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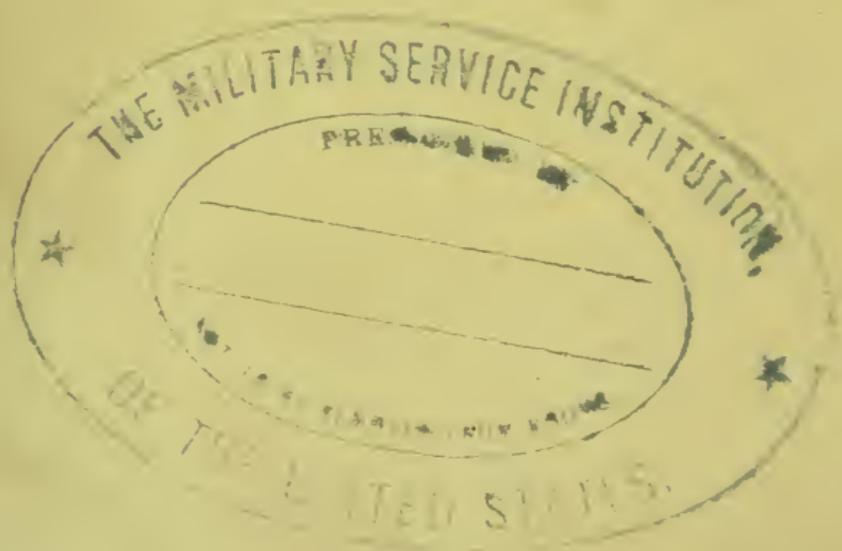




Regalbert Wallace.

with the effect regards

of his friend  
Hiram the Alliance



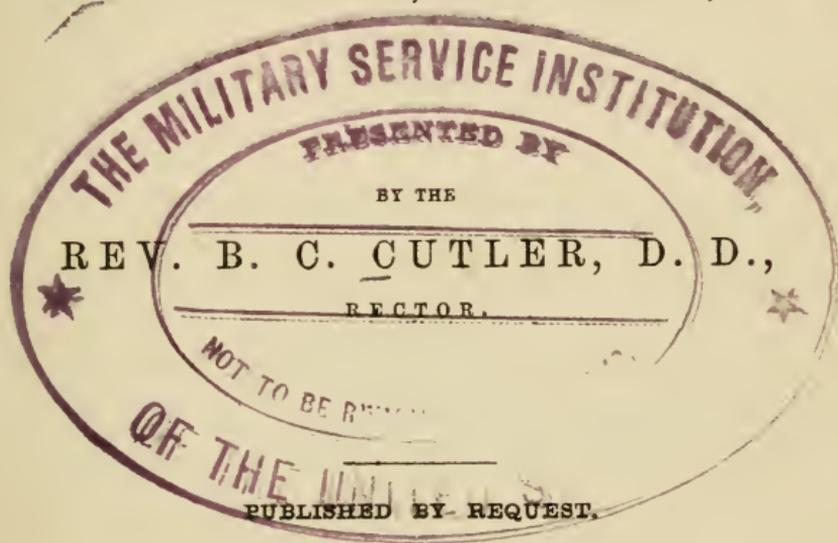
(Cutler)



# PAROCHIAL SERMONS

PREACHED IN

ST. ANN'S CHURCH, BROOKLYN, N. Y.,



“Moreover, I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to love these things always in remembrance.”—2 PETER i. 15.

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PHILADELPHIA:

H. HOOKER, & CO., PUBLISHERS AND BOOKSELLERS,  
S. W. CORNER CHESTNUT AND EIGHTH STREETS.

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TO THE  
MEMORY OF THE DEPARTED;

AND

IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE GENEROSITY OF THE LIVING MEMBERS  
OF

ST. ANN'S CHURCH, BROOKLYN, N. Y.,

THESE SERMONS ARE REVERENTLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,  
BY THE AUTHOR,

WITH THE HOPE, THAT IN THIS PERMANENT FORM THEY MAY EVER  
KEEP BEFORE THEIR MINDS WHAT, FOR MORE THAN TWENTY  
YEARS, IT HAS BEEN HIS DELIGHT TO  
PREACH TO THEM,

“THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.”

BENJAMIN C. CUTLER.

*St. Ann's Rectory, Brooklyn, N. Y.,*  
Nov. 21, 1856.



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# S E R M O N I.

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## O N P R A Y E R.

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St. Mark's Gospel, i. 35.

“AND IN THE MORNING, RISING UP A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY,  
HE WENT OUT, AND DEPARTED INTO A SOLITARY PLACE, AND  
THERE PRAYED.”

I APPREHEND, my brethren, that there is no point of view in which we seem so inconsistent and culpable to ourselves, as in the neglect of prayer.—I suppose that a large portion of the hearers of the Gospel pay some attention to this duty. That morning or evening, or both, finds them repeating a form of prayer, and that on some occasions this form may be somewhat enlarged. Still I apprehend, my friends, that the great duty of prayer is most deplorably neglected,—that it is reluctantly commenced, and joyfully concluded,—that few persons give to it that serious attention which their own reason would prescribe, and fewer

still are found of whom, even once in their lives, it could be said, as it is here said of the Son of God, "that in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place to pray!"

O what alienation of *heart* does not this neglect of prayer discover! How utterly unprepared are the prayerless for the coming of the Son of Man. How totally unfitted, in heart and mind for the employments and pleasures of the heavenly world! And how certain to hear at the last day, their condemnation from the judge of quick and dead, in these few but fearful words, "I know you not!" Ah, my brethren, we must acquaint ourselves with God, if we would be at peace with Him, and through what medium can this be done except through that now to be laid before you.

God grant, that what shall be said, may impress both the speaker and the hearers with the importance of this duty, and with the danger of neglecting it.

Prayer is the intercourse of the soul with God. It is composed of adoration, confession, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving. But whether it breathes forth in any form, or whether it rises to heaven from the heart, without form or without words—it is the intercourse of the soul with God.

I have chosen this term because it conveys the most general idea of prayer. The wicked indeed pray to God! Thousands of prayers, loud, earnest and for the time well meant, are uttered by the wicked, from beds of sickness and in hours of peril. But such praying is not intercourse,—that includes the idea of mutual communications and exchanges, dealings and transactions. When we speak of intercourse between this and a foreign nation, we mean that vessels pass and repass between us: communications are sent and answers received, and exchanges of friendly and pacific feelings are made. Now in this sense, the wicked never pray! and until they repent, and make their peace with God through Jesus Christ, they cannot expect an answer of prayer from heaven. The carnal mind is enmity against God,—men in general are intensely engaged in the pleasures and pursuits of the present world, and God and his pacific disposition, and Christ and his reconciliation are disregarded. There sits “the high and mighty Ruler of the universe,” waiting to be gracious—ready to hear our prayers, yea, more ready to hear than we to pray. There stands Christ, as our high Priest, ready to present our petitions for us, and desiring to see of the travail of his soul in our salvation, and there lives and operates the Holy Spirit ready to help our in-

firmities. But how many who know all this, still cast off fear, and restrain prayer! How many neglect in this day of salvation to make their peace with God, and how few have opened that intercourse with the "heavenly country," which would eternally enrich their souls? How few deeply laden prayers to God, full-freighted with all the rich products of a sanctified heart, take their departure from this land of sin and suffering? It is doubtless a circumstance of profound interest in heaven, for an effectual fervent prayer to ascend from earth. Such a prayer was that of the Prophet Elijah, in answer to which the heavens were shut for three years and six months; and again, by his prayers, the heavens gave rain. When such a prayer ascended from Saul of Tarsus, God said to his servant, "Arise and go into the street that is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold he prayeth." And yet the return of such a prayer as this is more sure and more rich than the return of any ship that ever was sent to sea; and yet the space between heaven and earth is broad enough for any number of such prayers to pass; and yet there is room enough in the land, to which they go to receive them, and riches enough to return them, with great gain to the senders.

But alas! how few are sent—how limited the

intercourse! And as a consequence how impoverished the land; how wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, the souls of those who leave unimproved this great privilege.

Oh my hearers, aspire to high and holy intercourse and fellowship with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ. "Be afflicted and mourn, and weep, ye" who have lived without prayer: "let your laughter be turned to mourning and your mirth to heaviness. Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God. For He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

"And it shall come to pass, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." "Who knoweth if He will return and repent and leave a blessing behind him, even a meat offering, and a drink offering unto the Lord your God."

We have been speaking of the wicked, between whom and heaven no friendly and mutual relations have ever been established. But we come now to speak of the righteous. These, from enemies, have become friends of God, and from alienation and separation have been reconciled and brought nigh by the blood of Christ. God the Father, and God the Son have promised to come unto such, and to

make their abode with them. They are temples of the Holy Ghost, and have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. It can not be said of such that they cast off fear and restrain prayer—for one of the most striking differences between the righteous and the wicked is, that the one abounds in prayer and the other neglects it. The one draws nigh to God, the other like Adam after the fall hides away from him. Day and night the Christian is ready to call upon God. He prays while he is laboring and he labors while he is praying. Three times a day, the prophet Daniel—and seven times a day or oftener during his brightest hours, David prayed to God. O that their spirit of prayer might be poured out upon the Church. For we fear that this is a time when the love of believers waxes cold, and the closet is neglected: and therefore it is highly important to examine the state of their intercourse with God. Is it frequent? Is it fervent? Is it satisfactory? Are they enriched by it? Or do they send out messages and make communications without any return? Are they trifling in this matter, merely keeping up their relations to heaven by regular indeed, but by the most formal communications, and feeling quite indifferent about the return. There must be no cause of complaint against us on the part of that great power with

whom we have to do. Ah! my Brethren—But there will be complaint. What human court, cabinet, or king has so sharp a sight, or is so ready and able to detect a falling off of zeal as that King “unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid?” Who so ready to detect formality? Who so jealous of any departure of the heart from him? Who so quick to perceive the admission of a rival, and who so indignant at the act? I do not say who so ready to punish, to resent, to break up all pacific and friendly relations. Oh, no. God is slow to anger—He can restrain his indignation—He can attemper the blow—He can send out warnings and remonstrances, and dispatch his Spirit to strive with men. But then he has said, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” There is a period, an end to his patience; there is a fire which at last will burst out from his anger, and there is a day when He may be heard to say, “I called, but ye refused.”

Now I would hardly dare, if I could, to lift the veil which heaven has dropped over every heart—and to learn accurately, the state of the intercourse between each believer here present and a prayer hearing God.

That there are some whose communications are frequent, fervent and effectual, we can not but

hope. That we may be addressing one who has risen up before day and found a silent and solitary place in which to pray, we cannot doubt; more than one who loves the hour of prime, when all is still but the early bird, that he may bathe his soul in an element of holy love and light! that he may gather manna before the sun is risen, and renew his strength by waiting upon God. Like the eagle at the dawning of the day his head is erect, his soul has risen, he is on his aerial flight; who shall limit or follow him in his ascent? As desolate and wild as the eagle's aerie may have been the habitation where that man had slept. Hidden away amidst earth's lonely highlands, or where poverty pines unseen, may have been his nest. But daylight comes and he is not here, he is risen; he has mounted aloft! Like the eagle, his soul is poised in the zenith, and while there, he is drinking in lustre from the source of light—lifting his eye to the throne of God, nor in haste to quit his high position. But, wheeling round and round, in the fervor and importunity of his supplication, and rising higher and higher in the ardor of his love, until at last he cries, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." But how many of all the Christian hearts here present have with their prayers anticipated the dawning of the morning? How many have sprung up with returning con-

ciousness to the parent spirit, or commenced again revolving round that great attraction as an inseparable and voluntary satellite? How many have said,—

“ I wake, I wake, ye heavenly choir,  
May your devotions me inspire,  
That I like you my life may spend,  
Like you may on my God attend.”

No, my brethren, there is no disguising the truth; there is no duty so poorly performed as this, there is no point of view in which we appear so faulty and so sinful to ourselves. On many and many a morning, the day has dawned, the sun has risen, the hour of labor has returned—all has been business and bustle without the house, while the Christian has not as yet approached the Throne of Grace. The leaden lids of sloth have covered his eyes, and though the sun has been long gilding his chamber-walls, the tenant is asleep. God is in that place and he knows it not! Saint Augustine declared, that it was dishonorable in a Christian to allow the sun to find him in bed. St. Ambrose also thought it a great offence if a ray of the rising sun, should find us sleeping. It would blush on our chamber-walls!

I have no intention to enter much into details. It is not necessary. The conscience of every

Christian will probe him to the quick. But I do mean to ask, why our Lord and Saviour should seek for long and uninterrupted seasons of prayer, and endeavor to secure solitude and retirement, that he might pour out his soul aloud to God? Why our Saviour should feel the need, or if you will, the desire, or the benefit of prayer, and we feel it not? This is the question which I wish to ask, and which I beg every person to put to himself. Christ was without sin, of which to ask forgiveness. But our sins are numberless. He was without wants, or he could work a miracle to supply them; and yet His prayers were frequent and fervent, and prayer appears to have been an important occupation in His life. In imitation of Christ, the Apostles gave themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word—praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; engaging in prayer private, social, and public; confession, intercession, praise, and thanksgiving. And this praying was considered by Saint Paul as a part of the armor of the Christian, in which alone he could successfully contend against the wiles of the devil.

Now compare a life of prayer, with that which a modern Christian leads. He rises at a comparatively late hour in the morning, he performs his brief devotions, he peruses a portion

of God's word, and instantly plunges into the business of this life. Not more does the hart desire the water brooks than he desires the secular pursuits and occupations of the day. His family worship is performed with despatch, and his back turned upon his closet, his place of retirement upon all sacred and spiritual associations; and the antipodes are not more distant from each other than the work and thoughts of the day from the prayer and meditations of the morning. Could we say of such, that God is in all his thoughts? Does he say hourly, "Thou, O God, seest me?" Has not his idea of the necessity of intense application to business during business-hours perfectly justified him in leaving a devout spirit on the mount from which he descended. Now, suppose a different course altogether. Suppose one could disentangle himself from all common and superficial thoughts on the subject of religion, and seeing the example of our Saviour, and feeling the necessity of a devout spirit and a constant preparation for his departure hence, and above all considering how great his danger of being accounted, neither cold nor hot in religion, how little real happiness and spirituality he professes and enjoys,—and how much more he ought to trust in God to favor him in his business than he does. Suppose some good and solid arguments should appear

for the establishment of a new footing for his intercourse with heaven. That he should imitate his Saviour, and rise up early—even before day, if you will—and seek out a solitary place, and there pour out his heart to God—hold communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ—praise God for creation, and for redemption—and seek for the blessed Spirit, the Comforter, and woo that gentle and holy Dove to descend from heaven, and once more to occupy his empty and deserted and aching heart, and promise solemnly and faithfully never more to grieve the Spirit, and never to open the door to his departure by deliberate sin or folly. Suppose some such commencement as this should be made, and though not satisfactory at first, yet that after many such mornings, there should descend upon him a serious, tender, humane, contrite and humble spirit! Suppose as the result of this, that he should look down upon the pursuits of time as trifling, compared with the demands of eternity, and proceed to his place of business with a calm, cool, and collected frame of mind—as one going to an occupation which God has assigned to him, in performing the duties of which, he was to glorify his Maker and Saviour, and in time to amass wealth with which he might be rich towards God, and taste the God-like luxury, not of receiving,

but of giving of his abundance to those who need. Think you that such a beginning of the day, such a devout temper thus formed, would impede a man, even in the acquisition and enjoyment of secular riches? I believe it would not. So far from it, I believe that it would fit and prepare him to detect deception under all its forms—to make cool and careful calculations in business—to discard all wild and visionary projects! and to pursue an honest and honorable traffic, acquiring every year a better and more solid credit and reputation—and sowing the seeds of charity and benevolence, giving back a regular portion to the Lord of all that he acquires, I believe that his life would demonstrate the truth of that Scripture—that “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” A chief justice of England once said—“If I omit praying, and reading a portion of God’s holy word in the morning, nothing goes well with me through all the day.” And an eminent philosopher also said, that his daily practice of retiring for an hour and spending it in devotion and meditation, gave him firmness and vigor for the business of the whole day. But suppose that no temporal benefit should follow, have we no other interests but what are temporal? Have we not our souls and the souls of our chil-

dren to care for and pray for? Have we not an eternity for which to provide? And how short does time appear in comparison with eternity? Suppose such a result should not follow. May not a devout spirit—an eminently devout spirit—afford immeasurable consolation and benefit to the soul? To be spiritually-minded, is life and peace. May not a peace of mind follow it, which cannot be described, flowing like a river day and night? May not a hope of glory be its result? May not the richest blessings be rained down upon the community, in answer to the prayers of that spirit? May not God be glorified by its holy conversation? May not its memory be blessed, and generations unborn, dwell upon the faith, the purity, the zeal, the love of that man whose prayers endeared him to the Church of Christ? A whole city, a whole region of country seems lighted up, and perfumed and made sacred for years and years, by the residence of one such saintly spirit; although that spirit may be enclosed in a feeble and failing frame, and its earthly tabernacle be hardly known to the worshippers of mammon around it. Ten such praying spirits would have saved Sodom from destruction.

There lived in New England a profane and reckless seaman about the year 1744. He became a man of prayer in 1764, and in the year 1844

a memoir of him was published. It is now more than fifty years since he died—and yet in his native village his memory is fresh and blessed, and his name is as ointment poured forth. It is said that a great while before day he would rise and retire to a solitary place to commune with God—when dying, he pointed to the spot on the floor of his chamber where for more than thirty years with the exception of ten days, he had risen from his bed every night, and knelt and prayed for a dying world. “Thus saith the high and lofty one:—To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word.” “The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous.” My brethren we all know and acknowledge the importance of this duty. The great enemy of souls knows it still better, and it is by his temptations that we are led to neglect it—hastily to perform our devotions, and wickedly to rob God of his due, and our own souls of unsearchable riches and joys. When Satan cannot destroy he can distress. When he cannot carry the soul by open assault, he can gradually undermine its battlements and secure in time his admission. When he cannot break up the habit of prayer, he can destroy all its vitality. He can diminish the time devoted to it—he can abstract the mind when engaged in it—he can keep the soul in leanness, in unbelief, in doubt and despondency. The

Christian like the prodigal son, under his tuition, shall feed upon husks, while there is bread enough in his Father's house and to spare. But when the Christian at last comes to himself, "he will arise and go to his Father." And while he is yet a great way off, if the resolution is formed—if the tempter is discovered—and mental misery is deplored, and the groveling pursuits of sin are loathed, and if the face is fairly turned towards Zion, then will the Father see and embrace the son, and bring forth the best robe and put it on him. Who can have wandered more than Israel and Judah, and yet, when they solemnly and deliberately returned to God, He is heard to say—"Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still—therefore are my bowels troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

Brethren—Jesus Christ was tempted in all respects as we are. He was tempted to neglect prayer—and when engaged in prayer he was tempted to conclude it. And why was this—was it not to succor those who are tempted? Let us then look unto him for assistance, and when the enemy cometh in like a flood, let us trust to Christ to lift up a standard against him. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

## SERMON II.

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### ON THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

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1st. Timothy, iii. 16.

“GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH.”

FEW persons have any idea of exalted benevolence. Pity and magnanimity which regards its own fame, as much as the benefit it confers on others, are not unknown; but pure and divine benevolence is to man a mystery, and hence in his conversion from sin to holiness, nothing is more common than a sudden expansion of the affections—a new—sometimes an overpowering benevolence which wants a horizon as boundless as the universe.

True faith in God is not a common attainment. The mere exercise of the understanding upon propositions which can be plainly proved, does not result in faith; it results in knowledge, and between knowledge and faith, a mighty deep inter-

venes. "It is with the *heart*, man believeth unto righteousness." When the acutest mind has tasked its powers to the utmost, there is even then much room left for a simple child like faith in the declarations of a gracious God; and to encourage faith there is the assurance "what I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Possessing a heart renewed by the Holy Ghost, and a mind truly humbled by a sense of the imperfection of its present faculties, and of the limited extent of our knowledge, we approach the holy scriptures with reverence, and are neither amazed nor confounded at the declarations which we there find of the love and condescension of God, even when we read that "he was manifest in the flesh."

But whatever may be our views and feelings, such is the solemn truth, set forth with a plainness which no form of expression can surpass: "God was manifest in the flesh." 1st. We find these words in the epistolary correspondence of an apostle with a younger minister, and the whole verse rises naturally in his mind while seriously contemplating the great scheme of our salvation. It drops from his pen as one of the most familiar though important truths. Not a subject of controversy, but one which must be received where the religion of the Bible is received at all. Happy

would it be if this serious simplicity were universally prevalent. If human philosophy in the exercise of its gifts, would confine them to a circle for which they are adapted, and while it scrutinized with severity all the points within *that* circle, it would approach those truths which are matters of pure revelation, as not fit for controversy, but for belief.

The manner in which these words were uttered is worthy of especial regard. The mind of the apostle, while communing with his fellow disciple, seems to be carried away from present subjects and present things; then pausing to consider the actual condition of mankind, he utters a soliloquy—"God was manifest in the flesh." The apostle was a Jew, and had been brought up in the strictest manner under the law. To him all the previous instruction of prophets was familiar. With all the past history of his nation he was acquainted—with their idolatries, their gross conception of divine things, and with the plain and repeated instructions which they had received respecting the Unity of God. It was to the Jew a fundamental truth that there was but one God. The opinions of the heathen had no weight with him. The repeated declarations in the scriptures, of the living God and of one God—were doubtless made in consequence of the dead or lifeless gods which

abounded among those who were not blest with an explicit revelation.

This was not only a matter of instruction but it was embodied as the basis of all morality. The first precept which was uttered in a table that was intended for all time was, "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me."

From Gentiles who were brought up in the belief of dumb idols, we might expect some confusion in the use of terms; their heroes, abstractions, and deifications might lead them even after conversion, astray, as was sometimes the case. But from a Jew who was brought up in the severe school of confined and literal criticism, we should expect a precision of terms which it would be impossible to misunderstand. The inspiration too, under which the apostle was writing, was a powerful guide to his thoughts, and in a composition which was to be handed down from age to age, and to be the ground of faith not only to the wise, but to the foolish, not only to the learned, but to the unlearned, care would doubtless be taken that on so important a point a mistake could not occur. If all holy scripture was written by inspiration of God, and if it was intended for the ends of the world, when a thousand circumstances local and temporary under which it was written could not be well known, the most simple and express

declarations concerning the Godhead must be expected. When, then, an inspired apostle converted from Judaism, writing to a younger disciple, pauses to give utterance to the solemn convictions of his inmost soul, and comprehends in a few sentences all the great truths of our religion; we have found him in his best frame, and may receive with the solemnity of a dying testimony the results of his meditations. "And without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness! God was manifest in the flesh—justified in the spirit—seen of angels—preached unto the Gentiles—believed on in the world—received up into glory." Hear then what St. Paul saith to Timothy:—"These things write I unto you, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but, if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

The word *manifest* means *apparent, evident*. It denotes not only what is *seen*, but what is *easy* to be seen—what is seen *forcibly* and leaves no hesitation on the mind. It is opposed to that which is doubtful. It is compounded of two words, which in the language from which they were taken, means a thing being so near that it can be laid hold of by the hand. We may by way of explanation, then, say the text means simply,

it is evident God was in the flesh. He was not only seen, but easily seen, seen forcibly and there is no hesitation about it, the evidences were not at a distance, your hands have handled them.

He was justified in the spirit. The miracles which he performed, not by physical but by a spiritual power, justifies such a belief. To the angels of heaven there was the perfect evidence of knowledge; with men a proper consideration produces belief of this astonishing truth, and consistent with his manifestation was his departure from earth, for it was glorious. Though we are preaching his Gospel, and have long been pondering on his character, yet to us the secret or mystery of godliness is great!

God was manifest in the flesh. This is the conclusion of the verse. Let us glance at the commencement. Without controversy—great is the mystery of godliness. Who can deny this proposition? Godliness, or the religion of Christ is a mystery; not a mystery as it lay concealed in the prophetic writings; but now, though the virgin has conceived and borne a Son; though he has been seen, and heard, and known; though heaven and earth have borne testimony; though we are preaching him, and have long been pondering on his character; though inspiration has been afforded us, yet the mystery of our religion is great.

Let us imagine, that ages ago, in a benighted region, the sun had for one day—and for one day only—risen above the horizon. That ever before that it had been night or twilight, and that ever after that day, night and twilight had continued; and suppose that we had found in the writings of a philosopher some such sentences as the following: “We have been filled with astonishment. We saw the sun, that glorious orb which gives light to all the planets, plainly rise above the horizon. We were enveloped in a flood of light. Heat was felt everywhere. The earth was dressed in colors, and all nature smiled in new life. What a day was that! The stars hid their heads, men rejoiced; and distant nations who did not behold the spectacle, were in time made acquainted with it. This glorious sun continued for a day, and it went down with more splendor than that in which it rose.” If this sentence had been found, and astronomy was as well known as it now is, of what consequence would it have been, whether the word sun had been in the sentence or not—could any one have supposed that the man was writing about a star, or planet larger than ordinarily seen? Would his admiration rise to such a height? for this, would he employ such language? speak of stars which hid their heads, and of nations who, upon the proofs of it, (though

distant,) believed? Would he speak thus of a star—while at the same time he knew that there was a sun behind, from which all light was derived, and which was a million four hundred times as large as the earth? Take the word away, it is of no importance; the idea is just as strong without it, as with it. On no principle of criticism could we interpret the sentence as coming from a rational mind, if the language so entirely overpowered the sense.

God was manifest in the flesh. How can it be? Take then what goes before and what follows after these words; write the sentence in a book, leaving out the great and important word; ponder on the force of the language, and see then if anything can fill up the space, but the very word which the Holy Ghost (as we believe) caused to be written there. Great is the mystery: a prophet was manifested. No, this certainly would have no force. An angel? No, for the angels were commanded to worship Him. A high, though created intelligence? but after the Apostle had seen this high intelligence, heard him speak, known all that was prophesied of him, and all that he said himself—what impenetrable mystery would still veil the subject. Why run over all the most striking exhibitions of Christ, in order to justify his faith in a created being thus

employed? Why wonderful that angels should see such a stooping, or men brought by preaching to give credit to it?

In further discoursing on this subject, let us inquire what kind of a manifestation would be most satisfactory to the human mind—not that this should be the rule by which a revelation from heaven should be tried; still it may not be improper to make the inquiry.

The manifestation should be of a sufficient length of time, that men may be certified of the nature of it, and it should commence and conclude life in the ordinary way. This would be a perfect manifestation. Upon one of these particulars—the length of time—the limits of this discourse will forbid me to enlarge; it was however sufficient. Thirty years was time enough, not only to manifest a perfect union with the flesh, but to give those who were permitted to live at that period all the opportunity necessary to perceive it. I shall advert only to the commencement and to the conclusion of this manifestation “God was manifest in the flesh”—in infancy. This is the beginning of human life. Suppose He had taken possession of the flesh in any other stage but that of infancy—it is evident that it must have been in a body occupied by some other soul, and therefore a sinful body. If a body was to be prepared

for Christ in which the divine nature might be brought into union with the human, I see not in what better way it could have been done than in that in which we believe that it was effected. There could be no doubt in this case of a perfect manifestation, if that "holy thing" or holy flesh had been in union with God from the moment of life.

But there is another reason for such a commencement of this manifestation. God had promised salvation through the very agent by which it had been lost. The seed of the woman—and how could that prediction be fulfilled, except that a virgin should present the infant fruit of her body an offering for the sin not only of her own soul, but of the souls of all. The virgin mother of a pure and holy offspring, presents it as the fittest residence on earth for an incarnate God. But still another thought arises which cannot be spared. The promise of a manifestation of God came through a holy man, and was confined to his descendants; and when these had multiplied, the promise was to be fulfilled. To the house and lineage of David then, on the registers of the nation, the birth of the Messiah must be traced; and to that, with every circumstance of publicity, unnecessary save under such circumstances, can the believer refer. Messiah did not appear in

manhood ; marvels were at his birth, such as to fix it without controversy to its predicted origin.

If this manifestation justified the expectations of men and satisfied their reason, it could not, when truly presented, but affect their feelings. The very mention of flesh, as the word is often used in Scripture, indicates a sensibility to enjoyment and to suffering. Which of these our Lord most experienced, it is needless to say. It is prophesied that he should bruise the serpent's head, and that the serpent should bruise his heel. Here conflict and suffering were clearly predicted. It is expressly declared that He was manifested to take away our sin. This world was dead in sin. Our whole race was condemned by the violation of the law of God, and to eternal perdition. "By one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."—Rom. v. 12.

It was to relieve an amount of suffering and to remove an amount of guilt to us inconceivable, that "God was manifest in the flesh." Death was the threatened penalty which had been denounced against sin—and this, too, was endured. He tasted death for every man ; He made by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full and perfect satisfaction for sin. He tasted death. The sufferings on the cross which were visible, were a

small part of those which were endured; and all that were endured availed only to remove our guilt, as that body was united to a divine Redeemer.

Take from the cross the divinity of the sufferer and there can be no conceivable satisfaction offered to God's law. The blood which was shed, if examined, would have been found the same with that which the martyrs shed; and the duration and extent of the bodily anguish, had been equaled by those who had fellowship in such sufferings. It was the divine, the high, the mysterious union of the flesh with God, which made every drop of that precious blood so efficacious. To human eyes it might have appeared similar to that which stained the crosses on either side, but to angels who saw it, it had a value to be fully known only in eternity. From what sins, from what guilt, and from what pangs of conscience, have not the drops of blood which were shed on Calvary cleansed the souls of men. In that fountain how many have been cleansed, and how many will be cleansed in ages to come. How could human, or human and angelic suffering result in such infinite benefits. Look at that manifestation in the flesh agonizing for one night in Gethsemane and bleeding for one day on Calvary; and could any creature, how high soever it might

be, claim as a reward of such suffering, the removal of the guilt and sin of this ruined world, and insure that infinite and eternal glory be bestowed in its place! The reason why, and the mode in which the divine was incorporated with the human nature, may still be incomprehensible!

It is certain that the object of such condescension on the part of God was great enough to justify the act. To infinite benevolence the deliverance of a guilty world from eternal death, was a moving object—the happiness of millions, once fallen and then raised to life forever, to express their love and gratitude, was its most proper food—for that it would hunger and thirst. And by every man who could if necessary lay down his life for the souls of men, it will be believed, and though from its length and from its height and depth we may not be able clearly to demonstrate its truth, it can be no hardship to our faith to sit where the Apostles sat at the feet of Jesus, and respond a sentiment which was in the beginning, is now, and ever will be responded.

“*Without controversy*, great is the mystery of godliness. In reviewing what has been said, it must be evident,

1st. That the divinity of Christ does not depend upon a few *words* sprinkled over the Scriptures, and which some may be brought to believe

were the errors of scribes or translators. The whole language of the Bible, the most simple of all books, the whole language of the Bible demands the supposition that Christ was God. The word may be left out from Isaiah to Revelation—if the manifestation is spoken of, reason will demand that the blank be filled with the name of the Most High. The doctrine is not exposed to accident, or to criticism—the whole book must be destroyed, to destroy that; and the judgment of the sacred writers, not only on that, but on every other doctrine might well be doubted.

Try any other text in the Bible which speaks with admiration of the Saviour of the world, by this text,—subtract the word God and put in its place prophet, priest, or king, and how will the judgment of the writer appear!

In reviewing what has been said, it must be evident—

2dly. That an uncommon inclination to believe the word of God, and an uncommon benevolence of soul, are necessary before the human mind will be likely to understand the Scriptures, or to abide by their declarations. To many a master of Israel, besides Nicodemus, the Saviour saith, “Ye must be born again. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, be-

cause they are spiritually discerned." Not a line in the Bible was produced from the mind of a natural man, and Greek and Hebrew are not greater mysteries to the ignorant than the sentiments and doctrines of the Spirit to one not born of the Spirit. The shadow of holy doctrines may be seen by carnal eyes, but the doctrines themselves only by those whose eyes the Lord hath opened. In the Church and out of the Church, with a true creed and without it,—all—every man who would see the kingdom of heaven, must be born again; he will never else have that great, that overflowing benevolence which regards chiefly the souls of men, and the soul's perils; he will never have that childlike faith which believes every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God, unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

In reviewing what has been said, it must be evident that casting away all undue dependence upon, and no longer attaching undue importance to, the opinions of uninspired men, and reading and receiving the Scriptures with prayer and pure affection, is the way to grow wise unto salvation.

The holy and the wise declare *that* book to be the inspired word of God, and they can prove it by arguments not to be refuted.

When once introduced by them into that sacred

temple of truth, let us approach it with reverence, and submit to it with humility; and as in eternity our faculties unfold, it may *then* be the language of our humility, “Who can, by searching, find out God?”

Lastly. Let us consider our salvation as closely connected with the truths in that holy volume. There we must find our title to mansions in the skies. Within the compass of those pages are truths, which can make the lame man leap as the hart. The Holy Ghost overshadowing that book, makes it the Mother of us all. “We are born not of corruptible seed; but of incorruptible, by the word of God.” And what confidence and hope do not its awful pages inspire. God was manifest—to take away sin, and to give eternal life to all that believe. The Bible proclaims repentance and remission of sins, through the blood of the Saviour, and admission to the kingdom of heaven. Its offers of salvation are to the vilest sinner who repents and believes. A thief, while enduring a just sentence for the violation of *human* law, is by his believing prayers freed from the consequence of that law which is *divine*. It speaks of a blood-shedding which can cleanse all sinners from all sin, if humble and penitent and broken hearted. It receives God manifested in the flesh, and is forever bound to obedience

through the cross. What precious consolation have they, who have fled for refuge to the stronghold for sinners provided in the Gospel. God has undertaken the work of their salvation—they shall not be moved. God was manifest in the flesh—the powers of darkness blunted all their fiery darts upon him, and even the monster death has lost his sting.



## SERMON III.

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### ON THE ADVOCACY OF CHRIST.

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1 John ii. 1.

“IF ANY MAN SIN, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER  
JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS.”

THE word Advocate suggests to our minds a well known profession among men. That of the law. This is now an indispensable part of civil society, and a large and important class of men have devoted themselves exclusively to its duties. They spend much time in preparing to pursue this particular calling, and often make great attainments in it. Indeed, when some superior genius takes up this profession and unites to his learning great powers of eloquence, the most guilty criminal in the land is heard to exult almost in the language of the text. If I am accused of any crime, I know of one man who can secure my acquittal. Indeed, so indispensable is this profession, that where the accused has not the ability

to secure counsel the State appoints it for him. But this power among men is liable to abuse. Talents of the highest order are prostituted to the lowest purposes, and when by the perversion of law, men gain their cause, they always fear a reversal of the decision in some higher tribunal. But we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is just, though he pleads for the unjust, that he may bring them to God. He knows not only every jot and tittle of the law, but he knows also the whole mystery of grace and truth, and in undertaking to deliver them who were under the curse of the law, he became a curse for them. God laid upon him the iniquity of us all and by his stripes we are healed. If any man sin then we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ *the righteous*, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Familiar as was the mind of the apostle with this human institution it was still more familiar with one that was divine. It was an important part of the office of the high priest among the Jews that he should make intercession for the people. Once every year, on the great day of Atonement, clothed in his pontifical robes, bearing on his breastplate the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, surrounded by all the magnificence of the Mosaic ritual, and

sprinkled with the blood of animal sacrifices, the Aaronic priest entered within the veil, and made intercession for the sins of the people. From this most significant and sublime proceeding, the transition was easy to our great Advocate Jesus Christ the righteous; a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec, who enters not into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us. Standing there amidst myriads of glorified spirits, with the names of the Israel of God on his breastplate, he employs his great mediatorial power in their behalf, and that not on one day in the year only; he ever liveth to make intercession for us, and has commissioned us to proclaim to the ends of the earth, and to the close of time—"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

From these general remarks, two particulars arise for special consideration. First, the evil of sin, and secondly, the fact of Christ's advocacy for sinners.

First the evil of sin.

Sin is the transgression of the divine law. A law perfect and perfectly adapted to the condition of mankind, and by the universal observance of which, harmony would have pervaded the lower

world, as it does now the upper. Of this law, the judicious Hooker has said: "Her seat is the bosom of God; her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth owe her homage; the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempt from her power. Both angels and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though each in a different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy." Now sin is the transgression of this law, and the disturber of this peace, and its criminality must be estimated by the value and importance of that harmony and peace which it disturbs, and the dishonor which it casts on God. One transgression of this law, deliberately committed, sealed the fate of our first parents, caused their expulsion from paradise and converted their happiness into misery. As one crime now deliberately committed, destroys a man's reputation in society, and exposes him to the condemnation of human laws, so, under the divine government, one sin deliberately committed, seals a man's fate. "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" for sin is the transgression not of a civil law, but a criminal, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. And yet who is there that liveth and sinneth not? "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "If we say that we

have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Could we see our sins as they are seen in the light of heaven, they would appear not only numberless but most criminal and aggravated. Sin would appear in every relation and action of life, and as defiling to us as it is insulting to God. Indeed, so universal on this globe has been the breaking of God's law, that our general appellation is that of sinner. This is the name by which we are known in heaven, and when one sinner repenteth, there is joy among the angels above. Now the ignorant may make a mock of sin, and philosophers falsely so called, may endeavor to explain it away. But it remains still a blot on the creation, and the origin of all evil. It has kindled the fires of the pit; it has drowned the world with all its inhabitants, save eight persons, in a flood of waters. It has glutted our graveyards with the fairest and noblest human forms; it has converted this goodly heritage of man into a Golgotha, and made a hell upon earth by the wars and sufferings it has caused. It bites inwardly like a serpent and stings like an adder, and after the commission of one great sin, the mind has sometimes experienced such a torment as could not be endured, and death has been sought as a relief. Every sin, if seen through the microscope of God's Spirit, would swell out in its dimensions, until it appeared of

gigantic form, opening its mouth wide against the heavens and drawing down the wrath of God. Sometimes men's sins are brought to remembrance in so strong and vivid a light, that reason and conscience unite in condemning them to everlasting death. Then they experience an alarm and distress, which no self flattery can allay; then a wound is inflicted which no earthly balsam can heal, and no physician but the one spoken of in the text, can afford any relief; and then they hail with rapture the sound of pardon, and receive with the profoundest gratitude, the intelligence from heaven—"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

But, Secondly, let us consider this Advocacy.

