who would enter into life. And all this while, they are helped on in their blindness, by that which lays claim to peculiar consideration, as pure and evangelical;—by the notion that "the righteousness of Christ," imputed to the soul through a mere act of the mind, called *faith*, is the ever ready shield for the condemned sinner. Whereas, the only righteousness of

Christ, which the Gospel makes available to the sinner, is that which is wrought into the very texture of his own soul, and is acted over in his own life, through the power of that "faith which works by love and purifies the heart;"—a faith, which is the eye and the hand and the motive-power of the new man within;—a faith, kept alive and vigorous by that to which it prompts—by prayer and fasting and self-denial and sacraments, and that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

I might here greatly multiply proofs of the insensibility and blindness of the baptized, who have grown up without Christian training or self-discipline. But enough has been said to show their melancholy state,—enough surely to justify the appeal of the text, "Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent."

III. But how is this to be done? How are the insensible to be quickened and aroused;—the blind made to open their eyes upon the light? How is he to remember what he "hath received," who has all his life been treated as though he had received it not? How made to realize that he hath been bought with the precious blood of the Son of God, and hence "is not his own," after having so long "lived unto himself,"—been trained to self-love, self-indulgence, and self-worship? How is he to call up to mind



what he "hath heard,"—what conscience hath admonished him of,—when her monitions have been drowned by the ceaseless clamoring of his own senses? What God hath proclaimed to him by His Word, when that Word has been to him comparatively a sealed book? What God hath proclaimed to him by His Church, when he has been taught from childhood to regard her voice rather as an idle tale? How is he to remember sins, which it has been the earnest purpose of his life to forget? How recall those, of which he never felt himself guilty? How be made to view acts as sinful, which, through the blindness of self-love, he has always looked upon as *innocent*? How be led to feel the horrible danger of sins, which have been made, as it were, the playthings of his childhood—the sport of his youth—the every day indulgence of his riper years? Alas! how is this thoughtless being to remember that long catalogue of iniquity, so soon to be unfolded before the Judge of quick and dead, of which memory retains no record—conscience no sting—the understanding no trace—the heart no grief? And still this catalogue, long as it is, and buried in forgetfulness, must be remembered. The mind must see it. The thoughts be concentered upon it,—upon all and every part of it. A general survey—a hasty glance—will not suffice. A confused mass—a dark outline perhaps—may be called up. But this will

not do. Every fact must be reviewed—every word of the dismal catalogue be virtually reproduced. All of thought, word or deed, that the recording Angel hath registered against him, in the book of God's remembrance, as deadly sin, with all its details and repetitions and aggravations, must, in some way, come before the conscience; for all is to be repented of—or appear against him in judgment. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from those sins only that are washed by the tears of contrition, and renounced by an act of the will. The case is, indeed, an awful one,—the difficulties appalling,—the dangers frightful! But there is no ground for despair;—no cause for morbid apathy. Something still remains to the willing mind;—yea, enough remains for final rescue;—enough to aid self-scrutiny—to thwart self-delusion—to lift the veil that rests upon the past—to recall the deeds of sin—to insure the triumph of the new life over the body of death. But the sinner must “hold it fast,” that which remains—must use it at once, and use it well;—and admit that he has but a single chance, and that that may soon pass from him for ever. He is still in “a state of salvation,”—still where prayer is heard—“the ministry of reconciliation” exercised—the confessions of penitence received.

(1.) His first act must be one of *submission*. Wearied with the unthankful service of sin, he must

consent to return to the privileges and duty of a son of God. The step, I know, will require much self-mortification and humility. He must confess his utter inability to direct himself;—confess that he has been made the dupe of Satan—the victim of sense—the slave of corruption;—confess that God alone can help him;—can be his wisdom and righteousness and strength. That Christ speaks to him, and offers him counsel and pardon and grace through His Body—the Church. He must confess this, and feel it, and act upon its truth, as the very first step in his return. In short, he must submit himself to God as “not worthy to be called God’s son.”

(2.) The second thing, and the one to follow immediately upon this submission, is an honest and thorough examination into his past life. The sins of that, which stand recorded against him, must be cancelled before he can well proceed to “make his calling and election sure.” But to be cancelled, they must be repented of;—and to be repented of, they must be known;—not acknowledged in the aggregate, and blotted out by a blind impulse of penitent sorrow;—but they must be *known* as they are, to be *confessed*. All sins, that stand between him and God, must be made, one by one, to pass in review before the mind;—must be drawn out from their hiding-places, however long and deeply they may have lain in conceal-

ment;—drawn out from the obscurity of years,—from the forgotten waywardness of childhood,—from the concealed haunts of cowardly vice, and the scenes of bold transgression;—from the midnight retreat and the windings of the solitary way;—from the noisy revel and the cell of undiscovered fraud;—from the marts of business and the sanctuary of devotion;—from beneath the cowl of hypocrisy and the incrustations of worldliness;—from the hidden fountains of pride—the secret folds of memory—and the depths of the callous heart;—from the abodes of the wretched—the graves of the impenitent—the torments of the lost, which his unfaithfulness has helped to produce;—all and every one, singly and in its own proper character, or in the true fountain and principle of it, must be summoned before the conscience, and without reserve or palliation or self-apology, confessed before God. “Who is sufficient for these things?” “Who can understand his errors?” Surely not the person who has been so long acting unconsciously, as it were, under their blinding influence. The avaricious are not likely to be safe judges of the sins of avarice,—nor the proud of the sins of pride,—nor the impure of the sins of impurity,—nor the passionate of the sins of temper,—nor the thoughtless of the sins of thought,—nor tattlers and tale-bearers of the sins of the tongue. In truth, the moral per-

ceptions become so blunted, and the judgment so biased by habits of transgression, that every sinner, whatever may be his sincerity, is more or less disqualified to decide in his own case. As well might the criminal at the bar of justice be made his own judge and jury;—the sick and enfeebled patient, his own physician;—the rebellious subject, the arbiter in his own appeal to the clemency of his sovereign. The sinner, then, must have some one to aid his self-scrutiny,—to shield him against self-love,—to extricate his mind from the entanglements of long-cherished wrong,—from the toils of long-indulged passion,—from the blindness of long-practised sin,—some one who has authority and power to probe the conscience,—to unmask self-deceit;—to bring up the thoughts and words and deeds to the touchstone of pure, unerring truth,—and expose all the evasions of selfishness, all the devices of Satan, the delusions of sense, the refuges of lies. I know the Holy Ghost alone can give us effectual aid—I know that He alone can unveil our minds and administer duly to our hearts. But I know, too, that according to His own word, He works through an outward, visible agency;—and that this agency or office, in the present case, is, whatever may be said or thought of it, as certainly as there is reality in the mission of Jesus, or truth in His blessed Gospel, “com-

mitted," as St. Paul saith, "to the ministry of reconciliation."

(3.) That was an awful, but heart-cheering spectacle to the penitent, when the Son of the Most High God breathed upon his commissioned Priesthood and said—"Receive ye the Holy Ghost;—whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Here is the authority—the commission, to the end of the world, of the Son of God. Here is the power—"the gift of the Holy Ghost for the office and work of Priests in the Church of God." Let the weary and heavy-laden then take courage;—let them come to Christ for guidance, as He is present in His Church and through His ministers. The provision is safe—the instrument may be trusted, however unworthy, as it is but an instrument, acting by the authority and upheld by the power of Almighty God. The provision is as precious as it is safe. The suppliant for pardon, in many cases surely, is not likely to attain the grace of Repentance or remission without it. But to attain this grace, he must come willingly—must come, as in the case of every duty, with no other than moral constraint upon his will. Still, he is under necessity to come.

This is no new doctrine, as some may call it. The one Catholic and Apostolic Church, from the

first, hath taught it. I place myself on this ground. It is no "Romanizing," as some may call it. The great body of the best Anglican divines, as well as the Anglican Church, hath ever taught it. I place myself on this ground. The exhortation to the contrite sinner to come to this source—to seek a knowledge and pardon of his sins from Christ, through the Priesthood of the Church—is enforced by the authority of Latimer, and Cosin, and Hooker, and Usher, and Sparrow, and Wilson, and Patrick, and Thorndyke, and Donne, and Comber, and Hammond, and Wheatley, and Collier, and Jeremy Taylor, and others, which the American Church hath set forth as our guides to her doctrine and discipline. I place myself on this ground. Let the troubled sinner, then, "come to some minister of God's word and open his grief; that he may receive such godly counsel and advice" as may help him to a full confession of his sins, that thereby he may be absolved from them and receive grace to renounce them, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—Amen."

(4.) Having done this—having thus, by the power of the Holy Ghost, thrown off the burdens of sin—he may arise with a lightened heart—a renewed courage and strength to the work of amendment, to "the perfecting of holiness in the fear of God." But the task

will not be easy. Long and painful struggles will be the fruit of that repentance, which is wrung from us late in life, or after a long course of self-indulgence;—particularly in the case of those who have disregarded the vows of the covenant, and squandered the grace of baptism, received in infancy. The enfeebled energies—the strengthened habits—the perverted tastes—the biased views—the corrupt associations—the artificial wants—the sensual cravings of such persons, will make their upward progress slow—their ascending path thorny and difficult. But it must be trodden;—onward—onward must be the watchword, and onward the struggle of every power. The stake is eternal life!

But “He giveth more grace.” “To them that have no might He increaseth strength.” You may not have received the gift of the Holy Ghost in the laying on of hands. Hasten to receive it;—confess your sins—bow before the Father of your spirits;—offer anew your vows, and crave the promised gift;—make your allegiance to Christ, through His chief representative on earth, and be endowed with apostolic grace. You may never have received, as “your spiritual food and sustenance, the body and blood of Christ.” Examine yourself, and delay not to come; and, with a broken and contrite spirit, seek a portion of “that bread which came down from Heaven, and



giveth life unto the world." Or you may hitherto have received it in vain—may have received it without self-examination, due confession, and repentance. Review your work—retrieve your loss. "Consider the dignity of that holy mystery, and the peril of the unworthy receiving thereof, and so search and examine your own consciences, and that too not lightly and after the manner of dissemblers with God, but so that ye may come holy and clean to such an heavenly feast." "Search and examine your consciences." A solemn confession of your sins is to be made to Almighty God—a confession of heinous guilt in thought, word, and deed;—a confession full and honest, deep and hearty—of sins grievous to remember—intolerable to bear. O what singleness of purpose—what application of thought—what depth of self-knowledge—what keenness of spiritual discernment—what soundness of judgment—what impartiality in decision, are demanded for such a confession, before such a Being and in view of such exalted communion—such divine and glorious benefits—in which our "gracious Lord grants us so to eat the flesh of His dear Son and to drink His blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His Body, and our souls washed through His most precious Blood, and that we may evermore dwell in Him and He in us." Well may our holy Mother admonish us to "search and

examine our own consciences," (and that not lightly and as dissemblers with God!) Well may she encourage us, by the hope of absolution, to seek aid in this momentous work from the ministers of God's word! O let us not, dear Brethren, from fear of reproach or suffering, despise and cast away the holiest privileges of our birthright—the privileges great and, in some cases at least, *indispensable*, of that priestly judgment, and counsel, and guidance, provided and ordained for us in the Church of the living God! Others may have abused this noble privilege. Some, indeed, have abused all privileges. You have only to avoid that abuse;—to take the gifts which God in mercy bestows, and see to it, that you use them according to His will, and draw from them the blessing which they were appointed to convey. Repentance you must exercise—repentance, constant, thorough, and of all and each of your sins;—for it is a repentance which implies *confessing and forsaking*. "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy." To all the work is difficult;—to those who have lived long in sin, in despite of their vows and privileges, the work, as we have seen, is appalling! It is folly, it is madness then, no matter under what strength of inducement, to turn away from those helps for the examination of the life and conscience, and the rescue of the ensnared soul, which God hath

provided in that priesthood to which He hath "committed the ministry of reconciliation."

But I must not detain you from the conclusion, and that is easy to infer and to understand.

1. The first lesson is to childhood. If our deadly sins must be remembered, must be confessed, and cancelled and forsaken;—if they must be, one by one, called up to our recollection, no matter what time may have elapsed, or how the circumstances of their commission may have faded into oblivion;—if they must be cleansed away from our souls, by the blood of Christ, through acts of penitence and prayer, no matter how deep their stains; and "holiness" be acquired, however hard to be attained, before we "can see the Lord;" then how happy the lot of that child, who is early subjected to the discipline of Christ; early placed under a prudent, spiritual guide, who will instruct his conscience—keep him alive to the grievousness of sin—teach him to shun it—to confess and forsake it aright—teach him to act up to his new nature—to "live by faith in the Son of God"—to follow Christ, his divine Head—to rely upon the strength of His grace—to walk in the light of His countenance—in the steps of His most holy life—in the blessed hopes of His fellowship forever. Happy, indeed, the lot of such a child! He is saved from the horrible evils of long-indulged sin;—saved from

the hard and frightful, but indispensable task, of recalling sins buried in the forgotten past—from the saddening fears that some may not be remembered till the final judgment;—from the humiliation of confessing that as abominable, in the sight of God, which had been lightly esteemed by ourselves;—from the shame of bearing about, upon our souls and bodies, before the eyes of men and angels, the marks of base servitude—the scars and wounds of corruption—the brand of disloyalty to our Sovereign;—saved, in short, from the horrors of ceaseless self-reproach—from the tears of a perpetual repentance—from the inconceivable trial of working out our salvation, against doubts and misgivings, lest our work should be fit only to be burned at last;—and our repentance prove only “that sorrow of the world which worketh death.” O happy that child, who, “brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” is saved from all this;—yea, blessed is he, whose manhood is cheered—whose declining days are soothed, by the light reflected upon them, from a childhood and youth earnestly devoted to God.

2. Finally, in view of what I have said, the worldly and neglectful Christian may object to the discipline of the Gospel as a *hard* service, perhaps impossible. Yes, to such a Christian, it is *hard*, but, by God's help, not impossible. To the Christian,

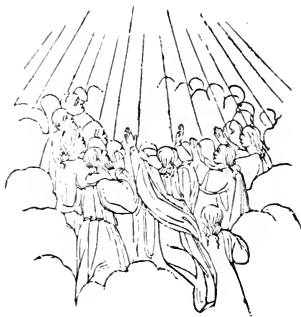
who has lived a large portion of his life, unmindful of his obligations, and wedded to forbidden things, the consequent discipline, if he would be saved at all, must be *hard indeed*;—hard, because his own unfaithfulness has made it so;—because he has thrown off “the light burden and easy yoke” of Christ, imposed in his infancy, and “yielded himself a servant of sin;”—thrown off the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and suffered himself to become a bondman to Satan;—to be bound with the fetters of evil passion, and inured to the degrading and exhausting toils of a spirit of vassalage. His bounden duties have accumulated,—his strength is wasted,—his resources squandered,—his powers enfeebled,—his affections entangled in sensual things,—his vows to the covenant violated,—his Saviour crucified afresh,—the temple of his soul defiled,—the spirit of life driven away,—and the curse of an unprofitableness incurred. O why should he wonder that to regain all this, and save his perjured soul, the service should be hard? Rather let him admire the forbearance that hath not cut him off in the progress of his sins; but still extends to him the day and means of grace. Rather let him adore that mercy, which now saves him from the merited doom of lifting up his eyes in hell torments, and permits him, yea, tenderly invites him, for his soul’s sake, to lift them up, in penitent and

hopeful sorrow, to the cross of his incarnate Saviour  
—his mighty God.

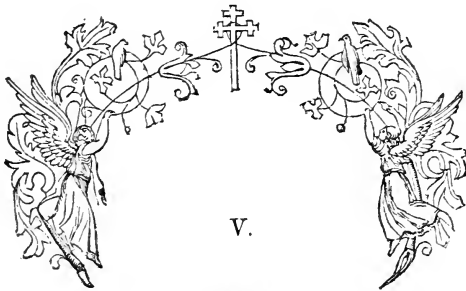


SERMON V.

SELF-EXAMINATION.







V.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

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LAM. iii. 40.—Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.

SELF-EXAMINATION is at once the most difficult and the most important duty in attaining holiness. The difficulty arises from the inconceivable number of subtile influences which insensibly warp our judgments, and mislead us in our estimate of self;—influences more or less blinding, according to our peculiar temperament, education, condition and character. Let us pray God for grace to detect the most fatal of these influences. Let us make the prayer of penitent David our own—“Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart,—prove me and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

1. In the first place, we must admit that we are all prone to think too little of our sins, and too well

of our spiritual state. That, as the man sinking under some mortal disease seeks to give it a softer name, or to find proof of a less fatal result, so we are disposed to hide the truth of our case, under gentle terms or palliating peculiarities. We cannot believe that the poison of sin is so deadly—or that it has insinuated itself into the real fountain of our life, or that its deep ulcers can be probed only by the spiritual Physician, and removed by his skill. Hence we are all tempted, either by the shame of our sins, or the severity of their cure, to make them, in our particular case, of too little account. The first thing, in “searching our ways,” is to seek, by every means, to awaken in the mind a proper hatred of sin in general. To get a clear insight into its essential odiousness in the sight of God;—as it is seen in contrast with His perfect holiness and justice—with the perfect holiness and justice of His laws—as seen in the light of the blessed Gospel;—as denounced by the words, rebuked by the example, and stained by the Blood of the incarnate God;—as seen in its effects upon nations,—in the calamities of war,—the horrors of social discord, and vice, and crime, and degradation, and ruin;—as seen in its influence upon individuals;—in the poverty, and disease, and debasement, and wretchedness, and guilt, and remorse, which ever mark the line of its deadly contagion. When we have thus gained a

just impression of its general character, we may "search" into its power in ourselves. And here we shall find ourselves liable to be thwarted, in our best intentions, by a variety of blinding circumstances.

2. We shall be tempted to look upon ourselves merely as members of a community; and hence to examine our own "ways," by the ways of society at large—as if our sin was a share in a kind of joint-stock. It is true, that some of our sins have a more social aspect than others. Such as are committed under the same obligations as those of other men,—against the same vows of baptism,—the same laws of society,—the same national disadvantages,—the same bounties of Providence. But even these sins have, more or less, a peculiar turpitude, from individual character and circumstances. So that in respect to all and each of our sins, if we would view them rightly, we must view them in reference to ourselves as individuals. Our neighbors may be very sinful, and so may the community in which we live; still we are so, in our own degree, according to our own "ways,"—and to "search" into these ways aright, we must be aware of our peculiar biases to self-justification. We have already remarked, that every body is disposed to look with favor or indulgence upon his own case. And this disposition is increased, and rendered more

dangerous, by a variety of peculiarities connected with ourselves.

3. (1.) We have naturally a strong propensity to a particular sin. The circumstance, to us, strips it of much of its enormity, and leads us to view it tenderly. We have a strong disposition to pride or avarice,—we love to exhibit ourselves in the most favorable light, or to improve every opportunity to add to our gains; and our natural thirst for these things, and its long gratification in their pursuit, blind us to their real character, and make us view them (though positively deadly in the estimate of God and His Church) as little short of positive virtues. The same is true of other sins committed in the indulgence of a natural passion or propensity. We like them, and hence view them with an indulgent eye: a sort of favoritism. Not that we would, in set words, wholly justify them; nor, upon reflection, wish to continue under their power;—still they are too agreeable to our taste to be viewed as very deadly in themselves, or as requiring of us any very strenuous efforts to forsake them.