It is written that the dead, small and great, shall stand before God; that the judgment shall sit and the books shall be opened, and that for every idle word we must give an account to God. Before this great and solemn day, God takes an account of sin and sinners—is angry with the wicked every day, and if he will not turn, he will whet his sword and bend his bow. The great question is, who will become the advocate of guilty man and plead his cause? No creature who is acquainted with the accused, or with the law which he has broken; no creature who knows the

penalty of sin, and has seen the power which has been offended, would venture to put forth a plea. The sinner himself is speechless, the great tribunal to which he is arraigned must itself designate the advocate who shall effectually plead his cause. It is said of our Lord Jesus Christ, that "He saw there was no man and he wondered there was no intercessor—Therefore his own arm brought salvation, and his righteousness it sustained him." Job wondered that there was no day's-man betwixt God and man, that he might lay his hand upon us both. But when man fell, his sin became so great, the evil so extensive, and the aggravation so extreme, committed as it was without provocation, necessity, or excuse, and in defiance of death eternal, that no created being could be found to advocate man's cause. Man himself, when at last his eyes were opened, dared not ask a remission of the sentence but hid himself from the presence of the Lord. How could he speak? what could he say, to what precedent, point? The angels who kept not their first estate were cast down to hell. Oh! there is weight in the words so often used—"Jesus Christ our only Advocate with the Father." There is no other. There could be no other. Nothing short of divine benevolence could have consented to plead our cause; nothing short of divine eloquence could have prevailed,

and nothing short of divine wisdom could have devised a way by which to deliver us, and to cause our very deliverance to redound to the glory of God. But Satan, when foiled in opposing the truth adopts it and drives it to absurdity. When it is impossible to prevent the sinner's application to the only advocate between God and man, the next thing is to multiply mediators so as to obscure the great one. But all the mediators which superstition has created, are to be classed under the head of lying vanities and miserable comforters. For how know we whether they ever heard a prayer, which their deluded followers have offered to them. But of Jesus Christ, God has audibly said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased—hear him;" and Christ has said, "No man cometh to the Father but by me;" and St. John has said, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous." Human mediation, and human intercession, are founded on an imperfect knowledge of character. There are some sins which come to our knowledge, and are so great, that an apostle has not desired us to pray for them; but there may be and doubtless are others worse than any that have come to light, for which we cannot pray. Were all the sins of men, in thought and word and deed, published and laid bare; were God wholly to un-

cover the human heart, and let us see all its deceitfulness and desperate wickedness, it would be said of earth as of heaven, that no intercession could be found. No holier man ever lived than Job, and yet when Job undertook to vindicate himself, his friends rebuked him. Few ever aimed at greater piety than David, and yet when David committed adultery and murder, who would have stood up in his defence? Alas! alas! had only one man broken up the harmony of the creation, we might consider it as an exception to a general rule. But when all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; when we have all turned every one to his own way and are all gone out of God's way, who would advocate our cause? If our deliverance had depended on the most merciful angel in heaven, he would have despaired of success. But now we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

“This, only this, subdues the fear of death.  
 And what is this? Survey the wondrous Cause,  
 And at each step let higher wonder rise.  
 Pardon for infinite offence, and pardon  
 Through means that speak its value infinite—  
 A pardon, bought with blood—with blood divine;  
 With blood divine of Him I made my foe—  
 Persisted to provoke, though woo'd and awed,  
 Blessed and chastised, a flagrant rebel still;  
 A rebel 'midst the thunders of His throne—  
 Nor I alone, a rebel universe.”

But we may profitably inquire, in *what manner* does our Lord put forth his plea and make his intercession for us. It was the opinion of Thomas Aquinas, and also of Bishop Beveridge, that our Lord intercedes for us in heaven, by presenting before the throne of his Father, the sufferings of his human nature while on earth. He is that Lamb which was slain from the foundation of the world. But without appealing to any uninspired authority, or relying on the imagination, let us resort at once to the holy Scriptures. These may furnish abundant materials for our use, and such alone as can be satisfactory. Seven hundred years before our Lord's advent, Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would make intercession for the transgressors; and when He was nailed to the cross, we hear him pray, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." After this example, his disciples learned to pray for their enemies; and the first martyr when dying, exclaimed, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Our Lord's atonement was not finished when he prayed for the thief, and his plea was grounded on his promised success. But now a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction has been made, the work has been accomplished, the sins of the whole world atoned for, and divine justice is satisfied. Now as we plead the suffering of

Christ for ourselves, so may He plead his sufferings for us. He may plead—"By the mystery of my holy incarnation; by my baptism, fasting, and temptation; by my agony and bloody sweat; by my cross and passion; by my death and resurrection, Father, forgive them." Our Lord may not only plead *his* sufferings in our behalf, but He may also plead *our* sufferings themselves in arrest of justice. *For some*, he may plead as he did for his murderers—"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." For others—they have wandered afar—from peace and safety; they have fallen into misery and want; they have condemned themselves, and have repented in dust and ashes—Father, "receive them graciously and love them freely." For some, he may plead the piety of their parents; for some, the profit of their future labors; and for others, the glory that will redound to God's grace by the conversion of such conspicuous offenders. I hear him now plead for a sinner—"his sufferings are great—'There is no peace to the wicked!' He has sunk below the brute. He has sinned with a high hand; he has done it *ignorantly*, and in unbelief. But I bought him with my blood; I travailed in birth for *his* soul; I bore his sins in my own body on the tree. I made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the

sins of the whole world. Hide, therefore, thy face from his sins; blot out all his misdeeds. Behold me, and look upon the face of thine Anointed. Behold my hands and my feet, and visit him not as he deserves—his sins rise up in judgment to condemn him. The whole world condemns him—he condemns himself. Let this man go down to his house justified.”

Our Advocate pleads for *saints* as well as for sinners. He pleads the covenant made from everlasting—“Thine they were and thou gavest them me, Holy Father keep through thine own name those thou hast given me.” Our Lord took upon him a human body and experienced its pains and wants, that he might know how to succor them that are tempted; and as he prayed for Simon, when assailed by Satan, so may he pray for the saints of to-day. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmity, for he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He tasted sorrow as well as death for every man, and was *acquainted with grief*;—and to assuage that of his weeping friends at Bethany, he raised the dead to life. Hear his intercession there—“I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always; but because of the people that stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.”

We have read often of the intercession of men, one for another. Abraham interceded for Sodom; Samuel prayed all night for Saul; Moses and Aaron fell down and interceded before God for rebellious Israel. Many a pious father has with David cried for his son, "Would to God I could have died for him." Many a pious mother for her daughter, "My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live." "My son, O God, is now lost—Lord, must he be lost forever?" With strong crying and tears the closets of Christians have been consecrated, from that of the mother of St. Augustine to that of the suffering saints of to-day. But put all these tears in a bottle, and they are but a drop in the bucket compared with Christ's intercession for us. Which of these agonized until the sweat rolled down as it were great drops of blood? Which of these undertook so bad a cause as that of rebellious man, and bore the hidings of God's countenance, until he cried, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" Of which of those could it be said, "His soul was poured out as water, all his bones were out of joint—His heart was melted like wax in the midst of his bowels. His strength was dried up as a potsherd, and his tongue cleaved to his gums." Our Lord died before his companions in death, in consequence of the in-

tenseness of his mental agonies. Now, if on the cross Christ prayed for his murderers, we may well suppose, that on his great mediatorial throne he will continue his intercession, and with equal success; and if his success depends upon his ability—what may we not hope for from his advocacy? Christ is called the “*Wonderful Counsellor*.” “Our Redeemer is strong, and shall thoroughly plead our cause.” When, then, we consider all the qualifications of *our* Advocate, my Christians friends, what may we not hope for? He is divine—in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Him the Father always hears. He spake as never man spake.

Who then is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again—who is even at the right hand of God, who ever liveth to make intercession for us.” The very mention of our name may seal our blessedness, and fix our condition through eternity—“Father, I will that *he* be with me where I am, that he may behold my glory.” It is done as thou hast said. Christ advocated the cause of a malefactor, and that day the malefactor died and was with Christ in Paradise. Christ advocated the cause of his murderers, and in fifty days, three thousand were converted to God;—and who can say, but, that the most despised sinner in this temple, if he

engages Jesus Christ to advocate his cause in heaven, he may obtain the full and free forgiveness of his sins. Say, then, oh sinner! say, "Lord Jesus, plead thou my cause with them that rise up against me, and fight against them that fight against me." Say, "Jesus, master, have mercy on ME;" and "though your sins are as scarlet, they may become as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they may become as wool." "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword—for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."



## S E R M O N I V .

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### DEPENDENCE ON CHRIST.

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St. John xv. 5.

“WITHOUT ME, YE CAN DO NOTHING.”

ST. PAUL approved of the sentiment of a heathen poet, that “in God we live, and move, and have our being;” because it inculcated our *dependence upon God*, for everything which belongs to our animal or natural life.

What can we do without God? It is he who gives us the breath by which we live, the strength by which we move, and our immortal soul is but a part of his own immortality; for when the “body returns to the earth as it was, the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

In like manner we may approve of the sentiment of the text, for it inculcates as clearly our dependence upon Christ for everything which belongs to our spiritual or religious life. “Without

Christ" we can neither live, nor move, nor have our being, in the Church. This is the view which St. Paul had of the Saviour, when he says to the Corinthians, speaking of Christ, "who of God is made unto us 'wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.'"

In the work of redemption we may all be learners, and so great is the height, and length, and depth of it, that we should not despond if we can now get but a glimpse of him who is "the light of the world."

Those who have endeavored to "follow Christ" for years, are compelled still to consider themselves babes in the knowledge of this great mystery, which will continue to occupy the immortal mind through ages of eternity.

It is therefore with no feeble sense of *unfitness*, that the present attempt is made to consider that entire dependence upon Christ, which appears to be expressed in these his own words—"Without me, ye can do nothing."

I. One point appears to be very evident, that "without Christ" we should never have been redeemed. When our first parents transgressed the law of God and fell under his displeasure, a sentence of death temporal and eternal was prepared and ready to be executed; and Adam and his whole posterity would have been swept into just and eternal destruction.

There would have been no *knowledge* of the mercy and of the other bright and benevolent attributes of God. The dark desolation of Cain might have in a degree at least, pervaded the whole race. Without Christ, this not only might, but we are assured would have been our temporal and eternal doom. When there was no eye to pity, and no arm to save, when perhaps the very angels of heaven could no longer plead for man, then *One* as much above the angels in glory, as he was in mercy, said—"Lo! I come, to do thy will, O Lord! My soul shall be made an offering for sin; the cup of wrath which they have deserved, I will drink: give me the heathen for *my inheritance*, and the uttermost parts of the earth for my possession."

Let us try to realize that "without Christ," we might have been now prisoners of despair; wearing out our lives under the awful certainty that we were soon to fall into a state of blackness and darkness forever, and crying out with Cain—"My punishment is greater than I can bear!"

II. Another point seems equally clear, that "without Christ" no man would ever have been converted and fitted to enter the kingdom of heaven. The instructions of heathen philosophy could shed only a feeble light over the future, and set in motion only a feeble impulse towards holiness of

heart and life. The law of God itself, delivered in the awful grandeur of Mount Sinai, could but convict the consciences of men, and lead them to self-condemnation. It was the Gospel of Christ which first arrested the attention, aroused the insensibility, and satisfied the longings of the immortal mind. It was a display of Christ, and in that very part of his mission which his unenlightened followers would have wished most of all to have concealed, of Christ on his cross, covered with shame and ignominious wounds—it was this very display of Christ before which the hearts and the hopes of men melted and revived. Without the Gospel of Christ, and without Christ on his cross, the Greeks might to this hour have boasted of wisdom, and the world might have been buried in its vices and crimes. Nor is this all; it is the spirit and power of *Christ*, in the preaching of the cross, which gives it efficacy; it is he still who calls, qualifies, and sends forth the ministers of the Gospel, and working with them “confirms the word with signs following.”

Let every believer then, whose heart the Lord “hath opened,” that he might attend to the things which belong to his peace, look up with gratitude to him who “gave him power to become a child of God,” and who made him to differ from an unholy world.

“Praise, my soul, the God that sought thee,  
Wretched wanderer, far astray ;  
Found thee lost, and kindly brought thee  
From the paths of death away.

“Praise with love’s devoutest feeling  
Him who saw thy guilt-born fear ;  
And the light of hope revealing,  
Bade the blood-stained cross appear.”

III. Although the door of mercy has been opened, and the sinner turned from the error of his way ; still without a righteousness, far superior to his own, he will never see the Lord. “We are therefore accounted righteous before God on account of the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and not for our own work or deservings.” Our dependence, then, upon Christ must extend to his righteousness.

The holiest *Christians* feel and confess, that their endeavors fall far short of God’s commands. They discover that all their works and apparent sacrifices, are stained with sin ; that they would not endure the “refiner’s fire,” nor bear to be weighed in the “balance of the sanctuary ;” and at any moment they would despair of reaching the presence of God, and of beholding his glory—but that they rely upon “the righteousness of Christ.”

The parable of the wedding supper illustrates

this truth. Although the supper was ready, the guests were invited, and were present at the feast; yet, without the wedding garment, they would have been cast into outer darkness. How is it possible that any man can expect to appear before God in his own righteousness? Who is there that can enter a human assembly where he is known, with a consciousness that he is without fault even in the eyes of men. Here, it is true, a multitude of sins may be covered by the mantle of charity, and the consciousness of our own infirmity may compel us to bear with the infirmity of others. But there is no infirmity nor sin in the saints above; and the only mantle which they perceive in their ranks, is one that has been wrought on earth by the perfect obedience and submission of the Saviour in our stead. It is when Christ is made unto us "righteousness and sanctification" that God "is well pleased."

Who then can think his soul to be safe, while he trusts it to take its flight alone, naked, disconnected with the righteousness of Christ, to stretch its wings up towards that pure and holy throne of God—when a high and exalted Saviour came down to bleed and to die for his sins, has offered him a robe of righteousness, and has declared in these plain terms, "Without me, ye can do *nothing*?" Or of what service can it be to make

use of the Saviour's name, as a mere ceremony in our transactions with God, when such truths as we have pointed out are taught in the Scriptures, and our "very life is hid with Christ in God?" That we may be at no loss to know when we are trusting to Christ's righteousness—we read that the effect of such a trust is joy and peace of mind in view of another world, and continued efforts for personal holiness in this.

IV. Without Christ we cannot pray acceptably to God.

Under the Mosaic economy, an innocent animal was slain to make prayer effectual: even then the worshipper was restrained from approaching the most holy place. But now we have "boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus."

As the priest in the ancient temple presented the offerings of the people: so Jesus Christ, the high priest of our profession, who is seated on the right hand of God, ever liveth to make intercession for us. All acceptable prayer comes up to God through him. And what Christian who reflects upon his prayers, but must rejoice that we have an high Priest who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities? What lifeless petitions! What wandering of thoughts! What ignorance in asking? What formality, and even hypocrisy, do

not Christians continually lament? Such prayers are more fit to provoke than to propitiate the Father of spirits. But on the other hand, what may we not expect if we are allowed to put up our petitions in the name of the Son of God. O Lord, hear us for Christ's sake. "Verily, verily," saith the Saviour, "whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

V. In fine, without Christ we can do nothing that is pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God.

It is evident that men in general attempt to do little for the glory of God, and for the best interests of their fellow-men; and the reason is, because they are "without Christ." It is equally evident, and far more surprising, that many disciples of the Saviour are willing to do and to suffer but little in this cause; and the same reason may be given—they feel but little need of depending upon Christ. They are relying upon their own wisdom, righteousness, and strength; they do but little, and are proud of that. It is when we are humbled in view of God's holy law, abased because of our inexcusable offences; when "poor in spirit," we feel unable to do anything as it ought to be done, and yet bound to render all things to God as those who have been bought with a price, that we may be said to bring forth fruit to the praise and glory of God. It is as

captives redeemed by Christ, as sinners interceded for by Christ, as disciples following the example of Christ, and depending upon the continual assistance of Christ, that we appear and labor in our proper character, and have a reason for the hope of acceptance. “He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for *“without me ye can do nothing.”* Our Lord alludes to a most common fact in the natural world—the necessary union of the tree and its branches: “I am the vine, ye are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me.” Should we separate the branch, even when loaded with blossoms, from the tree on which it grew—how quickly would it wither and die? Though we expose it to the brightest sun, or the most reviving rain, our efforts would fail; and we should speedily behold a striking emblem of the Christian who is without Christ.

VI. One thing is certain, that we are not willing to die “without Christ.” Men who have said but little about the Saviour during life, are heard involuntarily to call upon him in the hour of death. This may possibly be owing to the circumstance of their having been born and brought up in a Christian land: and it may possibly be an involuntary tribute to the truth of the text, “without

me ye can do nothing.” All the composure which false doctrine and false reasoning can impart to the conscience of the dying sinner, is in danger of being disturbed amidst the apprehensions of a death-bed. That God is a holy being, and that he will by no means clear the guilty, are truths which are deeply engraven on the human mind; and although men under the influence of error, may for a while summon up resolution, and rely upon their own wisdom, and rest in their sins, they not unfrequently discover, when possibly it may be too late, that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Certain it is, that good men always, and bad men often both think and speak much of *Christ*, when they are about to pass through the valley of the shadow of death.

In looking back upon a guilty life, a wicked man is often heard to say, that he relies upon the merits of a Saviour, and is often heard to cry, “Lord Jesus, save me, I perish.” The holy martyr, Stephen, and the penitent thief on the cross, both uttered in substance, the same prayer, they could not *die* “without Christ.” We hazard no opinion upon the success of the prayers of dying sinners, but would only inquire, why, if the Saviour is so important to us in death, he is not in proportion important in life? We have to “die daily,” and Christ may be, and doubtless is,

as important to us in making our daily struggles against sin and satan, as he will be to us in our last struggles with death.

May we not infer, then, that the reason why we have so little success in our daily struggles, and that we bring forth so little fruit, is because we ask not the *presence and assistance of Christ*, who says, "Without me ye can do nothing?"

On the other hand, this may be the true secret why there is so much holy resignation in some Christians, so much zeal and self-devotion, so much activity and perseverance, such ardent prayer and noble enterprise, such deadness to the world, and life in religion. This may be the secret why some Christians are more holy and useful than others; why they go on their way rejoicing, through evil report and good report; in life and in death; and this may be the secret why so many professors of religion, languish and complain, and find neither pleasure nor peace in the ways of piety. What would Christ's earliest disciples have done without him? What did they do the moment he was taken from them? They fled and were confounded. What did they *do*, and how did they conduct and preach after he had risen from the dead, after *he* had appeared unto them, and after they had received his promised gift of the Comforter? They were all boldness, inspiration and joy. Hear one

of them say : “ I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.”

A few words to two classes of persons will conclude these remarks. How can wicked men escape if they neglect so great salvation? They often complain that they have neither the wisdom nor the righteousness necessary for salvation : but here is wisdom and righteousness, here is every thing that a perishing sinner needs, and provided expressly to *save* him.

The law of God which would accuse him of innumerable sins, has been satisfied. Jesus Christ died to satisfy the law of God. It is not now their *sins*, although these have most “justly provoked God’s wrath and indignation against them,” it is their unbelief and rejection of Christ, which will seal their doom for ever. If they would only *believe*, they might be saved. And how insupportable their self-reproaches through eternity! that they might have escaped all their sufferings, by only believing in Christ: that there were days and weeks and years in which they might have believed; but it is too late for ever. Men sometimes acknowledge that it is their irresolution and love of sin which is in the way. But Christ has sent forth a Spirit, which can convince men of the folly, the misery, and the danger of sin; and which operating, with his word, is sharper than a

sword, cutting the sinner from his sins, though they be like his right eye or right hand. And lest he should dread the operation, O wonderful compassion! Christ has anointed his ministers to preach the balm of the gospel, and to pour oil and wine into his wounds. O submit to the operation; it is better for thee to enter into life, with one eye, than to have two eyes and to be cast into hell-fire. It is possible, many of you may think of Christ, if not before, upon your death-beds. It is possible, you may then call upon his name, but it is more than possible, then, that it will be too late. At any rate, such a late application must cover you with confusion and fill you with apprehension.

It is hard to give up sin, which a man has for a long time nourished and cherished in his bosom; but soon that cherished sin may "bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder." It is a worm that may "never die." It is a fire that may "never be quenched." There is one who can now destroy that worm, the Lord Jesus Christ. Approach him in faith and in prayer. He is exalted to give repentance to Israel, and his blood it is that cleanseth from all sin.

Let us ponder on the import of the text, and put in practice the thought which it suggests. If we are convinced that our past unfruitfulness has

arisen from our separation from *Christ*, let us “draw near to him in a new and living faith:” and obtain that strength by which we, feeble as we are, “may *do all things*.” Let us begin then, more seriously the work of *self-denial*: and when suffering under its smart, let us look up and depend upon the consolations of Christ, which are neither few nor small. Let us commence more vigorously the work of *doing good*, and when we meet with difficulties, let us look up and depend upon the power of Christ before which every knee must bow. Let us endeavor to live above the world and renounce its pomps and vanities; and when the feelings of a corrupt nature are mortified, let us look up and expect the riches of Christ’s “glory, which are ready to be revealed in the last time.” And when oppressed with a consciousness of our infirmities and sins, let us rely upon the *mercy* of Christ, which may forgive, and the righteousness of Christ which is abundant to cover us in raiment “white as snow.”

## SERMON V.

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### WITHOUT CHRIST.

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Ephesians ii. 12.

“THAT AT THAT TIME YE WERE WITHOUT CHRIST, BEING ALIENS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL, AND STRANGERS FROM THE COVENANT OF PROMISE, HAVING NO HOPE, AND WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD.”

IN times of danger, men discover their real character, and fly at once to their cherished resources: one man, if brought suddenly to the verge of the grave, will pray to the saints to deliver him;—another will apply to Jesus Christ, as if He was the tutelary divinity of his particular nation;—and a third will cast himself upon a God of mercy;—while a fourth will rely upon chance as his divinity; and indeed, of every unconverted man now as in the days of Jonah, it may be said, under such circumstances, that they cried, “every man unto his God.” Now; the idea I would first present is, that Jesus Christ, is not the tutelary

Divinity of *any* particular nation, and is in no such sense as this, the God of any man's salvation: I do not mean to say that the last prayer of the dying man, may not be heard; although I greatly fear that, in such a case, where God has been calling to a man for years, and has not been attended to;—when at last that man is compelled to ask for mercy of God; I greatly fear, that he will not find it:—“I called, but ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock, when your fear cometh.” The great difference between *true* and *false* religion is, that the true is designed not merely to *save*, but to *sanctify* the soul. If I was to express the strong and clear idea on my mind, it would be, that eternal salvation, is the result of a character formed this side the grave. We are not told what will be our pleasures, or our pursuits in the world to come;—that is, exactly how God will employ us, or exactly how he will make us happy:—but are told what manner of spirit we must be of—“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:”—We are told what our tastes, and what our desires must be; and more than that; we are assured that we shall be there, very much the same men we are here; and that the religious and

irreligious will each go to his "own place." Judas when he died, went to *his* place; and Peter when he suffered martyrdom, went to *his*—Dives went into torment; and Lazarus into "Abraham's bosom!"

Settle it, therefore, I pray you, that in order to your being effectually benefited by the redemption of Christ; you must sustain such a relation to him, as will insure the formation of a truly sincere and religious character. For Christ to profit you, you must become a follower of Christ, in the strictest sense of the word; you must repent of your sins, forsake them, and cast yourself, soul and body, now and for time and eternity, on Christ Jesus the Lord; and when accepted by him, and united in spirit with him by the Holy Ghost, as the branch is united to the vine,—then, and then only can it be said of you, "ye who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Now, my hearers, young and old, have you ever tried to realize what a situation you are in, who are "without Christ?" I am speaking of you, who are living in a Christian land; and would remind you, that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you. Have you ever endeavored to realize what it is to be without Christ? I fear not! It is to be

living under all the curses of a broken law. It is written in the Bible—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Galatians iii. 10.) Now, if you have lived to this time, without Christ, you are standing as it were, under an overhanging rock, which is just ready to fall and to grind you to powder. Every shower of rain that descends upon it; every tempest of wind that sweeps round it, threatens to precipitate it on your head: the constant accumulation of particles of earth and other material substances, *must some time*, cause it to fall, and *may, at any time*; and yet you have been living, sleeping, and waking, days, weeks, months, and years, under that impending weight of destruction; and nothing that your own reason can teach you; and no remonstrances from God's ministers, no—though God himself has been beseeching you,—have induced you to remove to a place of safety! Instead of having a rock *beneath* your feet; *standing upon it*; and *resting* upon it; and *looking up* from it to the new Jerusalem,—the city of our God—you are still *standing underneath* the mountain of yoursins; and can see nothing before you but blackness, darkness, and a tempest! You are strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, without God, and without hope, because without

Christ. No matter what may be the particular form of your unbelief and indifference; no matter whether you are old or young; whether you think you have committed many, or few sins, all you have committed, are over your head, and are a sore burden, too heavy to bear, and they will all, sooner or later, find you out; for God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing—and for every idle word spoken,—every false statement men make—every uncharitable and censorious speech they utter; God will bring them into judgment. Think, then, what it is to have committed such sins; and what it is to be without Christ; and to be underneath such a load of guilt. Think how heavily one single sin sometimes weighs on your mind—how many tears have been shed for it; and how much shame has been suffered, and how often the soul has cried out in bitterness, that its sufferings were greater than it could bear, and that self-destruction was better than life. Then reflect what a weight a whole life of sin will be, when it comes down upon you at once! Our blessed Lord speaks of a millstone being hanged about a man's neck; and of his being cast into the sea, as punishment that awaits the persecutors of his disciples. The Bible speaks of one sin committed in Paradise, causing the whole earth to be cursed. But, O what a burden will not hundreds and thou-

sands and millions of sins become ! and O, what a helpless, ruined, and pitiable object a man, without Christ, who is driven out of this life, as Adam was driven out of Paradise, with more sins to answer for, than he has hairs on his head ! than there are stars in heaven, and sands on the sea shore ! than he has lived days, hours, and minutes ! We call these things to mind, because all these sins, great, aggravated, innumerable as they are ; forgotten by you, but written in the Book of God's remembrance, might have been laid upon Christ ; put under your feet ; nay, literally and truly, buried in the depth of the sea,—and remembered no more ! Our Lord Jesus Christ came to bear our sins in his own body, on the tree ; and to become our deliverer ; by carrying them as the scape goat of old did the sins of Israel ; into the wilderness, that they might return no more. But the sinner who has never transferred his sins to Christ, must prepare to meet a God of judgment, and himself bear all the punishment which divine justice will apportion to him. For the day that cometh, which shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble ; it shall leave them neither root nor branch. Malachi iv. 1.

Again, he who is without Christ, is without peace of mind. Our remarks do not apply to the utterly thoughtless and unbelieving, but to those

who have a concern for the salvation of their souls; the former may not desire, nor care for peace; but with the latter, there is more or less apprehension and alarm: now of all men, the most miserable, are those who have just enough of religion to see the evil of sin, and not enough to forsake it: they enjoy neither the life that *now is*, nor that which *is to come*; they are wandering through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none. I do not wonder that such men sometimes resolve to be rich; for if they attain to riches, they apparently have *some* satisfaction at least; it may be small and empty, and counterbalanced by cares and perplexities, but it is something. Our Saviour describes the Laodiceans as neither cold nor hot, and says:—"I would that thou *wast* either cold or hot." But as few men compared with the whole number can be rich, by far the greatest portion of mankind, notwithstanding all their struggles in this world, must be classed among the miserable, and this because they are without Christ. "The wicked," says Isaiah, "are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;" "their mouths are an open sepulchre;" madness is in their hearts; hateful and hating one another; flying from object to object; travelling from city to city, and from continent to continent, and saying, "Who will

show us any good?" Tormented like Tantalus, with a thirst for happiness, which nothing on earth can ever quench. Wars and fightings, provincial jealousies and animosities, party prejudices and family feuds, social disturbances and personal quarrels ending in blood, all testify as with a hundred mouths that the whole world lieth in wickedness, and that there is no peace to the wicked. Now all this results from being without Christ. There is not a sin included in this catalogue which God would not forgive for Christ's sake; not one for which Christ did not die; and there is not a sinner but might, if he would return to God, through Christ, and find mercy, have all his sins pardoned and hidden in the depth of the sea. Hear the express promise of God:—"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." (Heb. x. 16-18.) "Having therefore, brethren, these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. vii. 1.)

Every impenitent sinner resembles the prodigal son, who spent all he *had* to spend in a far country,

and there fell into disgrace and misery. But alas! every impenitent sinner does *not* resemble the prodigal son, who at last came to himself, and returned to his father's house, and was received with open arms and joyful feasting. Contrast the bosom of the pardoned and penitent sinner with the bosom of the impenitent and unpardoned! Does it require much time to decide, that light is not more different from darkness, joy from sorrow, sweet from bitter, than is the bosom of the saint from that of the sinner. When Saul of Tarsus was breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, his bosom was a faint picture of the horrible pit; but when he had repented and believed the gospel, and was caught up to the third heavens, his happiness knew no bounds! While the Bible describes impenitent sinners as destitute of peace, so it describes the penitent as enjoying a peace which passeth all understanding. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." O, had ye hearkened unto my commandments, then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea. My peace, said Christ to his disciples, "I leave with you." The criminal reprieved, when under the gallows; the mariner escaped from shipwreck; the sick recovered from the plague; the soldier

who alone escaped to tell of the carnage of the battle field, can form an idea of the peace of the Christian. It results from a calm, rational hope of happiness beyond the grave, founded on the known truth and love and faithfulness of God in Christ, and a present sense of reconciliation with God through the cross of his Son. Once God was dreaded, now he is loved. Once God's presence was avoided, now it is sought for and delighted in. In his impenitent condition, the sinner may be compared to Adam, when he stood disinherited and excluded from paradise; in his believing condition, he is like a man who has found a door to re-admit him into paradise, and is awaiting the summons,—“Friend, come up higher!”

To be without Christ to the end of this life, is to be without Christ through eternity. There is hardly one of my hearers who does not promise himself, that sooner or later, he will secure an interest in Christ. He admits that his peace is not made with God, and that he is without a well-grounded hope of glory—indeed that the threatenings of a God of judgment are directed to him, and that all the curses of a broken law may fall heavily upon him, unless he repents; but he intends to repent in time, to avert the dreadful calamity. He acknowledges that he is not happy—no, far from it; his mind is at times uneasy about

his future welfare, and he does not mean to remain much longer in this state. How much longer, my dear friends, you mean to stand in jeopardy, I know not; but one thing I know, that some of you have stood in jeopardy for many years past. Now, suppose you should live in future without Christ only as many years as you have already lived since you resolved to repent, and follow Christ. Suppose I say you should prophesy to yourself, or I should prophesy to you that you will remain for the next five or ten years without Christ; that you will listen to five hundred more sermons, without being persuaded to be a Christian; have four or five more severe fits of sickness; lose one or two more children, or friends—should I prophesy to you an incredible thing? Certainly not! That you resolved five years ago to prepare for death, and have not yet done it; that you have contrived to answer conscience so effectually, and arm yourself with such good reasons for not repenting—is pretty good evidence that you will be able to do it five years longer,—and *five years* at the *end of that!* The fact is, the older you grow, the more skillful you will become in finding excuses; more and more hypocrisy you will see among professing Christians; more and more obscurity in the Scriptures; and more and more in life that will prejudice you

against the ministers of Christ. Indeed the older you grow, the less sensibility you will feel to divine Truth, and to everything else;—your heart, hard as it now is, will grow harder; and your conscience, blunted as it now is, will become blunter;—more and more will your faculties of hearing and seeing be impaired, and your ability to attend upon God's house abridged—there will be first weeks, and then months, between your attendance; and more and more that last and great argument of Satan will prevail, *It is now too late to repent*; you now admit, that with your own views of religious doctrine, if you should die without Christ and a change of heart, you would be lost, and must perish. But you do not intend thus to die—certainly not; it is not convenient just now to give up the world; you are a little too much occupied, perhaps, in this new business, or engaged with those new pleasures, or too much is now required of you in bringing forward your children. Alas! alas! when I see such persons as you, I think of the similitude of Solomon, of fishes caught in a net; true it is a large net, and the net is yet in the water—you can still swim in it, and you have company enough to amuse and entertain you! But wait a little,—out of that net you can by no means get!—you are safely enclosed, and strong arms

are now gradually and gently drawing you to land—and soon the adversary will seize upon his prey! O make one convulsive effort! Cry mightily to God to deliver you!—not a moment is to be lost,—one day more, and it will be too late *forever!* By all that is horrible in the pit, and by all that is happy in heaven, strive to enter in at the strait gate! You must take the kingdom of heaven by violence!—yes, the violent must take it by force! Cry—“Jesus, Master, have mercy on me!” Pray without ceasing!—Begin to read the holy Scriptures, and *read* with all diligence!—awaken those around you; cry, “Awake thou that sleepest, and Christ will give thee light!” This is the nearest way to escape; for such praying, and such reading, and such writing will become intolerable to your present tempter, and may cause him to quit you. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you;” do this, and O, with what rapture will you exclaim—“The snare is broken, and we are delivered!”

Allow me to remind you, that you cannot turn and reflect just when you please; both repentance and faith, are gifts of God—you cannot remove away from under your sins just when you please. Those sins are crimes, which no one but yourself will own; and the law, and the accuser will not so acquit the guilty. You must point to evidence

—to the law satisfied in Christ—or its satisfaction will be required from you, the transgressor. There is a time for all things—a time to repent, and a time to believe;—and when that time is past “there is no more sacrifice for sin; but a certain and fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversary.” But allowing none of these circumstances in your case!—how uncertain is life, and how uncertain the possession of reason in death. Suppose that all things are ready on the part of God, even to the last; yet death may overtake you before the shortest prayer can be uttered. But, O my hearers! if you have managed to live so long without Christ, there is every probability that you will die without him; that is, without such a saving and sanctifying union with Christ as will be of any avail. O then, let me exhort you—to recover yourselves out of the snares of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will; let me invite you to taste and see how gracious the Lord is; let me entreat you to stand from under the great Rock—for just when you are saying “Peace and safety,” then sudden destruction may come: and on whomsoever this rock shall fall, it will grind him to powder!

## S E R M O N V I.

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### ON THE HOLY GHOST.

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Acts xix. 2.

“HE SAID UNTO THEM, HAVE YE RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST SINCE YE BELIEVED? AND THEY SAID UNTO HIM, WE HAVE NOT SO MUCH AS HEARD WHETHER THERE BE ANY HOLY GHOST.”

THESE are the words of certain disciples whom St. Paul found in one of the cities of Asia which he visited. It may appear strange to us, that there could be true disciples who had never heard of the Holy Ghost. But as in the natural world we live a long time before we know and feel to whom in it we are most indebted; so in religion we doubt not there are persons, habitually governed by the fear of God and not destitute of the fruits of the Spirit, who, notwithstanding, can give *no better account* of their faith, than these disciples whom the Apostle found at Ephesus. They had received only the first principles of the

doctrine of Christ. But this St. Paul thought neither safe nor sufficient. He therefore instructed them more fully in true religion; and particularly in the nature and office of that blessed Being from whom they had unconsciously received a teachable disposition and a desire to become devout and holy men. Happy was it for these disciples that they met with a faithful instructor. For, although sincere in their intentions and teachable in their disposition, by giving heed to ignorant or designing men, they might have been led into error, and might have lived and died in darkness.

The disciples of Christ must *grow* in grace and in the knowledge of God and of his Son Jesus Christ. It is most happy for them, then, when they have a faithful pastor, or some experienced Christian friend, to whom they can confide their views and feelings, and with whom they can freely communicate the exercises of their minds. Days of darkness and terrors unnumbered will thus be avoided.

There can certainly be no persons in this assembly, who, if questioned by St. Paul himself, were that possible, or by any of his humble successors on earth, whether they had received the Holy Ghost, could reply, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." But, although the name of that blessed Being is

often repeated, still it is possible that some persons present may profitably listen to a few remarks upon the character, the dignity, and the influences of the blessed Spirit over the human mind. To such we would address the thoughts which may suggest themselves to us under each of the heads just named, at the same time applying the subject to *all*, whether ignorant or instructed.

I. The *character* of the Holy Ghost.—The Holy Ghost is a person, and not a mere personification. All the attributes of God may be personified. We may say, “*Mercy* rejoiceth against *judgment* ;” “ Thus *spake* the wisdom of God ;” “ The *goodness* of God leadeth thee to repentance.” The prophet Isaiah (lix. 14) in one verse personifies four attributes of the Deity : “ *Judgment* is turned away backward, and *justice* standeth afar off ; for *truth* is fallen in the street, and *equity* cannot enter.” But how different is this from the *personality* contained in the following texts of Scripture. “ The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me.” (Isa. xlviii. 16.) “ Jesus said, If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when *He* is come, He will reprove the world of sin.” (John xvi. 7.) “ John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a *dove*, and

it abode upon him." (John i. 32.) St. Paul to the Romans speaks of the Holy Spirit in these words: "Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what to pray for as we ought. But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groaning that cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." (Rom. viii. 26, 27.) For such agency in the plan of salvation the name of the Holy Ghost is admitted with that of the Father and the Son in the solemn ordinance of Baptism. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of Son, and the Holy Ghost." (Matt. xxviii. 19.) The Holy Ghost is then a person—a being sufficiently distinct from the Father and the Son, to justify and require the application of personality. This may be rendered more plain, if we consider,

II. His *dignity*. Most men in Christian lands have formed their opinions as to God the Father,—who and what He is. But their opinions are not so distinctly formed as to, who is Jesus Christ, and who is the Holy Ghost, whose names are thus inscribed with equal honor on every believer's forehead. There are those who say, that Jesus Christ is the highest of *created beings*. Who then is the Holy Ghost?—that Holy Ghost concerning whom this remarkable caution is given in

Scripture, "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that *blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost*, it shall not be forgiven." (Luke xii. 10.) Men who have blasphemed God and blasphemed Christ, may repent and be forgiven; but if they blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, they shall *not* be forgiven. There are those who say that the Holy Ghost is an attribute of God, just as is wisdom or mercy. But is an attribute of God of more dignity than God himself with all his attributes, that one included? Who then is the Holy Ghost? The following Scripture will inform us. In the fifth chapter of the Acts, we have an account of Ananias and Sapphira—both of whom had deliberately told a lie in the presence of Peter the Apostle. Peter said to the man, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie against the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto *men*, but unto *God*." According to St. Peter, then, the Holy Ghost is God.