(2.) Again—we make efforts to forsake them, and find ourselves little or no better;—find that, after our tears, and confessions, and prayers, and fastings, we come under provocation, and do the same things. We are therefore tempted to regard them lightly;—to think that sins so bound up in the life of our souls,

or so tightly woven into the texture of our innate desires, cannot be so very abhorrent to the nature and will of our Maker. But we forget how false is this reasoning, in respect to the diseases of our bodies—forget that we may as well think lightly of such diseases, because of the difficulty of their cure, as to palliate our sins, on account of their obstinate resistance to the means of grace. The truth is, that the very circumstance which often tempts us to put a low estimate upon our evil ways, is the one which, above all others, enhances their guilt. They are natural to us, we say, or they adhere to us notwithstanding our efforts to cast them off; or they return to us, without our solicitation, or just as we are congratulating ourselves in having overcome them. Thence are we sometimes disposed to think that we may have regarded them in too serious a light. Whereas the true cause of our failure lies in our never having discerned their real magnitude—never having been sensible of the depth of their malignity—nor of our degradation and guilt on their account. They are perpetuated to work in us a deeper humility—a keener sense of their debasing power;—to punish us for our presumption, and to save us perhaps from still greater evils—save us from a false peace, or a superficial cure, or a lower degradation, or a more aggravated doom.

(3.) Besides, our simple familiarity with sin tends

to mislead us. It startles and disgusts us at first. But we soon learn to view it with little emotion. Its more rugged features soften down, as we contemplate it. The objects of darkness gradually lose their terror, as the eye becomes accustomed to their dreary abode. This is more or less true with the best of men;—with those most in earnest about their salvation;—who are in constant habits of self-examination. Let such men speak, and they will tell you, that those sins which, upon their first discovery, drew from them bitter tears and self-condemnation, are now, without special effort, contemplated with apparent unconcern, if not with positive injury. Our cunning adversary seeks to make the very recall of the scenes of our guilt, the means of awakening in us those sensual desires, which it is the very object of this recall to mortify; or to turn the sorrow we feel for our treacherous deeds, into a smile at thoughts of our adroitness in perpetrating them. So that our very self-examination is, without great watchfulness, made to contribute to our false estimate of sin. There is good reason, therefore, for the admonition of the text—“Let us *search* our ways.” But it calls to a still further duty. We are not only to search, but to “*try* our ways.” This implies a standard;—and that we are to test our lives by it;—to subject our thoughts, words and deeds, to its strict and unyielding requirements. And here,

again, we are liable to be led astray in our judgments. There are other standards, besides the true one, by which we are prone to try ourselves.

1. There is education ;—the notions in which we were brought up. Our parents held this or that opinion—acted thus and thus, under circumstances similar to those in which we find ourselves. Our teachers, whose memory we now revere, inculcated upon us their peculiar views. Our native place gave birth to its own code of thought—established its own code of morals. These things have, more or less, their weight with us. We are likely to judge of conduct, as we were taught to judge of it in our childhood,—to estimate sin, as it was estimated by our parents, and early associates. Of this influence we cannot well divest ourselves. It comes to obscure our clearest perceptions, to bias our most careful judgments. It is fixed upon us, by a kind of instinctive reverence, which we ought not lightly to disregard, though carefully to watch, lest “the sins of the fathers should be visited upon us their children.”

2. Again—there is popular sentiment. What the multitude around us think, and say, and do. Here the temptation is great. Here comes upon us that “fear of man which bringeth a snare.” It requires high moral courage to resist public opinion, however depraved ; to resist its influence, even upon our own

minds, in judging of ourselves. We are more or less dependent upon one another. Rely for our advancement, or support, or comfort, upon the community in which we live. But this we can insure only by retaining its good opinion. How terrible the temptation to seek to retain it at any risk! The most pernicious errors may prevail. The most licentious spirit be in the ascendant. Still it requires no common degree of nerve to pronounce against the one, or rebuke the other. We are tempted to be silent, where silence is an approval of sin;—to prevaricate, where truth should be boldly spoken;—to withhold even our example, where there is a stern demand, and a no less stern necessity, to “let our light shine before men.” With what difficulty do we bring ourselves, at certain times, to the duties of an earnest, spiritual life! How often are we tempted to omit prayer, and fasting, and meditation, lest, in this licentious age, we should be thought “righteous over much!” How often have we neglected our devotions, and thus joined the wicked in their disregard of God, when placed with them in the same apartment! How often shared with them in their impious mirth, lest a grave, and dignified, and consistent Christian bearing should forfeit their favor, or incur their ridicule! Thus are we led to do wrong, for the want of courage, or firmness to do right—to dishonor God’s law for



fear of losing man's good will! We shall do well to consider, seriously, the effect of all this upon ourselves—upon our moral discernment—our judgment of sin. For surely we cannot so deceive ourselves as to suppose it possible to act long under a false influence, without begetting, in our minds, a false standard of right and wrong;—without so perverting our judgments, as in a little time to think that right in ourselves, which we have been accustomed to countenance in others; and thus to bring upon ourselves the guilt of “following a multitude to do evil;” and insure, in our own case, the certain fulfilment of that promised doom—“Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished.”

3. This is not all. We are in danger of being led astray by the tone of religious sentiment around us: We were born among Protestants, as the term is— and hence are liable to fall in with whatever is usually embraced under that term. And that which increases the liability is the fact, that this term, *Protestant*, stands, in the public mind, for purity—purity in doctrine and morals. So that the foulest heresy, to find favor, has only to be christened *Protestant*. The filth of Mormonism, the blasphemy of Socinianism, the curse of Antinomianism, and Solofidianism, and the wildest fanaticism, have, by this means, found currency. While, on the other hand, whatever can,

in any way, be identified with Rome, however Catholic, however Christian, however necessary to that "repentance which is unto life"—to that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," has only to be branded as Popery, and forthwith it becomes corrupt, and dangerous, and beyond the pale of toleration, particularly if it be something that restrains our passions, or rebukes our self-will. And that which makes this fact bear heavily upon the question of self-examination, is, that "Protestantism," strictly so called, actually discourages, and, in its most essential characteristic, is opposed to that inward life, and deep self-discipline, which gives to self-examination its true motive or value; inasmuch as it is opposed to that sacramental system of grace and discipline in the Church, set forth in our Liturgy. What is likely to be the depth and accuracy of a self-examination, conducted under the Protestant notion, that no matter what may be the stains of sin, or the stubbornness of evil habit, all may be suddenly cancelled by a mere act of the mind called faith? What our concern and effort to be freed from sin, and imbued with righteousness, under the notion that the righteousness of Christ, *imputed to us*, is the only garment which we need, to hide the nakedness of our souls? What the estimate of ourselves, as "members of Christ," under the notion that sin, after baptism, in which the most

awful gifts are intrusted to us, and the most awful vows bind us, is no more deadly in its character, than sin committed before the blessing of that divine sacrament; in which we were made the temples of the Holy Ghost, "which, if a man defile, him will God destroy?" What our anxiety to be restored to the favor of the Church, and the forgiveness of the Church's Head, through that Priestly authority by which we were, at first, admitted to this blessing, while we live under the notion that we need no Priestly intercession, nor counsel, nor absolution, for our return; but have only to offer Sacrifice to God, with our own leprous hand, and according to our own presumptuous will? The truth is, the difficulties, in our day of due self-examination, are, from this source, most appalling;—a day, in which men, claiming all purity, "call evil good, and good evil!—put darkness for light, and light for darkness." In which each sect denounces all the rest, and, with the same breath, insists that all the rest are sufficiently right, if they be only sincere;—arrogates to itself all sanctity, and yet pretends that all have enough to appear, with favor, before the terrible scrutiny of the heart-searching God;—proclaims to all, "stand by thyself, I am holier than thou," and yet cries to all, "peace—peace," when it has just declared there is no peace. Thus, for reward, "prophesying deceits."

4. And, finally, what adds, in many cases, much to the power of these false standards, is an actual blindness of heart and mind, occasioned by "quenching" the light of the Holy Spirit. By this are our souls illuminated at holy baptism;—are put into Christ, "the true light of the world." But for such illumination, we should still "walk in darkness"—still be under the blinding delusions of sense. This light, however, may be again shut from us—"our candlestick be removed from its place." Wilful sin, after baptism, persisted in, or unrepented of, leaves the soul again in darkness—extinguishing "the true light," and taking away all power of spiritual discernment. Accompanying this evil, there is sometimes a kind of *judicial* blindness—blindness sent from God, as a just punishment for presumption in sin. Men who greatly desire to follow their own will against the will of God, and under the power of self, actually adopt a course dictated by such desire, are often allowed, in just judgment upon them, to "believe a lie,"—believe themselves right, and to pass on, blindfold and at ease, like Balaam and the careless "man of God" from Judah, in the way to destruction. Thus showing, that "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, while the end thereof are the ways of death." What can be more awful than this? What can oppose, to self-examination, a more formidable

difficulty? And yet it is so. And we shall do well to examine, first of all, whether it be not so with ourselves; whether, by resisting the perfect will of God, in our compliance with men, or with the sinful impulses of our own selfish nature, we may not have brought upon ourselves a judicial blindness, which hinders us from seeing our sins, and the true way to return from them unto the Lord. However this may be, I have shown you, Beloved, that there is enough in our condition, to fill us with deep anxiety, lest we be misled in our attempted scrutiny into our ways, and to wake us up to the awful truth of utter helplessness in ourselves, and of our utter dependence upon the Holy Ghost. Here, then, if we would have help, if we would have the veil torn from our eyes, is our first duty—humbly to admit our blindness and helplessness, and earnestly to implore, at the foot of the cross, and with the intercession of God's commissioned Priesthood, the illumination of the Holy Ghost. His inspiration alone, can light up the darkness of our souls, and enable us to penetrate the darkness and crookedness of our past ways. Prayer must be the first act of self-examination—

“Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,  
And lighten with celestial fire,”

the first breathing of our prayer. And our prayer

must be attended with fasting; the flesh must be mortified and subdued, if we would give triumph to the spirit. Self-indulgence is fatal to self-knowledge. To gain a clear insight into our state before God, we must abstain, not only from all and every doubtful gratification; but also from every innocent thing which would be likely to obscure the moral perceptions, or strengthen the bias to self-flattery or self-justification. But, with our hearts sufficiently humbled and illuminated to take these precautions against self, and with our ears open to the voice of the Holy Church, we may look for protection from all false standards of judgment, and for direction by the true one. As the searching and trying of our ways, however, is to be a preparation for our "return again to the Lord," we must inquire what has taken us away, or how we have departed from Him.

1. We were, at first, brought to Him in Holy Baptism; brought into His Kingdom, into His Body, and Spirit, and Life—as "the branch is ingrafted into the vine." But upon certain conditions,—conditions imposed by Christ through His Priesthood. We must look at these conditions—reconsider "the solemn vow, promise and profession," which we then made;—our "renunciation of the world, the flesh, and the devil;"—our unreserved and hearty submission to the will of God;—our absolute separation from

the temper, and maxims, and systems of mere men, and our deep self-consecration to Christ, according to His Spirit, and laws, and example. We must recall this—take it to our closets, and then on our knees; make it the test, by which to try our thoughts, words, and deeds. To do the work thoroughly, we must go back to the time of our baptism. Beginning when our Christian life and obligations began, we shall find advantage in dividing that life into small portions; and taking each separately, and holding it up to the light of our baptismal vows and gifts. We shall do well to observe another rule. Instead of viewing our sins in the gross, let us take one sin at a time, beginning with that which most easily besets us, or is most flagrant in its nature, and trace its stains through the several divisions of our lives. Then return to another, and another, and so on, till we have analyzed our whole moral being—all that enters into our constitution, as God's accountable creatures; and have subjected every feature, of every part, to the touchstone of our obligations, as "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven"—ever keeping in mind, not only what we have *vowed* to Christ, but, also, what we have *received* from Him;—not only what we have received, but what, through His great mercy, we have been permitted to *hope for*;—keeping in mind, not only His

will, but also His sacrifice, His gifts, His example, His present and eternal fellowship. In addition, it will be necessary to weigh all the aggravating circumstances, under which our sins have been committed;—all that has tended to deepen their malignity, and to call for a more signal punishment; all that has arisen from the neglected duty, and pernicious example of parents, and masters, and teachers, and magistrates, and professed Christians, and so on;—all that has come from misapplied wealth, or power, or influence, or station, or trust;—yea, all that has been, for years, accumulating under God's astonishing mercies, and warnings, and chastisements, and forbearance. If we do this, with childlike simplicity and earnestness, under the direction of those whom God hath commissioned, and, by His grace, fitted to "watch for our souls," we cannot fail to arrive at a knowledge of our sins;—and such a knowledge as must, if we be not given over to a fatal "blindness of mind," fill us with broken-hearted contrition—must make our hearts overflow with sorrow, for having so wantonly violated the conditions of the covenant and despised its heavenly gifts;—yea, for having cruelly torn open afresh the wounds of the blessed Saviour, and "put Him to an open shame"—put to a new and severer trial, His meek, and patient, and loving spirit! For here we shall remember, that, being put by holy



baptism into Him, and He made to dwell, by means of the holy communion, in us, we have borne Him with us (if we have not actually driven Him, by the enormity of sin, from our souls) through all our erring course;—borne Him to the scenes of our worldliness, and folly, and vice;—subjected Him to insult and suffering—made Him the witness of our unfaithfulness—the partaker of our shame—the companion of our misery—the companion of miseries which we can little realize or comprehend, though we are both their authors and victims. O, who that still has spiritual life, can recollect these things, and not pour out his grief at the cross of Jesus—yea, wash His divine feet with tears of bitter anguish—and dry them with the ardor of gratitude, for His forbearing and forgiving love!

This will bring us through the first step of our return to the Lord.

2. And, further, it will prepare us for the second; for our fresh renunciation of self, and return to the merits of Christ. For what can destroy self-reliance, like self-knowledge? What take away all thought of personal merit, like a view of personal sinfulness? What cast us at the foot of the blood-stained cross, like a glimpse of the frightful burden of our crimson ingratitude and guilt? When we have a proper knowledge of, and compunction for sin, it will bring

us to our knees ; yea, will turn our face to Christ. It will strip us of all self-exaltation and self-conceit—and fill our hearts with earnest desires to be restored to His favor and fellowship, Who “was despised and rejected of men.”

3. But dependent, as we are, upon Christ, there is an instituted way—instituted by Himself—to His favor. “He is the Head of the Church, which is His Body ;” and is to be approached only through the channels of Grace, which He hath opened in that Church. But to these men are admitted, as we have seen, upon certain conditions, and by a certain instrumentality, ordained by Christ, to guard and enforce them. That instrumentality is His Priesthood, to which, as St. Paul saith, “He hath committed the ministry of reconciliation.” Through this ministry, we received at first, in holy baptism, the remission of sins, and union with Christ, as “Head and Saviour of His Body ;”—which remission and union we were to enjoy just so long as we should fulfil the prescribed conditions. Perhaps we may not have done this ; perhaps some deadly sin, of which we find ourselves guilty, may have sundered the tie that bound us to Christ, and virtually shut us from the blessings of the covenant. Our self-examination may have assured us of this solemn fact ; and our fearful danger awakened in us a deep concern to be reconciled again to our

Lord. But in what way are we to be reconciled? Have we a right, after our gross violation of the laws of His Kingdom,—the due execution of which He hath intrusted to His Priesthood,—to return and be reconciled on our own terms, and at our own pleasure;—regardless of the judgment of that Priesthood—regardless of the only authority having in trust “the ministry of this very reconciliation?” Is the criminal to be made the judge in his own case? To mete out his own penalty? To determine his own fitness to enter anew upon the forfeited privileges of good citizenship?

It is most true, (and I would keep this truth distinctly before the mind,) that the merits of Christ alone can avail as the ground of our restoration to Him, as they could, in our first being received into Him at baptism. But how are these merits to be applied now, except as they were then, through the instrumentality appointed by Himself? Except through that priestly judgment, intercession and absolution, made effectual by the virtue of His sacrifice, and authorized and made binding by His express commission—“Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained;”—words which our Liturgy applies to the Priesthood now, at the ordination of every priest.

Besides, as all mortal sin, whether known to men

or not, cuts us off from Christ, by cutting us off from "the communion of His Body and Blood," so our reconciliation with Him is effected by our re-admission, as "worthy partakers," to that holy sacrament. But how is this to be brought about? Repentance, it is true, is the qualification. But who is to decide upon its fitness and fulness? \* It certainly cannot, at this day, be necessary to defend the position—that the priest of Christ is set over the divine mysteries of Christ's Body and Blood, and is, by Him, made the judge of our qualifications to receive them. But how is he to execute this office—how be enabled to judge of our qualifications without a knowledge of our sins? Except as we "open our grief" to him—confess that guilt, which separates us from the love of Christ, and submit to His pastoral care and guidance?

Again, he is set "to watch for our souls, and give account of them to God," at the terrible day of judgment. But how is he to watch, if we have a right to be our own shepherds, and wander at large? How

\* It is not here meant that the judgment of the priest necessarily determines the state of the penitent; or that it, in any degree, helps that state, if the repentance be not sincere and genuine. But that it is the judgment, however fallible, which alone Christ has authorized to guard, so far as a human judgment, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, can guard, the returning sinner against the blindness of his own sin and the sore evils of unworthily partaking of Christ's Body and Blood. But that this judgment of the priest, to be relied upon, must be given under the guidance of *personal holiness*, as well as the sanction of divine authority.

is he to be made justly accountable for us, if he have no authority to direct and reclaim us? And how reclaim us, except as he shall know our wanderings? Remember, it is for "our *souls*," that he is to "watch" and to "give account." It will not do, therefore, to say, that his oversight and responsibility are restricted to open and scandalous sins. The demand of the final Judge will be, whether he has done what he could to save, not only the honor of the Church, but also the *souls* of his people—to unmask every defiled and burdened conscience, and to apply, for its relief and cleansing, that remedy which the Divine Physician has, by solemn commission, intrusted to him, as a Priest in His Church. It is true, he cannot go beyond the willing mind;—true, that his authority yields, and he stands acquitted of the guilt of blood, where the priestly functions have been duly asserted, and the duties and privileges of the penitent earnestly exhibited, and pressed upon the conscience. Then, if his message be unheeded, the responsibility rests with the disobedient. Whatever may be the final and eternal result, "the Priest has delivered his own soul."

God knows, my dear Brethren, that I have no desire to magnify, beyond His truth, the powers and responsibilities of the holy Priesthood. God knows, that I feel them to be sufficiently awful in their

naked, scriptural *reality!* But I fear the day of judgment—I fear, I am free to confess, the wrath of God—the fire of hell! I fear it for you—I fear it for myself;—and I fear that day will disclose such awful mistakes on this subject—involving your salvation—as must, except I speak out boldly now, bring down the eternal curse of God on my own soul!

It will avail nothing, then, that you quiet your consciences now—justify yourselves for turning a deaf ear to my message to-day, by calling it “Popery,” or “Priestcraft,” or “an unauthorized attempt to restrain your just liberty.” All that will avail you then, is God’s own truth, as set forth by God’s own Church, and incorporated into your hearts and lives by God’s own Spirit. All that will avail you then, is a self-renouncing will—self-loathing compunction—“a hidden life with Christ,” in this your day of trial; yea, a childlike humility—submissive faith—“the yoke and burden of Christ” well and rightly sustained,—his cross joyfully received, and humbly, and patiently, and courageously, and perseveringly borne after Him, in saintly innocence, or lowly penitence, “even unto death”—even unto “the joy of our Lord.”

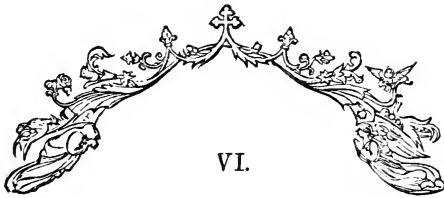
O, then, let us, dear Brethren, “search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord, our God!”

SERMON VI.

THE CASE OF THOSE WHO RESIST THE REIGN OF CHRIST.







## VI.

### THE CASE OF THOSE WHO RESIST THE REIGN OF CHRIST.

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ST. LUKE xix. 14.—We will not have this man to reign over us.