But if the Father is God, and the Holy Ghost is God—who is Jesus Christ, who is thus admitted into august fellowship with the two already named? "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) Can Jesus Christ be a created being? Is

there not an *immeasurable distance* between the thing created and him who created it? Is not the potter, with his skill and power entirely different from, as well as far superior to, the lump of clay which he is moulding to his will? Who would venture to connect the name of Jehovah, who was before all worlds, who had lived an eternity before any being was created, and displayed all his infinite perfections,—I say, who would venture to connect *His* name, on terms of equality, with that of a being of his own creation? Who then is this co-equal being, Jesus Christ? St. John and St. Paul tell us, “God was manifest in the flesh.” “The word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” And “the word was God.” The Father then is God; Jesus Christ is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. But are there three Gods? No. The Scriptures expressly declare there is but one God. “Thou art God alone.” And the baptismal formula has but one name. “In the *name* of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

The doctrine of the Trinity is a conclusion to which we are forced by the language of the Scriptures. In those sacred writings we perceive that there is but one God. Yet we perceive also that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are each called God. Hence we conclude that there are

three persons, but one God. None will deny that there is a difficulty here, and a mystery; the only question is, whether there is not more difficulty involved in the denial than in the belief of the doctrine. Here we have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Suppose we deny that the Son Jesus Christ is God. We deny a plain declaration of Scripture. St. John says, *he is*. Suppose we say, the Holy Ghost is an attribute of the Father. Then we baptize men in the name of the Father, which includes all his attributes, and of the Son, a created being, and finally of one of the attributes of the Father. God himself,—Jesus Christ, a created being, and one of the attributes of God. What a strange union and combination is this! Can this be what is meant by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? We cannot ascend up into heaven and get a new revelation. Indeed, if we could, to our present imperfect powers it would hardly have less mystery than the present. Is not our safest, nay our only way, to think and to speak of Jesus Christ as God,—to think and speak of the Holy Ghost as God; and to believe that we pray to one and the same God, whether we pray to the Father, to Jesus Christ, or to the Holy Ghost. Let us not speak of difficulties; for if we could solve this, there would be ten thousand others

starting up before us. And the man who would undertake the business of explaining all the difficulties around us, would find himself stopped at the first grain of sand, which is infinitely divisible; or at the first thought of *eternity*, which is without beginning and without end.

Having considered the personality and the dignity of the Holy Ghost, we proceed:

III. Lastly, to consider the *influence of this blessed being over the human mind*.

We are commanded by our Lord to search the Scriptures, and this implies something more than a mere reading; it means a diligent and prayerful perusal of them.

We are also taught by St. Paul, (1 Cor. ii. 13,) to “compare spiritual things with spiritual.” Now, by searching and comparing Scripture with Scripture, we find that God the Father is the Creator, Jesus Christ the Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost the Sanctifier. Man is created. He sins, pollutes himself and posterity, and offends his Creator. Jesus Christ sheds his own blood to atone for him. The Holy Ghost then acts upon the heart of man, and prepares him to partake of the privileges which Jesus Christ has procured for him. Thus the Triune God is the Creator, the Saviour, and the Sanctifier of his people.

1. The first object of the Holy Ghost is to

*enlighten the mind.* At his birth man is ignorant of everything. During childhood and youth it is difficult to instruct him; he receives the knowledge of the things which are seen slowly and reluctantly. But being wholly engrossed with these temporal things, he pays no regard to the things which are unseen and eternal. Therefore, the Scriptures represent man as blind to spiritual things, and declare that "his foolish heart is darkened." The man who is eagerly pursuing an object, and who turns not to the right hand or to the left, sees not, hears not, knows not what is around him, may be said to be blind and deaf and insensible.

Man is not only unwilling to acquaint himself with God, but he is really incapable. In a state of nature he cannot perceive the character of God, the extent of his government, or the plan of man's redemption. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to enlighten the mind,—“to take of the things of Christ and to show them to man,”—to open the law of God in all its length and breadth,—to reveal to the sinner the Lord Jesus Christ in all his glorious perfections, and to enable him to see the unfathomable love of God in the work of redemption. The Scriptures are a sealed book to unbelievers. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolish-

ness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.)

In order to read this blessed volume aright, we must be enlightened by the Holy Ghost. Without his blessed influences, we cannot perceive even those simple truths on which depends our salvation. "We have eyes, but see not; ears, but hear not." Like Nicodemus, we cavil. Like the Scribes and Pharisees, we dispute. Like the multitude, we admire the parable, but feel not its application. In the devotional part of the Scriptures—the Psalms,—we see no pathos, nor with the writer feel any sympathy. And in the deeper and more doctrinal part,—the Epistles,—we are lost and in imminent danger of wresting the Scriptures to our own destruction.

But when the Holy Ghost pours the light of day upon the darkened mind; when the eyes of the understanding are enlightened, then we find wisdom in every page. We read it and become wiser than our teachers, yea, wise unto salvation.

2. The next work of the Holy Ghost is *to convince men of sin*. Men in general are insensible to their sinful condition. A man may feel himself, as St. Paul did, alive without the law. He may thank God that he is not as other men are. Condemn faithful representations of human depravity, fold his arms in fancied sanctity, and proclaim his

readiness to go to the bar of God or man. But let the *commandment* come; let sin revive in his *memory*, and astonish and shock him; let his *conscience*, acted on by the Holy Ghost, begin to point at sins rushing out of every relation to God, to man, to himself. Let each sin be stripped of its gaudy and delusive garments, and be seen in all its gigantic deformity, defying the power and despising the goodness of God. Then will he with the proud disciple of Gamaliel, die with fear and trembling. The remembrance of his sins will be grievous, the burden of them intolerable; and despair would lead him to silence *anticipation* by braving *reality*, unless some faithful minister should be sent to preach Jesus as the Saviour of sinners.

But it is not always necessary to inform a patient of the extreme malignity of his disease, nor to declare to him at once the fatal issue of it. The sight of the precipice on which he is sleeping, might make him dizzy, disorder his reason, and unfit him for escape. Therefore, the Holy Ghost is usually more gentle in his motions, and more gradual in his discoveries, and shows us the horrors of the precipice after we have left it at a distance. It may not be wise *to pray for a full knowledge* of the sinfulness of our heart; but for such a view of our sinfulness as will humble and abase us and drive us more earnestly to the

Saviour. An actual possession of the joys of heaven may be necessary to counterbalance the the full and frightful disclosures of the depravity of man.

3. Lastly. The office of the Holy Ghost is *to sanctify*. There is a continued spiritual influence, which may be better understood by saying that there are three successive operations on the human mind, in order to form a religious character. The first is *conviction*, the second is *conversion*, and the third is *sanctification*. This may be illustrated by the case of a man reformed from intemperance. He first discovers that he is in a perilous condition, and that if he continues in it he will be ruined. This is *conviction*. Here the work may stop, and after a few painful struggles, the man may return to his vice, or his convictions may remain, and he may actually abandon strong drink and become temperate. This would be *conversion*. But he still at intervals has a great desire for his former indulgence, and continues to feel in his body the effects of this indulgence in burning pains. Much time spent in *salutary discipline* is necessary in order to restore him to the feelings and to the health of a temperate man. This is the case with the sinner. He is first convinced by the Holy Ghost of his sinfulness. He is then converted from the errors of his ways into the paths of

religion. But a continued operation of the Holy Ghost is necessary in order to restore him to purity of heart and life. It leads him to the formation of holy habits, inures him to a holy warfare with sin and temptation, and it bows his will and desires into holy submission to the will of God.

But this last is a gradual work. The mind is recovered from sin and prepared for heaven by the Holy Ghost, just as fruit is ripened by the sun. And although this in different climates is effected *more or less* speedily, it always takes time. Religion, except on extraordinary occasions, does not appear to be a car of fire, which is to transport us in triumph to heaven. It is rather a pilgrimage, which we must take step by step; and often a wrestling not only in prayers for mercies, but in combat for deliverance. In religion, the only alternative is victory or death. We must conquer our foes, or they will conquer us. "For we wrestle not (says St. Paul,) against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers." It is then the work of the Holy Ghost to enable us to resist in the moment of temptation. It is that blessed Monitor, that at such moments whispers good counsels, and strives in our hearts. It was He who withheld the bereaved Job when rashly advised to destroy himself, by whispering, "Shall

we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job ii. 10.) It was He who supported the fainting Jacob when in the wilderness, by whispering, "This is none other than the house of *God*, and this is the gate to heaven." It was he who strengthened the son of this patriarch, when tempted in Pharaoh's court, by whispering, "How can you do this great wickedness and sin against God?" And to thousands in every age, who have been striving against sin within and without, his still small voice has been heard amid the tumult of the passions, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

But the blessed Spirit does not merely stand by as a monitor. He is ready to strengthen such as do stand, to comfort and help the weak-hearted, to raise up those who fall, and finally to beat down Satan under our feet. And when a conflict with Satan is over, it is He who diffuses an air of triumph over the soul—a feeling of *delight*, which is beautifully described in our Saviour's temptation. "And when the devil left him, behold, *angels came and ministered to him.*"

We could proceed farther in tracing the operations of the Holy Ghost upon the human mind, if time would permit. We could show how in seasons of affliction he bows the stubborn will of man to the wise chastisements of his Maker.

How he checks the rising murmur, silences the voice of nature, and spreads a serenity over the soul—which is aptly figured in the calming of that tempestuous lake on whose waters the bark of Jesus was floating. But would we witness the most evident display of the divine influence, we must watch the dying moments of the true believer. A few days before, perhaps, he was engaged in the cares of his business—happy in the love of his family, and busy in schemes for their support. The thought of death was appalling, and he turned his eyes with trembling from the grave. These few days have passed, and *now*—all is sweet resignation, calm expectation, yea, even a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. What has effected this change? The same blessed Spirit, which in the creation of the world moved upon the face of the waters, bringing light out of darkness, order out of confusion, beauty out of deformity, and harmony out of discord, has moved upon the believer's mind and all is peace—peace within, and peace with God.

I have thus endeavored, my hearers, to state clearly what the Scriptures declare respecting the Holy Ghost. First, that it is a person, and not a personification of an attribute of God; next, that it is a divine person, one with the Father

and the Son, equally with them to be worshipped and glorified; and lastly, I have attempted to describe his influence over the human mind. Now let me ask with faithfulness and affection, Have you, my hearers, received the Holy Ghost? If you have not, then you should seriously reflect upon your desolate and dangerous condition. You are sleeping on that eternal precipice, from which the next day or the next hour may see you falling in dizziness and distraction over that dark and dreadful abyss, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Your souls must then be dark, self-righteous, and unsanctified. You have not been enlightened and converted, and you are yet in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. My hearers, if you have *not* received the Holy Ghost, it is because you *would* not. He has often been striving with you. He has often flashed conviction over your minds. He has visited you with the terrors of the Lord; he has affected you with the goodness of God; he has shown you your guilt and ingratitude. Perhaps at this moment he is striving with you, and saying: "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Open then your hearts to this holy visitor—beseech him in secret to convince, convert, and sanctify you. Let not business nor pleasure pre-

vent; for you are never too busy to die. A day may bring forth mischief for all your schemes, and a night sorrow that will never end. "For thus saith the Lord—My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is flesh."

Christian friends, who trust that you have been inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to repent, believe and obey the Gospel, you are called to a peculiarly holy and zealous life. As so many sacred temples, you have been consecrated for the residence of infinite purity. God the Holy Ghost has condescended to dwell in your hearts, to sanctify and ripen you for glory. Beware lest you offend him by sin; beware lest you undervalue his gifts; lest you neglect to implore his assistance where without it you can do nothing,—in prayer, in reading the Scriptures, in becoming acquainted with your own hearts. Venture not into this holy place until you have implored his presence; and quit it not until you have prayed for his fellowship. As the stream betrays both the quantity and the quality of the fountain from which it proceeds, so the conversation betrays the state of the heart. "Let then *no* corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth;"—"and *grieve* not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed." "Let all bitterness, and wrath,

and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice; and be ye *kind* one to another—tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

## SERMON VII.

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### ON BEING BORN AGAIN.

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John iii. 7.

“YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.”

SOME persons may desire to know, why the first part of the third chapter of St. John was selected as the Gospel for Trinity Sunday. The reason of the selection is the same that influenced the framers of the Liturgy to select for the Second Lesson the third chapter of Matthew; because in that portion of Holy Writ all the three persons of the Godhead are presented together. There we have the baptism of our Lord, in which the voice of the Father was heard—the person of the Son was seen—and the visible form of the Holy Spirit, in the dove, was recognized; thus setting forth in a most striking and impressive manner, the doctrine of three persons in the Godhead. So in the third chapter of St. John's

Gospel, there is the admission of Nicodemus, that no man could do the miracles that Jesus did, except God was with him ; the declaration of Jesus himself, that he was *on earth*—yet *in heaven* at the same time ; and the imperative requirement put forth by Jesus for all his followers, that they must be born of the Spirit—“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ;” and the text—“ Ye must be born again.”

Now, it is readily granted that it is *not* an easy task to bring the mind of man to receive this doctrine of *three persons in one God!* and hence, one reason *why* man must be born again is, that until *he is born again*, he *never will believe* this doctrine ! “ No man can say that Jesus *is* the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” St. Paul did not mean here to deny, that a man may hold a speculative belief in the doctrine of the Trinity without conversion ; or may hold such a belief because he was taught it in his childhood, or hold it simply because he feels bound to embrace whatever the Church requires—and the Church requires him to *hold this*. But this is a *blind credulity*, and not a *saving faith* ; a man *cannot* give a reason for the hope which *such* a faith affords. *No* ; a preparation of heart and mind is necessary before a saving belief in the Trinity in Unity *can* be held. Strange as it

may seem, it is “with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness;” and the man who has been humbled in heart, and who acknowledges that he knows nothing yet as he ought to know, and who is convinced of sin and condemns himself before God, and feels from solemn self-examination that there is no health in him, and that all his sufficiency is in Christ—it is only such a man as this, who perceives the want of a divine Saviour, and who is prepared to admit the evidence of his Divinity, when it is presented to him in the Bible.

There is a fitness between a divine Saviour, and a renewed and converted sinner, to be found nowhere else. Sin is a disease; and in proportion to the violence of the disease, must be the power of its remedy. He who hardly feels himself a sinner, may rest satisfied with a human, or angelic saviour; but no such saviour will satisfy a man *who is born again*. He has been ushered into a new world of which Christ is the light; and his devotion to Christ would be idolatry, unless he could recognize in him “God manifest in the flesh.” But we require the new birth also, to dispose us to rest satisfied with what is *not* revealed in the Bible, as much as we do to admit and rejoice in what *is* revealed. If God’s providential government is above our ways as much as heaven is above the earth, it is not surprising that his

Being and Nature may be above our comprehension. An unconverted mind may weary itself in difficulties respecting the doctrine of the Trinity—and even Christians may distress themselves greatly about the distinctions that exist in the Godhead; but the main pillar of the doctrine, is the divinity of Christ, and upon this the attention of the Christian should be fixed—“Ye believe in God,” said our Lord; “believe also in *me*.” That is, believe in Christ as you believe in God; pray to Christ as you pray to God; and trust in Christ as you trust in God, regarding him as one with the Father and the Holy Spirit—equal with them in every attribute of the divine nature—and all difficulty will vanish. If you believe thus much, all the other particulars of the doctrine will certainly follow, and in time your mind will be at rest on the “Rock of Ages!”

From these introductory remarks, I proceed to my main object to-day, which is—to impress on your minds the solemn meaning of *one* word in the text. The word is—*must!* There are many things, my friends, desirable in this life; many things pleasant, and many things important;—but *there is one* thing absolutely necessary, and *that is*—a *new birth*. You *may* maintain any set of doctrines! you *may* be of the Calvinistic school, or you *may* be of its opposite; you may take

high views, or low views of the Church,—but you MUST be born again. I cannot stop now to point out *what* the new birth *is*, nor what it is *not*. It is *something* which to all unconverted men, is mysterious and marvellous! Something which they have not before thought of, or thought of as what they could not attain to; something whereby they would be greatly changed in their temper and taste, in their opinions and practice, and which would usher them into a new spiritual world as their first birth did into this natural world. We cannot in reason suppose that, if our Lord here meant only baptism, Nicodemus would have been so much surprised, after knowing the baptism of John, and would imagine it so difficult for him to be baptized. Nor can we suppose our Lord meant that, in baptism *every* man would necessarily receive a new birth of the Spirit, for then there was no need of the text. He might simply have said: “Ye must be baptized,” and it would devolve on the holy Comforter to see that the new birth in every person who submits to baptism, was effected. But, no; the text is in the form of a command to men—*ye must* be born again. It was delivered to *a* man, and applies to *every* man who would see the kingdom of heaven. He must experience the great work of regeneration, and this effected by the

Holy Ghost. And when he has once experienced it he will wake up as from a dream, and exclaim, "Old things are past away; behold, all things have become new."

Our Lord repeats the charge three times, in a few moments; and it was probably the sum and substance of his conversation with Nicodemus, a man who came in the night to inquire about the new doctrine. It was certainly the first thing he endeavored to teach him; and the necessity of the instruction was proved by the total ignorance of the inquirer, respecting the great work on which our salvation depends. And how many learned men are there now in our day, who are as profoundly ignorant of the new birth, as was this Jewish Rabbi! How many who see no *necessity for it*, or for any change, save that which human reason and heathen philosophy would require, or which present expediency demands! How many who have a speculative belief in all the articles of the Christian faith, who yet are at ease in Zion, and cannot be roused to make any exertion! And do not such perceive by the short sentence of the text, taken with the smallest amount of common sense, that they can never "*enter the kingdom of God?*" They may hover round it, approach very near to it, or knock at the door of it; but they cannot enter. O how

this cuts off all controversy about creeds and churches ;—there is one way for the wise and for the foolish, for the orthodox and the heterodox ; the Jew and the Greek, the Protestant and the Papist. They are all made of one blood ; destined to one common death ; all had one common birth in entering this world ; and all must have another common birth, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. Why not cease then all controversy and disputation on common matters ? Why not cease saying, “ I am of Paul,” &c., and give the whole attention to this one thing—the obtaining of the new birth ? Certainly there are persons here, who do not pretend to have experienced the new birth—young and gay, old and grave, active and laborious, who know, and are persuaded that they have never been born again ; who with greater or less appreciation of its importance, still live on day after day, and month after month, with this text staring them in the face—“ *ye must be born again.*” The great change that is coming over the *body* at death, must be preceded by a great change over the *mind* in life, to prepare us for the shock ; and over the *heart*, to prepare us for *heaven*. That text is not more plain and certain than the fact, that men of all ages have experienced the new birth, and are calling to their fellow-sinners and saying, “ *Ye must be born again.*”

It is the voice of God and men, and also of conscience, testifying to the necessity of such a change; charging home the pollution of the heart; pointing to a God of purity, who has no pleasure in wickedness." "All things proclaim the necessity of this change"—reason, revelation, and experience. Take that pious mother, from whose lips, in childhood, you first heard of God and of Christ; of heaven and of hell. Was she like the gay and giddy world? Was there not something uncommonly *serious, religious, benevolent, and heavenly* in her character—something which she acknowledged, she once had *not*? and is it not upon this that you ground your belief, that she has long since been with Jesus in paradise? Now the whole amount of this text *is*—that *what* was *necessary for her, is necessary for you; absolutely necessary*, so that, without it you will never see the kingdom of God. The same blessed Spirit which changed her heart, *may* change yours; and *must* change it, and thoroughly change it, so as to amount to a new birth.

The importance of this short text rises more and more. It is so short *that* it must be heard; so plain it must be understood; and so definite that a man must know whether he has, or has not fulfilled it. It is not that you must be a churchman, or of this or that party within the Church.

That you must partake of this ordinance, or that; must have such and such knowledge; that you must give a great sum for this freedom, or do a great work, or make a long pilgrimage. No! it lops off all circumstantials; all mere valuables; all very important auxiliaries, and brings down the requirements of the Gospel to the smallest possible point—"a new birth!" But then *that* must be experienced. What an important doctrine is this for the poor man! He may not look around him, and say—I have no library, and therefore I cannot become wise unto salvation. For the seaman, also, he may not look over the vast ocean, and say—I have no church in which to worship God, and therefore I cannot be converted! For the orphan, he may not say—I have no parents to put me in the way of salvation, and therefore I must remain among the lost. For the sick stranger, he may not say—I have no man to care for my soul, for what is required of him as absolutely necessary to salvation, but "*the new birth*;" and God the Holy Ghost, and *he* alone is the Author of it. I would not depreciate the ministry of the Church, nor its ordinances. I believe the sacraments to be *generally* necessary to salvation; but I believe that the "new birth" of the Spirit is *absolutely necessary* to salvation, and that without this, no man will ever

be saved. And as now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation; and we know of no other day of salvation—while we do know of a day of judgment and condemnation, and of an eternal prison, and chains of darkness, I believe that from this fearful end nothing can save us, the best of us, but our being “born again!” I know that nothing is easier than to make light of this doctrine. I have heard men make light of it; but I have seen them afterwards *die with no hope of heaven!* I have heard men marvel concerning it, and dispute concerning it, who were, nevertheless, as honest as Nicodemus, and as earnest to discover the truth as he was; I have seen them after this, live to say: “I submit, I contend no longer. Create in me, O Lord, a clean heart. Renew in me a right spirit.” I have had men follow me from the pulpit to the vestry, and say that my preaching was greatly changed; that I was actuated by a new spirit; that I had never preached so before—not knowing that the change was in their own feelings!

But it has been truly said of some preachers, that they have been “born again.” It was of Dr. Scott and Legh Richmond, and of many others in our Mother Church;—and it has been said of far greater numbers, that they *have not* “been born again.” That there is no unction in

their sermons; no earnestness in their efforts to save souls; no discrimination between saints and sinners in their preaching; no instruction about the operations of the Holy Spirit;—and provided their support is furnished, no apparent concern about turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of satan to God. Woe to such shepherds—who care for the fleece, and not for the flock. It is quite probable, that it may be said of whole churches, as of ministers, that *they have not been “born again.”* The world, though standing afar off, has eyes to see, and is not slow in judging of whole churches as of individuals—that they have a name to live, and are dead; that they are doing nothing to advance the cause of Christ; that they are making no inroads into the kingdom of darkness; that they are doing little to extend their own religion; and to save those sheep in the wilderness, who become continually a prey to the lion. It is in the zealous, faithful preacher, and in the active unworldly Church, which is straining every nerve to multiply converts to Christ, that the world sees the Spirit of Christ—a Church which is striving not merely to add members to its own communion, and to swell its means and extend its reputation; but to make converts to Christ among the poor and the debased, in the cellars and garrets of the city, and among the

fields and the forests of the wilderness. It is the lone missionary preacher, who is not waiting for a bench of bishops to send him, or a general convention to carve out his path of duty. He carves out for himself a diocese, as large as all England; and making his appointments for the Sabbath and other days; goes about doing good; finding a pulpit, and a cathedral, and a choir, any and everywhere where the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth forth his handy work, and where souls lost will listen to his voice. Of such a man, or of churches made up of such men, who will say—"Ye must be born again?" No! when such a man speaks that which he does know, and testifies that which he has seen; when he says—"I would to God, that all men who hear me, were not *almost*, but *altogether* such as I am, save these bonds"—these infirmities and imperfections—there is no disposition to return the text upon him; but on the other hand, a conviction of the necessity of the new birth, and an acknowledgment that the impenitent must experience it, and an humble application at the Throne of Grace for mercy! O that such cases were more common. O that the Holy Spirit would come down, and new create all unconverted hearts here present. O that a mighty-rushing wind would fill this house, and that we might

have a goodly number who would think that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. That the Bible was a new book; the Gospel a new dispensation, and life this side the grave full of new hopes and joys. "Behold, I create new heavens and new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness." Create them, O Lord God! and may no one here say, Know the Lord; but may all know thee, from the least to the greatest.



## SERMON VIII.

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### ON TAKING AWAY THE STONY HEART.

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Ezekiel xxxvi. 26.

“I WILL TAKE AWAY THE STONY HEART OUT OF YOUR FLESH, AND  
I WILL GIVE YOU AN HEART OF FLESH.”

THIS promise is easily understood. It is one of salvation. But it must not be separated from the condition and temper of the people to whom it was first made. God is indeed able of stones to raise up children unto Abraham, or to save those to the uttermost who come unto him by his Son. But without a broken and a contrite heart, no man can be saved. The promise of the text was first addressed to the ten tribes of Israel when they were in captivity in Babylon; and knowing as we now do the sins of the Israelites, and the severe judgments they had drawn down upon themselves, it might be difficult for us to realize that such a promise as that in the text could be

addressed to them. But we must understand, that it was not until after they had been humbled by *adversity*, conquered by a cruel tyrant and conducted into a far country; not until they had hanged their harps upon the willows—not on the banks of the Jordan, but of the Euphrates, four months' journey from Jerusalem;\* not until after they had considered their evil conduct, and had despaired of deliverance from bondage by their own power;—in fine, not until God had determined to be glorified by their piety and zeal before the heathen, did they hear this announcement of his beneficent designs—“A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the *stony heart* out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” A stone, the substance to which the heart may be compared, has two manifest properties—hardness and coldness. We remark then, in the first place, that there is *hardness* about the heart of the sinner. In some points of view there is much in the heart to approve and admire. Parental and filial affection, pity and compassion, magnanimity and generosity—these are often displayed and challenge our respect and veneration; and yet the heart in its every day indifference to human suffering and woe, in its continual coveting of the

\* Ezra vii. 9.

riches and honors of this world, in its selfishness and envy of competitors and rivals, discovers its real character.

If we should proceed to make a still closer examination, and to scrutinize the *interior* exercises of the heart *towards God and Christ*, and compare them with those holy and heavenly aspirations which the Searcher of hearts requires, we should rise with astonishment from the work, and cry out with Solomon—the “hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil;” and in our prayers to God we should confess the obduracy of which we are accused, and pray him to do for us what He promised to do for Israel of old—take away the stony heart out of our flesh, and give us an heart of flesh.

What unconverted man requires an argument to prove, that there is an heart of stone in his bosom which must be taken away from him? Does he not perceive, week after week, as the word of the living God is preached to him, that it falls without effect upon his hard and impenetrable heart? that it is as if the sower had dropped his seed-corn upon an unploughed field, or on a beaten walk, or on the smooth surface of a stone; that it rebounds, it glances off, or it lies there unassimilated to the surface on which it fell? Does he not perceive, week after week, what an amount

of heavenly instruction has been wasted upon him; and hence what a fearful account he will be compelled to render to God of abused privileges? And when he observes what fruitfulness other hearts around him exhibit, under the same cultivation; how eagerly others listen to the word of life; how the seed of Christ's blessed Gospel sinks deeply into them, and springs up and brings forth fruit—while not a single emotion of piety or penitence is awakened in his breast? Does he not learn in the contrast, what experience and the word of God teach, that there is in his bosom a heart of stone, which has been growing harder and harder by the lapse of years, and that no matter what materials he may have prepared for a death-bed repentance, no matter how much knowledge of divine things he may have acquired, or works of charity he may have performed—the *great* work of his salvation has not yet been accomplished.

And were I to draw a parallel between the case of such an one and the Israelites, the persons to whom the text was first addressed; were I to follow him through all his past afflictions, through all his painful pilgrimages, through all his perils by sea and by land, through all his seasons of sickness and domestic affliction—when he parted with a parent, or with a child dearer

than life itself; were I to remind him of the time when he hung his harp upon the banks of some foreign stream—upon the banks of the Delaware, or of the Hudson, or of the Ohio, or of some more distant and solitary river, whose silent flow and sepulchral gloom seemed congenial to his grief—would he not discover, that, unless his heart had been harder than a millstone, these afflictions would have melted it, softened it, and opened it for the reception of divine truth, and that the wilderness within would long ere this have rejoiced and blossomed as the rose? Now this hardness of heart may appear to some but a negative kind of evil; and the saint whose heart is changed from stone to flesh may appear in no way superior to him against whom the charge of obduracy may still lie. But according to the Scripture, the softened, the humbled and sanctified heart, is as much more prized by God than one destitute of the operations of divine grace, as a vital organ of the body is esteemed by us of more value than a clod of the valley or the fragment of a rock.

The heart is that object on which God keeps his eye. He says, “I the Lord search the heart;” and God estimates all hearts by their exercises towards him. The first and great commandment is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.”

We come then, secondly, to consider the *coldness* of the natural heart towards God. Of his moral and intelligent offspring God expects supreme love, homage, and submission. However small may be their knowledge, their hearts or affections must be placed supremely on Him. All else is as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. Nay, all pretensions to merit from prayers, and alms, and austerities are an abomination in his sight. Nor has God attracted our hearts merely by objects of sense, however beautiful, grand, or magnificent! No! nor by the sweet and social relations of life, however dear, or necessary to our happiness. *Besides* these, *before* all these, God commends his love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us! All other evidences of God's love sink in importance before the exhibition of that love on the cross. He gave his Son to die, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He laid upon him the iniquity of us all, and by his stripes we are healed.

And for the joy that was set before him, the joy of saving the souls of men, of delivering them from going down to the pit—Christ endured the cross, and despised the shame; and because of this humiliation in our behalf, God has highly exalted him. Now I ask, what unconverted hearer of the Gospel can seriously reflect, not only upon

the hardness, but the coldness of his heart under this melting display of love and compassion on the part of God towards mankind, and not alter materially his estimate of himself? It is announced in Scripture, that if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.

The incarnation and death of Christ warmed the hearts of holy men, who were destined not to approach within one thousand years of these great events,—and only *then* to see the dark shadows of their coming greatness. The incarnation and death of Christ awakened the astonishment of angels, and aroused the curiosity of demons, and they cried out with wonder and alarm. The death of Christ was signalized by changes and convulsions in the inanimate creation. Over the heads and under the feet of men, the heavens and the earth exhibited a fearful and unwonted sympathy. The sun withdrew his light, the earth quaked, and even the rocks were rent! But there is something harder than the rocks, and more immovable than the earth. It is the heart of man.

The heart of the sinner is the same in every age since the great apostacy. That heart which has long tenanted thy bosom, O my impenitent hearer, is a heart harder than the nether mill-

stone. Whilst the whole creation above and below seemed to have appreciated the sacrifice of the cross, still not a throb is felt in thy bosom. The ice does not melt, the adamant does not yield! Not one tear has been shed in return for the agony and bloody sweat of Christ in thy behalf, and not one relenting has been experienced. Upon hearts most unlikely to be moved, the truth of God and the love of Christ have produced their legitimate effects. Children, *ignorant* of almost all history but that of the crucifixion,—Jewish opposers, blinded with bigotry and burning with anger,—have been moved under the preaching of the cross; but that intelligent, that dutiful, that educated, that generous, that humane, that heroic, that philanthropic heart—is still a heart of ice, of stone, of adamant, towards God. O what a petrification of the noblest faculty is here! What a disease has fixed upon that vital organ of life! What real wretchedness exists beneath a seeming happiness! What a weight is sometimes felt within the bosom!

We could lay aside the office of reproof and rebuke entrusted to us by God, and sit down beside some such an unhappy victim of obduracy. We could pay him a visit of condolence and deplore this great affliction, and pity this inveterate obstinacy, and grieve that so much true happiness

should be lost; and, mourn that the eyes of God should see even ONE, whose heart is as cold as a stone! That Christ should behold such a spectacle as this, and should send messages to it; and yet that not one movement of life should be visible, and not one response be audible. That while the earth exhibits its annual changes of spring, and summer, and autumn, and winter, and yields to the influences of sun and rain; while the very flesh around the heart chills or melts, is sometimes sick and sometimes well, waxes and wastes, *that heart* should remain the same;—that while parents and children *die*, those tenderest ties, those very fibres of which we suppose the heart is made, are sundered, are torn, are wrenched away: yet we discover the melancholy fact, that they had only fastened themselves outside the heart—wrapped themselves around that hard and cold and impenetrable surface, like the ivy that mantles some rocky prison, whose gates have rusted on their hinges.

Is not this a subject of grief? Might not the sincerest sympathy be experienced and expressed? The Psalmist beheld the sight, and was grieved: “Rivers of water run down mine eyes,” says he, “because men keep not thy laws. O that my heart were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the

slain of the daughter of my people!" Who is so much to be pitied as this man? Who of all the sons of men so sadly afflicted? Talk not of domestic trials. Talk of no earthly misery, or misfortune—the death of friends, the loss of property, the disgrace and misconduct of children,—there is no affliction so dreadful as this!

Where there is anguish, there is life; and where there is life, there is hope—but O, the insupportable burden of a heart, which though deserted of God, cannot ache. The will may compel an attendance upon the ordinances of the Gospel; but the heart is not made better. Its aversion to God is not changed, and there is no concealing it. It speaks through the countenance; it utters its rebellion through the eye; it expresses its hatred and contempt through a curling lip; it glories in its shame. But O, it is a burden to the sinner. He often beats upon his breast as the place where his greatest evil is imprisoned, and utters imprecations on himself. O that such might be moved to pray: "Take out of me, O God, an heart of stone, and give me an heart of flesh;—create within me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

## S E R M O N I X .

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### ON TAKING AWAY THE STONY HEART.

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Ezekiel xxxvi. 26.

“ I WILL TAKE AWAY THE STONY HEART OUT OF YOUR FLESH, AND  
WILL GIVE YOU AN HEART OF FLESH.”

EVERY reasonable man before me knows that some great change must take place in him before he can enter into the kingdom of heaven. He feels within himself a hardness of heart, which he knows must be transformed. He is conscious of continual guilt, and aware that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. He reads in the Scriptures that, although sin was committed in this corner of the creation, in one of the smallest planets revolving round one of innumerable suns!—yet it was visited with unerring precision, and with lightning-like rapidity. And the first man who sinned, was instantly made to suffer the consequences of his

transgression. God said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" and in the cool of that day, man heard the voice of God in the garden, and saw the executioner of the dreadful sentence pronounced against sin. But while he has been made to feel the justice, he has also been made acquainted with the mercy of God. He has read, that upon the eve of the expulsion of the first man from Paradise, and while the flaming sword was glittering amidst the bowers of bliss—the goodness of God was present in the promise of salvation which accompanied the condemnation. And what was the substance of that promise? It was this—that although the serpent has now triumphed, and will triumph still longer on the earth;—yet the day is coming, when the rod of his power shall be broken; when he shall fall before the Son of God—the promised seed—and when a paradise far superior in its joys, and wider and broader in its bounds, shall replace the Garden of Eden; and even this second paradise shall fall far short of the third, whose walls shall be salvation, and whose gates praise.

Such is the commingling of mercy and justice in the character of God. At least such it appears to us. The finite and prismatic power of our minds thus divides it;—but to infinite intelligence these colors are all blended, and God is

light—and in him is no darkness at all. Now, my brethren, it is evident that against man's native character of obduracy and depravity, God's severity will be directed, and upon that it will ever have a field for action. Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man that sinneth.

But when this native obduracy and insensibility are changed and converted into their opposites, then will the other attributes of God's character be exercised, and "glory, honor, and immortality" be conferred—upon the Jew first, and also upon the Gentile. And what, but this change, can bring the sinner into communion with the milder and gentler attributes of God? What fellowship hath light with DARKNESS! What concord hath Christ with Belial? The goodness and the severity of God are ever before man; and upon this change in his nature, he knows that it depends whether he shall be exalted to the embrace of the one, or be cast down to hell by the frown of the other!

This change it is now my purpose, by divine assistance, to describe; and to aid me in the work, I shall employ the plain figure of the text. God's promise to the Jews was, "I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." The heart of stone is hard and

cold; the heart of flesh sensitive, pliable, and filled with the love of Christ. In order to make my subject plain, I shall take two different cases from Scripture—in which the heart of stone was taken away, and an heart of flesh was given.

I turn first to the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel, and take the case of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Whose heart could be harder than his? Obdurate by nature, and ignorant of God: he had grown up under the grossest idolatry. Prosperity the most substantial and dazzling, had increased his native obduracy—as it does every man's—and the gratification of his highest wishes in the completion of his city and palace—unrivalled before or since in magnificence—had put the last touch to the adamant of his heart. Hear the language of this proud and haughty monarch. “Is not this great Babylon, that *I* have built, for the house of the kingdom by the might of MY power, and for the honor of MY majesty?” Yes! it is, O king, but not for thy honor and majesty alone, but for the instruction of all future generations of men. While this word was in his mouth, the hand of the Lord was upon him. His wisdom was quickly turned to folly, and his reason to madness. He is driven out from among men, to eat grass like oxen in the open field, and his body becomes wet with the dew of heaven! At

the end of days, Nebuchadnezzar lifted up his eyes unto heaven, and his understanding returned unto him, and he blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him that liveth forever and ever, and left upon record, this testimony, "that they that walk in pride, He is able to abase!" Here you will observe that tenderness of heart is not mere sensibility, or a peculiar inclination to sympathize with distress and suffering. These are developments of our animal nature merely, and are held by us in common with the brutes. A heart of flesh is one that bows before the authority of God, submits to his judgments, and reverences his word. A *heart of stone*, on the other hand, is a compound of ignorance, perversity and depravity. It knows little or nothing of God, as revealed in his Word, and indulges to the fullest extent its own corrupt devices and desires. But when changed by the Holy Spirit, it begins to acquire a knowledge of God, and in proportion as its knowledge increases, is its struggle for obedience and submission! What employment is so uncongenial to the heart of the proud and prosperous man, as the serious reading of God's word? And what employment so soon engages the truly converted man, as the reading of the same volume? Who is so sure to come where the truths of the Gospel are preached as he; and into whose heart

so certainly sinks the incorruptible seed of that word, as into the heart of him upon whom the Holy Spirit has descended? How much need have the unconverted to pray that this susceptible heart may be given them? And what encouragement have they to pray for this gift, when God says, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them!" O what a different reception would they give to the preaching of the Gospel, to which they are privileged from Sabbath to Sabbath to listen! After his heart was changed, David exclaimed, "O how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day long. I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth."

Another peculiarity to be noticed in the heart of the believer is its warmth or vital heat. To illustrate this part of our subject, let us consider the conversion of St. Paul. When the quality of coldness is attributed to the natural heart, it must be confined entirely to the affections, and chiefly in their relation to God! Before conversion there often is a hot head and a cold heart, but in that great work a revolution takes place; the heart becomes warm and the head cool; and the moral constitution is again restored to a natural and healthy action. Of Saul we read that before his conversion he was

breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. His zeal was furious and persecuting in the extreme; his talents and property and influence were all engaged on the side of error; so that he even abandoned the study and practice of his profession, to pursue the humble followers of Christ Jesus. All this is consistent with an heart of ice, or of adamant. Zeal may carry a man to a great length in what he deems the cause of truth. He may bestow all his goods to feed the poor, and even give his body to be burned, and yet it may profit him nothing! The first and great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." "My son, give ME thy heart." It is upon the heart, then, that the Holy Ghost makes its first impression. Softened, humbled and subdued by its mighty power, the heart is prepared for a revelation of God's love. Struck by the power of Christ, Saul fell to the earth, effectually humbled, and convinced of his wickedness as a sinner; the voice of the Son of God is then heard in tones of mercy, and the affrighted convert cried out, "Who art thou, Lord?" The voice replied, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest;" and now in-

dignation and wrath are expected; but instead of these, forgiveness, adoption, consecration, and a commission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles are bestowed. Hear what comfortable words fell from our compassionate Redeemer's lips: "Rise and stand upon thy feet; for thou art a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." O what a revolution must have taken place in this man's heart! How must the warm glow of affection have kindled in his soul! What, is this Jesus whom I have persecuted? Was He the Messiah and a Martyr? What thoughts were these to inflame the heart? What sorrow? What shame? What fear? Yea, what indignation were here? What an opening was now made through which the love of Christ might be shed abroad in that heart? What is the Apostle's own account of his conversion? "When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I conferred not with flesh and blood." Neither with his own, nor with any other man's. He lived no longer unto himself, but was now alive unto God. He "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." He valued neither reputation, nor ease, nor kindred, nor friends, nor life itself in comparison with it. The love of Christ was so powerfully

shed abroad in his heart, that it constrained him, i. e. bore him onward like a resistless torrent. It was like an overflowing river, rising above its banks, and sweeping all before it: and thus it continued to overflow, until it had entered the ocean of eternity.