IN the parable from which these words are taken, our blessed Lord represents Himself as being a King; as having established His reign on earth, called sinful men to His standard, furnished them with means to prepare for being gathered into a more perfect state; and as having gone from them to await the completion of His Kingdom. He represents also that, in His absence, His claim to the submission of mankind, and His provision for their spiritual welfare, would produce among them very different results; that, in the case of such as might yield to His sway and accept His bounty, some would be diligent in preparing for His return, and some heedless and slothful; and that, in the case of others, the spirit and language would be that of continued rebellion—"We will not have this man to reign over us."

The question now is, and it is a very solemn one,

Who are these persons? and what is their actual state?

I. Who are these persons?

(1.) They cannot be heathens, in the sense of being destitute of a knowledge of Christ and His Gospel: for it is Christ and His Gospel which they reject. (2.) They cannot be persons under involuntary error or prejudice: for they are represented, in the text, as being guilty of wilful disobedience. Who then are these persons?

Christ's Kingdom is His Church. As a King, He is its Head "God," says St. Paul, "gave Him to be Head over all things to His Church, which is His Body." And again, "the Church is subject unto Christ." Hence they that reject Christ as their King, are they who reject Him as Head of the Church. In other words, they that "will not have Him reign over them," in the highest sense, are they that refuse to enter, by holy baptism, His Church or Kingdom. For "except a man be born of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." The unbaptized, then, in Christian lands and under Christian instruction, are the persons first alluded to in the text. It is not necessary to suppose that each of these persons, thus neglecting baptism, have given any formal expression of their hostility to Christ. It is enough that, against His command,

they remain out of His Kingdom. Rebellion is a state, as well as a profession. To fix the guilt of it upon a person, it is only necessary to find him in the ranks of the enemy. In the case of those charged with refusing submission to Christ, it is enough that they are found associated with such as have lifted up the arm of rebellion against Him. They may not have blasphemed Him, nor done any act with a settled purpose of resisting Him. Still, if they have heard His call, and have failed, no matter from what cause, to range themselves under His standard, and thus declare themselves subjects of His Kingdom; they must be considered enemies of His reign. "He that is not with me is against me"—saith our Lord. And the reason is plain. He came into the world, and found it filled with men leagued with the powers of darkness. He set up His Kingdom against these powers, and summoned mankind to His standard—to become His subjects by entering His Kingdom. Now, whoever of mankind refuse to obey the summons, must be classed with those who disown his authority, and array themselves against the progress of His reign. Neutrality is impossible. Attempted neutrality is virtual resistance to His claims. Any thing short of actual enrolment, under the seal of regeneration, among His followers, is, in effect, the declaration—"We will not have this man to reign over us."

The unbaptized may be startled, perhaps, at so serious and unusual a charge. But can they, with a good conscience, and with the Gospel before them, say that the charge is not strictly true? I appeal from the devices of man, to the unfailing Word of God. I appeal from themselves to the true voice within them; from the deceitfulness of their evil hearts, to the honest response that even now trembles on their lips, waiting only for courage to speak out the truth.

You say that you are not fit for so holy a sacrament. But the whole truth would force you to say, whether you admit it or not, that you have not sufficient resolution to make yourself fit—to cut yourself off from sinful indulgence, and to undergo the prayer, and fasting, and self-denial, which proper fitness demands. That you refuse to enter the Kingdom of Christ, because of your unwillingness to come under the restraints imposed by His law. That your passions and habits demand a liberty quite different from that with which He would make you free. That your self-will cannot brook the childlike submission which He exacts—your reason cannot admit the necessity of things which He enjoins. That, could you be allowed to follow your own will—adhere to your own prejudices—pursue your own pleasures and schemes, and, in most cases, govern yourselves, you

would consent to become His subjects—to have Him “reign over you.” Let conscience speak, and it will assure you of the truth of this—assure you, that the aversion you feel to yielding yourselves, in holy baptism, to Christ, is only the dislike you have to the exactions of His government.

II. Having thus ascertained that the unbaptized are the persons chiefly referred to in the text; we are to inquire, secondly, into their actual state.

1. They are in a state of *condemnation*,—still under the curse of sin. The Gospel speaks only of two states. One of salvation; the other of condemnation. One of union with Christ; the other of separation from Him. One in Christ’s Kingdom; the other out of His Kingdom. One being His dutiful subjects by baptism; the other refusing submission to Him in this holy sacrament. Now, all persons, not in this state of salvation, must be in a state of condemnation. For when Christ opened, in His Kingdom, the door of salvation, the whole world was under sentence of condemnation. Hence, all who refused to enter this door (no other way of escape being provided in the Gospel) must inevitably remain under the sentence. Therefore it is, that membership, by baptism, in Christ’s Body, or Kingdom, is uniformly represented as *the state of salvation*. Hear our blessed Lord—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be *saved* ;”

or be in a state where he may be saved. Hear St. Luke—"The Lord added unto the Church daily, *the saved*;" or men that they might be saved. Hear St. Paul—"According to His mercy He *saved* us, by the washing of regeneration;" or, by baptism, put us into the way of being saved. Hear St. Peter—"Even baptism doth now *save* us;" or put us into the state of salvation. Hear our holy mother, the Church—where she teaches her children to thank their Heavenly Father that, in baptism, "He hath called them into the state of salvation." If this be true—(and who can doubt it, that doubts not God's word?)—if baptism places men in that state of salvation opened by the sacrifice of Christ, then the consequence is inevitable, that the unbaptized are in a state of condemnation—and while they remain so, cannot secure the blessings of eternal life; can neither receive the remission of sins, nor be considered in a state of probation.

An attempt, I know, is often made to escape this conclusion, by insisting upon "faith" as alone sufficient to relieve us from the curse of original sin, and put us into a justified state. But, to my mind, this is, as if a man, bound by all the terms of a covenant, should plead exemption from one specific term, on the ground that another specific term, which perhaps involved the other, could not be dispensed with. We

admit that when that "faith, which works by love, and purifies the heart," is attained, the Gospel state of salvation is attained. But we deny that such faith can be attained without baptism. Its seminal principle perhaps may; but not its justifying power. I know the words of the apostle to the jailer,—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,”—are often quoted with an air of triumph. But is it likely that the apostle intended to differ from the language of His Master—“He that believeth and is *baptized* shall be saved?” Or, are we to suppose that this condition of salvation, thus solemnly enjoined by the Son of God, in His commission to the disciples, is set aside by the instructions of one of these disciples, acting under the commission! Faith, in the sense of the New Testament, is *submission* to Christ, and hence necessarily implies submission to every known condition of salvation enjoined by His authority.

Would to God this were a needless argument. But the perverseness of the age compels us to reassert the first principles of the Gospel. The age boasts of having the Bible for its religion; whereas its manifest struggle is to throw off the simplest teaching of the Bible. Men, now-a-days, talk of the liberty of the Gospel, while they are fast bound by the systems of men. They exult in their freedom from the dicta-

tion of others, especially of the Church—forgetting that in religion, the most miserable slave is he who follows himself—has become the victim of his own pride, and passion, and self-will. Let the unbaptized take warning. Let them turn away from the treacherous counsels of men, to the unchangeable will of Almighty God—turn away from their own deceitful hearts, and learn, from the clear and emphatic voice of the divine Oracle, how perilous is their state—a state of utter condemnation—admitting no light, nor hope, nor favor; but one dreary and unblest—upon which the wrath of God abideth, and, if He be true, must abide for ever.

2. Again, persons out of Christ's Kingdom, are in an *unregenerate* state. The divine nature bestowed upon Adam, after his creation, was lost in his fall; or, so far lost, as not to have power to control man's lower or carnal nature. The Son of God came,—assumed that lower nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, that, by a new-birth into Him, we might again be made partakers of His nature,—or “receive power to become the sons of God.” Now this new-birth takes place in holy baptism—by which we are “born again into Christ's Kingdom, of water and the Spirit,” by which “we put on Christ—are created anew in Him unto good works,” and become “sons of God and heirs of eternal life.” The design of this new-birth



is, so to unite us again to God as to give us ascendancy over "the world, the flesh, and the devil." This is beautifully exhibited, by our Lord, under the figure of a vine and its branches. "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit—for without Me ye can do nothing." But to obtain this help from Christ, our union with Him must be complete and vital; our ingrafting into Him, both "outward and visible," and "inward and spiritual." As the union of the vine and the branches is perfected by external fibres and internal circulation; and as "the branch cannot bear fruit of itself," so without this new-being in Christ, we can do nothing—cannot take the first step in the way of holiness. And here no terms can exaggerate the necessity of the case. Suppose the wrath of God appeased. Suppose the sentence of our condemnation annulled. This would be little towards the end of our probation on earth—would be little towards the attainment of a pure and exalted state in Heaven. It is not mere forgiveness that man seeks—he demands advancement to a higher life;—not to be pardoned like a cringing slave, and still to remain under the galling bonds of spiritual degradation. This would be no boon—no sufficient

motive to take the yoke of Christ. Man, however low he may be sunk in depravity, is not satisfied with his moral condition. He has times of deep yearning for something better—yearning to be taken out of himself, degraded and vile, and linked to another more exalted. The Gospel here sympathizes with man, and seeks to raise him from his bondage;—not only to procure his reprieve, but to take off his chains—lead him from his prison-house, and, by the power of a new nature, to elevate him to a new and heavenly fellowship. Hence, as saith St. Peter, “its great and precious promises are given us, that by these we should be made partakers of the *divine nature*.” Nothing short of this can raise us. We lost this nature in the fall of the first Adam—we must regain it in the triumph of the Second. But He triumphs as “Head over all things unto His Church.” We must seek Him there; must “enter His Kingdom” through water and the Holy Ghost—become “members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones”—must be “buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.”

3. Finally, they, who belong not to Christ's Kingdom, are not in *a state of grace*;—or in that state to which God has promised the gifts of His Spirit.