Now, is it difficult to understand the nature or necessity of this inward transformation from stony coldness to vital warmth and grateful love to Christ? Is there an unconverted man present who does not perceive his need of it? Is there one, whatever has been his humanity, or his courtesy, or his charity, or his zeal for the external church, who does not perceive that there may be still within him a hard and cold heart towards Christ, the Redeemer of his soul? And who, on the other hand, cannot perceive the grace and moral beauty of a heart of pious sensibility, opened and warmed with the love of Christ, an element which pervades the heavenly world. Who requires to be taught that such love as this, shed abroad in the heart, produces the highest human happiness? When David experienced this change of heart, he called upon all nature, sun, moon and stars, earth and sea, mountains and hills, beasts and birds. Peter men and maidens, old men and children crucified the name of the Lord, for his amen, ye did it ignorant, and his praise about God is merciful. He hath

does not perceive that so long as this fire is burning in the heart, no high motive will be wanting to stimulate the sluggish soul; but that, with an equal measure of love to Christ, every Christian would, to the extent of his intellectual ability, be a Paul. O then contrast the unconverted heart with a heart of flesh. Ponder on the length of time during which you have neglected, or it may be have despised, Christ and his cross. Consider how hard your heart must have been to resist all the piercing calls of God's law, all the reproofs of conscience, and the invitations of the Gospel, and instead of hardening still more your heart, O yield it up to the Holy Spirit, and inquire of God, this day, whether he will not bestow on you this highest, noblest, and most God-like gift.

The chief reflection which this subject suggests, is upon the mighty power of a preached Gospel. What harder subjects could we find than those Jews whom the Holy Ghost converted on the day of Pentecost? We read that under the preaching of the Gospel three thousand of these, on one occasion, were converted and baptized. Now, my unto Gen, you observe that it was by the blessing the excellen preaching that this change was effec his Lord." Here of tongues, the inspiration, bril nor kindred, nor frier which had been imparted to son with it. The love of C, only the curiosity, and

aroused the attention of men, and had drawn around the humble preachers of the Gospel a vast crowd. Not, however, in the gorgeous temple, not before the great altar, not in the administration of the sacrament, not amidst awe inspiring music, flashing lights and breathing odors; but in an humble apartment it was that the discourse was preached, the outlines of which we have in the book of the Acts; and we know that it was the same evangelic strain which you are accustomed to hear. It was that strain which may offend unconverted intellect, but which is as milk, and honey, to the converted soul. Blessed are your ears, for they hear the joyful sound. As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if so be that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. The grand and efficacious instrument by which so many were converted to God, was what some have contemptuously called the “everlasting Gospel.” To these very Jews, themselves, it had once been a stumbling block—anything but wisdom and truth. It was all comprised in these words: “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” St. Peter says, in substance, “Ye have taken and crucified the Lamb of God. Yet, brethren, ye did it ignorantly, and in unbelief. God is merciful. He hath

raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, and hath sent him to bless you by turning every one of you from his iniquities. Repent, therefore, and be baptized every one of you."

Now there is nothing here which could greatly interest the mind; nothing greatly to inflame the passions. There is no form, no intellectual brilliancy, nor oratorical comeliness about this kind of preaching, called in this connection—testifying and exhorting—and yet while Christ himself converted but few persons,—while Christ himself in a pulpit of splendor, blazing brighter than the meridian sun, converted only one out of many around him—three thousand were in one day converted by his apostle. It was the work of the Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, to convert men's souls. Therefore said Christ, "It is expedient for you, that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." God the Father sent the Son—God the Son died a sacrifice for our sins; but God the Holy Ghost converts and sanctifies, and man's salvation is perfected. This influence is in Scripture compared to water, which cleanses, revives, and refreshes—"I will sprinkle clean water upon you," says God, "and ye shall be clean." Here man is represented, as polluted externally as well as

internally; and by the element of water is purified, revived, and restored to life. But it is feeling or sensibility under the teaching of divine truth, which is meant. The truth of God before fell powerless upon their ears; but now every word sinks into their hearts, and seems addressed to them. The preacher is now considered personal in his remarks. The preacher's eyes are fastened on them. He has singled them out for reproof; he has written a description of *their* case. Some one has informed him of the exercises of their minds, and he has thus publicly exposed their private history. Such persons have just been awakened out of sleep—have now for the first time ears to hear. It may be that some one here was once convicted of sin, and urged by the Holy Spirit to turn to God, and it may not have occurred to him that he has since been forsaken of God. But now he has an ear to hear. Now the word of God, as a sharp sword, has been laid upon his heart—and has for the first time inflicted a wound! It is the Holy Ghost which has at last descended and settled upon him. It is the hand of God, which has applied that solvent to his hardened heart. It is the creative energy of God's Spirit, which has turned the arid and barren desert into a fruitful field, and is now blessing the labors of the spiritual husbandman.

O that I could hope that many of those who hear me, were thus under the transforming hand of God. That he was now breaking the stony heart, humbling the proud, and changing contempt for the cross of Christ into concern and alarm, and sorrow, and shame, and admiration, and love of God. Have you not, my hearer, lived long enough in "hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word." And, O Lord, will it not be for thy honor and glory to turn these hearts, to cleanse them from all iniquity, so that they may walk in thy statutes and keep thy judgments?

## S E R M O N X.

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### THE MYSTERIOUSNESS OF THE NEW BIRTH.

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John iii. 8.

“THE WIND BLOWETH WHERE IT LISTETH, AND THOU HEAREST THE SOUND THEREOF, BUT CANST NOT TELL WHENCE IT COMETH, AND WHITHER IT GOETH: SO IS EVERY ONE THAT IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT.”

THERE are various objects to which the Holy Spirit is compared in the Scriptures. Sometimes his influences are said to resemble *water*, which is fertilizing, refreshing and cleansing; and at other times he is compared to *fire*, which illuminates, melts, and purifies. But of all the objects employed to explain the operations of this mysterious Being, there is not one more striking than that to which allusion is made in the text—“The wind.” “This,” says our Saviour, “bloweth where it listeth (willeth) and thou heareth the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither

it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The text is the answer which our Lord gave to a request that the *new birth of the Spirit* should be explained. The inquirer desired that this great work, called in Scripture, conversion, a new creation, and a birth from above, should be made visible, so that it could be clearly seen and made intelligible. He appeared to think that a change which took place within the heart, and beyond the inspection of man, was of no importance. He seemed to say—I can understand how by circumcision a man may be made a Jew, and how by baptism he may become thy disciple—but how a man can be born of the Spirit, or how his salvation can depend upon an invisible influence communicated to his heart, of which he himself can give no account, I cannot comprehend. If inquirers stopped here, it would speak well for their humility; but many go further and deny, that there is any such mysterious and unaccountable change which passes over men; and that there is any other renovating or converting process than that which is connected with the waters of baptism. It was in answer to such, that our Lord made the declaration in the text, that in the case of every man, born of the Spirit, the manner of his conversion could not be known, and its effects were to be sufficient to decide the question of its reality. "The wind blow-

eth where it listeth, and thou heareth the sound thereof, but canst not *tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth*: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The word wind and the word Spirit, are both represented in the Greek by the same term, "*pneuma*," (*πνευμα*), and our Lord naturally employed the first, which was most familiar, to explain the second, which was less so. Therefore, he says, the *pneuma*, or spirit, that blows over the earth, and produces great changes upon its surface, is not visible. Neither can its origin nor its destination be ascertained by man: and yet the effects which follow it are sufficient to prove the certainty of its action.

And the *Holy Pneuma*, or God's breath, which renovates the heart, likewise breathes where it listeth, and thou perceivest its effects in the new and holy life of the true convert, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth.

As our Lord condescended to employ natural phenomena in order to illustrate the truths of spiritual religion, it may be allowed us to take the same course, and in the remarks which follow, to treat of the influences of the Holy Spirit under two heads, corresponding to the two most obvious peculiarities in the element to which allusion has been made. And First, *The Holy Spirit in His operations is independent*; or it may be sufficient for our purpose to say that he is not inseparably connect-

ed with any means, instruments or ordinances. The Holy Spirit may operate through a particular means, and there are channels through which he may be expected and solicited to operate, and where it cannot be ascertained that he has NOT operated, we may charitably hope that he has. But still the Holy Ghost is not dependent upon any known medium for His converting action. Like the wind, He bloweth where he listeth or willeth. No art of man can cause the wind to blow in any particular direction, or if it has ceased blowing, cause it to renew its action; neither has any man control over the influences of the Holy *Pneuma*, or Spirit.\* In the creation of the world it moved over the face of the waters, blowing where and how it listed, producing order and grandeur, beauty and harmony, and joyous existence where it willed. And over the whole face of the Church it moves according to laws not to be comprehended by man; leaving some fields in a state of drought, and visiting others with life-giving and fruit-bearing influences. "There are diversities of operations, but the same Spirit." Taking one of a city and two of a family, and bringing them to Zion. And

\* "Baptism," says Bishop Burnett, "being an action not always in our power, but to be done by another, it were to put our salvation, or damnation in the power of another, to imagine that we cannot be saved without baptism."

even where these precious influences are bestowed, making differences and a gradation of bestowments according to his good pleasure.

The Scripture teaches that wherever the Gospel is preached the Spirit is present, and is more or less urgent with men to turn to God. "I will pray the Father," said our Saviour, "and he shall give you another comforter that he may abide with you forever." (John xiv. 16.) But, although there may be this general diffusion of the Holy Spirit, yet it still remains a truth that the Holy Spirit, in its higher operations, is independent. He continues to impel men, or he is grieved and withdraws from their hearts. He visits one man with such a mighty and transforming influence that, like Saul of Tarsus, he sinks in instant submission to Christ; and He visits another with an imperceptible influence, like that of leaven, which gradually assimilates unto its own nature the entire mass. We cannot say that he will certainly accompany baptism, or the Lord's supper, or ordination, with his gracious influence, although it is proper to pray that he would.

If it were not so—if an inward change was always connected with baptism—if in bringing men to the sacred font we could always insure that then and there they should be born of the Spirit, what meaning could be attached to our Lord's

words, that as independently as the wind bloweth over the surface of the earth, so does the Holy Ghost produce the spiritual birth of men severally as He will. The doctrine of a necessary spiritual renovation, in baptism—of the inseparable connection between the outward and visible sign, and the inward and spiritual grace, requires the exercise of as implicit a faith as the doctrine of transubstantiation does. To believe it we must maintain, in opposition to our senses, that what is evidently the work of the flesh is really the fruit of the Spirit. We must believe that baptized blasphemers, and baptized inebriates, and baptized adulterers, are born of the Spirit. Men who are ready honestly to confess, not only that they are not now, but they *never* were, under the control of the Spirit; that there never was a time when the fruits of the Spirit were brought forth by them; although baptized in infancy and perhaps trained by the most faithful and religious parents, and preserved from bad examples, and nurtured almost in the sanctuary, as was the pious Samuel, yet memory can go back to no period when religion, or even the restraints of morality, were acceptable or easy to them. Oh no. If we accede to the doctrine, that a mere baptism of water will certainly renew the soul, that the Holy Spirit is always connected with this means of grace, we must

have low views of what is meant by the influence of the Holy Spirit. We must reduce it to some such general operation as was felt by the inanimate creation, when under the Spirit's brooding wings it gradually rose out of chaos; or, at most, to that reproofing influence which, before the flood, all men, however corrupt and abominable, experienced, and of which God spake when he said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man for that he also is flesh."\*

In such a new birth as this there is nothing mysterious. The priest may appoint the day and hour when this mighty wind of Heaven shall blow, and he may elect the favoured individual who shall thus be transformed and entitled to glory; or he may hold back the Spirit from every man who worships not in the sanctuary with him. He may deprive the sick of a new birth, by neglecting to attend at their summons. He may decide when there shall be a revival of religion in a church, and when not, no matter whether God should bless his word or not. Indeed he becomes the omnipotent being,

\* "How frequently," says Archbishop Leighton, in a Sermon on Psalm xlii. 8, "doth God heap riches, and honor, and health, on those He hates, and the common gifts of the mind, too, wisdom and learning; yea, the *common gifts of his own Spirit*." Vol. II. p. 99. "It is not a little reforming," says Archbishop Usher, "will save man—no nor all the morality of the world, nor *all the common graces of God's Spirit*, nor the outward change of the life."

and the Holy Ghost his instrument, and the text should be changed, and read thus: The church baptiseth where it listeth, and according to its good pleasure men are born of the Spirit. A mighty prerogative! An inconceivable power! A most daring presumption! Depriving the Holy Spirit of its sovereignty, and falsifying the word of God, which, embracing all mankind within the possibility of the Spirit's influence, assures any and every man, whatever be his ignorance of, or distance from, the sanctuary; whatever be his condition or his sins, that a new birth by the Spirit may be accomplished, without the intervention of any priest, but that great and blessed mediator the Lord Jesus Christ, who will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Almost as well might this presumption be carried into the natural world, as into the spiritual; and men profess the power of waking up the wind of heaven, which God holdeth in his hand, of directing its course over the different regions of the earth, and of benefiting one individual and not another with its refreshing influences. But no, the wind, in despite of such presumption, "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

But of the truth of what has been said, we may

be more assured by considering, *secondly*, that the Holy Ghost is *not only independent, but omnipotent in his influences*. By this, I mean only, that we know of no obstacle so great which the Holy Spirit cannot overcome. Among the common elements about us, the wind holds a most conspicuous place. It is not easy to separate the idea of it, from that of the air which we breathe, and without which life cannot for a moment be retained. It may be employed gently to fan the face of nature, and extract fragrance from flowers; or it may be employed to shake the adamantine pillars of the earth. It may waft fleets in safety over the face of the ocean, or lashing that ocean into a tempest, hurry a whole navy into the abyss of destruction. We read in the 1st book of Kings xix. 11, that a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord.

We have then, in this similitude, abundant room in which to discourse upon the ordinary and extraordinary operations of the Holy Ghost. Of the extraordinary agency of this blessed being, we have a demonstration in the miracle which was wrought on the day of Pentecost, when, like a mighty rushing wind, He filled all the house where the disciples were assembled. Imparting to them unquenchable zeal, miraculous knowledge, utter-

ance of all living languages, and crowning them visibly with an emblem of his presence, an ornament of fire on their heads. From the day of Pentecost to the present, there have been seasons of such refreshing from the presence of the Lord—when whole churches and communities have felt and acknowledged His reviving power, and hundreds and thousands have awaked to newness of life. Such was the case at the Sandwich Islands in 1820, and within the diocese of the Metropolitan of India, in 1840. Such are some of the extraordinary influences of the Spirit—extraordinary either in the miraculous nature, or in the wide extent of the effects produced. But these are not to be confounded with what may be called human revivals of religion, which appear to be as purely the work of man, and as much exposed to the charge of presumption, as the assumptions concerning baptismal regeneration. The language of the humble priest should be “I baptize you with water, but there standeth one among you whom ye know not, He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.”

The extraordinary out-pourings of the Spirit are important to the church, not only because of the numbers which at the time they add to her ranks, but because of the exhibition which they set before us of the mighty power of this gracious being. The magnitude of the change which must take

place within a man before he can obey the Gospel of Christ, and read his title clear to mansions in the skies, is such that the work would be hopeless, unless the agency employed to effect it was omnipotent. A new birth, a new creation, the giving of life, from whence are these but from Almighty power? Not only is despondency felt by the Christian minister, as he looks upon men who are continuing in sin after every human means has been used for their conversion, but the impenitent themselves acknowledge that the work appears as difficult to them as it can appear to others. Many a man who has been baptized, and against whose life and conversation no charge of immorality can be brought, presumes not to approach the table of the Lord to commemorate the dying love of Christ, because his heart is yet unholy and wedded to the world, and although his theological teachers would persuade him that in baptism he was born again, his own conscience denies it; and when he compares the words of his mouth, and the meditations of his heart, with those which are acceptable in the sight of God, He is convinced that except he is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God! Who of you, dearly beloved, whose hearts are now set upon things above, and who confess Christ to be your chief joy, cannot recollect the time, when the

wealth of the Indies would not have tempted you to become a true Christian; when you declared, that nothing short of making you over again, could so change your tastes, dispositions, and passions, as to cause secret prayer to become a consolation, the study of the Scriptures a pleasure, and fellowship with the saints delightful. This is now the confession of thousands who sit under the preaching of the Gospel, and it was to meet and enlighten the views of such, that our Saviour uttered the words of the text, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: So is every one that is born of the Spirit." In the natural world, when the earth is deprived of this influence;—

"When not a breath—

Is heard to quiver through the closing woods—  
The uncurling floods diffused,  
In glassy breadth seem through delusive lapse,  
Forgetful of their course,"

it appears impossible that the wind should possess such power as to tear up by the roots, whole forests which have withstood the storms of a century—or that vast navies, and deeply laden fleets, should be driven by it, trembling over the sea, or be engulfed in its mighty waters. But let the

mysterious word go forth which lifteth up the stormy winds, and the stoutest heart may be melted in a moment. And should the Lord come down to work within his Church, might not as surprising effects follow in the spiritual world? Is there a stouter heart here, or one more averse to Christ than there was in Saul of Tarsus? Are there more prejudiced minds here, than were those of Christ's Jewish murderers? And was it impossible, that the Holy Spirit should change three thousand such hearts, and from the bitterest enemies convert them into meek and lowly followers of Christ? O the blessed truth—that the influence of the Spirit is like the wind. It can penetrate every house—"the whole house," and every heart. Blessed truth that the Holy Spirit is mysterious in its operations; we know not what obstacles are great or little to it. We know not that any heart however hard, can resist its mighty influence. What ground, then, is there here for the prayer of intercession. Is any conversion too hard for God the Holy Spirit? Is not God's word inspired by that Spirit like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces? Blessed truth, that the Holy Spirit bloweth where it listeth. That no human bigotry, ignorance, or prejudice, can confine it: but that like the wind, it may bless and favor those who are most despised! That the

poor and broken-hearted sinner—who has been mourning under a conviction of his guilt, and dreading everlasting destruction, can to-day be blest with this fair wind of heaven, which blowing away all clouds, may reveal the sun of righteousness in his splendor, and gently waft the weary voyager into the desired haven. O, who would have the Spirit other than independent in his operations, and omnipotent in his power? Who would have any other than a great and powerful influence which may be found in secret—whose assistance may be implored in the private chamber—to whose mysterious power men may open their hearts, and of the success of whose operations they cannot doubt? Under this administration, men may work out their own salvation, and when they have tasted that the Lord is gracious, may present themselves with confidence to be enrolled among the soldiers of Christ.

Now, my brethren, if there has been provided so powerful an agency for the moral transformation of men, the necessity of that transformation must follow, and the difficulty of the work itself must be apparent. That men in general are not prepared to die and meet their God, is evident and will be readily confessed. That a great change must take place, before they can say with the true Christian, “to me to live is Christ, and

to die is gain," it requires no argument to prove. Although exposed to death daily, yet nothing is so terrific as its approach; although their sins are beyond all computation, yet the consideration of them is painful, and continually postponed. There are times, however, when alarmed for the future, they give attention to the subject of salvation! But alas, their efforts are then misdirected. Instead of instant submission and salvation—instead of crying for mercy in the name of Christ, and offering themselves a living sacrifice to God—relying on the atonement of his Son for their acceptance, and upon his Holy Spirit for repentance and faith, they commence the work of reformation in their own strength. Our Saviour described the case of such, in language like this: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none." Mark! that was but one of many other spirits which were left still in occupancy—"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and findeth none.—Then he saith, I will return unto my house from whence I came out. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first." Instead of a partial reformation, as if all

our sinfulness consisted in the gratification of one corrupt passion, let the sincere seeker humble himself before God, as altogether sinful and vile. Let him consider not only the necessity of moral purity, but of supreme love to God, and disinterested love to man—of profound humility—lively faith, ardent devotion, cheerful self-denial, and entire deadness to the world. And when he perceives how very far gone he is from original righteousness, let him pray to the Holy Ghost, to create within him a clean heart and a right spirit. It is thus, that, feeling the perishing need of this great spirit to convert the heart, realizing, that the Ethiopian can as easily change the original color of his skin, by once plunging into the warm waves of his native floods, as the natural man can be new created, by merely submitting to the ordinance of baptism, he will cry mightily for this converting power, and in due time, may experience its fruits in his heart and life.

Again. If there has been provided a remedy adequate to the disease of sin, how frivolous the common excuses of men, when called to repent and believe the Gospel. Where is the man who has an excuse, which will quiet his conscience, not to say satisfy his judge? His sins are many, aggravated and heinous. And has he not been taught, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth

from all sin? Has he endeavored to return to the path of duty, but without success? And upon what has he relied, but upon his own strength? Under the mighty influences of the Holy Spirit, he might have been as much abased as was Saul of Tarsus, or changed and renewed as were three thousand men on the day of Pentecost.

But does he suppose that his is a peculiar case? That ordinary preaching and exhortation cannot move him? That his objections and prejudices are beyond the reach of argument or eloquence? And may not the penetrating, melting, and astounding operations, of this great agent be sufficient to remove all the dross from his soul, and to bring it out of the furnace, purified as gold under the refiner's hand? Or do some plead *youth* and the *love of pleasure*, as insuperable difficulties in the way of salvation. And may not this great Spirit open before them, new sources of pleasure, greater than those which eye, ear or heart ever enjoyed? Did he not in the creation of the world, change vast and confused elements, into all the forms of beauty which have been seen by man? And is there now one "good and perfect gift," which is not from above?

In fine, if this mysterious but indispensable change passes over every true Christian, in what danger are those professors of religion who have

not experienced it? Mark! it is a mysterious and indescribable work. It is not alike in all.—The experience of one man is no standard for that of another. If the fruits of the Spirit are found in the heart and life, no matter when or how the change has taken place, the great work is done. But how many among us, have neither the inward consciousness of this great and mysterious change, nor can point to the fruit of holiness by which it is to be recognized. To some, our Lord spake in plain and awful language, “I know you, that you have not the love of God in you.” Oh, my brethren, if one man requires this great transformation, every man requires it, for all were born in sin. It is upon the heart that God keeps his eye. And here the work of salvation must commence. That which is highly esteemed among men, or in the church, may be of little account with the Searcher of hearts. The person to whose inquiries our Lord replied in the text, was a Master in Israel, and without doubt was punctual and exact in his attention to all the ceremonial law of God;—nay, he believed in Christ as a teacher from above. And yet the inference is, that he still required the new birth of the Spirit, and by his future conduct, he gave some evidence that he received it. Alas! “although we have all knowledge and all faith,” we may, notwithstanding, be

as sounding brass. We may have been baptized, confirmed, and admitted into the fellowship of Christians, and be accounted friends of religion and the Church, and yet the renovating Spirit of God may not have drawn or driven us to the feet of Christ. O, put not off an investigation of your case to a sick bed, and to the hour of death. The work of self-examination is most difficult,—those who have been longest engaged in it, often despair of success and cry out with David, “Search me, O Lord, and try my heart, prove me and know my thoughts.” But, when sickness has debilitated both the mind and the body, when all energy has failed, when you are calling for the consolations of religion,—then to submit to its scrutiny—its searching light, to hear its unbending requisitions—Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God:—then to hear, Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting, O who can bear the thought?

And yet, this discovery must be made thus late, or what is still worse, men must go down to the grave with a lie in their right hand.

It is impossible for you to conceive of the anxiety and grief which the pastor experiences, when he is called at a late period to pronounce upon the case of many a dying man. Alas, alas, when the soul has advanced so far—into the world of spirits

—but little can be done to change the final destiny. “Now, is the accepted time.” Now, while there are health and strength, let the most solemn and searching examination be instituted. Set it down as the unchangeable decree of heaven, that except a man be born again—except a moral change come over him—over his heart and mind—except he becomes a new creature—except old things pass away, and all things become new—except he comes to have an intelligent and fervent love to Jesus Christ, as the author and giver of life—such a love to God, as a child has to a father—he cannot be saved. No sacraments can save him—no assurances of man will avail him—no priestly absolution will release him from the guilt of sin. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” O, what a different aspect would our churches present, if every communicant was born of the Spirit! If all ministers were full of the Holy Ghost—if all those who had the Spirit were wrestling in prayer for those who have it not,—if all closets witnessed that fervent and effectual prayer, which availeth much—if all firesides were sanctified morning and evening by the incense of prayer and praise to God,—if children were prayed for, and prayed over, with a strength of desire which would take no denial,—if the pious mother was heard to cry,

“My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live,”—or, if speechless, but tearful grief was witnessed for souls who have gone astray, by Him who seeth in secret! It was, my brethren, when the disciples of Christ had prayed, that the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. Let humble and fervent prayer, then, ascend to God, that the blessed Spirit may breathe upon all your hearts and minds—moving you heavenward with a mighty energy—reviving all your languishing graces, awakening your desponding hearts, and causing you, as one man, to “come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” And should your prayers be heard,—how small the conception of the uninitiated, of the result which would follow;—how men the most opposed to religion, would weep and confess their sins;—how the covetous would become liberal;—how the listless and inactive would burn with zeal;—how every means of grace would be prized and enjoyed;—how the poor and ignorant would be fed and taught, and how the true spirit of love and zeal would swell every bosom. It would be like suddenly transforming a tree, from its wintry desolation, into the most flowering and fruit bearing state. It would be overtaking the ship long becalmed in mid ocean,

with a wind filling every sail, and hastening the joyful mariners to the desired haven. It would be opening the tombs in the graveyard, and re-peopling that wilderness and solitary place, with new and beautiful forms, until it should rejoice and blossom as the rose. It would, in fine, take away the strong fear of death from every trembling Christian,—reconcile us to all the ways of God, and make us feel not that there is but a step between us and the grave; but that there is only a thin veil which separates us from Paradise.

And now, awake, O north wind, and come thou south; blow upon this garden, that the spices may flow out. Let Christ come in and eat his pleasant fruits. O Lord, breathe upon the dry bones in this valley, and may they spring up to newness of life. Upon our sons and daughters here, pour out thy Spirit. Upon Mount Zion may there be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

## SERMON XI.

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### ON THE BARREN FIG TREE.

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St. Luke *xiii.* 7.

“BEHOLD, THESE THREE YEARS I COME SEEKING FRUIT ON THIS FIG TREE. AND FIND NONE: CUT IT DOWN; WHY CUMBERETH IT THE GROUND?”

It was a provision of the Levitical law, that the fruit of a young tree should not be plucked until three years after it had begun to bear fruit. When then, the owner of the vineyard came expecting fruit on this fig tree—he had afforded it time to grow. He did not come the first year after it was planted, nor the second, nor the third; when he came with an expectation of gathering fruit, he had given the tree time enough to come to maturity. He had not we may well suppose planted it in an uncongenial soil, but in a productive one; and lastly, he had not left it without the care of an experienced cultivator. On the contrary, with

every circumstance favorable; and after a sufficient time had elapsed, the lord of the vineyard made his first visit. With the account of this visit we are not furnished; but we may infer that no small disappointment was experienced. Other trees planted at the same time had brought forth fruit, and a similar result was expected in the case of this.

Now, my Christian brethren, although it is a settled principle that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” and that when the influences of the holy Spirit are given they must be treated as talents—yet from Scripture and reason we may be well assured, that there never will be demanded of us any attainments in holiness which we cannot make; that nothing will be expected of us, which we have not been assisted in every proper way to perform, and that nothing will be demanded of us which has not been demanded of others and found in them again and again.

So that every one of us who is not bringing forth the fruit of good works, who is not in all respects what God requires him to be, resembles this unfruitful fig-tree, and is awakening feelings of disapprobation and surprise. He has enjoyed all the opportunities, all the advantages, and all the assistance necessary, and therefore he is without excuse; and if this night his soul should be

required of him, he must be speechless—and must hear the sentence, Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? O how many Sabbaths, how many sermons, how many sacraments, how many warnings, how many invitations have been allotted to him, and without success—perhaps without any adequate sense of his obligations. It is a most solemn announcement—“Unto whom much is given, of him shall much be required;” “and that servant which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.” O how certainly will he be called to give an account of his stewardship; and except he repent, how surely will he perish. All this bears hard both upon the careless, and the formal and pharisaical professor. You remark that there was no disappointment experienced respecting the general appearance of the tree. It had put forth vigorously and was covered with leaves; so much so, that it required close inspection in order to discover whether there might not be fruit after all. And alas! this may be the case with many a professor of religion at the present day. His general appearance may be flourishing and proportioned to his advantages. There may be a *profusion* of foliage, of mere profession, of religious conversation, and religious services, and active duties.

“ I bear them record,” says St. Paul of the Jews, “ that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” The true heavenly fruit of *inward piety* and of deadness to the world; the hidden fire of a holy love to Christ; the continual exercise of unseen but heartfelt charity to man; the abasing and humbling of the heart on account of its sins, and the storing of the mind with the spiritual instruction of Christ’s blessed Gospel—these cannot be found. They are sought for; the tree is carefully surveyed, from the lowest to the highest branch, and not a vestige of fruit is found. It is said that on one occasion our Lord was an hungered and came to a fig-tree, and found nothing thereon but leaves only; and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth forever. And can any member of the Church endure the thought that Christ, hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of his people, has made such a visit to him, desiring that he might bear much fruit; has long beheld his public professions of religion, and yet—though he has been carefully examined—no proper fruit has been found!

Can any Christian bear to think that suspicions are awakened, that all is not right with him, and that possibly, although his profession should continue longer, there would never be any appearance of piety. Alas! such may have begun to build without counting the cost.

They may have supposed that to profess religion was the way to possess it. But they must long ere this, have discovered their mistake; and should be unceasing in their penitence and prayers that God would fulfil his promise—"Take out of them the heart of stone, and give them an heart of flesh." It is not, however, mainly on the remorse of the unfaithful Christian, that I intend to dwell. It is on the feelings of the Lord of the vineyard, when this visit was made without success. Many a Christian, who, in spite of all his privileges, has been unfruitful, has encouraged himself in this state, as the ungodly encourages himself in open sin. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Because God did not cut him down the first year of his unfruitfulness; he has come to believe that he will never be cut down!—that he will never be visited, molested or punished at all. Thus David once reasoned and said: "I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." But O, how little does such a Christian know of the depth of the divine compassion, of the liberality of the divine government, and of the patience of the divine discipline. While he thinks, either that he is not ob-

served of God, or that in some way he shall be forgiven, and all will be well, the great Husbandman has come and gone; the Holy Spirit has been grieved, and the blessed Jesus has multiplied his mediatorial supplications, and the poor and proud professor has become a spectacle of presumption, and dishonor to Christ. In the description which is given in 2 Sam. xii., of the Sin of David, it cannot have escaped any one, that before that painful chapter is brought to a close, we read of David's successes and triumphs. It is said, that David "took the king's crown from off his head, the weight whereof, with the precious stones, was a talent of gold, and it was set on David's head." Knowing as we now do, the punishment which was hanging over that head, for a most aggravated sin, we can be at no loss to conceive of the grief, the anger, and alienation which by that act had been awakened in the divine mind. And yet the prophet Nathan, had not then been commissioned to reprove the sin-besotted monarch. One of the first symptoms of anger is silence, passing a man by without notice. A studied *silence* on the part of those in power, is often intended as preparatory to punishment. It often indicates that the party deserves chastisement, and it ought to awaken the apprehension, that in time he will experience it. It is not necessarily haughtiness, nor pride; it is often an expression

of grief, of sorrow, of disappointment. Better things had been looked for; such delinquency, such misconduct, such abandonment of principle, had not been expected. Not unfrequently that neglect is the outward exhibition of inward despair of any reformation, and will be followed sooner or later by an act of justice. "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." O, that offenders were wise, that they would not demand extraordinary warnings to repent and amend! O! that they would not compel those who delight in mercy, to do violence to the best feelings of their hearts, and to become ministers of God for condemnation. "We are unto God," says St. Paul, "a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish."

To return to David: we can venture to affirm, that although the thunder of God's reproof, was not heeded, by that unhappy monarch, yet that the music of God's mercy was unheard. The light of God's countenance was not experienced; the consolations of God's Spirit were not enjoyed. No! David from the moment he committed his sin, was, without doubt, a subject of remorse, of misery and of guilt: but the gratifications of sense had deadened the susceptibility of his soul, and stupefied his conscience. We are told that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit." Now, al-

though the Christian may have remained unvisited by judgments for a long time; may have increased in wealth, or even abounded in labors, and have been the means of turning many to righteousness; yet let him be assured, that his sins will find him out, and that God will visit him for these things. God said to David, respecting his crime: "Thou didst it secretly, but I will punish thee openly, before all Israel and before the sun." Let him be assured, that secret sin is an abomination to the Lord; that even unfruitfulness in a Christian profession will not be tolerated by Him! That not only will open backsliding be punished, but that the anger of God will be awakened, and will burn against every soul of man that doeth evil—the Jew first, and also the Gentile; that God will make a visit of examination in all cases, when there has been time enough for piety to take root; as soon as the dews and sunshine of divine ordinances have been in sufficient measure afforded; that then God will inquire for fruit, nay—as the word may mean—will seek diligently, and carefully, and zealously for fruit, for the desired, for the expected fruit, the proper fruit; and if none is to be found, will He experience on an infinitely larger scale, and in a much higher degree, all that the owner of the vineyard did, when he stood before that flourishing but fruitless tree of His

planting—and even now, judgments are contemplated, and punishments are prepared, and anger is experienced on the part of God.

Remember and mistake not—it is of the unfruitful Christian that we now speak;—the man who does not bring forth the fruit of holiness—love to God and charity to man; who does not let his light shine; who is not as salt in the earth, is not as leaven in a lump; and who is making no exertion to serve and glorify God. There is no man that liveth and sinneth not. The holiest Christian on earth is compassed with infirmities, and burdened with sins. His heart and his mind are in a continual state of imperfection, repentance, and reliance on Christ. But he is nevertheless bringing forth *some fruit*—his very humility is choice fruit in the sight of God;—it is of great price. Whatever he may think of himself, men take knowledge of him, that he has been with Jesus; and the light of his example is a beacon-fire, which is guiding men over the waves of this troublesome world; and while he is condemning himself, God is acquitting and pardoning and blessing him; and saying, “Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.”

Such as these God will guard as the apple of his eye, and will hold in the hollow of his hand. Their growth in grace, their abounding in good works, their daily exhibition of the power of godliness He will behold with delight. Hear His commendation of one of old: "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him;" again—"Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth—a perfect and an upright man; one that feareth God and escheweth evil?" "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." With what satisfaction are the divine visits made to such holy souls as these;—although unconscious as the very trees themselves of the fruit which they bear—saying, "When saw we thee an hungered and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink?" Yet concealed beneath the thick foliage, the Great Husbandman is finding fruit, and is sending his rains and sunshine to bring it to perfection. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Will you not aspire, my friends, to follow the blessed Jesus in a life of holy labor? "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." "I thank God," said St. Paul, "that I labored more abundantly than they all—yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me." Lord, give us grace that we may be and continue to be

Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our life's end; that we may deny "all ungodliness and every fleshly lust; and perfect holiness in the fear of God." *Work* in us, O Lord, both to will and to do. "Stir up the wills of thy faithful people, that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by thee be plenteously rewarded." Of the long-suffering and patience of God we should have had no unaffecting view, if as Lord of the vineyard he had made but one visit to the fruitless tree. But we must conceive of him as patiently repeating his visit. One year more of repose in winter, and of invigoration by the rains of spring has past away, and the season of fruit has returned. It is now that a visit is made for the second time.

The tree is again examined, but no fruit is found, notwithstanding its promises in the spring, and its improvement in every other respect. Nor is this the only visit;—another year is slowly passing away, and contributing to the fruitfulness of the vineyard—and a third visit is made. But this is attended with no better success; and now the sentence is heard—"Behold, I come these three years, seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?". I know not whether to pause now, and admire the patience of God; or to go on and

add that that patience does not stop here. But first I must put the question to all present, whether they could desire a more patient and considerate Master? one who was more generous, more liberal; one who made more ample provision; one who afforded more time and opportunity to do his work, and bring forth fruit? If God should, by his grace and Holy Spirit, plant one of you this day in his vineyard, and should wait until you had taken root before he came expecting fruit; if for a season he should not *be strict* to mark what is done amiss—should give you time to cast off bad habits and to form good ones; in fine give you as long a time to be rooted and grounded in love to Christ as this fig-tree had to come to maturity in the earth—would you not be satisfied? Would you not engage willingly in his service? Would you not deny that he was a hard Master? If you had had time enough—had been living in as faithful a church, as this tree had been planted in a fertile soil;—if all this had been experienced, would you not be willing to submit to an examination—to court it, to invite it, to glory in it? We are not told in the parable, that the Lord of the vineyard expected *much* fruit—a great profusion of fruit;—no, one single specimen at first might have satisfied him, that he had not been mistaken in the tree, nor had labored in

vain;—and one single specimen might have insured for the tree more attention, more care and culture, that it might bring forth more fruit. “To him that hath shall more be given.” O, who can describe the tender mercy of our God? Who that has drawn near to Him has not come up upon the multitude of his tender mercies? Who will not yield to Him the homage of their hearts? Who that has one single desire—the smallest desire to serve God—but will be drawn out by this subject to enlist under his banner, and to listen to his standing call—“Son, go work in my vineyard to-day?” O, how unlike an earthly master—how unlike the world, the flesh and the Devil—how patient—how long suffering—how compassionate—how considerate is God—and yet how just—how holy—how inflexible—how persevering in his determination. Fruit must be found, or destruction will ensue. How resolute in executing the sentence of destruction. “Cut it down,” came out as freely as a third visit was made patiently. No! we do not pretend that God is not just and holy, and severe to the incorrigible and impenitent. We do not preach that there is not an *axe* for the administration of justice, as well as a golden sceptre for the exercise of Mercy. But we do say, that no mortal mind can conceive of the mercy, the patience, the long-suffering of God

towards those who fear him, and whom he plants as trees in his vineyard. Well might the Psalmist sing, "His mercy endureth forever." We do mean, that no man will be excused who refuses to serve God on the plea that his service is hard and unreasonable. Ah! what can be harder and more unreasonable than the service of sin? The wages of sin is death. "There is no peace saith my God to the wicked." "The way of the transgressors is hard." It is hard to please the world. It is harder still to satisfy the sinful desires of our own hearts. O, can you prefer these masters to Him who came three years seeking fruit on his fig tree, and even then, upon the intercession of the dresser of the vineyard, waited a fourth year?

Now, my Christian friends, I pray you to view, in connection with this moving fact, the certainty of God's anger at the presumptuous Christian, and to ask whether he is willing to live any longer under the restrained anger of God—under his silence and apparent neglect; I would ask such—how long is it since the light of God's countenance has been experienced in thy inmost soul? and ask how often hast thou said, O, that I were as in months past, as in the days when the candle of the Lord shone upon my head; and when by His light I walked through darkness! I would ask if he can promise himself that all will be well—even

although he should add sin to sin? It is certain that the great, the heart searching God, has made a visit of examination to every tree of his planting—that he has come *seeking* fruit—that is, has been in earnest in looking for it, and that every such visit has been noted down in his book.

After such and such an *affliction*, so trying and so painful, after such misfortune in business, so mortifying to the pride, but purifying to the spirit, God came seeking fruit. Did he find it? After such success in business, or improvement in external affairs, God came seeking fruit. Did he find it? After years of instruction in his sanctuary; after the Christian had sat long under the richest and holiest influences; had heard the Gospel preached plainly, faithfully, and affectionately, and had seen it bring forth fruit all around him; after this, God came seeking fruit; and if this visit has been unsuccessful, why wonder at the sentence, “Cut it down.” Be sure, O, fruitless Christian, that that sentence had been passed upon thee; and the tree of thy profession had been cut down long since, had not the dresser of the vineyard interceded! “Let it alone this year also.” Who that has been long in the enjoyment of Christian privileges does not tremble? Who ought not to *tremble* lest such a sentence may have been passed on him? Who is not alarmed

when he reflects that nothing but the intercession of Christ has interposed between him and destruction? For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many die. The church *has* from time to time been thinned of its fruitless trees—its mere professors. Even Christ's intercession has availed only for a time. The year of his renewed culture and care has past away, and the silence of the grave has terminated the vain attempt to serve God and mammon.

The great object I have in this discourse, is to guard you against the natural but dangerous conclusion, that because you are left unmolested for a season, that therefore you will be unmolested forever. No; whether God is now on his first, second, or third visit, he has all those feelings of disapprobation, and those determinations of justice which our Lord in this parable shadowed forth. And although God's mercy is as high as heaven, yet it will certainly give way to justice, and the vials of his wrath will most assuredly be poured out. The day is now appointed; the hour is now on the wing, when your laughter will be turned into mourning, and your mirth into sadness.

There is one most solemn reflection which must force itself upon us all. That not only is this examination certain, but that it is to be universal. If but a few members of a church were thus to be

tried and examined, and these the holiest, the event might not be so much dreaded. And yet if God should be strict to mark what is done amiss, who could stand? "He chargeth his angels with folly." But when we think of this examination as carried on in respect to every professor of religion, young and old; when we think that multitudes are to be publicly examined by God who have never privately examined themselves; that those are to be called on for fruit, who have been remarkably deficient in all Christian duties; over whom the most common Christian has mourned; who have been noted as apparently destitute of the temper, the conversation, or the works of true disciples; who can fail to feel the most painful apprehension? Is it possible that God is to make a visit of inspection to that person, to whom his minister has applied again and again, but in vain, for the means of spreading the Gospel among the destitute, the ignorant and perishing, to build up the waste places of our own Zion, or even to save the souls of the poor and neglected in his own city? Is it possible that God is about to visit that person who can hardly be prevailed upon to wait upon him in His house on the Sabbath, and never during the week, though he may find abundant time for the most frivolous amusements? In fine, is it possible that every person who partakes

of the Lord's Supper is to be visited and called upon for those fruits which a Christian ought to bring forth? What a disappointment must follow! How many trees will be found destitute of fruit! Twice dead, plucked up by the roots. How many persons come to the table of the Lord, who cannot be induced to undertake any work for the church; who not only abjure all public charities, but who pay little or no attention to their own souls or the souls of their children or domestics? Who do not comprehend the meaning of these words—"Ye are not your own, but are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are His." Is not this a painful reflection? Must this Church resemble the net of which our Lord spake, which, it is true, was filled with fishes, but which, when drawn to land, was subjected to inspection, and found to have collected both the bad and the good? What disappointment will be experienced at the judgment day! Many shall say, "Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drank in thy presence, and hast thou not taught in our streets?" To which the Judge will reply, "I never knew you." Must this Church resemble that field in which tares were growing with the wheat, and which in time of harvest will contribute its proportion of bundles to be burned? Must all the labor of the pulpit in

their case be lost? O how solemn and painful the reflection, "that even Christ, the great Mediator, must say, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground." "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire."

God forbid that such should be your lot, my hearers. No, let the mercy of God lead you to repentance. Repent most truly of your past sins; have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ's death; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men. So shall you be mete partakers of Christ's holy mysteries, and lay up for yourselves a good reward against the day of adversity.



## SERMON XII.

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### TO YOUNG MEN ON TEMPTATION.

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James i. 12.

“BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT ENDURETH TEMPTATION; FOR WHEN HE IS TRIED, HE SHALL RECEIVE THE CROWN OF LIFE.”

It may appear somewhat mysterious, that we should be peculiarly exposed to danger at the beginning of life, and that when we have the least wisdom and experience, we should be most fiercely assaulted by temptation. Whatever light may be thrown upon this subject by a subsequent examination, it must be acknowledged, that he who endures temptation in youth—who, in the midst of wide-spreading licentiousness is pure; of abounding dishonesty is upright; and of prevailing infidelity is faithful to God and to truth, is really deserving of the myrtle and the olive,—is worthy of public estimation and private regard.

On the other hand, it is certain that, however

numerous and seductive the snares of vice,—however weak and depraved our fallen nature,—mankind in general do not hesitate to condemn, and even to expel from their society,—to disinherit and despise those misguided and unhappy youth who are ruined by these seductions. So that, however difficult it may be to endure and overcome temptation, it is certainly not impossible, and, on examination, it may be found under ordinary circumstances to be no more than is reasonably expected and required by a God both of justice and mercy. Let us proceed then to examine this subject.

Suppose, now, that in early life the propensities to vice are strong, that opportunities for indulging in it are numerous, and that circumstances favorable to it are inviting, has not God implanted at this age an inward monitor which checks and warns the tempted youth of danger? Has not vice been displayed to him in all its frightful consequences, uniformly ruinous and fatal alike to body and soul? Long before he reaches the field of fascination, is he not convinced beyond a doubt, that the way of the transgressor is *hard*, and that *death* is the wages of *sin*? Is it not known to him, that no plea will really justify a vicious course of conduct even in the eyes of men! If, then, he pursue such a course, how much reason has he to fear the judgment of God!

Against the natural propensities to vice and the allurements to evil, to which we have adverted, has not God in the period of youth furnished the most powerful antagonists? a fresh and uncontaminated frame; a solemn voice from heaven speaking to the very soul; and many, nay, innumerable spectacles of vice-polluted and vice-destroyed bodies and souls. I say nothing now of religious education, which in many instances has been a double defence to the soul. But I inquire whether, after all, the press of temptation upon the youthful resolution is really too great to be resisted; and whether a youth who has yielded to it, and is ruined thereby, has any right to charge his Maker with the evil and misery which he must suffer as the consequence of his folly. Had he only hearkened to the voice of conscience; had he only taken warning from those who had gone before him; had he only considered the contempt which even the world would cast upon him; had he only turned away from the paths of the destroyer, saying with one of old, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" he would now have been reaping in a healthy body and with a sound mind a golden harvest of honor and affluence. "Happy," says Solomon, "is the man who findeth wisdom, and the man who getteth understanding. Length of days is

in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor.”

Again, suppose that the temptation to unbelief, ungodliness, and the entire neglect of religion is strong, and that in such a course the world will to a certain extent encourage the young; suppose that the evidences of Christianity do not lie upon the surface of the Bible, and are not easily to be apprehended; that its doctrines and precepts are not palatable and pleasant and congenial to the taste and feelings of the natural heart, and that the young, if they only avoid open vice and profligacy, may, although decidedly irreligious, make great advancement in worldly prosperity. Does not the youth of even common apprehension perceive, that in most cases a denial of the truth of the Bible is accompanied with a life at variance with its commands; and therefore conclude that, if the Bible did not interfere with men's vices, they would believe in it and follow it, even though it abounded with the greatest absurdities, and made the most monstrous demands on their credulity. But where is the youth tempted to infidelity, who does not perceive the necessity of religion for man? The hall of pleasure cannot always be open, and the hour of reflection must be experienced. Seasons of sickness or affliction in his own person, or in the person of some valued friend,

will force upon him the question, What will be after death? The sudden decease of a companion of his youthful sports, or of an associate of his riper years, fills him with apprehension and alarm, and all the shafts of satire and ridicule which have enlivened the festive board, will not satisfy the demands of his immortal reason, nor silence the voice of God's vicegerent conscience. He knows that the cold grave may to-morrow entomb his body; he believes that he shall survive the dreaded dissolution of his mortal frame, and he *demand*s, I had almost said, of the author of his being, either the extinction and destruction of his fears and forebodings, or an intelligible revelation from heaven. And has not that revelation been afforded? Is it not placed within his reach? Is it not capable of proof? Let two thousand years of experiment among men furnish the reply. When his mind was tender and unoccupied, were not its truths implanted as first principles? Has not that revelation been read, explained and preached to him in all the attraction which parental love and infinite wisdom could devise to work upon human intellect and affection? Parental love was the first moral exhibition which delighted and impressed him; and does not love beam out in that book like the sun in the firmament,—providing for all wants—offering pardon for all sins, through

the atonement of Christ—sparing not the brightest object in heaven, even his only begotten Son, that man might be reconciled to Him, and that He might exalt the dwellers on his footstool to an equality with the happy spirits around his throne.

However this subject may appear to the uninformed, to those who have made it their study, the love of God revealed in that book is as far superior to all manifestations of human affection, as heaven is high above the earth. Should not that then which fully satisfies the real wants and ardent longings of the immortal mind, and delights it with assurances of a paradise beyond the grave, equal at least to that which preceded death;—should not that which ages and generations have proved to be true and good; should not that which condemns only vice and crime—which solves our doubts, when doubts are most painful; which silences our fears, when fears are most tormenting; that which is not left to be consulted in the solitary shrine, but which speaks out its solemn truths by the tongues of ten thousand living preachers; should not that be an antidote to the loose, libidinous and half-illuminated assertions or jests of a few dissolute, depraved or prejudiced men? True or false, he only is the *happy* man who endures and overcomes this temptation. Little penetration is required to discover that

mental misery, to drown which liquid poison must be taken, and continued dissipation indulged, is the indissoluble companion of him who cuts himself off from a hope of the future. "Blessed is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful."

But let us proceed to higher ground, embrace a wider circle, and come nearer home. Suppose that the calls of pleasure are loud, the hilarity and joyousness of youth great, the intercourse of refined society brilliant and captivating; suppose the ball-room, the theatre, and the gaming-table, to be alluring in the highest degree, yet to a youth educated in religious principles, and such I now have in my eye, there is enough to awaken suspicion and to create disgust. To the young who, dedicated to God in infancy, come up weekly to the temple and are favored with the faithful ministrations of the gospel, who hear that the friendship of the world is enmity with God, and that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; to such, is there not in the preaching of the gospel, and in the visitations of the Holy Spirit, an antidote and safe-guard against temptation, to which the God of all grace may appeal, and say: "I called, but ye refused?" I ask, who pronounces the captivated attendant

upon these pleasures blessed? Not *Jesus*—not he who pronounced the poor in spirit blessed. Not he whose name is precious to the righteous, above every name in heaven; whose name must not be whispered where maddening music and fragrant odors and flashing lustres and glittering jewels and sparkling glances lend enchantment to the scene. I admit there may be fascination and enchantment in such scenes, even for those who are neither vicious nor unbelieving; for the old as well as for the young; for the learned as for the ignorant; I had almost said for the pious as well as for the ungodly. Who can say that there is no enchantment in all this? Who can say that there is not here a well-contrived and successful attempt to obliterate all thoughts of Him, in whom we live and move and have our being? Who will say that there is not here a deliberate design to drown care, to dissipate fear, and to indispose the heart to fix its supreme affections upon God? Will the deluded victim himself in retrospect pronounce the subjects of such enchantments blessed? Will he review those scenes in which he took part with self-approbation? Ah! when the summons of death arouses to agony the pleasure-seeking spirit—when the thoughts of an eternal world and an offended God and a fiery retribution break in upon him, will the miserable victim *then* pro-

nounce the word blessed? Nay, will not the tempter who enticed, the friends who encouraged, the companions who united in such attempts to draw the mind from God, be considered enemies to the soul? And, as the soul is immortal, and its immortality is lost, may they not be visited through everlasting ages with the scorpion stings of upbraiding and reproach.

But we shall conclude as we commenced, by adhering to the sentiment of Scripture, that he who endures temptation is worthy of *admiration and honor*. Notwithstanding that he who yields to the attractions of pleasure, or to the seductions of vice, is condemned by his fellow creatures, his conscience, and his God; notwithstanding that the barriers and fortifications which enclose virtue, are strong and sufficient, nevertheless there *is temptation*, and a great reward is promised to him who endures it. Yea, though he humbly decline distinction, distinction awaits him. He is pronounced "blessed," and is assured of a crown of life, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, has promised to them who love him.

From the language here employed, we are to conclude that it is a true Christian of whom the Apostle speaks. None but he who is such can be said to overcome all temptations, and to endure for any length of time the fire of the furnace.

He is indeed esteemed worthy of honor who retains his moral integrity, even if he proceeds no further; and he is beloved who remembers his Creator in the days of his youth. But would any one secure the full measure of divine benediction, he must openly and unreservedly dedicate himself to Christ. Having passed through the minor furnaces, he must enter the church; that furnace is heated ten times hotter for youth than for age. Then it is that apostles and their successors in the Christian ministry call him blessed,—pronounce him happy, and assure him of that crown of never-fading laurel which the Lord has promised to them who love him. Look through the long line of enemies, which from childhood he has resisted, and is there not evidence of faith and courage and temperance and godliness; and are not these the virtues and graces which insure for their possessors, through Christ, all that makes this life honorable and death happy.

But I can dwell no longer on the temporal distinctions that await the triumphant Christian, although these are *great*. God has promised that the meek shall inherit the earth; and that those who honor him he will honor. The Bible abounds with assurances, that if men seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things shall be added to them. All temporal enjoyments

may be considered matters of taste, and men may demur at *such* blessedness. I come then to the great realities of death and eternal existence. I see all earthly grandeur fade away. I imagine the stripping of the soul of all its temporal possessions. I come to the period, when the grave is about to be opened, and the worm to feed upon charms, which have excited admiration and awakened envy; and I imagine the blessedness of him who has used the world as not abusing it; who has early remembered his Creator and kept his commands; who has confessed his Saviour and served his day and generation. If there be blessedness, it must bud and blossom here. Who has ever seen the righteous forsaken? Who, that has long waited on death-beds, has seen him tremble, has heard him exclaim against death—nay, has found him banishing this dreaded theme, and desiring to be deceived, until the last hour arrived? Nay, who has not exclaimed as he witnessed the departure of the righteous,

“Night dews fall not more gently to the earth,  
Nor weary worn-out minds expire so soft.”

Who has not said, “Let *me die* the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?” Who has not sometimes discovered in dying Christians a calmness and eagerness to *depart*, like that which

men feel in commencing a journey, when golden sunbeams, invigorating breezes and morning glories attract and animate the newly risen traveler. "I desire to depart," said one, "and be with Christ, which is far better," than remaining here. "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Who has not heard the deep conviction, the settled expectation, the longing desire to quit this sublunary scene, and to enter into the joy of the Lord? True, there were once the ardent hope, and feverish thirst, and fearful forebodings, of an earthly and castle-building spirit. There were too many weights to hinder the *living* Christian, but none to oppress the *dying* believer. The great Shepherd who is to conduct him through the dark valley has arrived, and now his doubts are removed, his fears allayed, and his hopes elevated. Earth has accomplished its work. It was the furnace, and is now yielding up the gold. Nor could ten thousand worlds of sin and care and earthly love, tempt the departing Christian to stay, when once the summons has been heard, Come to the marriage; when once his emancipated spirit has caught a glimpse of paradise and the joy of his Lord. For *this hour* he has been setting the battle in array during successive years of trial and conflict. For

this hour he has invoked the presence, support, guidance and direction of God on occasions too numerous for memory to retain. "Suffer no pains of death to fall from thee," has been his public and private petition. To get ready for the grave, has been his solemn charge to a body of sin; for, it may be, half a century. Many a time has he in imagination stretched himself in the silent tomb, bade farewell to all below, and anticipated the joys above. And is not this such a discipline and preparation as may well tend to calmness and lead on to triumph? May not such a man be able in all sincerity of soul to exclaim, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

The blessedness of the conquering Christian in another world, it may not be in our power to portray. But it must be both great in itself, and great by contrast with his present trials. But of the future sufferings of the unbeliever and ungodly rejecter of gospel mercy, we have some information. If those who yield themselves to skepticism and vice, are even here the subjects of shame, remorse and dishonor, what must be the shame and everlasting contempt in reserve for such when they awake in the eternal world? If men condemn them *now*, how certainly will a Holy God condemn them *then*? Will the pleasures of a short life be compensation enough for the endless endurance of

the wrath of God? If he is blessed who *endures* temptation, what is he who *yields* to it?—Yields first to small temptations, when taught to resist them—nay, when encouraged so to do by the assurance of eternal blessedness. To be on the opposite side of the great gulf from such,—forever safe,—enshrined in the affections of the saints made perfect,—embalmed in the bosom of angels, and basking in the eternal sunshine of the Lamb,—is not this blessedness indeed!

My young friends, you are now, and ever have been, in the midst of temptations, allurements, snares and seductions. Remember you were placed here by your Heavenly Father, that strength and wisdom and motive have been afforded you to endure them, and that eternity has been arrayed in all its transcendent glories to encourage you, and with all its appalling terrors to dissuade you from yielding to vice.

Whatever your rank in life may be, whether you are in the most prosperous or in the most humble condition, or at an equal distance from either, you have your temptations, and these must be resisted, or they will inevitably be your ruin. There is no middle ground. You must be able to point to such temptations endured, to such enemies overcome, to such trophies of your faith and courage and godliness secured, or the voice of conscience

will predict your doom, should death now freeze up the currents of life. And remember, that just when you think that you have eluded the vigilant eye of God,—just when you think that you have consummated some long desired scheme of honor or wealth, the power of God may be felt in the awful and agonizing struggle of death, saying, “Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.” Say then, I beseech you, to those around you,—“Choose you, this day, whom you will serve; but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.”



## SERMON XIII.

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### TO THE YOUNG.

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Proverbs viii. 17.

“THOSE THAT SEEK ME EARLY SHALL FIND ME.”

Psalm cxii. 6.

“THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL BE IN EVERLASTING REMEMBRANCE.”

PAINTING, sculpture, and poetry have in all ages contributed to fulfill this decree. Inspiration itself, how impartial soever its pages, has embalmed the memory of those who excelled in virtue. There is in the Bible a register, at the head of which stands the name of “righteous Abel,” which includes that of many others, of the young as well as the old.

We follow the holiest and best examples, then, in rescuing from oblivion the short but exemplary life of a pious youth, John G. Fuller, who died on the 10th of August, 1853, aged 17 years. Hun-

dreds and thousands who never saw the happy face of the subject of this sermon, will receive his instructions, and not a few, it is hoped, will follow his example.

With me there should be no respect of persons. I have commemorated with you the graces of the aged saint and the labors of the active minister; and to-day I propose briefly to notice the dying deportment of a young disciple.

The text which was *given me* by him is found in the VIIIth Chapter of Proverbs, the 17th verse—"Those that seek me early shall find me."

I look upon these words, as they were used, to convey—first, an humble exhortation to the young to seek the Lord; and, second, a modest confession of having found Him.

My young friends, the person who uttered this request was on the verge of the grave. All hope that he could live had fled; and, taking a calm view of both the present and the future life, he fixed upon that thing which it was most important you should do; and, being unable to exhort you to do it, he solicited me to exhort you in his stead. What that thing is, you all very well know. It is to become truly religious, to forsake your sins, and to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Your young companion, you know, had himself become religious. You may have seen

him at the early age of thirteen years, of his own accord, come forward to receive baptism, and at a subsequent period, confirmation and the Holy Communion; and, after having experienced the benefit of these important ordinances while in health, and now enjoying the support and consolation of divine grace in view of death, his heart yearned towards you. He hesitated—he tried to say more—but could only articulate the wish that I should preach to you a sermon from the words, “Those that seek me early shall find me.”

*What* they shall find God to be, he left me to imagine; but, when I looked upon his calm and cheerful countenance—when I reflected on the length of time he had been suffering from disease—perhaps two years—when I considered that he had been cut off in the morning of life from all the sports of youth, and all the aspirations of approaching manhood—I reckoned that he had found the Lord a very present help in time of need—that he had found all the support and consolation which he required—and that he was ready and willing to brave the King of Terrors, and prepared to meet his God.

On this subject we shall, however, treat at large in the conclusion of this discourse, or in some other way. We must attend to our duty first, and enjoy our privileges afterwards.

Think, then, first, how you have incurred the displeasure of God—lost His favor and the light of His countenance. Think how many sins you have committed against a holy God. The Scriptures declare that you were born in *sin*, the “children of wrath”—that is, *you* descended from sinful parents, (as *they* did also.) Thus, *you began* life itself with a corrupted nature; you began early to sin and disobey God; and you have lived in sin, committing many actual transgressions. Now, “the wages of sin is death”—that is, all who commit sin are condemned to die by the law of God; and they remain thus condemned, and the sentence of death, temporal and eternal, is passed on them, until they discover their miserable state, confess their sins, and seek the Lord with an humble and contrite heart. Say, then, in the words of the hymn—

“How helpless guilty nature lies,  
Unconscious of its load!  
The heart unchanged can never rise  
To happiness and God.”

Now, the need of such an exhortation as this may be felt by inquiring how many among you, his young friends, have thus sought the Lord and thus found Him, or are now seeking, and desiring to find Him? How many among you are anxious about your future state—are afraid that God will

bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing? How many have discovered that their hearts are deceitful and wicked? How many are mourning before God in secret that they are so prone to sin, so deceitful, so negligent of God and disobedient to their parents? How many are ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well? Alas! whatever may be our hope of you for the future, we have not at present much to encourage us about your immediate salvation. You are putting off the subject of religion from day to day, and Satan is tempting you to put it off. You are forgetting your soul amidst your sports. You are building castles wholly for this life. You are seeking amusement, or, at least, knowledge and instruction, but you are *not* earnestly seeking the Lord; you are not seeking for the pardon of your sins—for the purification of your hearts—for a preparation for heaven. You are not thinking of these things; you are just what your young friend was before he began to seek, but very far from being what he was after he had found the Lord. This is the reason why he besought me to preach a sermon to you, that I might awaken your minds and alarm your consciences—not with the terrors of the Lord, as if he would not forgive you; but alarm you with the great danger you are in, because you will not seek for His forgiveness—that,

although sick with sin, you will not seek the great Physician—though in the land of the shadow of death, where the old and the young die, where children are torn suddenly from their parents, from their plays and schools, from the light of the sun, and the moon, and the stars, from the surface of the beautiful earth, and buried down in darkness and the grave. When you are daily exposed to all this, you do not know it; or, if you know it, do not think of it; or, if you think of it, you do not fly to the arms of your Saviour, and, embracing Him, say, “Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly!” No, I fear there is too little of this among the young. If there was not, your friend would not have been so anxious about you. He would not have selected *this* text. He would have rather said, “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.” He would have recounted to you all the way the Lord had led him: first, to seek the Sunday School; then, to persevere in going to it of his own accord for years; then, when he was grown, to join the Church. He would have told you how he first felt his sins to be a burden; began to keep the Holy Sabbath, to read the Bible, and pray in private; and how, at last, light dawned on his mind, and he felt that God was love, and loved him for Jesus Christ’s

sake, and was merciful to him, and would forgive him his sins and sanctify him by the Holy Ghost, and how he had a hope of heaven which was now an anchor of his soul, both sure and steadfast.

But he sent no such message as this; he rather was compelled to look upon you as not in the fold of Christ, as strangers to the covenants of promise, without God and without hope; for although you were baptized in the Church, of what service is your baptism and admission to the Church, if, instead of obeying the Lord Jesus Christ, you are every day disobeying Him? "It is better not to vow, than to vow and not pay." Oh no. He looked upon you as in danger—in great danger; as both ignorant of your sins, and not wishing to be delivered from them; and therefore, though your pastor is preaching for you every Sunday without effect, and your teachers are teaching you without visible effect, and your parents are conversing with you without effect, yet he might have thought, that if one rose up from a death-bed and preached to you, you would repent.

If you saw the emaciated frame and pale face of your former friend, once so ruddy and healthy as he was, thus changed—saw him just ready to step into the grave—saw him in his coffin, and followed him to the tomb, you would inquire, How should *I* feel if this night my soul should be

required of me? Where should I now be if I had died? Should I be with my friend in paradise? or should I be in the blackness of darkness forever?

O, this is the reason that the dead can speak more powerfully than the living—this is the reason that the living lay it to heart; because, with such a spectacle before them, they see that it is appointed unto men once to die, and are reminded that after that is the judgment.

O, what cause for alarm have all those who have not found God! “What will it profit you if you gain the whole world, and lose your own soul?” Of what importance is it that He MAY be found, and easily found, and be willing to be found; and when found, be able to save to the uttermost! If He is not sought after through Christ, you do *not* come unto Him. If you never seek Him, but neglect so great salvation, how shall you escape?

You may be near a fountain, but if you never go up to it, how can you drink? You may behold a table spread with the richest viands, but if you refuse to go to it, how can you eat? You may read of a Saviour who loved you, and died on the cross for your sins, but if you do not go to Him in prayer, and become His disciple, how can you expect Him to own you at the last day?

You may resolve to go to Christ at some future time, but death may overtake you too soon. I have lately read in a sermon of a fatal accident in a rail-road train:—

“For the lack of one moment,” says the writer, “the lives of twelve persons were lost, and one hundred hearts prostrated with anguish. If that unhappy train had only had at its disposal one minute more, an awful calamity would have been prevented. A man is walking on the edge of a precipice, he steps only one foot too far, and in the twinkling of an eye he is gone. A house is on fire; a man steps back only one minute to save a trifle, the floor gives way, and he is engulfed in flames. The trifle of one moment was a matter of life and death to him: so it may be with some of you. A trifling delay, a trifling excuse, may contain the seeds of eternal destruction. If death should overtake you one minute before you are ready, one minute would shut the door of hope, and all the angels of heaven could not open it.”

*Secondly*—We considered these words as containing also a modest confession of having found the Lord. We say modest, for such, most eminently, was our young friend. There was no more prominent trait in his character. Though a beautiful boy, though exuberantly cheerful, though full

of sport, he was remarkably modest—and by modest, I mean more than merely silent and retiring in his manner, but meek and gentle in his spirit. When about twelve years of age, he was attacked with a most violent inflammation of the lungs, and lay for eight or ten weeks in such a state of fever and inflammation, with a pulse of 130 for weeks on the stretch, that it was a miracle almost that he survived. His case was so remarkable as to be published in a medical journal. I visited him all this time, and never saw more philosophic submission and quietness in either old or young. Under God nothing but this saved him. He had already made a profession of religion, and he undoubtedly possessed it; and this it was, grafted on a remarkably meek and quiet spirit, which enabled him to lie on the rack, as it were, or on a bed of burning coals, for weeks and weeks, without murmuring.

From this attack he finally recovered—not, however, without great admiration on my part, of the skill and attention of his physicians; and recovering his strength, he desired to fulfill his whole duty, and receive the Holy Communion. Thus, the exhortation of St. Paul was heeded, as recorded in the XIIth Chapter of Romans: “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacri-

fice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," &c. And thus the example of David, as recorded in the CXVIth Psalm, was followed:—"I was brought low, and he helped me. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold on me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful; I was brought low, and he helped me. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people."

This, we know, he did. But, how many children have been sick, very sick, and restored to health, without presenting themselves a living sacrifice to God! How many persons not children have been at death's door, and have promised, if spared, to present their lives to God as a living sacrifice, but have not! O, how different would be the experience of such, if this week they should be struck with a fatal disease, and knew they must die! O, what a message would such send to this church! If they sent any, they would say, "O, warn my friends not to delay as I have; entreat them not to stay away from

Christ and His table as I did! All is now uncertain and hopeless before me; I am going to take a leap in the dark, when, if I had forsaken my evil ways, and fled to the bosom of Jesus, I should now, like Paul and Silas in prison, be singing hymns to Christ; I should be rejoicing in the Lord, and my joy no man could take from me."

For what, I inquire, was this youth cut off—so early, so painfully? Or for what was that lovely infant taken away, or that beautiful boy, that engaging girl, that blooming daughter? Why was that man, in the midst of manhood, and that woman, in the midst of maternal cares summoned hence?

It was to awaken the unthinking; it was to shake the hopes of observers and mourners to their foundation—to write, "*Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin,*" on the walls of their houses—to dissolve the charm of the nursery, which charms the mother's soul away from Christ.

O, exclaim the spirit voices within the veil, O break up this sleep, dissolve this dreadful delusion; do it at any cost; cost what it will, let their souls be saved! Whatever else they trample upon, let them not trample on the Son of God, and count the blood of the Covenant *an unholy thing*, and do despite unto the Spirit of Grace.

We called this a modest confession. We do

not intend to hold up our young friend as an eminent saint. We say simply, that he early sought the Lord—sought Him for himself, and appeared to find Him. He certainly found peace of mind, quietness of conscience, and calmness, in view of death. In a letter to a friend, he says: “You will never succeed in contending against sin, unless you go daily to the Lord, and ask Him to help you. I know that He will help you, for I have tried.” “O, what should we do without Christ? Hold fast on Christ. If you do that, you are safe. And let me implore you never to be ashamed of Christ, but stand up for Him, confess Him in your life as far as possible. Never be ashamed of a schoolboy’s ridicule, but stand out boldly for Christ.” This was written at the age of seventeen years.

After awhile, he found himself willing to give up the world, its riches and honors, this side the grave; and when health returned, as it did, slowly, too, he commenced his preparatory studies for the sacred ministry. And might he not here be followed by some of the young in this congregation? There never was a time when the Christian ministry was more in want of candidates—never, since the world began, was the field for ministerial labors more extensive than it is now; and the door opened more widely, and the way

more plain. Wealth can work its own way up to the ministry—we say nothing of that. But where there is not wealth, education societies, academical scholarships, theological seminaries, with liberal endowments, open the door wide—nay, open many doors; so that a young man who finds it in his heart to preach the Gospel and save souls, may, while standing in the counting-house, look through door after door, and see his way clear into the ministry, and into even the gate of heaven, and hear a voice, saying, “Son, go work in my vineyard to-day.”

The case of our young friend was like that of David. He purposed, in his heart, to preach the Gospel—to live, and labor, and suffer, and be despised, or lightly esteemed, and then to have, as Lazarus had, his good things after death; and God, doubtless, accepted his will and intention, and will reward him according to what he purposed, and not according to what he did. And can his friends mourn that he obtained the crown even before he began the conflict?—that he was miraculously landed at the port of heaven so soon? Would they prefer that he should have had a hard and stormy voyage, with constant head winds, and beat his way across the great deep, not only encountering the prince of the power of the air, but wrestling all the time with

mutinous and murderous passions? No! Had this been his lot, as it has been that of others, even then Christ must have fought his battles for him, and he, as far as himself was concerned, must have taken shame and confusion for his deserved portion, saying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us." No, no:

The disciple whom Jesus thus loved  
He has drawn to His pitying breast;  
All joy to the spirit removed,  
He has entered his glorious rest!

Would *he* be a lingerer yet,  
In this crumbling but beautiful clay—  
Though peace here her signet had set,  
Ere the spirit was ravished away?

In life's spring-time he turned him aside  
From the world, its allurements and strife,  
And asked for a heavenly guide,  
And a name in the Lamb's Book of Life.

How beautiful then were his feet,  
Who the way of salvation revealed!  
How teachable, lowly and meek,  
To Life's Fountain he came, and was healed!

Close, close to his Saviour he drew,  
As a shelter in every storm;  
Whatever his hand found to do,  
He was strong in his might to perform.

Behold his victorious calm,  
Nor stain his pure brow with a tear;  
Made white in the blood of the Lamb,  
As his may our garments appear.

Rest sweetly, my boy—thy bright eyes,  
That with roses all folded repose,  
Shall awake to new joys in the skies,  
Which the bowers of the blessed disclose.

Precisely what he enjoyed during his protracted sufferings no one knows, for silence, far more than conversation, seemed pleasant to him.

There are joys with which a stranger intermeddeth not. One hundredth part of what a Christian enjoys or suffers, hopes or fears, is never known but unto Him from whom no secrets are hid. We have, however, in his letters, in his diary, and in his other papers, abundant evidence that he loved much, and enjoyed much, for even he found time to labor for Christ. He addressed letters from time to time to different members of his family; he prepared a religious tract for publication; and his epistles to Christian friends, especially to one of the former assistants of this church, have been transcribed, and sent to me with numerous accompanying remarks, forming a large manuscript, and a valuable remembrance. Nor were these labors without visible effects: more than one of the present communicants of this church were the fruit of his personal exertions, influence, and example.

Thus lived and died this sweet and lovely youth—a flower transplanted from the earth to a

heavenly paradise—one of the many visible and valuable fruits of the Sunday School of this church, which was planted about a quarter of a century ago. It cannot be said of this tree that there are two or three berries in the top of the uppermost boughs, four or five in the outmost branches thereof. No; we have good reason to believe that the Lord Jesus hath been gathering fruit from this tree for many years past. Hardly a year has gone by in which the Lord of the vineyard has not come seeking fruit, and has found it. Scholars and teachers, and teachers of teachers, have been gathered to their fathers, having the testimony of a good conscience, and in union with Christ. What they found the Lord to be, where they found Him, when they found Him, it is not so important to know as that they actually did find Him, and found Him in time, before their feet stumbled on the dark mountains.

Now, children, I write unto you, because you have known the Father—because you have known the Saviour, and have heard of the Holy Spirit; I write unto you, because, if you seek the Lord early, *you* shall find Him. Others may seek, and may *not* find; those that seek Him early *shall* find Him. Others may seek when He is not to be found, when the door of mercy is shut, when the Lamb of God is turned into the lion of the tribe

of Judah, and it is eternally too late to obtain mercy. Others may wait until their hearts have become hard, and they cannot feel; their minds dull, and they cannot think; and their reason perverted, and they cannot believe. Now, your reason is not yet perverted—your minds are active, and your hearts are soft. Say, then, to those hearts the words of the text; remember that they came from the lips of a dying friend; that it was a message sent to you, each one of you—though dead, he yet speaks—and speaks to you, and he says, Do not resolve to become religious at some future time; this Satan will try to make you do; but, become religious now; now is the accepted time; this day and this hour. Say in your hearts to Jesus Christ, “*Lord, save, or I perish.*”

## SERMON XIV.

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AGREE WITH THINE ADVERSARY QUICKLY.

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Matthew v. 25.

“AGREE WITH THINE ADVERSARY QUICKLY, WHILST THOU ART IN  
THE WAY WITH HIM.”

WHEN we listen to some preachers of the gospel, it seems as if mankind were now in an intermediate state; between a condition of sin and hostility to God, and one of full enjoyment of his presence! We feel as if the great struggle of conversion was over, and indeed as if men were waiting only for the gates of glory to open for their admission. There is little said about sin and rebellion against God, or about the danger of neglecting the great salvation; and there is little apparent concern on the part of the speakers about the fate of the hearers. No—we have all arrived at the desired haven, and the only question is about the order of disembarkation, and of admission into the palace;

all is ceremonial—all is about the *means* of grace—little about grace *itself*—less about the perishing *need* of it, and still less about the *certainty* and *severity* of God's *wrath* against wilful and obstinate offenders; calm and cold consideration of things, in themselves right and proper, but infinitely inferior to others, which ought to be repeated and reiterated, until our hearers awake from the sleep of sin; not by some sudden and startling spectacle of death and destruction near them, but by clear and solemn warnings conveyed in words of inspiration, and impressed on the conscience by the Holy Ghost! How different from such a blind and infatuated ministry, the tenor of our Lord's discourses! the sum and substance of which may be found in the words of the text, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him." Here the law of God is declared to be an adversary in the way of the wicked, and threatening him with eternal death; and the counsel of Christ is to agree with him *quickly*; for, unless that agreement is made, there is a certain seizure by death, a remediless deliverance to Satan, and an endless confinement in the prison of hell.

Such is the simple, though solemn subject of our remarks this day. Our subject is divided to our hands, and it only requires faithful exposition to ensure on your part the most deep-seated alarm;

and if we did not preach the gospel as well as unfold the law, such as might well be followed by that sorrow of the world which worketh death. But whatever may be our description of the rebellion of fallen man, we hope never to preach without opening the door of mercy, and pointing the sinner to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Our first general remark is, that the law of God is an adversary in the way of the wicked. In the history of Balaam, when that infatuated prophet would go to preach peace to the enemies of God, he was met by an angel in a place where there was a wall on each side; the angel stood with a drawn sword to resist him, and so blocked up the way, that the dumb beast on which he rode could proceed no further, but stopped, and though beaten and urged to advance, resisted, and by a miracle at length spake out, and condemned the madness of the prophet. What a picture is this prophet of most men who sit under the preaching of the gospel! They are driving furiously on to sure destruction, heedless of every danger, and above all, regardless of that great adversary—the law of God—which is standing in the way to resist them; and standing, if they could only see it, with a drawn sword in his hand, ready to destroy every sinner, when the decree is past; “Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?”

This is the case with men in general, but it not

unfrequently happens that one is suddenly stopped in his mad career, and is overtaken with alarm and conviction of sin; he has no complaint to make of bodily indisposition; his business has taken no new and unfortunate turn; he is not disposed to melancholy; he heard not a sound, not a sentence which awakened his fears, not a syllable which he has not heard a hundred times before, yet he is filled with alarm, he is agitated mentally and physically; trembling has taken hold of him; all fear of man has departed; the world and all sublunary things have suddenly sunk in value, and he stands amazed and unconscious almost of surrounding objects, the subject of deep heart-felt terror and dismay. So true is the case which I have now described, that the most classical and pious of English Poets, has engrossed it in imperishable verse :

“ This man was happy—had the world’s good word,  
 And with it every joy it can afford;  
 Alas, how changed! expressive of his mind,  
 His eyes are sunk, arms folded, head reclined;  
 Those awful syllables—hell, death, and sin,  
 Though whispered, plainly tell what works within;  
 That conscience there performs her proper part,  
 And writes a doomsday sentence on his heart;  
 Forsaking, and forsaken of all friends,  
 He now perceives where earthly pleasure ends.”

So that it is a phenomenon that has been seen in both continents, and in both this and a preceding

century; and who can doubt but that in every century, until we reach that in which the Holy Spirit was sent down on the day of Pentecost; when three thousand men at one time, and in one place, were overtaken by the same terrors, and were heard to cry out—"Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" Are you asking for an explanation of this phenomenon? I answer by the simple declaration, that man has not discovered what Christ declared that every man might discover, the great adversary—the law of God—standing in the way to resist him; charging him with innumerable transgressions, in *thought, word* and *deed*, and threatening him with death and eternal suffering in the prison-house below. That most men around us appear unaffected by fears of the future, is no good evidence that enough does not exist to make the stoutest heart to tremble! Thereafter as a man feareth, says the Psalmist, so is Thy displeasure. Circumstances may *clothe* this adversary with terror, and circumstances may *conceal* its terrors. Felix, the Roman General, made an honest confession of the reason why he was not moved by the great adversary; he had not time; he knew that there was a law, and that he *had* transgressed it; that there was a judgment seat, before which he must stand; that there was much which might be brought against him; but,

said he, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." Who does not know the power of earthly things to amuse the mind and stupefy the soul? Who does not know how the fascination of business engrosses it, and how the attractions of pleasure allure it, and how success in any profession intoxicates it, even success in the *ministry*? and how it steels the mind against all unwelcome and and spiritual subjects?