Men, out of this state, may be visited with compunction for sin, and the grace of submission; but not with the grace which sanctifies, and gives peace and fellowship with God;—for Christ Jesus is the fountain of such grace. But the unbaptized are not in Him. To be living members, however, they must be in the Body;—to have the vigor and growth of branches, they must be in the vine. But they are, in every sense, out of Christ;—out of His Kingdom, His Body, His fellowship, or special love;—beyond the instituted channels of His grace, and surrounded only by spiritual barrenness and desolation. Let us descend to particulars in our examination of this point. (1.) The unbaptized are certainly out of His *Church*, and hence are destitute of whatever grace, or means of grace, our Lord designed to bestow especially upon that. But, if we may believe the Bible, “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it unto Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” If this be true, what can be more certain, than that the unbaptized belong not to that body, to whom are applied the merits of Christ’s death, and the gifts of His cleansing and sanctifying grace? It is true, Christ’s death was designed to open the way of salvation to all man-

kind. But it is equally true, if this plain passage of God's own Word is to be trusted, that that way is opened in His Church—that the divine virtue of His Sacrifice, and the manifold graces of His Spirit can, in a Christian land, be enjoyed only in His mystical Body. (2.) Besides, the unbaptized are without the blessings of the Christian Priesthood;—shut from themselves the grace which flows from “the ministry of reconciliation,”—from the priestly authority of Christ, committed to His Church. “God hath set in the Church,” saith St. Paul, “some apostles, some prophets, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for *the edifying of the Body of Christ.*” Who that belongs not to this Body, can receive edifying from the Priesthood? The commission, you say, to the disciples, was “to preach the Gospel to every creature.” We admit it. But preaching the Gospel to the heathen, or unbaptized sinners, is not “edifying” the Church. It is, without doubt, a part, and an awful part, of the priestly function, to preach the Gospel to the unbaptized—to those not under the reign of Christ; and hence I preach to that class to-day. But I am authorized to speak no word of peace to those who hold out in their rebellion. To pronounce no blessing—to offer no hope—to such as continue in a state of condemnation. I dare not do it, as I would save my

own soul and theirs. I dare only say—"Repent, believe, be baptized," or perish in your sins. That teaching, which administers to faith, and pardon, and peace of conscience, can be given only to "the member of Christ, the child of God, and the inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." All that can be given to the unbaptized, is warning, and calls to repentance, and submission to the dominion of Christ. A knowledge of the doctrine of Christ is promised to those only who earnestly do His will;—the privilege of being taught by Him, only to such as meekly take upon them His yoke. Hence the commission to teach His people, followed that to "baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

In addition to priestly instruction, men need from Christ priestly counsel and absolution. And these are committed to the ministers of His Church. "He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost—whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Here is the blessing of the remission of sins, (however it may be imparted,) intrusted to the Priesthood for the benefit of sinful man. But no sinful man can have this blessing, except he first consent to receive it, by baptism, in the name of Christ. No absolution from sin can come before this. No

contrition, nor confession, nor self-abasement of the unbaptized, can insure it. No priestly authority from Christ, can confer it. Those, out of His Kingdom, may kneel with the congregation of His flock—may repeat, with sorrow and self-condemnation, the words of the Church's confession; but they can have no part in the Church's absolution, through Her Priesthood. They are not in a penitent state—not where contrition and confession alone can find pardon. They must submit to the reign of Christ, before they can have the blessing of His forgiveness or fellowship.

In conclusion, they, who refuse, by Baptism, to enter Christ's Kingdom, are deprived of another blessing of the Priesthood, which men must have or perish;—*the Body and Blood of Christ*;—"Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." Spiritual death must follow the want of spiritual life. And that want, we see, all must experience, who willingly separate themselves from the Holy Eucharist. Hence among the early Christians, such separation was dreaded as the greatest evil—dreaded as separation from Christ Himself. And who can wonder at this, when the Church declares, that "Almighty God hath given His Son to be our spiritual food and sustenance in that holy sacrament—that thereby our sinful bodies may be made

clean by His Body, and our souls washed by His most precious Blood—that thereby we may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of His passion.” And where she exhorts us, “as we love our own salvation, to be partakers of this holy communion.” But I hardly need say, that the unbaptized cannot be; that they cut themselves off from this life-giving food—this heavenly banquet, by shutting themselves out of the Kingdom of God—rejecting His blessed Son as their Ruler and guide. Thus, by wilful disobedience, the unregenerate deliberately cast from them every instrument provided by the Almighty for the work of their salvation. That work must be done. Sin must be washed away,—sinful passions overcome,—self-will controlled,—holiness attained,—man fitted for communion with God. And still these persons, feeling and confessing this, and in the full possession of reason, consent to remain in a condition cursed and hopeless—where sin cannot be forgiven, nor obedience done;—a condition without the blessing of the Church’s Head—the Church’s teaching—her priestly intercession—her spiritual succor—her “communion of saints, and forgiveness of sins,—her hopes of the resurrection of the body, and of life everlasting!” A condition where the power of the world is unchecked,—the impulses of the flesh have no law,—the wiles of Satan no rebuke;—but where

temptation and delusion and sin are the certain pre-  
ludes to that final state—where “their worm dieth  
not, and the fire is not quenched.”

And these men now live under the Gospel;—and have all these things laid before them in the Gospel;—and draw all their hopes from the Gospel;—and expect to be judged by the Gospel; and still they live on,—in a state of remorse, perhaps of alarm and of wretchedness—but still live on, out of the body of Christ, in defiance of His warning, in resistance of His reign—wasting their strength, squandering their probation, enhancing their difficulties, strengthening their delusions, multiplying their sins, and hastening to their final account. What a spectacle for angels! What a result for men, endowed with reason—instinct with noble aspirations—animated with immortal spirits! What a result for sinners amidst the tokens of God’s love!—Having before them, the birth, and life, and death, and resurrection and ascension of God’s eternal Son;—having before them His Kingdom of life and peace—the gifts of His blessed Spirit—the entreaties of His ambassadors, beseeching them in His stead, to submit to His reign, and “be reconciled to God.”

III. Thus have I stated, as the Gospel requires of me, the case of those to whom the text has primary reference. But it is, by no means, restricted to this



single class. Others, with a no less fatal certainty, come within its scope. He, who deserts the standard of His King, or, in any way, violates his oath of allegiance, strikes a more deadly blow at the royal authority, than he who has never left the ranks of the enemy. How many, almost without knowing it, may put themselves into this attitude of rebellion against Christ!

1. There is the open and avowed apostate. The man, who, with the vows of baptism upon him, and the gifts of baptism intrusted to him, proceeds with utter disregard, if not contempt, of the faith and practice of a Christian. The illustrations are too many, and too sad to require further description; while the opposition to Christ is too notorious and direct to be mistaken. With such persons warnings may be useless, as insensibility to our spiritual state generally increases in proportion to our advance in guilt and danger. But the Church must be warned,—the Church must be made to listen to the awful Truth of God:—"It is impossible, for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost—if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame!"

2. Again, there are those, who resist the reign of Christ by resisting the authority which He hath delegated to His Church. He is represented on earth. His priesthood acts in His stead and by His authority—is commissioned and endowed by Him to carry out his purposes of love among sinful men. Thus to His representatives “is committed the ministry of reconciliation.” They are “exhorted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to have always in remembrance into how high a dignity and into how weighty an office and charge they are called—that is to say, to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord; to teach and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord’s family; to seek for Christ’s sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children that are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever.” While His people are exhorted to acknowledge and keep in mind this their divine office;—to “obey them—thus having the rule over them—and submit themselves”—to “esteem them very highly”—to honor Christ in them—keeping in memory how He said of them—“he that receiveth *you*, receiveth *me*, and he that despiseth *you*, despiseth *me*.” But some men, in our day, are led to act in total disregard of this; and to do it, under professions of extraordinary love and zeal for truth. The ground of their resistance is, that an enlightened

conscience constitutes a higher tribunal than any delegated authority of the incarnate God! And then, taking it for granted that their consciences are duly enlightened, and that the authority delegated by God has little or no conscience, they proceed in their opposition with feelings of peculiar self-complacency—actually thanking God in being able “to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” In this way, self-love, sustained by self-will, vaunts a higher commission, and often gains a far more exacting and absolute sway over the minds of men than the divinely accredited ministry of Him, whose “yoke is easy and whose burden is light.” May I not use the freedom of St. Paul, and entreat you, beloved in the Lord, to “mark those who thus cause divisions among you and avoid them,” lest haply, in being joined unto their fellowship, “ye be found, at last, to fight against God.”

3. This is not all. They resist the reign of Christ, who, in opposition to His Spirit, are governed by the spirit of the world. Satan is the acknowledged god of this world. To destroy his power on earth is the declared purpose of the manifestation of the God of heaven. Between these two beings is the real contest. Their kingdoms, and designs, energies and works, are arrayed against each other in a spirit of essential and eternal hostility. There can

be no communion—no sympathy—“no concord between Christ and Belial;”—but a deep and irreconcilable hatred—a fathomless and impassable gulf! How can we be led at the same time by two such spirits—“serve two such masters”—be in the interest of two such antagonist powers? “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His—He that is not with Me is against Me.” Fearful thought!—fearful, when we cast our eye over the body of those who call themselves Christians! Fearful, when we look into our own hearts! May God have mercy upon us, dear brethren, and rescue our ensnared souls from the dreadful power of the world, the flesh, and the devil;”—yea, send into these souls an abiding conviction, that “the friendship of the world, is at enmity with God.” For why should we continue in this fatal blindness to the truth? why, cling to this empty fellowship of the world? Why hold out in senseless opposition to Christ, to be awakened to our folly by the final sentence—“These mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before Me!”

SERMON VII.

OBEDIENCE THE WAY TO KNOWLEDGE.





## VII.

### OBEDIENCE THE WAY TO KNOWLEDGE.

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JOHN vii. 17.—If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

OUR blessed Saviour spake these words to the captious Jews at their feast of tabernacles. They had before heard His speech; marked the divine wisdom with which He spake; confessed that He spake as never man spake. They had also witnessed His mighty works; and had acknowledged that His having fairly wrought them, could not be denied. And still they held out in their unbelief; and were at this very time plotting His destruction. In the text He gives the reason of their unbelief—of their blindness to His teaching—and the reason too of all blindness to the truth. And He does it by showing them the way to gain the light;—the way in which blindness must be removed and spiritual sight restored. The way of clear discernment;—of a certain faith and just appre-

ciation of divine things. And this way is *obedience*. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of His doctrine."