Most men resolutely and roughly reject and despise all religion and all reproof. Of the whole number of hearers of the gospel, a large proportion pay no attention to the concerns of their souls at all; they give various excuses, one pleads his business; another his domestic cares; another his duties to society; but all pray to be excused, and few pray to be alarmed. But what avails all this? The law of God is still in the way, as sure as death, as relentless as the grave, as remorseless as eternity, uttering its demands in a deep and solemn voice, whetting its sword and bending its bow, and cutting down men on the right hand and on the left, and appointing them their portion with hypocrites and unbelievers, and crying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

The law worketh wrath, the scripture saith.

The law knows no mercy, no mitigation, no reservation, no respect of persons or things; no imperfect works will pacify it, no good intentions will disarm it; it stands up unmoved, unrelaxed, unflinching, unforgiving and unending in its opposition to sin; opening the windows of heaven at one time and pouring out a flood of water, and lifting up the doors of subterranean fires at another to destroy transgressors. O what a doom shall we of the ministry incur! and how deep in a sea of suffering shall we be engulfed, if, when we see and know that the great adversary is standing in the way of every man, and is ready to bring down his sharp sword, we do not warn men. If this be *not so*, if all this be not *true*, why that fear of Death? Why that feeling of guilt? Why that recollection of past sins? Why does that breach of purity, or that of honesty, or that act of cruelty recur to us? Why has that sin, committed so long ago, made so many visits to the mind? Why, when sickness or misfortune or the death of friends, or a storm, or tempest, or a frightful accident occurs, why sinks the soul back on itself? Why call up so unwelcome a visitor as our sin? Alas! there is an agency unseen which calls it up, and which will call all sins up that have ever been committed; and all that is necessary to dissolve the stoutest heart in terror and dismay, is a little time

to *consider*; a little misfortune to cool the fever for gold; a little pain of body; some sudden and sharp attack of disease! Any one of a thousand of the instruments in God's armory may, in an hour, put to flight all dreams of ambition, and leave the boldest sinner a mere infant—a miserable driveller—a humble supplicant for deliverance from the punishment and the penalty of sin! How thoroughly the searcher of hearts knows the truth of all this, and what a conviction of its truth does not a long ministry produce! The physician foresees not more clearly the requirement there will be for his art, when men will transgress the laws of nature, than does the physician of souls foresee the discovery that the sinner will soon make of the great adversary in the way of his soul. O what changes have we not seen in a few hours! what sudden changes from curses to cries—from pride to abasement—from philosophy to fear—from brutal bravery to feminine softness!—and where should we find place to lodge all the regrets, all the self-reproaches, the vows and promises made upon death-beds! Now, my dear brethren, it is that this great adversary may not be discovered by you at a most unwelcome moment, and when you will have no time to listen to his threatenings and his thunders, that I would persuade you of his colossal stride across your

path; of the certainty of his having marked you as his victim, and of the good counsel of the great Redeemer to agree with your adversary quickly! You must all see in the very construction of this sentence, that however fatal the enmity which you have incurred, yet that some way exists by which you and your enemy may come to an agreement. If this was not the case, why would Christ have sent such a message? “Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him.”

Agreement, then, is attainable, and speedy agreement, is possible; and instantaneous agreement *may* be necessary! And if this be the case; joyful agreement is equally possible: and what can possibly be more joyful, than the removal out of the way of such an Adversary as this? or the converting him into a Friend! what more joyful than to be able to sit down and admire his bright armor, to survey his glittering sword, and behold the jewels that sparkle on the hilt, and the highly polished blade, and say—I delight in the Law of the Lord—O, how I love thy Law! O, what a change is this—what a new world is thus opened—what a relief is afforded—what a burden taken off—what a darkness dissipated—what gloom enlivened—and what love experienced to that great and divine Saviour and

sacrifice, on whom that sword was fleshed; who laid his bosom bare for its sharp edge; and who, under its fatal infliction, yielded up the ghost! Such deliverance, on the one hand, and such introduction to a deliverer, would constitute an era in life; the value of which would outweigh the wealth of the Indies, and would create in your bosom emotions of the highest gratitude and love, which would exalt, whilst they delight; and sanctify, while they suffice; and fill the soul to overflowing with love.

By the very language of the text, we are taught that this agreement is not a mere matter of feeling, like the agreement between Jacob and Esau—when Jacob's adversary was appeased by a costly present. We read here of a Judge, of an officer, and of a prison. It is the Law which is the adversary, not arbitrary power; and the law of God, which is holy, just, and good, and which every godly man knows to be founded in wisdom, and executed and administered in justice, and to obey which, is as much for the happiness of the *creature* and for the *glory* of God. It is a Law which harmonized perfectly with every feeling of man, when in Paradise; so that there is a double reason why it should be an adversary to man; for by transgressing it, he has wronged himself, as much as he has dishonored God. But it is

Law—passionless, unchangeable, undeniable law : now, to agree with such an adversary, the terms must be as clearly laid down, as the charges are carefully made ; and when those terms are complied with, to the letter, then no room for doubt remains, the matter is settled, the controversy is ended, and the law is on our side. Now, what are those terms? We answer ; they are repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ ! Our Lord Jesus Christ undertook to meet this great adversary, and to pay all his demands for those who should repent and believe ; and before he left this world, he exclaimed, “It is finished !” He *died* for our sins, but He *rose* again : His resurrection from the dead, was proof of His divine mission, and justifies our belief.

But other and most astonishing miracles were performed in his name ; and thousands of those who saw him suffer as a man and a malefactor, received and submitted to him, when risen as a God ! The law of God demanded perfect obedience of every man—or eternal death ! But as there is now a way of appeasing the Law, as an adversary, so there was from everlasting, a way devised by which God would accept of the perfect obedience of a substitute in our stead ; and when we connect the divinity of Christ with his perfect fulfilment of the divine law, and His suffering of

the penalty due to man's sins, the exalted nature of Christ, more than makes up for the unit of His person: so that one divine being suffering, is counted of more importance than millions of finite beings suffering; and the submission of that great Saviour to obey the law, and to be born under the law, that in man's place, he might obey it, reflects more honor on the law, than the perfect obedience of all our race who have sinned, and who are counted before Him as the dust of the balance, and as the drop in the bucket.

Now, it is by pleading the sufferings of Christ, and by presenting His obedience as our own, before God, that we are to meet the great adversary; and when by repentance and faith we submit to God's righteousness, when we can perceive that Christ is the end of the Law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth; it is then that we can boldly challenge this adversary, and demand—Who is he that condemneth?

Now, my brethren, this salvation, as far as its facts are concerned, is perfectly familiar to you; the demands of it are equally well understood; you know on the one hand, that you are debtors to God's law—ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay—and you know that it is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, that Christ is the Mediator of a new covenant,

and one which far surpasses the old, in mercy and blessing. You, perhaps, have long since determined to repent and believe in Christ, to forsake sin, and to live unto God; but you are still found lingering, and are as distant from actual salvation, and from a settled and sealed agreement with this great adversary, as you were a score of years ago, and my business is to urge you to accede at once to our Saviour's advice, and to agree with your adversary quickly!

Into this short life there are crowded the most solemn responsibilities: it is within the limits of a few short years that we are to make a decision, the result of which is to endure for weal or woe through eternity. If this decision is a happy and righteous one, it is of more importance or value than this visible world. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? A prize is to be secured, compared with which all that is seen by man, is a bubble; but this is not all—a loss is to be averted—an evil is to be arrested—man's present destiny is to be reversed—in fine, death is to be exchanged for life, and everlasting suffering to be converted into eternal happiness. But mark! this is all made to depend upon as brittle a thread, as that of human life. To day it may be possible to ensure eternal repose and pleasure; to-morrow all this may be utterly be-

yond your reach. Agree, said our Lord, with thine adversary, quickly. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for as the tree falleth, so it lieth.

What responsibility can be equal to this? How can the mind of man fathom, or measure, or conceive of the importance of agreeing with this Adversary, while you are in the way with him.—God is no respecter of persons: the cultivated mind, may frame arguments to prove that there is no danger; and the uncultivated may entertain a presumption or hope, that although men continue in sin, they may be saved. But after all, of what avail are the reasonings of men? Prisoners at the bar,—children of wrath,—transgressors against God's laws. All who are acquainted with human tribunals of justice, know that they are continually refusing to grant, what even good men desire, in their own case: men are blinded by self-interest, and it is that blindness, entire blindness in wicked men, which prevents their reasoning, and prevents their attending to the calls of divine goodness and the plain threatenings of divine justice. But, partial or impartial, our Saviour's words are still ringing in our ears; and have been ringing in the ears of every generation of transgressors. Agree with thine adversary quickly. O, what solemn words! Here is a

sworn enemy ; and here is a defenceless traveller ; the enemy has gone forth to slay him ; the traveller walks on unsuspectingly ; a friend warns him—agree quickly—and offers to be the mediator. The case will soon be determined—a few moments, and the parties meet, and death will be the result. Can any advice be more kind, more reasonable, more profitable ? O, if it had been offered to angels that sinned, would they not have embraced the opportunity, and come to an agreement, the result of which would have been a reinstatement into their ancient possessions in Heaven. But Christ the great Mediator, took not upon him the nature of angels : Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners : and will you, my hearers, still proceed towards the grave, and towards death eternal ; and refuse to agree with this great Adversary ? Think how soon you may be overtaken, and that in the most prosperous career, when health is most blooming ! It is an observable and instructive fact, that many of the most distressing dispensations of a mysterious Providence, have fallen upon the appointed victims in the hours of happy excitement, of elevated enjoyment, or of giddy and thoughtless revelry ; strikingly fulfilling our Lord's meaning “ that in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.” All flesh is as grass ! in the morning

it is green and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, dried up and withered. Who can tell what a day may bring forth! Now, you may quietly agree with your Adversary! In the solitude of your own thoughts, in the retirement of your own chambers, while all your powers and faculties are in perfect repose, you may agree with him; make an amicable settlement with him; transfer all your sins, seen and unseen, known and unknown—original and actual, to the great Mediator, and take his obedience and merits as your own. This agreement may be consummated publicly, solemnly, surely, by the Ambassadors of Christ, and here, in the presence of God: it may be sealed by your Baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity; and by the handwriting of the Most High, even his Word and Oath you may receive, and possess and handle, and read again and again—that “he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved”—O, what an agreement is this! How sweet and joyful! what peace may follow it, even a peace which passeth all understanding! How purifying and sanctifying to the soul! What hopes and what joys are its fruits! God is your reconciled Father. Christ your reconciled Saviour, nay, your high and joyful deliverer—he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. Over your agreement, angels

rejoice, and your name will be written in Heaven, and your Mansion prepared, and your arrival hailed with joy—

“ Saints in light, your coming wait,  
To share their holy, happy state.”

And will you jeopardize all this by delay? even when Christ says, “agree quickly”—when thousands who *have* delayed, have suddenly been destroyed, and that without remedy. When death is busy on your right hand, and on your left—when disease, or insanity, may deprive you of the power, or ability to make the agreement. O, will you bear any longer the stings of conscience? Is it not hard for thee to kick against pointed spears? Are you not an enemy to your own happiness, as well as to God’s Law—have you ever enjoyed one day of true peace? For what then are you foregoing this agreement with God, through Christ—so rich—so full of blessing. You are selling your birthright for a mess of pottage—you are bartering that which is of more value than this whole world, for at best, *misery modified*. You are not as miserable as you might be; not as miserable as you will be when age has deprived you of Pleasure—not so miserable as others, especially as those who have already gone down to the Pit. O, choose this day, that good part which cannot be taken from you. Retire from this

house to your chamber ; confess and forsake your sins and come and be reconciled to God, in the Gospel, and through the blood of His Son. Wait not until you return to your dwelling, but here, in the presence of God—here, where the demands of your Adversary are thundered out, and where the Great Mediator is especially present. Here lay down all opposition to God, heartily submit to Christ, and determine to be saved, or to perish in a bold but believing union with your Lord !

## S E R M O N X V .

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HE THAT EXALTETH HIMSELF, SHALL BE ABASED.

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St. Luke xiv. 11.

“FOR WHOSEVER EXALTETH HIMSELF, SHALL BE ABASED; AND HE THAT HUMBLETH HIMSELF, SHALL BE EXALTED.”

THAT every human being must ultimately be abased, is certain; corporeal death can be viewed in no other light than that of abasement. God cannot possibly intend to exalt a mortal, when he takes from him his breath, destroys all the senses of his body, and demolishes, in fact, the very temple in which his soul was enshrined. God cannot intend to exalt a human being, when he allows a horrible dread to overtake him, and the most humiliating deportment and exercises of mind to afflict him and all beholders. Death is the wages of sin; and death hath past upon all men, for that all have sinned. When one who was proud and lofty in his carriage, and presumptuous in his

spirit, was brought at last under this trial, the spirits of the dead in Hades were made to exclaim, in the language of divine poetry: "Art thou, even thou too, become weak as we? Art thou made like unto us? Is then thy pride brought down to the grave? The sound of thy sprightly instruments: Is the vermin become thy couch, and the earth worm thy covering? How art thou fallen!"

Before we enter upon a brief exposition of this passage of Scripture, we take it for granted that there is a general persuasion resting on the minds of men, that whatever meaning may be attached to this striking and antithetical announcement, abasement, either temporal or eternal, awaits every son, or daughter of Adam. This is the common apprehension of all men. There is a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. And yet there is an intimation in the text, notwithstanding this universal apprehension, that men are in the habit of exalting themselves; and this not merely in comparison with their fellow-men, but even in the presence of their Maker.

Let us consider the two instances noticed by our Lord, as common in his time: "And He put forth a parable to them which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms,

saying, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee, and him, come and say to thee, give this man place, and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room." Here is a manifestation of great pride and vanity, coupled with equal ignorance of one's own condition. Had not this man been in the habit of thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think; fancying himself more wise, or more honorable, or more meritorious than his neighbor, he would not have committed this error. Had he always kept his eye on what was deficient in his character, and not upon what might possibly be valuable or useful, he would have formed a low estimate of himself, and in time have remedied his defects. But by ever dwelling upon his knowledge, upon his superior advantages, or upon his great success in life, he formed a habit entirely the opposite, and this led him, in time, to his abasement before men; and when the world has once passed judgment upon a man, and that, an unfavorable one; it is hard, if not impossible, to reverse it. The world seems to say—we have looked long upon that man; we have weighed his excellences and his imperfections; and we have waited for him fully to act out his character; and now he has

exhibited himself; we see what he is, and our decision is final.

There was an excellent treatise once studied in our common schools, which we would commend to every opening mind, as a book of inestimable worth; it is called, a Treatise on Self-knowledge. From the pages of that small volume, but especially from the pages of the Bible, a wisdom may be gleaned, which is far above rubies; and a wisdom as different from the presumption of which we have been speaking, as light is from darkness! But this offensive spirit is not only discovered in the affairs of the present life; it is to be found in men's intercourse with God. Our Lord, when he would rebuke those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, delivered the well known parable of the Pharisee and Publican—"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican, I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." This was the language of the Jewish Pharisee; but our Lord's comment upon it is, "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased."

My brethren, the habit of self-exaltation, we

apprehend to be as common now, as it was in our Lord's time; and it cannot be doubted that your attention may be well occupied in considering one or two of the ways in which men are now in the habit of exalting themselves; men, too, who know that they must soon be abased, and that by a power which they cannot resist. I do not intend now to enter upon a description of the manner in which men endeavor to display their superiority over each other, in the ordinary walks of life; by a supercilious deportment, by a foppish display of purple and fine linen, by sumptuous entertainments, or by glittering equipages; all which are open to observation, and suggestive of reflection to all, and are condemned not merely by the Christian, but even by the grave unbeliever. I feel in a more solemn mood, and would enter at once upon the inquiry, whether men do not exalt themselves in several ways before God. It was the exulting language of a dying Christian beggar in an almshouse—"Is it not better to step out of a hovel into the kingdom of Glory, than to step out of a palace into the lake that burns with unquenchable fire?" Is it not better to begin with shame, and end with honor, than to begin with honor and end with shame, especially when what you begin with endures but for a moment; but what you end with is for ever and ever? "Pride

goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Before honor, is humility. Do not some men exalt themselves above others, in respect to their goodness and moral worth? Are there not some men who, although they have made no profession of religion, consider themselves far better than most of those who have? Do not such men pride themselves upon their honesty, their integrity, and their truthfulness; and comparing themselves with their neighbors, draw a conclusion very soothing to their own pride? Some such existed in days of old; and man has not greatly changed in the general traits of his character. I ask not now, whence this is, but simply whether it does not exist; and whether it does not draw upon its authors the rebuke of the text; whether it is not evident that this self-exalting man, had he inquired what his besetting sin was, in what way human depravity had found an outlet in his case, or in what way it had coiled itself up within his bosom, or burned in his heart; (for he has a deceitful and desperately wicked heart within; whether he knows it or not,) O, had he strictly and thoroughly examined himself; had he taken into consideration all the early restraints and peculiar advantages which he enjoyed, while others were fearfully exposed; had he considered his constitutional dislike of that

which was tempting in the extreme to others ; and had he counted up his privileges, religious and literary, above millions, instead of looking round with philosophic pride, he would have kept his eyes upon the ground, and put his hand upon his mouth, and said, “ a sinful man, O God ; ” “ enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” How different is such from one of the most humble and holy persons our country ever produced ; a saint indeed ; and whose name is applied to sacred institutions among us. In walking through the wards of a State prison, when replying to some novice in sanctification, who had commented upon the depravity of the hearts around them, this Christian said, “ I feel that I am the greatest sinner in this house, for had these poor convicts been blessed with my advantages, they would have, any one of them, outstripped me in holiness ! ” Here was a follower of the chief of the Apóstles, who also counted himself the chief of sinners. Men, until they are broken in heart, by God’s holy Spirit, are forever thus exalting themselves. St. Paul acknowledges that it was *his* habit ; he says, “ I was alive once without the Law.” Instead of thinking of their sins, studying the requirements of God and His holy law, and perceiving how oft they offend ; instead of considering what God has

required of them, and how little they have performed; what God has forbidden them to do, and yet how often they have done that very thing; how positive the command to keep the Sabbath, and yet how often they have broken his Sabbath; how imperative the injunction to reverence his name, and yet how often they have taken His holy name in vain; instead of bewailing their manifold sins and iniquities, and feeling the weight and burden of them to be intolerable, they have left all such work and watching to the saints, to the really excellent of the earth; and they profess and believe that they are far better than others, more honest, more moral, more honorable and high minded; and upon all who will pander to this their insufferable self-deification, they will shower favors and gifts without grudging. It has been well said that such a defective standard of excellence was one of the predominant errors and mischiefs of ancient philosophy. "The wise man of the Stoics, Platonics, and Peripatetics, felt himself to be all that he ought to be; he was proud and vain, and impious to the gods; he boasted of his morality and piety, although he was a liar and adulterer, as he boasted of his happiness while writhing under the pangs of the cholic or the gout."\*

\* Dwight's Theology, vol. ii. p. 191.

The Bible has taught us to set a man down as a positive delinquent in just the very traits in which he boasts himself to have excelled. Whenever, then, we hear a man loudly proclaiming his veracity, and challenging the whole world to convict him of falsehood, we are at no loss to decide what may be that man's besetting sin. Again and again have we heard the most notorious falsifiers openly profess, that whatever else might be laid to their charge, their reverence for truth could not be questioned. That we have all known pure minded and high minded men, who could not be allured by any prospect of gain from the most rigid honesty and integrity, we rejoice to think; but these were men who had faith, and had added to their faith virtue and knowledge, brotherly kindness and charity. We have great fears, my brethren, that whoever is found to exalt himself—whoever is found setting up himself and despising others, if his private history was known, if his accounts were looked into, his bosom examined, and his bosom friends cross-examined, would be found to have exhibited in private, in this short life, about enough of selfishness, of baseness, and of real dishonesty, to entitle him, not to the highest seat in the synagogue of morality, but the very lowest. If Jesus Christ should now reveal the secrets of all hearts and of all houses, no place

of concealment would be too dark or deep for this man's retirement.

“The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.”

“Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?”

“Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?”

“For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.”\*

We have heard of a sharp and shrewd man of business, expounding to a new apprentice the enormity of lying, and warning him against so mean and low and base a vice, for the purpose of awakening in the mind of the novice the most exalted idea of his morality; and yet before many days had elapsed, uttering in the hearing of this very youth, the most unqualified falsehoods in his sales; and adding, with a vulpine expression of countenance, when the back of the buyer was turned, “that is the way to make a bargain!” What a shocking spectacle must such a man present to the eyes of a Holy God!—exalting himself above others when he ought to steal

\* Micah vi. 9-12.

away from all observation; insulting the majesty of heaven by an outburst of ignorance, pride and presumption, and saying with the Pharisee in the Temple,—“God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, or even as these professors of religion!” Yet, my brethren, this Pharisee was one of a class of men which our Lord pronounced the most griping, dishonest, cruel and hypocritical then existing in Jerusalem. “Woe, woe, woe unto you,” was his awful denunciation. Of this we may be fully assured, that the true position not of this man alone, but of every human being before God, is the profoundest abasement; and the most proper language, a full confession of sin, and the most humble demeanor. His sins, whether he knows it or not, are great, and his iniquities are countless; he may never have thought of them; he may have forgotten them as did David, although David’s sins were adultery and murder. He may quaff his wine in jollity and mirth, hold up the glass and admire the sparkling bubbles on its surface, while he sits and ridicules piety and its friends! He may eat the fat and drink the sweet, and rise up to pray, but in some evil and unexpected hour, some poor, despised and beggarly prophet, of God will put forth a parable—will hold the mirror up to nature, and when the besotted sinner beholds in the glass the monster he has made himself,

God by his Spirit will say, "Thou art the man!"—and then with shame will he begin to take the lowest room.—"For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased!"

But I apprehend that there is even a more offensive way than this in which men exalt themselves; that is by setting themselves above all God's laws, and setting at defiance all God's threatenings. I am not now about to speak of open and avowed Infidels and Atheists, nor of those who erect a temple to human reason, and worship at her shrine. I shall not now advert to the Humes, the Gibbons, Voltaires, or the Paines of every age, but I shall speak of men who outwardly pay a becoming respect to the Christian religion; they are men, who without disputing the truth of the Bible, are perfectly indifferent and unconcerned about its threatenings. It is true that they must soon be abased in death, and their spirits be summoned before God. It is true that they will have no answer to give to the great question—"How camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" It is true that they must be speechless before God, and yet they appear now to think that the laws of God respecting the Sabbath, honesty and moral purity, are beneath *their* regard, but are all very proper and necessary for the *poor* and *ignorant*. What men of their stamp and talents—of their wealth and

high position in society, are not to be bound by laws and rules and precepts, as are the illiterate, the vulgar and the obscure! With what a smile of contempt or pity or courtesy should we be met, if, on the Lord's-day, we should stop one such man under our charge on his way to the public conveyance, with his accompaniments of travel, and bound to some distant city to buy, or sell, or get again, and say, My friend, God has commanded us to remember the Sabbath-day! He would reply—"My business requires that I should travel; inclination prompts me, and I must proceed!" How many men are there whose hearts prosperity has hardened, or whom bodily strength and mental power combined, have tempted to cast off fear, and to restrain prayer! How many men, whom affliction has not yet assailed, can listen with perfect insensibility to descriptions of the horrible pit which God has digged for the wicked? How many men are there who, if they exalt not themselves above God himself, exalt themselves wholly above his law,—consider themselves great, and that look little—who, when God calls, refuse; when He stretches out his hand in plague or pestilence, regard Him not; when He abases their neighbors, and brings the most haughty down to the grave. "O how suddenly do they consume away, perish, and come to a fearful end!" still

bear themselves with a high hand, open their mouth against the heavens, and say—"With our tongues will we prevail—our lips are our own—who is Lord over us?" Such an one—a man or woman, family or tribe, who, when he heareth the words of this curse, blesseth himself in his heart, saying, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart; the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man." That men as a matter of fact do thus exalt themselves, and are wholly regardless of consequences, who can deny? And when we bestow the most ordinary reflection upon their conduct, must we not experience the alarm which David did in view of such a spectacle, when he says—"I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law." Must we not anticipate for them at no distant period the most poignant and bitter remorse, and hear them heap up curses on their own guilty heads, and on the heads of those who persuaded them to sin, or who participated in their guilt. Such, and all such exalt themselves, and they shall be abased; sooner or later a horrible dread shall overtake them; a conviction of guilt will flash into their minds, and no human or angelic arm will be able to snatch them from destruction.

What a work is to be done with your hearts, my hearers? If, like the Pharisee, you are still found exalting yourself; if you entertain the belief that “you are not as other men are;” that you are better or safer, or nearer the kingdom of heaven; that all you require is a little more attention to the outward forms of religion; a little increase of length to your devotional exercises; a slight restraint upon your appetites and passions; and a few more pounds, shillings and pence, expended in charity. Alas! alas! what a work is there for he Holy Ghost, the blessed Spirit, to perform! What a mighty work! How little can all human learning or eloquence avail in doing that work;—as little as the winds and waves of the ocean can accomplish against the rock-bound shore, against which for centuries they have blown and beat. How little has the eloquence of the pulpit, listened to, for perhaps half a century, availed! How little the eloquence of affection—the voice of a mother, or a wife! How little the awful reflections, which at times have arisen in the soul at midnight, or in sickness, or in peril in the deep, or on the land; and how little the voice of conscience rebuking ever so sharply! Yet, unless that abasement is experienced, unless that heart is broken and humbled, that proud spirit subdued; unless the fear of God shall cause that

heart to tremble to its very centre, it will be noted and set apart among those who are yet to be abased at the judgment day; among those who are yet to call upon the “rocks to fall upon them, and the mountains to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

It is the language of the Son of God: Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased!

It is reasonable, it is graceful, it is necessary, that we all should be abased, and should abase ourselves. We are all sinners, dying sinners, condemned sinners, sinners now on the way to judgment; and if we have not repented, we are under the wrath of God Almighty. O agree then, my hearers, with your adversary quickly! Lose no time in abasing yourselves before God. Employ the language of the Publican in the Temple; and, not daring so much as to lift up your eyes to heaven, with an imploring voice say—whisper—sigh—“God be merciful to me a sinner!” And O, if you should indeed say this, and should become a follower of the Publican in this, before you reach your dwelling-place, it is possible—I say no more, it is possible that Jesus Christ may say in his majesty, as well as in mercy, “Go down to thy house justified; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

## S E R M O N XVI.

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### A CONVENIENT SEASON.

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Acts xxiv. 25.

“ GO THY WAY FOR THIS TIME, WHEN I HAVE A CONVENIENT SEASON  
I WILL CALL FOR THEE.”

This was the answer of Felix, the Roman Governor of Judea, to the apostle Paul, who was his prisoner.

It was extorted from him by a powerful address from the apostle. As Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled and replied, in substance, It is all true—I must *reform*—but not now—I cannot listen to such a proposal—I am too much involved in a multiplicity of cares—some time hence I shall be differently situated, and then—and then I will hear thee again.

Such, my brethren, were the circumstances un-

der which the text was first uttered. The words themselves require no commentary. Their meaning is readily understood, and the idea they convey is perfectly familiar to your minds. There is hardly an impenitent person present who has not employed them a hundred times, nor one who is not ready to employ them again. I shall then consider them to-day as the reply that all such are ready to make if called to repent and obey the Gospel—and proceed to a simple but serious remonstrance, adapted to the present occasion, the first Sunday in the New Year. Since we last assembled on this occasion,

“How many precious souls have fled  
To the vast regions of the dead.”

Your pastor has been called to commit the remains of thirty-four persons to the tomb. If we should undertake to classify these, what a commentary would be found on the words “all flesh is as grass.” As you sat here this day twelve months, and thought of the uncertainty of life, did you not hope that with such care as you could bestow, the beautiful buds of infancy would at least be spared—yet twelve little ones, of whom “is the kingdom of heaven,” have disappeared. Or did you suppose that the youthful and hopeful, having escaped from the perils incident to infancy would

be allowed to enjoy the banquet of life? But from the lips of six of these, the rosy cup was dashed just as they had raised it to their lips. Or did you flatter yourselves that the experienced and mature would be able to avoid the snares of death? Seven persons, in the midst of life or past its meridian have fallen asleep in death. Or was the hope fondly cherished, that those venerable parents of threescore years, would still remain to overshadow your dwelling, and delight you with the rich and ripe fruit of their wisdom? Such hope in nine cases has been fallacious. Were we to enter into an analysis of *characters*, a variety as great might be found as in age; and to the Christian no less than to the pagan eye, the dark and capacious urn would appear to have poured out the names of men promiscuously, and to have taught us, that in this respect one event happeneth to all. So much does it say for the past. And what does it say for the future? It seems to say,—some score of idolatrous parents should prepare this year to resign their little idols. Some score of persons in middle or mature life, fathers, mothers, sons or daughters, should gird up the loins of their minds, trim their lamps, and be ready to go out and meet the bridegroom. More than one of the youths here present, now rejoicing in their strength or priding themselves on their beauty, should

pause and reflect that death is no respecter of persons. The young and the old, the merry and the sad, lie down in one promiscuous throng, and repose undisturbed in their cold resting place, the grave, alike unknowing and unknown. Is this a just reflection? Has there been one year when death exacted much less than during the last? Over six hundred and fifty mortal remains has the minister of this church been called to officiate; and if this sum is divided by twenty, the number of years during which he has ministered in this portion of the Lord's vineyard, it establishes thirty-two as the average bill of mortality of this congregation. What a procession will then be formed from among us this year, to walk through the valley of the shadow of death; and how many, who, perhaps, now give no thought to eternity, will be summoned to join that procession, and before the return of this day, will have entered on the untried scenes of Eternity. But sooner or later, all here present will be included among the dead, and the places which now know them, will know them no more forever. Is it the part of wisdom for any living man to disregard these monitions? or does it hold out encouragement for the future, for men to say with Felix to the faithful preacher, "Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Before

entering upon some general observations, there are two particulars about the text, which should be noticed and which are not without their significance. First, I beg to remind you, that the text proceeded from the lips of authority. The hearer on this occasion held the preacher in captivity, and had the key of his prison. He could remand him into it or deliver him out of it as he pleased. And you, too, my hearers, have us, your ministers, in your power. I am far from intending by this to remind you, that, as you furnish us with a support, you must not therefore be faithfully remonstrated with. I mean that you and I must both appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ! and that you may have us then and there in your power; if we have *failed* to remonstrate with you, if we have forborne to warn, and to reprove, and rebuke with all long suffering and doctrine; if, after you have been condemned and have received your sentence and are departing for the world of woe—you can turn round to us, and then and there say—No man cared for *my soul*! I was careless and you warned me not; I was ignorant and you instructed me not; I was deluded and you undeceived me not! You have us there in your power. Yes! you may have the power, great as it is, and gratifying as it is to a guilty and revengeful spirit, of dragging us along with you over into the great gulf!

But can you say this, dear brethren? Have we not warned the unruly, instructed the ignorant and undeceived the deluded? Think how often we have explained, illustrated and enforced the Gospel. How often we have reasoned with you of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; and how often we have called upon you to fly from the wrath to come, and called as men that cared for your souls. And how often, during our ministry, our tears and entreaties have compelled you to say in effect, with this infatuated man, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee!" You have another power, the power to *call for us*. A wish of yours may cause these doors to be opened; you may assemble in this place and call for us, as Felix did for Paul; and you have a right to expect that we shall obey your summons, and proceed to preach to you the everlasting Gospel; nay, more, you have the *power* to call for us day by day; day and night you may employ our time and our talents, our knowledge and our zeal, to instruct you in your own houses, and in your chambers when sick, in sorrow and in joy. But, oh! have you ever pondered upon this power of pastoral instruction? How precious! how important! how suited to remove all doubts and difficulties, and to quiet all fears; to meet and rebut

all the arguments of infidelity and scepticism, or the more wicked and blasphemous suggestions of your own hearts! Oh! is not this living under the droppings of the sanctuary? What is there about Christ and salvation which you may not know, and what day may not be the day of salvation to your souls? But this power is *unemployed*, and you often call for men of the most opposite character, not to inform you of the way to heaven, but to fascinate you with earth; not to teach you how you may more rapidly grow in grace, but how you may banish all thoughts of such subjects, and every thing connected with religion from your minds. Oh! what a talent are you burying in the earth! And, once more, you have the power of stifling all convictions of sin. You have not indeed the power of being unmoved, if you hear and believe the Gospel. No! there is such intrinsic force and authority in its truths, and your hearts and characters are such, that, should the preacher reason forcibly of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, you, like others, *must* tremble! But alas! you have an opiate which can calm your nerves; you have the ability to turn away your thoughts; you have the means of hardening your hearts. And though to-day all may be soft and impressible as wax, yet by a well known process, your heart may become

as *hard* as a rock, nay, harder than the nether millstone. Of this the history of the church furnishes us with numerous examples. We know that here was a heart softened; that *here*, a man trembled; but we ask in vain, if we ask, "Did it result in his salvation?" Did this man ever draw as near to God and salvation as at this moment? Was he not at the instant when he uttered the text, at the very extremity of his orbit? the extreme nearest to heaven, and oh! as divine mercy followed that dark and guilty soul in its retrogression, did it not say, "He is joined to idols, let him alone?" When God withdrew from our Saviour, what darkness overspread the earth! What agony swelled the heart of the sufferer; what spirits of darkness assaulted him! what a bloody sweat flowed from his body! and what cries were heard from His lips, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

What was the object of St. Paul on this memorable occasion, it is unnecessary for us to state; you are well acquainted with it. It was that nameless object for which this and all temples were builded, and for which we and all other ministers ought to preach; that deep and disagreeable object, the conversion of your souls from sin to holiness; an object which, if asked, you would say was unquestionably important, and

must be attended to at some time or other, but which you cannot attend to now. Nay, it is a deep and disagreeable object; you do not like to speak of it; it is so peculiar and so personal a thing that you beg to be excused; besides, it is no man's business but your own—so you wrap it up. But let us unwrap it. What made it so peculiar? so delicate? so disagreeable? Let us look into this matter. If we mistake not, it is because it is an object of paramount importance; it is a duty long neglected; *it is such an object as this and no other*, that if it is any object at all, it is one far above every other; health, family, or even life itself. If out of that deep and dark abyss of an unconverted heart, this object should be allowed to rise up, should come distinctly into view, should spread itself out in all its dimensions, rise in all its altitudes and extend itself in all its interminable length, you could do nothing with it; it would overwhelm you; the whole world would be small in importance; all temporal existence would be counted a moment, and this new and great object would consume your whole time, attention, and affections. This is the reason why you bury it down deep in your hearts; why you think that the little hours of time, and the little days of life are too short in which to consider such a subject. Now this is the very ground of

our remonstrance—it is the *great value* of the object which you are losing. *You* have only a presentiment of its value, but we think we know how priceless it is. You know that there is a diamond within of inestimable worth—that all the silver and the gold in the world ought not to purchase it; and that if you were to sell it for the gifts of fortune, you would be accounted a fool in the sight of God—therefore you are silent about it. But it is *our* duty to speak about it: you have made it so; you have called us to speak about it, and it should be our honor and glory to help you to raise it up to view and weigh it openly; to help you to comprehend its value, great as it is, and to join with you in preventing its destruction.

First, then, it is a soul which God has created in his own image. It is a soul which is to live forever. It is a soul of vast capacities. Its capacity for knowledge is wonderful;—the more it acquires, the more it is enlarged. Its capacity for pleasure is boundless. All that comes into it from every quarter during a long life, only excites its desire and stimulates its appetite. Its capacity for goodness is astonishing;—it can burst through a thousand allurements, saying, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee?” Its capacity for pain

is as great as that for pleasure. The agony, the anguish, the torment it may endure here, are fearful premonitions of what may be awaiting it hereafter. But I stop at the threshold of this contemplation. I bethink myself that the Bible treats the soul just as you do its salvation; it dwells but little upon it. It reasons as if you had a soul, and it provides for you as if your soul required salvation. It sets apart one day in every seven in which you are to hear about it. It sends forth a class of men to treat about it. It holds up a great Saviour to deliver it, and it points you to his precious blood-shedding as the price paid for its ransom. But where is the book or the chapter which goes into a description of its nature, its capacity, and its duration? The only way in which we are to arrive at anything like a knowledge of these, is, by inference. We there read of the loss of the soul, the cause of the loss, which is sin and unbelief;—the great judgment day at which it is to be tried, and the ground on which its condemnation is to proceed:—the very words of the sentence which is to be past upon it, and some brief reports of the sufferings which it is to endure. We hear the sentence—“Depart, from me ye cursed!” We know that this is to proceed from the lips of Christ, the Son of God,—the Lamb changed into the Lion. We know that the soul of

the impenitent is to be "cast into outer darkness," that it is to be delivered to the worm that never dies: and that the smoke of its torment is to ascend up forever and ever! Our Saviour did indeed follow one soul into hell, and describe it as in torment; but he seemed to draw a curtain over it, and the Bible has drawn a curtain over it, and God has let fall a thick veil between us and it, and caused the sunbeams his mercy to play on this side the veil, and has of embroidered it with every possible emblem of his love, and wrought out with divers colors the heavenly city, with its gates of pearl, and walls of precious stones, and streets of gold; its dazzling throne, its translucent river, its shady groves and refreshing fruit. Nay, He has portrayed his Son on the cross, agonizing and atoning, dying and rising, ascending and interceding for man, and saying, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." "Why will ye die, oh! house of Israel?" "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." This, my brethren, is all that is said; but I ask now is not this enough? Suppose your dying hour was come;

would you wish that anything more should be said? would not that which is living and moving in your mind, would not that which was behind the veil and that which was before it, be enough? would not these deep things then have great weight, and, joined with the deep and dark fears which you have long smothered, would they not impel you instantly to decide to submit to God and be saved? I ask then, “*why* halt ye between two opinions?” Will the time ever come, when you can take a more calm and dispassionate view of this matter than at present? You do not deny that this is a convenient time, but you ask in reality for a *more* convenient season. Permit me to ask you whether in such a matter as this, you can with any propriety speak about convenient seasons. Is God a humble artisan, who presents himself with his account for payment? to whom you say, “Go thy way for this time, and when *I* have a convenient season *I* will call for thee.” You say these words, it is true, to us your fellow-men, but you say them in effect to God, knowing us to be ambassadors for God. Now, if God the Holy Spirit is saying to you, through me, “to-day if you will hear *his* voice, harden not your hearts.” I put it to your consciences—to your sense of what is right—is such an answer the one that should be made,—“Go thy way for this time, when *I* have

a convenient season I will call for thee." "Hear, oh! heavens, when God, the God of the spirits of all flesh speaks, is it not becoming in you to listen? When He does but whisper, when he sends but a message, should you not listen with profound attention? Oh! that great veil which is dropped between heaven and earth, what contrasts within and without, does it not witness—within, the veil, all is adoration and worship. Every spirit in the worlds of light or of darkness trembles or adores; angels tremble, and are rapt in praise to God. Without that veil, is blasphemy and contempt of God, despising his gospel and ridiculing his people; or where decency and propriety and cultivation and cherishing of his great institutions are found, even there hear we such words as these—"Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." But we ask again, "Why halt ye between two opinions?" Are the pleasures of sin so sweet, that to enjoy them a little longer, you are willing to endure whatever is to be endured in the world of woe? But we are addressing men who have little to do with the *pleasures of sin*, so called—men of belief, men of domestic responsibilities, men of purity, men of thought, men of learning, and we must inquire of such, why do ye halt between life and death?

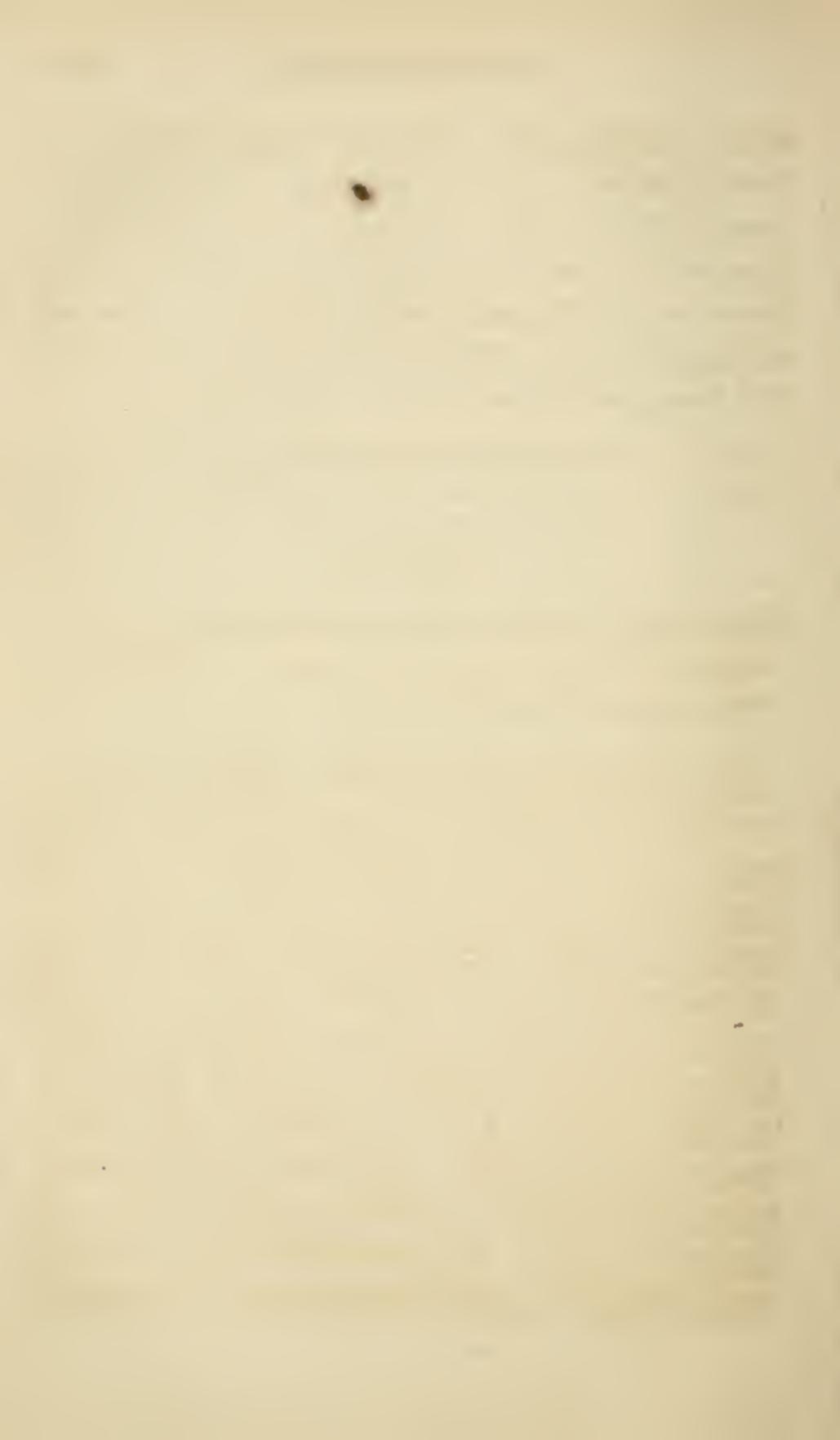
Are riches so enticing? Is business so delightful? Are children so lovely? Companions so dear, that you should shut your eyes upon the glorious illustrations of God's love on this side the veil, and harden your hearts against the awful consequences of God's wrath on the other. If God were not *God*, yet if heaven were what it is, and hell were what it is, would you, could you, as rational beings, when the one offers itself to you, opening its glorious gates and spreading its costly banquets and tuning its golden harps; and the other uttering its muttering thunders, sending up its murky smoke, or through the thick darkness opening—its gloomy gates and allowing to escape some of wailings, could you repeat slowly and intelligently and voluntarily these words, to heaven,—Go thy way, shut up thy golden gates, dismiss thy bright attendants of mercy, hang up thy golden harps, and let God, the God of mercy, wait until it is convenient to me to come? Or could you stand and look down into that dark abyss, and see the smoke of torment rising up, and hear the groans of the dying, but never dead, and the clanking of the chains that are never to be loosed, and the gnawing of the worm that is never to die, and venture to postpone for a day or an hour the effort, the desperate, convulsive effort to escape! I ask then why halt ye between two

opinions? I am not speaking to men who have no opinions, no belief; but to men who *have* opinions, and correct opinions, and who mean to follow on to a right and happy end, but who do not mean to do this to-day—at this season,—this year;—at this convenient season,—at this proper season,—but who want only a *more* convenient one! one a LITTLE more convenient, with not *quite* so many hindrances to impede, with *not quite* so many earthly pleasures to engross, with not quite so much business to attend to. Ah! my hearers, it was said by one of the martyrs on going to the stake, life is sweet, and death is bitter; but eternal life is *more* sweet, and eternal death is more bitter. How long then halt ye? how long have you halted before high heaven! and stood and listened and looked and heard and seen, and yet remained in the same position, in the same undecided mind, and uttering the same words to us, and to Him that sent us. You plead for a more convenient season. But is not this the season, above all others, proper to think of such things—to call your ways to remembrance—to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armor of light? If men make any changes, is not this the season? Oh! why then not make the greatest change that can be made? Why not say heaven is too great a good, and eternal death too great an *evil* to admit

of any halting, any deliberation, any delay. A God of justice! A life of religion! A day of judgment! If these are reasoned out to my satisfaction, so that at times my flesh trembles on my bones—a spirit comes over me in the dead of night, and I start affrighted from my pillow! Oh! if I have such terrors as these now,

“When rising from the bed of death,  
O'erwhelmed with guilt and fear,  
I see my Maker face to face,  
Oh! how shall I appear.”

Choose you *this day* whom ye will serve.



## S E R M O N X V I I .

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### K I S S T H E S O N .

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Psalm ii. 12.

“ K I S S T H E S O N , L E S T H E B E A N G R Y A N D Y E P E R I S H F R O M T H E W A Y :  
W H E N H I S W R A T H I S K I N D L E D B U T A L I T T L E . B L E S S E D A R E A L L  
T H E Y T H A T P U T T H E I R T R U S T I N H I M . ”

The contrasts of Christianity, I propose now to consider; and if these are properly presented, they may serve to remove remaining unbelief, to reconcile you to the Gospel, and to quicken you in your approach to the only refuge set before you for salvation, *the cross* of the Son of God. Of these contrasts we have a striking one in the text, where the inspired command of God to sinners is, to “kiss the Son, lest he be angry”—my brethren, we are in a world of contrasts; what contrast more striking than the commencement of life and its maturity, than the crying infant and the eloquent and almost superhuman orator! But how-

ever great the contrast here, the emotions at one extreme (i. e. infancy) we are not able to recall; and therefore let us turn at once to the greatest contrast man ever experiences—that between his life and his death. Yesterday a man was all animation and vigor, like some mighty engine, setting in motion hundreds of subordinate wheels! To-day he is no more! and all those wheels are stopped and all that happiness diffused through so large a circle is changed to misery. Yesterday a palace owned him as its lord; from out of its gilded chambers he was clothed in purple and fine linen; and within its ample halls he fared sumptuously every day: to-morrow a small, gloomy procession comes out of his doors, and a dark and narrow mansion among the tombs will receive that same body, wrapped only in the simple habiliments of the grave, and deposited in stone, ornamented with some few and feeble efforts of art. I begin with death, because death impresses us. It is a fact, a stubborn fact, which cannot be passed over, a melancholy, a dreadful fact, which cannot by any possibility be ignored, though it be one which it is the great effort of the world to forget.—Literature endeavors to enwrap it in a purple cloud, bravery sets it at defiance with a boastful shout, licentiousness sneers at it amidst its bacchanalian revels and hardened guilt and

folly overlooks it altogether ; and when we would summon our fellow mortals to a manly and rational view of their present position, trembling on the brink of a precipice, beneath which fiery billows roll, they deny the truth of the whole statement, and, appealing to God, pronounce all alarm for the future, an insult to his character ! When we repeat the words of the Most High, “ God is angry with the wicked every day,” they deny the revelation or dispute the interpretation ! and they do it upon the ground that everything around them gives the lie to such representations, and affords evidence of an entirely different character in the Almighty. It is impossible, say they, that there should be such a contrast in God. But what contrast is greater than that between a man living, and the same man dead ? between the lordly noble and the lifeless corpse ? All who patiently examine the subject are satisfied that there is not a greater contrast between a God in mercy and the same God in wrath, than between a living and a dead man. Yet there is an inherent presumption in the wicked, that things will remain as they are. “ All things,” said the ancient sceptic, “ continue as they were from the beginning of the world.” The humblest intellect can inform the modern sceptic of the greatest changes that have taken place by fire, by flood,

and by other causes, which prove to a certainty, that all things do not remain undisturbed, except in the hallucinations of the sceptic or the pretensions of the imposter. There is the great fact, the great contrast to be experienced by every man, and a contrast not only in himself, but except he repent, in God also; and of this we have no indistinct premonition in the words of my text; "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Again, we have presented to our view, my friends, the suffering, dying, and rising Saviour; and we are informed that at his birth and death, marvels and miracles took place, such as never before and never after were seen. Shepherds watching over their flocks by night were surprised and alarmed; not by a few falling stars, but by the descent of intelligent beings, who united in chanting the praises of God, and in heralding forth the salvation of man. To an humble abode, indeed, and to the least of human forms, these proto-evangelists directed the shepherds, and they and we, in the infant in the manger, are commanded to acknowledge "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Now we are naturally inclined to pause. If we

give any thought to this subject, or suppose that we have a right to give any thought to it, we are ready to pause and exclaim with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" I pass by the miraculous conception, and I behold the nativity. I see the babe of Bethlehem, and my reason naturally stands amazed, when the Scriptures pronounce that infant "the Wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." But why? the consideration of the subject must not begin here. The question is, will the Most High dwell on the earth in his own nature? But behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. Will God be manifested in the flesh? Has he determined to execute a purpose of magnificent mercy towards mankind? And is it necessary to the accomplishment of this purpose, that he should take upon him the nature of man? First, examine the purpose, then the *plan* for its execution; a manifestation of the second person in the Godhead in the flesh. First, as a sacrifice, next, as an example, and thirdly, as a comforter in our sorrows, both of life and death; and then may come up the consideration of the particular means which were devised! that is, the apparently natural and regular birth, infancy, youth and manhood of the Mediator, and then the natural conflict with sinners, and the most natu-

ral and predicted conclusion of life, by a violent death. Assume the facts of man's apostacy and God's determination to save sinners! and then—the incarnation! and the marvellous nativity we this day celebrate, are both simple and natural; as much so, as that the bubbling fountain on the mountain side should be the commencement of the mighty river, over whose length, and at whose depth and breadth at its confluence with the ocean, men stand amazed!

The incarnation and nativity of our Lord, however, my brethren, form but one of the points of view in which we are to consider his character. We have bright and glowing steps by which to advance to others. His resurrection and ascension come up for consideration; and here the contrast begins to be felt as manifest and impressive! He arose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Had we been privileged to see these brilliant exhibitions of his divinity, I apprehend the amazing display of his life and death would have been forgotten. Of his ascension we may form some conception, from that of his forerunner, Elijah, on that bright and glorious pathway to the skies. Elijah was caught up by a whirlwind into heaven, whilst there came down to meet him a chariot of fire and horses of fire; and amidst this array of heavenly splendor, he disappeared from view.

From this and from the departure of Lazarus for heaven, we can easily imagine the glories which surrounded the Saviour, while God was exalting him. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in the holy place." Legions of angels would, if desired, have attended the summons of Christ at the cross; they appeared in his triumphal procession before the heavenly gates; the battlements of heaven were surrounded by multitudes of the angelic hosts, and from without and from within was heard the responsive song, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Nor is our admiration bounded here. Most dazzling and stupendous glimpses of his glory have been caught by man. "I saw," says Isaiah, "the Lord sitting on his throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims. Each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" But how resplendent soever may be our Lord's ascension, that is not, as might be supposed, the extreme antithesis to his incarnation. To the disciples, who were gazing upon

him as he ascended, angels said, "Ye men of Galilee, that same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." And accordingly St. Paul says, "To you who are troubled, *rest with us*, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

Now, my brethren, it is with both extremes of our Lord's character as manifested to men, that we must occupy our minds, as a humbled and suffering Saviour on the one hand, and as a risen and exalted Redeemer, on the other; and it is by failing to compare the first with the second, that men lose their souls. With regard to their own life and death, although here the order of the extremes is reversed, yet they attend only to one! They behold themselves in the mirror of present existence, of present prosperity, and of present luxury—and although they are taught that "all flesh is as grass," and that soon all this short-lived glory must fade like the flower of the field, "they go their way and forget what manner of men they

are." Again, they behold the incarnation of God's dear Son. They look upon the commencement—the introduction—the fountain head of his blessedness—the morning star of his splendor—and they behold—and despise—and wonder—and perish! They do not look for this second coming to judgment, and for the glory that shall be revealed; they cast off fear, and restrain prayer; nay, "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. Be wise, now, therefore, Oh! ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Again; there is a contrast as great as the last, between the commencement and the final triumph of Christianity itself. It is a law of nature, that revolutions which are to effect the most extensive and difficult changes, must advance by slow degrees, and generally most slowly at first. Wherever the

parts are numerous and complicated, and the subject much extended, regard must be had to the whole, in every great change. A false religion may be speedily propagated by mercenary means, a corrupt one by political fraud, or by force of arms, but of what moral or spiritual benefit is the change, after it is effected? True Christianity found man in a low and depraved condition, and commenced with the grand design of subduing this whole fallen world to the sceptre of Christ, and to create what might be called a new heaven and a new earth, wherein should dwell righteousness.—But the progress of this great revolution, in heart and mind, was to be slow, like leaven imperceptibly assimilating to itself the whole mass. Its conflicts were with mind as well as with matter; with principalities and powers, ghostly as well as fleshly. Its commencement like the infancy of man himself was small. An apartment, not as large as this house, contained all its professors, its first grand council, and the whole company of believers. “There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth.”\* Such was to be the amazing effect of God’s word, when sown in hearts barren before; such was the astonishing number of Gentile converts to be

\* Psalms lxxii. 16.

made ; while in the city, Christians were to be multiplied and grow up as numerous and fresh as blades of grass in the rich meadows. From the moral elevation of that upper room in Jerusalem, that manger and cradle of Christianity, its apostles, humble and unbefriended as they were, projected the moral renovation of the world. "Repent and be baptized every one of you," was their address, "for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ; for the promise is to you and your children, and *to all that are afar off*, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This was the stone cut out of the mountain, which, though small at the beginning, was to increase until it *filled the whole earth*. And now, in this nineteenth century (of its progress) what house could hold its converts ? two hundred millions of nominal Christians ! What nation in its palmyest days and with its mightiest conquests ever embraced two hundred millions of enlightened subjects, and swayed them with the golden sceptre of Mercy ? Did the kingdom of Ahasuerus embrace such numbers, within its hundred and twenty provinces ? Did the Macedonian hero, or the Roman emperor ever receive the homage of such numbers ? If we stop where we are, if we abate from Christianity all that might reasonably be abated, yet is the contrast between its commencement

and its present condition astonishing and miraculous—it shows the working of the wonderful Counsellor. It is now but two centuries and a half since the Bible was translated and given to the western nations in their native tongues, and not a half century since Societies have printed and distributed the Bible freely; and yet within that time more than one hundred additional languages convey the Truth of God to the souls of men. Christianity embraces all mankind in its arms, and the prospect of its ultimately filling the whole earth has long since ceased to be visionary. There it stands, more lofty than the Alps, more immovable than the earth or the visible heavens. “Heaven and earth shall pass away,” said our Lord, “but my word shall not pass away.” There it stands amid the darkness of this apostate world, looming up and supporting the heavens, while the day star lingers on its summit; and there it will stand increasing and expanding, rising and culminating, until the daylight of Eternity shall gild its summit. All nations shall flow unto it. Then shall be heard again great voices from heaven; a mighty angel shall descend to awaken the dead, and with him shall appear mighty seraphims, whose trumpet tongues shall wake our slumbers, and the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. Amen and amen. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.

In reviewing what has been said, we beg you to consider, in the first place, what ground of objection exists against our holy religion, on account of this peculiar mode of its introduction among men? Had it not a most natural and desirable commencement? Have men any natural desire to see God in his full orb'd majesty and splendor, or to see him at all, or to entertain *any* ghostly visitors from the world of spirits? How can we conceive of a manifestation of God more merciful, more condescending! better suited to our senses or more soothing to our feelings? Let the most intelligent mind, then, magnify the Deity to the extent of its ability, and conceive of him as the creator, the great uncreated source of all things; yet we admonish that mind of the fact presented to day, that there is another and entirely different view which must be taken of his character. Is he great? Greatness is always condescending—though he was *rich*, yet for our sakes he became poor. Though in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant. On this day of redemption he is visible in the nature of man. Nor is this all: he is presented as at the beginning of his human manifestations—he is taken up in the arms of aged and exalted piety—he lies in the cradle

as an infant—he was born in a stable. Is not this humble enough, gentle enough, and condescending enough? Where is the rank in life below this, where the human being is affrighted or repelled from Jesus? Where the excuse for the vilest sinner, since Christ hung on the cross? What more could God do for his vineyard? “What greater gift, what greater love could God on man bestow?” We call on men to repent and turn to God, and we threaten them with God’s wrath if they will not do this. They refuse our call and reply, God is too great, too holy, we cannot approach him. We lift the veil of old time, and present God the Son, the divine Mediator, as the Seed of Abraham and the Son of David, the King of Zion, in an infant form, and we beseech them, saying, “Kiss the Son;” pay homage to him, even now! though he speak not, though he is to remain awhile shorn of his glory, and veiled as to his Godhead, yet present to him now, your gifts; fall low before his footstool, offer up yourselves, souls and bodies, in homage, believe on him in your hearts, and confess him before men. Receive the instructions of His word—believe and be baptized—receive Him in all his offices as your Prophet, Priest and King. Alas! what answer do we get to this call? Is this the character of God? Then he is too merciful to punish

us, or he is too mysterious, we cannot comprehend him. Too much is demanded of us. How can these things be? Is that the Son of God? Is that the Saviour of man? The contrast is too great! But, brethren, may not as great a contrast not only be seen, but felt by you. Is there not a greater contrast between a living and moving and acting being, and the death frosts and throes which will soon overtake you? Between that fearfully made body, so much cherished, and a heap of unapproachable dust. Oh! if you are infidels, if you believe that the body is all, I boldly say, no contrast conceivable approaches this. To day a Newton, or a Bacon, to day a body majestic and joyful, and a mind Godlike and benevolent; to morrow a mule's burden of earth—all gone—all disappeared forever—all an illusion. Impossible, my brethren, let the one reconcile you to the other. Our God and Saviour is now within the reach of your arms, certainly of your apprehension; and nothing can exceed the mercy of his invitations, or the mildness of his manifestations. But yet nothing can be more unmistakable than his language, nor more fearful than his threatenings. "Kiss the Son, then, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Ah! my brethren, ye are now *in the way*, in the very way you must

have chosen had you been consulted. You are in a way in which your reason, your feelings, and your fears are all addressed, and that in the best manner possible, to move you as rational men, and not as animals. "Be not like the horse or mule, who have no understanding, but must be held with bit and bridle." Let the merciful manifestations of God affect your hearts. Let this particular manifestation greatly affect you. Now you may make your salvation sure; now you may approach your offended Saviour with a kiss of peace, of submission, of loyalty, and of love. Now your return to God may be compared to a feast. Now it is a time of rejoicing in God's house; a time for casting away burdens and fears and sorrows; a time for securing the favor of God and laying up treasures in heaven; a time when He is all love, all compassion, all forgiveness, heaven's golden gates are thrown open, the King has returned home, and has made a supper for his Son. Angels are in waiting—all things are ready. Now shuddering and tottering on the verge of the grave, you may escape death forever, death may be swallowed up in victory. The greatest contrast may be converted into a contrast of blessing; a worm may become an angel; a dying man may become a king and priest forever unto God. Sorrow and sighing may flee

away, and seraphic joys may take their place. Oh! Lord God, what more couldst thou do for man? What sweeter, nobler, gentler Saviour and salvation couldst thou bestow, and what better and juster wrath than that reserved for those who neglect so great salvation. How shall they escape?

But have we not a word for Christians? The blessedness of those who enter into the joy of their Lord no mind can conceive. But a foretaste of that is promised to all those who put their trust in Christ. The great advantage of Christian faith is plainly intimated in the text, "Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him? Have we not a word for the weary, who complain that sin is mixed with all they do; that there is ever a proneness to sin even in holy things; that vain thoughts will lodge in their hearts; who weep at the remembrance of the past and tremble for the future? The judgments which are experienced by this fallen family are the inflictions of the wrath of the Lamb. It is predicted of Christ that He shall rule the nations with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Fearful, indeed, will be the doom of those whom mercy cannot reclaim. He that believeth not is condemned already. But oh! to feel that

there is *no* condemnation; that you have the Lord and his anointed on your side; that instead of taking counsel together, to cast off your allegiance, you have often taken counsel together to strengthen and confirm it. Thus as one believing family was saved at the flood, and one righteous man in Sodom, so judgments cannot descend until the righteous are removed. That God will give his angels charge over them; that whether shepherds or sages; whether in cottages or in palaces, they shall be delivered out of all evil; that when Christ shall be triumphant, they shall be exalted; this is their consolation. It was the express declaration of Christ, "Ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones."

Oh! my fellow Christians, be content, then, in your condition, whatever that may be; your happiness and honor are secure. True, we are compassed with infirmities and burdened with sin; but we have accepted the invitation of Jesus who says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You have consummated your union with Christ at his table, and you are still further encouraged, nay, commanded to come near to him, to commune with him as with a friend. You might now, with-

out offence, exclaim, "My beloved is mine." You might bathe his feet with your tears, and in hours of distress lay your head on his bosom. I can conceive of no rebuke which you would merit, if, with the text before your eyes, you should say to Christ, "God do so and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." Death cannot part the Christian from Christ. Death is but the porter that openeth the door into the palace, and there, though coming from the uttermost parts of the earth, thou shalt find an everlasting inheritance. This is the wilderness—that the populous city, and within that palace there has been a mansion prepared for thee. We are dealing to day in contrasts; oh! the contrast between death's gloom and heaven's glory; between a poor, sinful, tempted, persecuted and forsaken mortal and a glorified saint, when entering into heaven; now in the eyes of the world he may be all meanness and misery. Spectators may be surveying in sorrow his sufferings, as he lies on his bed of pain and death: but let the silver cord once be loosed, and what resurrection for mortal man could be more glorious, and by contrast more dazzling; and what triumphal chariot ever bore through glistening gates earth's greatest conqueror in such splendor as that, which is now awaiting the humblest saint on earth. It hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive

the things which God hath prepared for them who love him. Oh! what a contrast awaits you, my Christian friends. It is possible now for you to say, Death is delightful, departure from earth transporting! Begin your Christian course where or how you will, in a stable and in weakness; live despised and rejected of men and die in poverty and pain, but there must *then* be an end to suffering—you have had your evil things, and now come your good things. Your body may descend to the tomb in corruption, but it shall be raised in incorruption; it may be sown in dishonor, but it shall be raised in glory; it may be sown in weakness, but it shall be raised in power; it may be sown a natural body, but it shall be raised a spiritual body. What a harvest shall then be ripened, what a vast and glittering field be spread before your vision!

“Brethren, it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

## SERMON XVIII.

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IS THIS THY KINDNESS TO THY FRIEND?

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2 Samuel xvi. 17

“ IS THIS THY KINDNESS TO THY FRIEND ? ”

A great King was once dethroned and driven into exile by his son. In this hour of need, he had an opportunity of discovering who among his dependents were sincerely attached to his person, and who had surrounded his throne with empty professions.

However painful the trial, it sifted out from that monarch's household every hollow-hearted pretender to fidelity and devotion. Among the the ministers or higher officers of this King, was *one* who had with great professional services expressed an uncommon degree of personal regard. It was said of two of the courtiers of an ancient monarch, that “ one was a lover of *the King*, and the other a lover of the *man*.” The same remark

might have been made of Peter and John, two of the most prominent disciples of our Lord. One was distinguished by zeal in the service of his Master, and the other by love to his person. It appears that the King of whom we are now speaking, had also two such courtiers or counsellors.— One was a politician, and possibly a patriot; the other was a counsellor, but more especially a private *friend*. To the former the King unburdened the affairs of state; to the latter he unbosomed his own personal and domestic concerns. The former, a mere man of the world, the usurper approached with his traitorous proposals, and secured to his interests, before he ventured to strike the decisive blow. With the latter it was not safe to tamper. His fidelity had been too well known, and his personal attachment was too strongly established. There are some crimes, at which even the basest of mankind instinctively revolt. There is a sort of honor even among the vicious. They cannot repress emotions of indignation when the rites of hospitality, and the obligation of personal favors are wantonly violated. Even men guilty of the same, or indeed, of darker deeds, if placed in a station of authority, are heard to utter sentiments which might with great propriety be directed to themselves. The usurper, a traitor and a parricide, was now seated upon his father's

throne, surrounded by ministers of state, and supported by a large division of the army and nation; and the man of whom we speak, is seen to throw himself at the foot of the throne of the royal regicide, and to join in the customary cry of "God save the King." It was on this occasion that the words at the commencement of our discourse were uttered, "And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend?"

Those who are well acquainted with the Holy Scripture, will pause before they unite in a sentence founded only upon appearances, and will refrain from eondemning this deserter. But it is not more with him than with his new master that we have to do. It was that man who, on his own principles, ought to have been glad to receive into his ranks a rebel, who made the exclamation of the text. But however he valued the acquisition of this counsellor to give permanency to a newly acquired sovereignty, however pleased he must be at the force of his own example in treason, Absalom could not refrain from uttering the language of surprise. When this man of all others made his appearance, "Absalom said unto Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend?"

This is undoubtedly a good representation of the impression which the blacksliding of a Christian makes on men of the world. They are in

open enmity to the cause of truth ; they are employing every instrument to overthrow the foundations of the righteous ; but even to them, the backsliding of a Christian is a matter of astonishment. When that greatly venerated martyr, Cranmer, had unhappily been wrought upon to make a recantation of his principles, he received only contempt and the flames for his reward.—“The Queen having now got a time to revenge her old grief, received his recantation very gladly, but of her purpose to put him to death, she would nothing relent.”

A moderate knowledge of mankind is sufficient to enable us to perceive the true state of the world. However averse to religion in reality it may be, it is not because religion is unworthy of regard or incapable of proof. It is because the pleasures of sin are indispensable to happiness, and these are utterly at variance with the principles of religion. The one would raise man to the rank of angels ; the other would sink him to a level with the brutes. Could Absalom despise the wisdom, power, or goodness of his sire and his Sovereign ? Was there anything contemptible in the government, or invalid in the claims of the constituted authority ? No. It was a base ambition, a restless pride and unbridled passions which induced him to set up the standard of re-

volt; and well might he be filled with astonishment when approached by a man of pure principles, who by one act of treason gave the lie to his past fidelity, and fell from that high eminence to a level with the profligate and profane.

Such, my Christian friends, is unquestionably the reception which every true Christian has a right to expect when, quitting the high ground of holiness, "he walks in the counsel of the ungodly, stands in the way of sinners, or sits in the seat of the scornful." Whenever a *Christian* is seen to descend to the meanness and dishonesty which is practised by the men of the world; whenever he unexpectedly intrudes himself into the society of the vain and trifling, the intemperate or the dissipated; whenever he joins in the ribaldry of the profane, or in the sneers of the unbeliever; whenever he deliberately devotes himself to the pomps and vanities of this world, he must expect to read in the countenances (if not to hear from the lips) of his new acquaintances, the ancient reproach, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?"

From the peculiar language here employed, it may be inferred that there had been an acknowledgment, on the part of this deserter, of the condescension of his monarch in extending to him his friendship, and some public declarations of unshaken devotion to his cause. He had, perhaps,

the very night before his Master was betrayed, exclaimed, "Though I should die with thee, yet will *I* not deny thee;" for it was not uncommon for men in high stations about the great, to seal their fidelity with life. When Saul's armor-bearer saw that his master was slain, he fell upon his own sword. This man had probably professed not merely fidelity and obligation, but a warm and tender regard, such as could not permit him to be separated from his master by misfortune or death. And David had, doubtless, encouraged and rewarded such an expression of personal affection. It was not unlikely, in the course of conduct adopted by David towards Absalom, that Hushai had been his counsellor. If so, there was a mixture of anger and resentment couched in this contemptuous or satirical salutation. Why have *you* abandoned the cause? What a contemptible appearance you make with your high profession! What have you to expect, after all your advice and enmity against me?

It is prophesied of the wicked, that, at the resurrection, they "shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt;" and before this they are destined to experience in their intercourse with the world a portion of that contempt which is hereafter to be administered without ceasing. "This man began to build, but was not able to finish." "This man put his hand to the plough and looked back." There

is no armor for the Christian's back; among warriors, a wound received in flying from an enemy was a perpetual disgrace. "If the salt has lost its savor," said our blessed Lord, "it is good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under the foot of men." "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

In order to become Christians, men must forsake their old sins, must come out from, and thereby become a reproach to, the wicked. They must engage in active exertions to conquer sin, the world, and the devil, and to establish upon their ruins the kingdom of Christ. They must often reprove, rebuke, and upbraid the world as did Enoch, Elijah, and John the Baptist. Now woe be to such, if they fall into the hand of their enemies. "So let the gods do to me and more also," said the enraged Queen of Israel to Elijah, "if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time."

There must arise in every face a contemptuous smile; in every breast revengeful thoughts, and from the lips of every man who dares to speak the merited reproof, "Is *this* thy kindness to thy friend?"

This desertion from his cause, this dishonorable

revealing of his secrets! After such a step is once taken, it will be too late to retreat. The traitor may throw down the pieces of silver, the wages of his iniquity, he may confess his baseness and guilt; but the hardened and impenitent will only reply, "What is that to us, see thou to that." Ah! he will see to it, indeed!

The taunt which he has heard but once, and which went like a dagger to his heart, will not die on the lips of those who first uttered it; it will be the language of reviling taken up in hell. Such a sentence on earth may be confirmed on the day of judgment, and the lost spirits of darkness may rejoice in the ingenuity that devised this species of torment. Like some new improvement of the gibbet or the rack, this torture will be applied to the terrified soul; and all the reproaches of earth may be light, all the lashes of mortal satire unworthy the name, compared with that whip of scorpions which the backsliding of a Christian may put into the hands of the damned.

Hell from beneath is moved to meet thee at thy coming. It stirreth up the dead for thee; all they shall speak and say, "O Lucifer, son of the morning, art thou become like unto us!"

O, my fellow Christian, there is no safety in casting one glance towards that world from whence you came out. That Egypt—that house of bond-

age. What though at times our way is a weary one; what though our comforts are small; let us not seek relief from those who will marvel at our approach, and will despise our desertion.

I. It would be well for the Christian often to consider what public professions he has made to God; for if they have faded from *his* mind, they are probably remembered by many who witnessed them; and who upon the least departure from consistency may be heard to cry out—"Aha! Aha!—so would we have it." But it is still more important to reflect upon the peculiar relation which he sustains to the Lord Jesus Christ. To every true Christian the Lord of Life has become a friend; not merely is there the general relation of creator and redeemer, but the particular and tender bond of friendship. Abraham was called the friend of God; and to all Abraham's spiritual seed the Saviour has said, "Ye are my friends." When we reflect upon the nature of this friendship, the condescension which it involves, and the consequences which must ensue if its obligations are violated, we may well inquire with the painful solicitude of the primitive disciples, "Lord, is it I" who has violated such a sacred bond? Certain it is that in every age men have dishonored the Christian profession. Some followed Christ for a while, but turned back and walked no more with him. Others continued their

fidelity until a time of trial, when they fell away, and in the hour of his greatest distress, one betrayed him—another denied him—and all forsook him and fled.

And is it possible that after such conduct as this the blessed Jesus would consent to receive back to his bosom such *faithless* and *heartless* deserters?

O hear his message upon his first arising from the dead. “Go tell my disciples, and *Peter*, that I go before them into Galilee—there shall they see me.” Is there on record one word of reproach uttered by this merciful Redeemer, upon the reunion of these friends after his resurrection? Did He the moment he met them, exclaim, “Is this thy kindness to thy friend?” Was that cowardly denial, were those oaths and curses, a proper return for my condescension, a proper reliance upon my power, or a suitable contempt of death in one of my followers? Oh, no; there was nothing of reproach except from the consciences of the men themselves. Is there not an inducement here for all backsliding Christians to return to their first love? Should they discover, upon reflection, how many advances they have made to the world, how much occasion they have given to the enemy to blaspheme; should they consider how much grief they have caused the Holy Spirit, and how much dishonor they have reflected on the cause of Christ;

then let them pause and ask, What should prevent an immediate return to the feet of their friend? Where can such happiness be found?

“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!”

O think of the sweet privileges which you once enjoyed at the feet of Jesus; when you could repeat and appropriate these precious words to yourself, “All things are yours; things present, things to come—life and death—all are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

Has your departure from Christ in any measure repaid you for your loss? If not, repent and return without delay. I can imagine the emotions of your heart when the sneers of the world were first directed to you. I can imagine your disappointment—your inward vexation. “Fool that I was, to desert so great, so good a Master; and is this all the return I am to expect? Well may I retire with Peter to weep in bitterness.” Imitate not only the penitence, but the faith of the Apostle. He not only wept over his fall, but he went back to his Master. He of all the twelve was the first to leap into the sepulchre, where he hoped to find his forgiving Lord. O let every backslider present convinced not only of the baseness but the folly of his course, without delay return to Christ, who is now saying, “I will heal their backsliding.

I will love them freely. Return unto me and I will return unto you." "Draw nigh unto God." "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded."

He knows our weakness and the power of our spiritual foes. Under an assault from them He groaned, and bled, and died. They were permitted to bruise his heel; but thanks be to God, they are now beneath His feet. He has openly triumphed over them. It is upon His power, then, as well as upon His love that the Christian must depend. "Without me," said Christ, "ye can do nothing."

II. There are others upon whose minds I pray God that the words of the text may make an impression. There is a certain class of persons who in private declare their conviction and assent to the truth of our religion, but who have never made that declaration public.

It is not necessary in this place to magnify the Sacraments of the Church—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are great and acknowledged helps in our Christian life. I would present them to all who are halting between two opinions. Christ has selected two things as of pre-eminent importance—Belief and Baptism. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." And out of many feasts

on earth, He has ordained one as commemorative of his death. "Do this," said He, "in remembrance of me." Here is his dying, and here his departing charge; and with what appearance of sincerity can any man profess kindness to Christ, while he lives in open disobedience to his public command, and to his dying request. It may be in vain for him to say, "I repent of my sins, I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." If you have done the higher duty, why refuse to perform the smaller one. If you have passed through the painful trial of penitence, and the examination necessary to faith, why refuse to come out from the world, and confess that Saviour in whom you trust. There is surely nothing in Christianity of which you should be ashamed.

Speak not of kindness to your friend. O, make no claim to an interest in the sufferings of Christ; boast not of a better morality than that of many Christians. Think not of being owned in the world of spirits by Christ, if you refuse to obey his commands, to receive the holy shower in baptism, and to taste of the emblems of his dying love, in the supper. The Israelite who refused to sprinkle his door post with the blood of the appointed lamb, was visited by the sword of the destroying angel.

But—danger aside—if the voice of a judge and a king will not affect you, cannot the tones of

friendship move your hearts? Can you fancy to yourself a friend in his dying hour, turning his languid eyes upon you, and forcing from his reluctant lips one last request. O! have you ever stood over the death-bed of a friend; and is there a sacrifice too great for you to make to gratify the last wish of his heart? Ah! my friends, you make kind, and even great sacrifices for human friendship. If one has fallen under the hand of God—if disease has overtaken your friend, your tender and generous sympathies are seen to move. You take many steps; you make many kind and soothing visits; you select from your luxuries some choice thing to sooth the parched lips; you sacrifice your rest. On such occasions—and many such I have seen. On such occasions it is that human nature puts on her best appearance. We almost forget the corruption of our fallen state, in such sacrifices as we then behold. And the gratitude which they awaken on the part of the recipient is sometimes commensurate with the generosity of the giver.

But, is there not a friend who is now to be sympathized with? Is there not a friend who is now saying, “Can you not watch with *me* one hour?” “Can you not pay one visit to my tomb, or take some pains to behold my dying agonies on the dreadful cross? Can you not give to my

parched lips one cup of cold water?" O, what a refreshing cordial to Christ, on his cross, was that heart-melting prayer of the dying thief—"Lord! remember me." O, what waves of delight must have met and mingled with the waves of agony which were rolling over his soul! Who can tell the ecstasy which is experienced when one sinner repenteth? When the stout-hearted offender is unexpectedly seen to weep; and with the gentleness of the lamb, he stretches out his arms, and falls at the feet of the sinner's friend.

Have you ever stood over the sick bed of one whom you loved? Have you long watched the sinking frame, numbered the decreasing pulse and felt the faint and fainter heaving of that heart, soon to beat no more? And when you were just ready to despair, felt the current of life resume its course? And have you exclaimed, with emotions of joy, "The crisis is over—life has again returned?"