How perfectly reasonable is this precept; how exactly in agreement with what is required to be done in the attainment of every other kind of knowledge! And yet, how different is it from the course which men generally pursue in seeking to understand their duty to God. Their efforts here are made in a way to insure defeat. Let us examine a few cases.

I. A man has doubts about the truth of the Christian Religion, from which he expresses a wish to be freed. But what does he do to attain the wished-for end? The questions to come before his mind are of the most awful character,—demanding for their investigation the deepest seriousness and humility. But his mind, in a great degree, is frivolous and proud. These questions relate to facts and evidence of the highest moral import,—to be examined and estimated only by the clearest moral perceptions. But his perceptions, if not deeply clouded by sin, are at the best, merely *intellectual*. The things to be considered presuppose an acknowledgment of God's right to govern men, and hence of their duty to obey; but his whole life has been a practical denial of this truth, and a practical assumption of the right to govern himself. They, involving matters of the very highest possible



interest to him, do rightly claim, in their examination, his highest sympathy and regard; but instead of this, his mind is filled with actual biases and prejudices against them. They demand that he shall proceed to their investigation with a presumption of their truth; but he takes them up with the notion that they are false. This is his state (I speak of skeptics generally) as he enters upon the examination of the truth of the Gospel. And in the progress of his work, he makes no renunciation of self, no submission to God,—seeks no spiritual guidance,—admits no insufficiency in his own powers,—feels no need of Divine help;—but with a boldness that never hesitates, proceeds to subject the deep and holy mysteries of the Christian faith, to the decisions of a proud and selfish and unsanctified mind.

Suppose the scholar should act upon this principle;—should enter upon the pursuit of any science with a disbelief of its truth, and hence a contempt for its claims;—should refuse the instruction of a master, and disregard every rule insisted on for its proper investigation;—should, though from its very nature, an insight into its principles demands the most earnest and patient and undivided attention, give it only a thought, now and then, while his main pursuits lie in a direction totally different;—and are daily fixing upon his mind and incorporating into his life habits

of thinking and acting which its professed object is to eradicate. What think you would be his prospect of mastering such a science? What would be the value of his judgment upon it? And yet this case is far more promising than that of the unbeliever who proposes to gain full conviction of the truth of the Gospel without submission to its moral precepts. And the unbeliever may see this by a little attention to his own mind and heart. He must admit that he has within him the power of moral discernment and sympathy; and that just in proportion as this power is drawn out towards a fellow-being, is his confidence in him weak or strong. For example; let him discern in a stranger the qualities which he himself most admires—with which he most readily sympathizes: will not his discovery act, at once, as a bond of fellowship, or become a ground of trust and reliance? On the other hand, will not his dislike of the man produce a proportionable distrust in his motives and statements? We see then the reason, why “the carnal mind receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” There is no moral sympathy between them;—no power in such a mind to discern spiritual things. The true evidences of Christianity are mostly spiritual—discernible only by the spiritually minded. A man must become such then, to get rid of infidel doubts, and enjoy the peace of believing. The faith will brighten

as the heart becomes pure, and the life obedient, and man approaches the likeness of God. But just so far as a man follows sense, will he leave faith behind. Just so long as he continues under the veil of this world, will the blessed vision of the next be shut out. No matter how strong and well stored may be his intellect; from the heart alone can he believe unto righteousness. He must cultivate then his moral sympathies—give ascendancy to his moral being—consent to *do* the will of God, or he can never see Him in His word, nor enjoy His presence in Heaven. “The pure in heart,” and they only, “shall see God.”—The power of sanctified obedience alone can bring down the unbeliever from his elevation of self-conceit and self-adoration, and humble him aright before the cross of his incarnate God and Saviour.

II. Let us take another case. A man professes to believe the Gospel,—professes, perhaps, to be a follower of Christ. And yet, from his position in society, or from some circumstances that are a snare to him, he reconciles his profession with great wordliness of spirit and life; and when admonished of his danger, defends himself on the ground that he is the best judge in his own case. Now let us see how far this is so. According to the settled maxims of men, he is the best judge only when he is the best informed. This he will admit himself. This he acts upon in

his secular business. When from mismanagement or any cause the title of his property is declared to be in danger, he resorts to the judgment of his lawyer. When his bodily health gives way, he consults his physician. And this he does on the principle of their superior professional knowledge. Now let us examine his knowledge as to his spiritual state. He is worldly;—fond either of display, or of sensual indulgence, or of amusements, or of his person, or wealth, or some other earthly thing. And he defends it as consistent with a religious life. But what does he know of a religious life? He has tried worldliness, and finds it pleasant—finds, he says, no injury from it. But how does he know that he has received no injury,—for what does he know of the standard by which the effects of the world are to be tested? What does he know of that “Spirit of Christ without which we are none of His?” That earnest self-renunciation and “following after Christ, without which we cannot be his disciples?”—That personal “holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord?” What does he know of all this? Has he learned of Christ?—has he been with Him in the scenes of His solemn teaching? Did he listen as He spake from the holy mount?—as He taught what it was to be His disciple? What was “the gain of the world with the loss of the soul?”—What was the attempt

to serve two masters?" Did he mark his answers to the questions?—"Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?"—"Are there few that be saved?"—"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And has He come forth from this teaching to plead for worldliness?—for a broad and easy way to Heaven? For the innocence of pride and self-will—the safety of riches—of earthly attachments—of a heedless, self-indulgent life? Alas! has he made one attempt—one earnest, real attempt to become a holy man,—to be conformed to the will, the temper, the example of Christ? If not, what can he know of the dreadful power of the world, the flesh, and the devil?—A spiritual life alone will reveal the true dangers of a worldly one.—"He that doeth truth cometh to the light." Let this careless Christian once comprehend what it is to be a member of Christ's Body, of his Flesh, and of his Bones; let him once reach, in his "hungerings and thirstings after righteousness," the joys of a hidden life with Christ;—let him but struggle on, with a mind intent upon his salvation, through the doubts and sadness and painful perplexity brought upon him by an inordinate love of self, and earth, and earthly endearments, till he has attained a resting-place in the bosom of a Saviour's love; and he will need no one to point out the madness of an attempt to reconcile a worldly life with Christian

safety,—to show him that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God.”

III. But let us proceed a step further. Let us consider the case of a Christian, in earnest about his salvation; but doubtful about the means. Inclined, perhaps, to have a strict regard to the moral duties and to the general custom of attending Church on Sunday, and going to the blessed Sacrament now and then, (perhaps once a month,) but distrustful of the efficacy of stricter rules or more frequent public services; because they have not hitherto been regarded by him as important. But how does he *know* that these things may not be important? Has he already attained perfection? Does he experience sufficient aid in the means he has already employed? After all he has done, is there no lurking, unsubdued sin, that soils his purity and disturbs his peace? No pride, no envy, no lust, no covetousness, no petulance, no uncharitableness, no selfishness, no irritability, no discontent, from which he would fain be relieved? Is there no Christian virtue—no higher good—no purer state—no deeper compunction—no stronger faith—no warmer charity—no more elevated joy—no nobler triumph—no holier fellowship, that he would attain? Why, then, should he hesitate to enter upon a stricter life?—a severer self-discipline, a more earnest application to his spiritual helps? Why should he not

resort to a system of more rigid self-denial? Deeper self-examination, more humiliating confession, more frequent self-mortifications, and fastings? Why not multiply his private devotions; encourage daily public prayer and weekly communion? Why start back from these things because they have so long been out of use? Why not obey the voice of God and His Church, yea, of his own urgent necessity, and return to them in earnest? Would he know their immense value, let him try their effect. No saint has ever lived without them. No one has ever been admitted to "the secret of the Lord," but through their lowly way. Let him try their efficacy before he pronounces against them. Let him feel the freshness of new spiritual life, which under God's Spirit they beget,—the vigor of new spiritual health which they restore. Let him occupy the high summit of purity and peace, to which, by God's mercy, they lead, and look down upon the low region of barrenness and death, from which they have been the means of his rescue; and above, to the bright visions of happiness which they have opened to his view;—and then may he judge of their value as the channels of divine grace. Then, if he will, may he raise his voice against them.

1. From all this, we see, in the first place, what great blessings we may cast from us by rash judgments; by not waiting to get practical knowledge of

their worth. To us they seem new; or we have a prejudice against them, because of their having been misused by some; or because others whom we dislike, may have employed them. And hence we discard them as altogether worthless. Whereas, had we waived our objections till we had given them a fair trial—a trial to which on their own account as truly catholic, and in agreement with our liturgy, they were entitled, we should have discovered our mistake. Discovered, perhaps, that the things we were led thus rashly to reject, were absolutely essential to our spiritual welfare. That the carnal passion which has continually thrust itself between us and the love of God, might, by their use, have been effectually subdued;—that the deadly sin which hangs about us like a loathsome leprosy, threatening the utter extinction of our spiritual life, might, through them, have been purged from our souls. That the loss of spiritual comfort which we so much deplore—the fearful shadows fast gathering upon our hopes,—the insensibility at our hearts,—the sluggishness of our minds—the worldliness of our spirits and lives, all pointing us to a terrible end, might, by the instrumentality of these rejected blessings, have been reversed, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, secured to the soul. We speak against confession, penance, fasting, frequent communions,



and the like. But could we know, by experience, their real bearing, as instruments, upon the salvation of the soul, I doubt not, a horrible dread would come over us, for our own peril in decrying them, and for the peril, on the like account, of ten thousands now quietly resting in a fatal sense of security! We take upon ourselves a terrible responsibility in rejecting *that* as a remedy for sin, which the experience of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church has ever sanctioned and enforced. And rejecting it, too, for no better reason than its abuse in particular cases;—as if a single blessing had been sent us from God against which the same objection might not be urged;—as if the very food which sustains our bodies, and the saving remedy demanded for that cure, might not, and often were not, by an improper use, converted into actual poison, to their destruction.

The truth is, *obedience* is the best expositor of divine principles, as it alone is admitted to a clear and sufficient insight into their grounds and effects. While *disobedience*, even in its lowest grade, so blinds the mind to the beauty of holiness and the glory of self-renunciation, as to make it utterly unfit to judge of unwelcome duties proposed for its good. Hence the richest blessings vouchsafed to man are more than lost to the unwilling mind. Be it then our prayer, Christian Brethren, to be made promptly and earnestly

to obey every *intimation* of God's will, that thereby we may not be guilty of lightly esteeming the manifold gifts of His grace! may not be so wretched as to shut from our souls the blessed light of loving obedience to Christ!

2. We see in the next place, what reason we have to hesitate in judging of the views and practices (admitting them to be catholic) of those who manifestly live holier lives than ourselves. Negligence in our own duty always leads to rashness and uncharitableness in our judgment of others;—particularly where others are more faithful than ourselves. And for two reasons; we can neither comprehend their fidelity, nor endure the rebuke which it administers to our own unfaithfulness. It is certain, that the world cannot comprehend true Christians. They are above it; live in a sphere beyond its vision;—have views and enjoyments and aspirations of which it knows nothing. Hence when our blessed Lord came into the world, “the world knew Him not.” “Therefore,” says the beloved disciple, “the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.” Hence the more we are like Christ, the more incomprehensible shall we be to the world. And again, the more our holiness is misunderstood by the world, the nearer may we consider ourselves to Christ. If this be so with the world, it is so with us in just such proportion as we are worldly. If we

are not comprehended by the world, neither are they who have passed farther than we out of the world, comprehended by ourselves. The law is immutable, that the minds of such as are the least holy are the most obscured. How then shall we judge those who are in advance of ourselves in holiness?—We can judge only by the standard we have formed to ourselves, and that standard approaches to accuracy only in proportion as we approach in holiness to our incarnate Lord. If our standard be lower than that of others, because of one being lower in the scale of obedience, how shall we presume to pass judgment upon them, or upon that which through God's Spirit makes them what they are, provided it has the sanction of the one Catholic Church? We are either in the very mire of sin, or at different stages in the ascending way of holiness. If we have not yet passed out of the obscure and misty atmosphere of sense, what do we know of the clear visions of those above us, "who walk after the Spirit?" And even if we have arisen to the same region, but are still below them, what can we understand of the peculiarities of their position,—of that broader landscape, and intenser light and beauty, with which their eyes are blessed? We see then the hazard we run in our harsh or unfavorable judgments of those, and the ways of those who may be better and holier men than we. For

what can we know of fasting, who are always fed to the full ;—or of self-discipline, who have always practised self-gratification ;—or of priestly counsel and judgment, who in our pride have always depended upon ourselves ;—or of the excellence of virgin purity, who seldom resist the impulses of the flesh ;—or voluntary poverty, who are always reaching after the gains and honors of the world ;—or of the good influence of more frequent prayers and sacraments, while we are actually wearied (God forgive us) with what we now have ? Indeed the uncharitableness which characterizes our age is the more unreasonable and hazardous, because of its being founded in ignorance of those things and persons against which its bitter invectives are chiefly aimed. Let us, Christians, restrain our censure and withhold our judgment of others, till we are certain of having surpassed them in humility, in holiness, in self-devotion to Christ !

3. We see once more how little the unholy can know of the real nature and danger of sin. How often they think well of themselves, and defend themselves with a bold face, when, if they understood their true characters—saw themselves in the light of obedience, and virtue, and *reality*, (the light in which God sees them,) they would hide their heads for very shame, and confess themselves, in all sincerity and truth, “miserable sinners.” Let us but induce

our people, one by one, to make a serious effort to live according to God's law for a single week; can you well conceive the change in their appearance, as they would come together the next Sunday morning?—The air of sadness and self-condemnation, which prayer and abstinence, and honest self-examination and humility, and the keeping of a good conscience before God, would inevitably produce? If this would be the discovery of a single week, what must be that of months and years, when all was known, and the penitent looked back upon the guilty past in the clear light reflected upon it, through tears of contrition, from the pure fountain of earnest and settled obedience! Think you, he could then contemplate without disgust and horror, that sin which he now commits with eagerness and unconcern?—That he could endure those obscene jests and infidel scoffs, which he now suffers constantly to defile his ear, if not his lips?—That he would not shrink in dread from those polluting thoughts in which he permits his imagination now to revel? If this would be the aspect of sin to his own renewed mind, let him ascend in his conceptions to a more perfect state;—yea, to the mind of an infinitely Holy God, and ask himself what must be the estimate to such a mind of his present unholy condition;—the awful hatred with which it must needs contemplate sins of which he

himself is now comparatively insensible—sins of pride and avarice, and lust, and the like? Let the sinner then, by every means, seek to understand his condition,—to know the malignity of his sin! Let him take it away from the delusions of sense—from the false world as blind as himself. Let him take it back to the pure waters of his regeneration,—the white robe of his baptism,—the sacred vows that bound him to Christ and salvation. Let him take it to the instructions of his infancy,—the early words, and prayers, and expostulations of parental love;—to the first struggles of conscience,—the first goadings of remorse,—the first bitter tears of repentance. Let him take it to his slighted privileges,—to the forgotten visitations of Heaven,—the resisted pleadings of divine grace in his soul. Let him take it to the despised humiliation of Jesus;—His birth of poverty,—His life of sorrow,—His death of agony,—and to that Saviour, “crucified by it afresh, and put to an open shame.” Yea, let him bring his crimson guilt before “the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” Let him take it to the all-devouring deluge,—the fires of Sodom,—the plagues of Egypt,—the terrors of Sinai,—the vengeance on Jerusalem,—on Babylon,—on Tyre,—on Israel,—and the Seven Churches of Asia,—to this very day;—to the miserable fate of

Cain,—of Corah and Saul,—and Judas and Herod,—and the apostate Julian! Let him take it to the couch of the dying infidel, and libertine, and false Christian! Let him place his guilty unconcern at the side of their amazement and horror!—Yea, let him take the fire of his own lust to the light of that fire “which shall never be quenched.” The haughtiness of his own pride, to “the gnawings of that worm which never dies!”—the cravings of his own avarice to the canker of that rust, which shall eat and eat for ever into his very soul. And then, O then, let him go to the confessions of a Publican,—the tears of a Magdalene,—the forgiveness of a Peter,—the zeal and fidelity of a Paul, and an Augustine, and a Xavier. But, I pray you, let the sinner stand not here! Unknown dangers are slumbering beneath him,—untold miseries are lurking thickly around him,—foul and deadly spirits anxiously await the signal for his destruction! O let him stand not here! Darkness gathers upon his path,—darkness thickens upon his soul. The way of obedience alone has light;—all other ways are delusive,—all other ways are dark, and lead to the blackness of darkness for ever. Let him hear the voice of Christ, and follow after Him—“I am the light of the world, he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life!”





## NOTE.

In my Sermon on Self-Examination, I have used language in reference to the necessity of priestly judgment in restoring penitents, stronger, perhaps, than at first view may seem to be justified. But a little reflection, with a few words of explanation, cannot fail to show that I have not exceeded the truth.

(1.) That in certain cases priestly judgment is required by the Church cannot be matter of doubt. It is so at adult baptism. "Timely notice is to be given to the minister, that due care may be taken for examination—To the end, that if persons *be found fit,*" they may be presented for holy baptism. Now it is upon this judgment of "fitness," that absolution from sin in that sacrament is predicated. The same is true in regard to the absolution given at the holy communion. Here the priest by express law is made the judge of the qualifications of the penitent. Take the case of persons who have been repelled from the communion—and especially of the sick—where the priest is commanded to "examine *whether the sick person repent him truly of his sins.*" Here the priest is surely made the judge of that repentance, upon the fulness and accuracy of which depends the absolution of the penitent. The judgment may be an erroneous one. The penitent may practise deception, and seek the blessing in hypocrisy, and hence the absolution be void. Still it is the best judgment, which, among fallible agents, can be

given. It is certainly better than the judgment of the penitent himself, obscured and enfeebled as his mind is by habits of mortal sin. It is better too than that of any other person, as it is the judgment authorized by God, and assisted by "the Holy Ghost bestowed for this office and work." True, after all, it is fallible. But not more so, in its decision upon the qualifications for *judicial* than for sacramental absolution. If it be fallible when given upon the repentance necessary to private absolution, it is equally so when given upon the repentance necessary to the forgiveness of sins, both in baptism and the holy communion.

(2.) It may be thought, too, that the necessity of priestly judgment urged in this Sermon, would require a more general confession than is implied in our standards; confession in them being regarded rather as the *exception* than the *general rule*. On this point I would remark, that, according to the system of the Gospel in the church, *sin* is the exception, and *fidelity* the general rule. And among sins, the more *flagrant* and *deadly* are the exception. So that it would be strange indeed, if confession of such sins were made the general rule. The truth is, no precise limits can be given to the necessity of that confession which depends upon the moral state. At one time such necessity may be much more general and urgent than at another; according as one time more than another may be characterized by moral depravity in the church. Just in proportion to the prevalence of sin in the baptized, does that blindness come over the mind and heart, which must needs beget doubt and perplexity, and call for priestly counsel and judgment, and hence for "opening the griefs," or unburdening the conscience. But this must be *voluntary*. Compunction for sin alone can lead to the cure. And hence the practice of private confession must be

restricted to the earnest and actuating desire for its benefits. This desire, it is true, may be far too limited. The necessity of sinners is always more urgent and extended than their convictions of it. Still these convictions must exist—must urge the penitent to the lowly and self-humbling posture of confession—before he can be admitted to the blessing. Here no constraint can be imposed, but that of the willing mind. No force employed but that of an awakened conscience.

I cannot here too highly recommend the able Sermon on sacerdotal absolution of the Rev. M. A. Curtis, preached before the Convention of North Carolina, 1843, and *approved by the same.*









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