Such, oh! sinner, may now be the anxiety of that Great Intercessor above, at your diseased and perishing soul. He is counting the pulse of life. He is keeping back the shaft of death.

"And is this thy kindness to thy friend?" This coldness, this neglect, this turning thy back upon his tomb, his table and his cross? Art thou aware of the offer of friendship which he makes? Hast thou made such preparation for passing

through the dark valley, that thou hast no need of Christ? But, I speak not of danger, I speak of kindness, of friendship and of gratitude; and I again inquire, Is thy past conduct an act of kindness to thy friend? Does not his cause now stand in need of thy aid?

Come then, in all the generosity of thy nature, come and show *kindness* to thy friend—the friend of sinners. Come, and repent of the past, and trust in the precious promises of Christ. Come, and make the trial of his power and love. Be persuaded that the power that now rules, is an usurped one; that the monarch that is now absent will be reinstated. The triumph of the wicked is short. The hour is on the wing, when he to whom so many faithful servants are now doing homage, will in his turn be overthrown, and meet with a punishment proportioned to his crimes. Then, when He whose right it is to reign, shall appear with a triumphal train of faithful friends to re-ascend his throne, the loyalty of the faithful, yea, of the penitent transgressor, who in time returns to make his peace with God, will be abundantly rewarded and universally honored. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

## SERMON XIX.

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MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE.

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2 Peter i. 10.

“WHEREFORE THE RATHER, BRETHREN, GIVE DILIGENCE TO MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE.”

THERE are many persons who consider an assurance of future salvation a blessing of inestimable worth; but, either from erroneous views of the nature of assurance, or from imperfect conceptions of the power of the Gospel, they fail to *attain* to it, and are inclined to sit down contented in a state of doubt and uncertainty, from a vague, but deep-rooted impression, that the object desired is beyond their reach. But is assurance beyond the reach of the Christian? Is it something which, like the horizon of the visible firmament, continually recedes the more we endeavor to approach it? Most certainly not. It does not,

in general, elude the grasp of the seeker; it is not a possession too great or too valuable for the common Christian; on the contrary, it is necessary to the ordinary enjoyment of the Christian life. It is a duty to try to possess it, and in fine it comes to us as every other grace, connected with a command to make the requisite exertion by which it is to be acquired. St. Peter, addressing the "elect," says: "Make your calling and election *sure*." But before we can open the subject fully, some difficulties in our way must be removed.

In the first place, we cannot allow everybody to explain what assurance *is*. Some might say it was a feeling of transport and delight, which comes in an instant. Others would make the channel to be a dream or a vision; and others, more discreet than these, would only enlarge on its nature, and expand it into a kind of overwhelming and engrossing emotion. Now, a much safer course presents itself to us. It is, not closely to define what assurance is, but simply to consider it a fixed and settled conclusion in the mind, that through the merits of Christ, we, as members of his mystical body, shall certainly survive all the changes at death; and, as soon as the silver cord of life is severed, shall enter into the joy of our Lord. Our position does not require us to deny that a very high degree of assurance has been attained

by saints in past ages, nor that it may now be enjoyed by true and tried Christians. Enoch, we are told, received the testimony that he pleased God. And Elijah, in the cave, was favored by revelations, which must have extinguished every doubt; but neither the trials of the former, nor the triumph of the latter prophet, are the appointed lot of men in general; and yet the troubles and afflictions of life, and the certainty of death, make an ordinary degree of assurance almost an indispensable support to the Christian.

In following out the thoughts suggested by the text, let us then attend rather to the *means* by which assurance may be obtained, than to the nature and delights of the possession itself. St. Peter refers distinctly in these Epistles, to the *calling* and *election* of his spiritual charge, as if these things were fundamental in the experience of the Christian. And he alludes to the exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel, which are given to believers. But two things are evident on the face of his appeal: one, that those to whom he was writing were elected, that they might become holy and shining examples of Christian truth; and secondly, that while thus enduring the brightening process, while bearing the refiner's fire, they would, and that by a diligent effort, make their calling and election *sure*. On the first of these

propositions little need be said; no one will deny that if our Lord should call a man from this ungodly and sinful world, to become a follower of his, that he would call him through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. In other words, if Christ calls any one, he not only disposes him to obey the call, but makes him willing to cast away his sins. Christ's code of morals is plain and simple, if severe; it was illustrated by the life and death of its author, and it is absurd to suppose that any man is called by Christ, except from darkness to light, or from ignorance to knowledge, or from licentiousness to temperance, or from sin to godliness; so that, if a sufficient time has elapsed since the supposed *call* was made, and men are not purged from their old sins, it is as clear as noon-day that they have not been *called* by Christ; and that in professing so to be, and sitting at his table, they are eating and drinking unworthily; and so far from the sacrament of the supper producing a sanctifying effect, each reception does but increase their condemnation. Remember, brethren, that you are "*called*" by Jesus Christ. God forbid that his Spirit should say as he surveys our godly numbers, "*Many are called, but few chosen.*" I pray you to examine yourselves, to prove your own selves; for know, in the language of St. Paul, "that either

Jesus Christ is in you, or you are reprobates." Determine that no pains shall be spared to ascertain the important fact, whether you are indeed and in truth a "member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

It is the other proposition which is evolved from this Scripture on which we propose to dwell, and which is closely connected with the first, viz.:—that it is while enduring the process of refining and purifying, that we come at last to the delightful and sustaining conviction that we are *called* and *elected*, and that our election is made *sure*. And O what can be equal to this! A state of mind, the envy of the philosopher, and a wonder to all beholders; an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, with which, although having nothing, we are possessed of all things; with this, "strangers" scattered over barbarous and idolatrous countries, could greatly rejoice, kept as they were by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. This proposition may also be divided into two parts—first, the purification of the Christian; and secondly, the agency which he himself has in the work. God has given him faith, but there is to be added to that faith courage and knowledge, and temperance and patience, godliness and brotherly kindness, love and charity. The part, that God takes in the work,

it may be important to know, at least so far as to encourage the Christian that grace and strength shall be given him from on high; nay, more, that much of the work God will reserve for himself; such as *affliction, trial, opposition* and *success*. It takes much to make a Christian perfect. Many fires—much operating with the hand of God, and this be assured will come. “I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but my mercy shall not depart away from him.”\* It is more important to inquire into the part which devolves on us, in order that we may taste the sweets of an assured hope of glory. We shall say in general terms that there is required—first, a settled *purpose* to become holy and happy in religion; and secondly, a diligent application and use of the means of grace. There must be a settled purpose of becoming holy and happy in religion. True religion in the heart may often be distinguished from that which is doubtful and false at its commencement. The true Christian begins with a determination to find out and possess the chief good of man below the skies. This may be attended with a quiet, or it may be connected with a very disturbed spirit; it is of little importance at what particular height the thermometer of the

\*2 Samuel vii. 14.

feelings stands, when the effort commences, if only it has been plunged in an atmosphere which will insure its rising at last. Far from this is the state of mind in others who profess religion; they come out of the world, sometimes because they dare not stay any longer in it, or from some temporary disgust, or because it appears not safe to serve both God and mammon; or because they are badly advised and improperly encouraged, and presumptuously conducted to the table of the Lord, at which the holiest saint might tremble, and at which the best Christians have appeared to themselves as the *last of all* and *least of all!* Now here is a clear mark of distinction at the *outset*. The true Christian, the sincere man, sets out simply and fixedly for happiness in religion; not for that *only*, but *chiefly*; short of this he does not intend to stop. He is not driven out of the world by a tempest; he calmly sits down and counts the cost; becomes convinced that all *below* the skies is vanity and vexation of spirit; that the world is opposed to God, and must be swallowed up in the final fire; he therefore quits it, extricates himself from it, disentangles himself from sinful companions and pursuits, not however from an honest business, nor from his social relations; and he puts into requisition every means in his power to attain his end. He reads and prays

and converses and forms new acquaintances for this end, and he is well persuaded that happiness, peace and joy are to be found in the ways of godliness; and he dedicates himself to the pursuit, and does not rest, and does not *mean* to rest until he attains it. This is what is meant by having a "single eye." "If thine eye be single, thy whole body will be full of light."

This was precisely the condition of Nathaniel, when he came to our Lord, and heard that Omniscient Judge say, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!" This is the *one* who is 'called'—the devoted Christian—the spiritual man; not so much on account of the attainments which he has made, as of the manifest intention and bent of his mind. Here let me stop and inquire whether already some of you, my hearers, cannot discover the reason why you have never arrived at assurance! You *never aimed* at it; your hold of the world has never been so entirely relaxed, that an assured hope of future happiness would satisfy you; or if you have aspired, or panted after assurance, you have failed to pay the price at which alone that pearl can be obtained!

St. Peter gave no encouragement to his brethren that they would attain to assurance, unless they gave to the work of religion *diligence*. He employs the same word in two other places in this

Epistle. In the 5th verse he says—"Giving all *diligence*, add to your faith virtue or valor!" Again, in the 14th verse of the 3d chapter, he says—"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be *diligent*, that ye may be found of him in peace."

It is, my brethren, in religion as in the affairs of the world, that "the hand of the diligent maketh *rich*." The riches of this world are hard to be obtained; but *riches* of righteousness *still harder*. The man who sets out with a determination to amass a fortune, may have to toil much, but the whole weight of worldly influence around him, stimulates and encourages him, and visible additions to his property, add fuel to the flame. But the man who commences a Christian course, with honest zeal, may yet in time be overcome, and become weary in well doing.

What a picture do the seven churches of Asia present, of the difficulty in the way of piety on earth. Some Christians, who begin well, are by relatives and friends, imperceptibly drawn away from the Holy Communion. The minds of others are poisoned by false teachers; but the greater number of those who fall from their steadfastness, do it through the remains of natural corruption *within*, together with the fascinations of the world *without*. And when you ask for that large

company who, a score of years ago, commenced their march to the land of promise with you ; alas ! alas ! how many have *perished* by the way ! Or, when you inquire for the poor Pilgrim, who at the commencement of his course was accompanied by not a few, you may see him now toiling almost alone ! St. Paul says, “ Demas hath forsaken me ! ” So said Elijah, “ Lord, I am left alone ! ” So said David, “ I am a sparrow alone upon the house top ! ” The night in which Jesus was betrayed, all his disciples forsook him and fled. Alas ! no wonder St. Peter calls to “ *diligence.* ” His Epistle was one of consolation ; but his spiritual charge was growing cold. Believers were inconsiderate ; they presumed upon their calling and election ; they were becoming timid ; their experimental knowledge of Christ was expiring ; they were falling into self-indulgence, were giving up the reins to evil tempers, were becoming worldly and sensual, and falling into discord. And the Apostle, especially as he was warned that he must soon put off his earthly tabernacle, feared that there would be none so faithfully to reprove them, as their spiritual father. In his second epistle he exhorts them not to rely upon these privileges or past professions, but to give “ *diligence* to make their calling and election *sure.* ”

The first reflection which grows out of this subject, is upon the possibility of attaining assurance.

There are two causes to which to attribute the low state of piety in the Church. One is unfaithful teaching, and the other is the attraction of the world. This latter cause may produce the former, and in reality the dangerous and all-powerful influence of the world, may be wholly charged with corrupting the Church. Men are permitted, if not encouraged, publicly to take upon them the vows of Christ, who have never been purged from their old sins, and who aim, not at obtaining and enjoying the high consolations of religion. Alas! it has always been *thus!* The blind have led the blind to the destruction of both! What can be plainer than the command of the Apostles. That *men*, after they have *professed* faith in Christ, should add to that faith all the great Christian graces; and they are commanded to do this, not more for the glory of God than for their own good! It is thus they are to make *their* "calling and election *sure*;" and can there be a doubt that such would be the case, if they were sincere, fervent and devoted. How can a believer speak of his assurance in stronger terms than Jacob did—"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!" than Job did, when he said—"I know that my Redeemer liveth;" than David did, when he said—"I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness;" than St. Paul did—"We know, that if our earthly house

of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ;” than St. John did, when he said—“ Hereby” (*i. e.* by keeping his word,) “ we know that we are in him ;” than the Martyrs did, who, though tormented, would not accept of deliverance, so assured were they that the moment of death would be one of triumph !

Few, very few, who now rank themselves as Christians, can thus read their title clear, and yet St. Paul exhorts Christians to try themselves, to prove themselves ; and to know themselves whether Jesus Christ is in them, or they in him. Men who have used the means of grace, may fail to arrive at assurance ; and those who once obtained it, may lose its consoling influence ; but how small is the number of Christians who have had no occasion to mourn the absence of this precious Balm ! It may be difficult to describe the connection ; but a connection does exist between diligence in a Christian profession, and assurance of future salvation ; and with proper exceptions to the general rule, those who have never possessed it, may find in their life and conversation the cause of the deficiency. While in the life and actions of the holy and happy saint may be found the explanation of his joys. He is continually drawing water out of Wells of

Salvation. Who spoke more confidently of his future salvation than Henry Martyn? The last words he wrote in his Journal were: "I sat down and thought with sweet comfort and peace of my God, in solitude my Companion, my Friend and Comforter: O! when shall time give place to eternity!" And who was more fervent in spirit, more constant in prayer, more diligent in self-discipline, more laborious in works of benevolence than he? Let us then be persuaded that "*Assurance*" is possible—is required—*is commanded!*—and that while adding to our faith, virtue, knowledge, and temperance, and brotherly kindness, and charity, while diligently attending on the means of grace, while being transformed from the old to the new man, we shall most assuredly arrive at that happy state, when it will appear even to our reason and conscience, that nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.



## S E R M O N X X .

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IF WE BE DEAD WITH CHRIST, WE SHALL ALSO  
LIVE WITH HIM.

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2 Timothy ii. 11, 12.

“IT IS A FAITHFUL SAYING: FOR IF WE BE DEAD WITH HIM, WE SHALL ALSO LIVE WITH HIM; IF WE SUFFER, WE SHALL ALSO REIGN WITH HIM; IF WE DENY HIM, HE ALSO WILL DENY US.”

PROVERBS, maxims and patriotic songs have contributed more towards the formation of a national character, than the gravest legislation.

A popular ballad, made and sung, in England, at a particular juncture, is said to have changed the political complexion of the whole nation. “The chorals of Luther, did as much for the Reformation, as his preaching.” Previous to the hour of battle, military commanders have delivered soul-stirring charges, often conveyed in a few words, which have contributed not a little to the success of their arms. Who can doubt but that famous saying, delivered by the Hero of Trafalgar,

at the commencement of the fight, "England expects every man to do his duty," contributed much towards his victory. Dr. Watts' Psalms and Hymns, those most faithful sayings, have comforted, if not converted, more souls than all the sermons which he, or any other man, ever published, or, perhaps, preached. The Psalms are compositions inferior to none in the Old Testament, and have proved the power of God unto salvation to numbers. And this faithful saying of St. Paul, has done much in securing the triumphs of Christianity in the world. The Apostle, doubtless, here referred primarily to corporeal death; the noble army of martyrs cheered one another, as they passed from the prison to the stake, with this well-founded hope, "If we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him."

Although the times are very different now, and Christians feel called upon to make *very small* sacrifices, yet this *faithful saying* may not be without its use, in awakening them to the inconsistency of much which is found in modern practice, and in consoling them under the afflictions which, while in the body, they are called to endure. If it is the duty of every Christian to hold himself ready to suffer death, rather than deny his Saviour, to lay down his life in the cause of his divine master, how much more imperative is the duty,

to bear the *lighter crosses* which are laid upon him, and by a life of ardent and devoted piety, to be ready for the Master, whether He comes at midnight or in the morning. In pursuing such a course, no little service may be rendered, by adopting some striking motto, or some easily remembered maxim, for instance, the text—"If we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us." Let us, then, examine what is meant by these words.

While we admit that to be dead with Christ, originally meant to suffer martyrdom as he did, yet with all the apostolic epistles before us, we shall not be likely to confine the meaning to corporeal death. There is a moral martyrdom, as well as a physical, and men may be said to be dead with Christ, and to have risen with Christ, who have not yet tasted of corporeal death. "If ye then be risen with Christ," says St. Paul, to the Colossians, "seek those things which are above." Again, "Buried with Christ by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." There is a sense then in which all who truly believe, are buried with Christ by baptism unto death. If I were addressing persons unacquainted with the Gospel,

I might stop and explain what is not meant by being dead with Christ; but I am persuaded it is not necessary. You are not, I am sure, disposed to put a forced interpretation on the text; you do not believe that in order to be dead with Christ, you must abandon the abodes of men, or the ordinary pursuits of life, or even set at defiance its common maxims. If there was no form nor comeliness in Christ, no beauty, that men should desire him; nothing in his manner or mode of living that attracted special attention or excited wonder: so, on the other hand, there was nothing uncomely or uncommon about him. The ordinary forms of society were not disregarded; there was nothing repulsive or ascetic about Him; persons of all descriptions sought access to him, and were received with courtesy; little children flocked around him, and were taken to his bosom; the learned were gratified in proposing to him difficult questions; the rich invited him to their tables; and the poor assembled around his person to gather up the bread, both of this life and the next. So, too, the Christian is not to be morose or repulsive, but cheerful and accessible in his manners—not to be sanctimonious, but social in his spirit, and with a dignity and self-respect which true piety always confers, he must be all things to all men, that by all means he may save some. He is

to provide things honest in the sight of all men; to be pitiful and courteous, active and diligent, prudent and provident; and if possible, thrifty, or always to have more than enough for immediate use; he should, on extraordinary occasions, be able to bring out of his treasury, things new and old. There is no difference in opinion between religious and irreligious men on this head. Common sense is a divine endowment, which is to supply details to all the general provisions of the Gospel; and the reason why we do not, in the pulpit, oftener insist on the morality of the Gospel, is because every man of ordinary intelligence is supposed to be informed on this subject. But notwithstanding all this, the Christian must be dead with Christ—*dead* to sin and dead to the world, or he will never enter the kingdom of heaven. The expression to be dead to any thing, means to be indifferent to it and uninfluenced by it, or positively opposed to it. Now, our Lord was, in the fullest sense of the words, dead to sin. Sin is the transgression of the law, and never, in *thought, word, or deed*, did he transgress the law. He came neither to violate nor to abrogate the law, but to fulfil it. He was not only indifferent to sin, and uninfluenced by it, but positively and actively opposed to it. He rebuked sin whenever he discovered it. He unmasked it when it was

concealed, and resisted it unto blood. He abhorred it, though covered with imperial purple, or combined with professed attachment to his person.

What more severe rebuke could be given to man, than that which our Lord administered to St. Peter, when he said, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" It was opposition to sin which nailed our Saviour to the Cross; which brought John the Baptist to the block; and which drew down from the first the hatred of the wicked to the righteous. Cain slew his brother Abel, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Our Lord's whole life and labors were directed to the destruction of the kingdom of sin, and hence the subjects of that kingdom plotted his ruin. Now, if we be dead with Christ, we shall, like him, *be dead to sin*. We shall look upon it as Christ looked upon it. We shall feel towards it as Christ felt towards it. We shall fight against it as Christ fought against it; reprove it as Christ reproved it, and grieve at its commission, when we cannot *prevent* it. We shall see it to be the transgression of a law, holy, just and good. We shall discover its odious and horrible nature, as indicating the basest ingratitude, and most flagrant opposition to God's holiness. We shall hate and abhor it, not only in our superiors and in our equals, but above all, in *ourselves*; we shall de-

clare, maintain, and continue until death, an open, unflinching, and increasing hostility against sin. We shall perceive that sin will have dominion over us, or we must have dominion over sin; and hence feel the necessity of contending against it, even unto death.

It is true, we are dead to sin in a different degree from our Saviour. He was divine and perfect—we are human and sinful. Sin is the same great evil, both to Christ and to us. Sin does not change its nature, but Christ and his followers differ essentially in theirs. He was God manifest in the flesh, and it was impossible for him to sin. On the other hand, we are worms of the dust; were born in sin, the children of wrath. We lived long in sin, committing many actual transgressions. Sin became a second nature to us, nay, it was our *original* nature, and we had in us at our birth, that which deserveth God's wrath and damnation.

Now, if the wages of sin is death; if one sin brought death into the world, and all our woe; who can compute the deaths we have deserved, or comprehend the woe we might have experienced, had not grace interposed in our behalf?

We can only approximate towards such a death unto sin as Christ's was, but no more. The first steps in that approximation are true conviction of

sin, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The man, under a load of sin and guilt, repairs to the Cross of Christ, and there with a penitent heart, and a grateful acceptance of Christ's atonement, and a sincere dedication of himself to God, obtains pardon for the past; righteousness for his defilement, and a holy and sanctifying spirit, which, like the material sun in its influence upon the fruits of the earth, will in due time ripen him and make him meet and fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. Men first die to open sins, next to secret sins, and then to spiritual sins, or sins of the heart. "Let the wicked forsake his WAY, and the unrighteous man his THOUGHTS." David, after his great sins against his fellow men, as well as against God, in view of the essence or spiritual nature of sin, could say, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned." But some will inquire how can we be dead with Christ, unless (like him) we are entirely sinless: Or how we can hope for acceptance with God, unless we are perfectly free from this terrible pollution. Are we not commanded, say they, to be perfect even as our Heavenly Father is perfect? To be perfect in the observance of the whole decalogue, and in all our duties, and to be entirely sinless, are different things; we have many different duties to

perform ; social duties as well as religious, duties to ourselves, to our friends, and to society. The Christian is to neglect none of these ; he is not to be faulty in one class of duties, because he performs another. The Jews allowed a man to leave his father and mother in poverty, and utter destitution, provided he gave his property to the Church, this our Lord condemned. They also loved their neighbors and hated their enemies ; but our Lord informed them that there were duties to be performed to enemies, as well as to friends ; duties growing out of our common relationship on earth ; and in imitation of our heavenly Father, he required them to be perfect or complete, or universal in regard to obedience. As to a perfect Christ-like death to sin, I submit that it is not reasonable to expect it. I assert that no man living has ever attained to it. St. Paul said, "There is *none* that doeth good, no not *one*." It was the praise and glory of our Lord himself, that he had committed no sin ; but if you can show a mortal man, who has arrived at an entire freedom from sin, how inferior must Christ's glory be in this respect to his ! Both have reached the same distinction ; but the *mortal* man under inconceivably greater difficulties. Christ's human nature was the work of the Holy Spirit, so was the renewal of the sinner's corrupt nature : But Christ never had sinned, never had felt the least inclination to

sin, never could be swayed by the example of sinners, never had been defiled by an unclean heart. But against a heart unclean and full of idols, deceitful and desperately wicked, against long standing habits of sin, against the example of sinners on every side, of equals and superiors, against the deceits of the world, the flesh and the devil; against all these combined, the man has gained the victory, and this not in death, but in life.— Alas! “if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” If we be dead unto sin, as was St. Paul, we shall live with Christ, as he did. But he declared that he had not yet attained, neither was already perfect, and he added, “I follow after, if that I may apprehend, that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”

But there is another sense in which we must be dead with Christ; we must be *dead to the World*, or if you will, the World must be dead to us. . Here our incarnate Lord and his disciples are on a footing. Their characters are widely different, but their condition is the same. Both entered a world opposed to God; most alluring in its nature, and imperious in its demands. It was this combination of moral power and wickedness, called the world, which crucified the Lord of Glory, and caused the blood of

his followers so freely to flow. It is this against which our Lord has most solemnly warned all his followers, and the love of which he pronounces incompatible with the love of God.

Now whether we can go so far as to be *entirely dead to the world* or not, it is evident that the world in a certain sense must be dead to us, or we shall not live with Christ. There must be some sense in which Christians are dead to the world; some meaning put on those words—"I renounce the pomps and vanity of this wicked world." It surely will appear as hypocritical for us to quit this life with such texts of Scripture as this on our lips, and yet to have lived all our lives in the indulgence of the pleasures and vanities of the world. Will it be pretended that those professors of religion are in any sense dead to the world, between whom and that world no human being can discover any difference, either in manners, in dress, in frivolity, in luxurious living, or in princely habitations. When we say a man is dead to a thing, the least we can mean by the expression is, that he is indifferent to it, and takes no deep interest in it; is not influenced by it, nor contaminated with it. Now what can be said of those who live and act, whose joys and sorrows, whose honors and distinctions, whose treasures and hopes are identical with those of the world, and who would be mortified if they supposed that they were NOT considered as belong-

ing to that particular circle of society in which they aspire to move. Look this faithful saying in the face. Call to mind the first Christians who employed it; see them opposed and persecuted, and flying from city to city, and hear them as they pass one another on the road in the heat of battle, repeat their faithful saying, "If we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us." Suppose this faithful saying to be *now* generally adopted by Christ's followers—(and *why* should it not be?)—and amidst a gay and glittering assembly, in some modern palace, two communicants should meet, and meeting, should repeat and respond this faithful saying, "If we be dead with Christ, we shall live with him." Or suppose two enterprising Christian merchants should meet each other at a time when the tide of business was at its height, and the mental excitement roused to fever heat, and the struggle for wealth the greatest, and exchange this scriptural maxim, "If we be dead with Christ, we shall live with him." Or suppose two fashionable Christian mothers, when meeting to arrange matters for the introduction of their daughters into society, should repeat this faithful saying, what strange thoughts would rise up in their minds, and what rebukes of conscience would they feel, or *ought* they to feel at the manifest inconsistency

between this apostolic saying and their cherished predilections and habitual deportment! Alas, my hearers, if the most common, the most lenient exposition of the text be given, and if it does contain the conditions in which alone Christians can live and reign with Christ hereafter, how large a proportion of modern professors must bid *adieu* to all expectation of heaven.

But, without invading the brilliant circle of fashionable life, have we not *all* great reason to make this faithful saying prominent? Do we not all feel within us the remains of an old love and admiration of the world? Do not too many of us try to incorporate with our mode of living as much as we possibly can of this world's pomp, without actually becoming the objects of severe and indignant censure? Do not such plead a cultivated taste, as the requirements of the age, or the demands of refined society, or the wishes of their children, or the commands of their husbands, in extenuation of their evident and undeniable conformity to the world? Do they not shrink from suffering for Christ's sake; and may they not oftener than they suppose, be considered as denying Christ by yielding their own wills to his enemies, and to those whose principles and modes of life are confessedly irreligious? What materials have we on which to base the least pretence that there has been in us

a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness? Is there a shadow of evidence that we are dead unto sin and the world; that we suffer for Christ; that we are suffering what would be called the *loss of time*, i. e., spending much time in *doing good*? Do we take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, i. e. give liberally of our substance to the cause of God, especially giving succor to those of the household of faith? Do we suffer bodily and mentally—in fastings or resisting our evil inclinations, and those of our children? With what face could we put these questions one to another, even in this holy house? Or how could we bear to have them put to us by the Great Searcher of Hearts? Alas! we hear much of an Age of Progress; but where that progress is to be found, when we take leave of the busy walks of life and enter the Church, I am at a loss to say. There is evidently progress in active benevolence, and in one or more directions towards superstition and worldliness. But is there progress in spiritual and scriptural, simple-hearted and single-minded piety—in real, open, honest, undisguised godliness? In noble, courageous zeal for Christ and his cause, or in deep, solemn devotion, in the prayers and services of God's house? Is the full measure of devotion necessary to fill up our grand and glorious liturgy supplied? Where

are the thunder-like Amens, which shook the primitive assemblies of the pious? The frequent cheerful and united songs to Christ as to God? Does heaven appear attractive? Does the thought of living and reigning with Christ, and being openly acknowledged and honored by him act as a spur to duty, or afford strong consolation in suffering? "Judge yourselves, brethren."

But all we have as yet said is on one side of the picture. *It has two.* We are bound to consider the bright side of this subject as well as the dark side; the reward as well as the labor. Although time would fail us now to enlarge, (if we were able) yet justice demands that we glance at it before we conclude. If we be *dead* with Christ we shall also *live* with him. To live with Christ now, means that Christ will live with us. Once it was thought a great favor if our Lord would visit men for a day or an hour. They besought him to come to their cities, and to abide in their houses, or to partake of refreshment at their tables. Sickness and plagues fled at his approach, poverty and distress were befriended, and the afflicted were comforted and consoled. "Lord," said one in the fullness of her heart, "if thou hadst been here *my brother had not died!*" What want was there which Christ could not supply? What enemy, temporal or spiritual, which He could not defeat? What

storm or tempest which He could not lull? Even the winds and the sea obeyed him. Once to have Christ to visit us personally and visibly might certainly have been attended with great results; now, although invisible, in what sense are his visits inferior in importance? He can forgive sins; He can sanctify the soul; He can comfort the heart, and sooth our sorrows, He can fight our battles, He can subdue our foes, all the more surely because he is *unseen* by them. It is very true, that a worldly, careless, proud and covetous disciple, would find it difficult to realize Christ's presence, or to enjoy it if he did. But the disciple who is dead with Christ, and not dazzled with the world; the disciple who gives up all to follow his Saviour, will know that Christ has sought him and found him; the heart that says in prayer, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" which complains, "Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell in Meshech." The heart that turns away from *sinful pleasure*, that sickens at *worldly splendor*, and abhors that covetousness which is idolatry: This is the heart that will find Christ standing at the door, and knocking, or entering into it and supping with it. And who that has ever tasted that the Lord is gracious—who that has ever supped with Christ, will not testify, that one day in his Courts is better than

a thousand days spent elsewhere? that one hour in communion with Christ has afforded him more happiness than any increase of corn and wine and oil? Again, "If we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him." Believers were once taught to count it all joy when they were persecuted for Christ's sake. "Rejoice," said Christ, "and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." This reward is reserved for another world. If we suffer with Christ here we shall reign with him hereafter.—As to live with Christ here, may mean Christ's living with us, so to reign with Christ hereafter, may mean our enjoying all the benefits of his triumph in heaven. As his true Church shares suffering with Christ on earth, so will it share his triumph with him in heaven. Here we suffer from sin—but we are only to suffer for awhile.—Here sin and sorrow are triumphant—but the triumph of the wicked is short. Soon the last pang of sinful feeling will be experienced, the last temptation endured, and the last reviling of men heard. Then these enemies will be under our feet, and under them forever. We shall depart with shouting, "O Death, where is thy sting?" "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory." Then we

shall enter in triumph the kingdom of heaven: Then we shall receive a crown of righteousness, the congratulations of angels, and the welcome of God. If we suffer, we shall reign. His reigning shall be our reigning; we made common cause with him on earth, and we shall make common cause with him in heaven. We that have followed Him in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit upon the Throne of his Glory, a seat at his right hand shall be prepared for us, and then an eternal weight of glory will open upon us." This is the least that we shall realize, and this may be realized any day and hour: "This day (this very day) shalt thou be with me in Paradise," said Christ to a dying penitent. Will not Christ's living with us in our trials, and will not our living with Christ in all his glories, amply repay us for dying to sin, and suffering for righteousness' sake? Choose, I beseech you, then, that good part, and choose it now.

## SERMON XXI.

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### THE OXFORD TRACTS.

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St. Matthew xxiii. 10.

“ONE IS YOUR MASTER, EVEN CHRIST.”

TEN years ago your Pastor was much struck by the following quotation from the Oxford tracts. It appeared in the most authoritative public organ of the literary religious aristocracy of England—the London Quarterly Review for April, 1839. He begs particular attention to it, as disclosing the foundation and impelling cause of that religious movement in the Church of England, which has excited so much attention and occasioned so much alarm and deep sorrow on this, as well as on the other side of the Atlantic.

“Should the government and country (viz. of England) so far forget their God as to cast off the Church, to deprive it of its temporal honors and substance, *on what* will you rest the claim of re-

spect and attention which you make upon your *flock*? Hitherto you have been upheld by your birth, your education, your wealth, your connections; should these secular advantages cease, on what must Christ's ministers depend?"\*

Now, the sum and substance of this is, that the temporalities of the Church of England were in danger, and some desperate means must be used to protect and preserve them. Twelve or fifteen years ago there was a manifest movement in England to separate the Church from *the State*. In parliament and out of it, the subject was agitated, and the question started, whether the time had not arrived for the State to take and maintain an independent position, unallied to any Protestant body of Christians? In other words, to imitate in this respect the position assumed by our political fathers in the year 1776, with this exception, that the government of England must profess the Protestant Religion.

Now, this created great alarm throughout the ranks of the established Church; supported, endowed and honored as it is, even with titles of nobility, by the State. Churchmen were interested to defeat this plan. But foreseeing, (and it required but little sagacity to foresee,) that such might, after all their exertions, be the ultimate

\* Tracts, vol. i. p. 1.

result of these efforts on the part of the Church's foes, some of the clergy of the establishment consulted together and commenced the work of preparing the Church for the event of a separation. This was to be done by awakening a new and profound veneration for the externals of religion—especially of the established Church. These clergymen were residents at Oxford, the oldest and most renowned University in the kingdom; and mark, my brethren, where this revolution in religious opinion began. It began in colleges among men who were conversant with books and with books mainly. Men who had leisure to pore over the records of the past, and to weave together out of these decayed shreds a garment which might caricature Religion and the Church. We have to look no farther than our own land for examples of the danger of such institutions to the purity of the Christian faith. Over our Eastern States is widely spread and established the false and fatal doctrines of Socinus. From whence have those proceeded, but from that venerable seat of learning, Harvard College? And throughout the Middle States, more firmly established in Orthodoxy than the East, an encroachment upon that Orthodoxy of so serious a nature has been made, as to divide the large Presbyterian body into two parts, denominated respective-

ly the Old and New School; and this proceeded from the venerable college at New Haven.

Now, I cannot stop to inquire into the reasons of this tendency—the fact is certain. From *Harvard*, from *Yale*, from *Oxford*, and from the *German Colleges*, have emanated doctrines which, by all evangelical Christians, have been branded as heresy. If in England, in 1833, one hundred of the working and parochial clergy of the Church, headed by the Bishops, and assisted by learned and pious laymen, had assembled to take into consideration the dangers which threatened the Church; or if the Church of England had held a general convention as the Church in America has often done, composed of learned, practical, and pious Bishops, clergy and laymen, the result would have been far different from what we have now to deplore. They would have endeavored to reform the habits and manners both of the clergy and laity in the Church; to induce the former to preach oftener and better, and the latter to walk more worthy of their profession. They would have striven to make the Church of England more useful and more indispensable to the people of that country. All might not have preached or practised as evangelically as could be desired; but all would have preached *orthodoxly* according to their own standards, and *practically* according to the necessities of the people.

Philip Henry's (Diary, 1671,) rebuke to Puritan intolerance in the days of Charles II., is much to the same effect. "If," said he, "all that has been said or written to prove that prelacy is Anti-Christian, and that it is unlawful to join in the Common Prayer, had been urged effectually to persuade Bishops to study and do the duty of Church Rulers, in preaching and feeding the flock according to the *Word*, and to persuade people to be serious inward and spiritual in the use of forms, it had been much better with the Church of God in England."

Yes, my brethren, the Church would have been reformed, and would have proceeded upward and onward—not have fallen backward and downward. She would neither have been reformed on the Genevan plan, nor on the Wesleyan plan. She would not have been changed at all organically; her venerable form and features would have remained the same, but *life*, and *spirit*, and *piety*, and *zeal*, would have been diffused, and though to opposers once dead, she would have appeared alive again; though lost, she would have been found. And every true hearted Protestant, from the High Church Presbyterian to the follower of Barclay or Penn, would have rejoiced with joy unspeakable; and hundreds and thousands would have returned to her *fold*, and have been gathered into

her embrace. What effect did the noble stand taken by the Seven Bishops, in the time of the Second James, produce? Their intrepidity and firm opposition to Roman corruption, and their acquittal after trial, set all London in a blaze of delight. Bonfires were lighted by hands unused to hold Prayer Books, and honors were devised by heads unpressed by a Bishop's hands. "Yet were the acclamations less strange than the weeping, for the feelings of men had been wound up to such a point that at length the stern English nation, so little used to outward signs of emotion, gave way, and thousands sobbed for very joy."\*

Now some may inquire, Why these remarks? We reply, because, from the midst of a condition of things over the water, unlike any thing which exists here, these Oxford Tracts have crossed over to us. We have meddled and been busy-bodies in other men's matters, and consequences much to be deplored have been the result. Solomon says, He that passeth by and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears. It is much easier to commence than to conclude this sport—to take him by the ears than to let him go. You cannot get clear of him when you would; and must thank yourself if you come off with a wound and dishonor.

\* Macauley's History, Vol. II., p. 355.

Without the shadow of a reason for resorting to any weapons of defence against Protestants or Papists; without the slightest necessity for providing for ourselves a resource or defence of any kind, being now entirely without the pale of the State, and not suffering or fearing to suffer from a want of reverence for Church *principles* among Churchmen, we have imported and published, read, marked, learned, and digested the results of the deliberations of Oxford divines. We have followed on in the *false* and *fatal theories* and *practices* of speculative and fanciful *theologians*, and just when our Church had begun to hold up its head among rival denominations, and its orthodoxy and excellence began to be felt and acknowledged, and members began to enter our fold, then we must, in communion with this absurd *revolution* abroad, return back to ancient and antiquated rites and ceremonies, and remodel ourselves after the image of a corrupt and condemned Church, from whose impure and anti-Christian rites and doctrines it has required rivers of blood to secede; a Church, which even now, and even by the official organ of Oxford divinity in the opposite city, was lately called our "wily and treacherous foe"—"How comes it," says that organ, speaking of one who has just apostatized to Rome, "that he has fallen into the embrace of a corrupt Church?"

Now, in the spirit of Esther to the King of Persia, we say, had one only of our young and adventurous clergy apostatized to Rome, I had held my tongue; but, like the decree of Ahasuerus, the influence of these heretical and anti-Christian doctrines of Oxford has spread through all our provinces, has infected our schools and colleges, and corrupted the very fountains of thought and opinion. Children are growing up with a decided taste and appetite for all the corrupting and intoxicating idolatry with which the Church of Rome abounds; and clergymen are found to encourage and foster this fatal tendency. Other bodies of Christians have seen these things, and have preached against them, and predicted concerning them. Your pulpit has not been unfaithful to its duty. From the first appearance of these pernicious volumes to this hour, have we labored, not always offensively, nor at large, to counteract their influence, according to our solemn vows at ordination.

But it is high time to be explicit, and to undertake the work of enlightening the minds of the young on the evil that has overtaken us. We may, from motives of delicacy, have refrained too long from publishing the domestic difference in our once harmonious church. But when such men as the estimable and cultivated Rector of an old and respectable church in the neighboring city

has become so completely besotted by these corrupting doctrines, as to seek communion with the See of Rome, "to which alone his allegiance," he says, "is due," it is time that an antidote was applied, and that as speedily as possible. For this reason I have determined to set before you, as clearly as I am able, the theory of loyalty or fealty for the true Christian. You have the motto on his shield in the words of the text, "One is your Master, even Christ."

From the first revelation made to man, we learn that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. And from the second, that the love of Christ is the perfection of piety. If we were to attempt to enter into the philosophy of Christianity, we would say that its essence or seminal principle is love to Christ. The whole world is guilty before God; all have sinned and come short of his glory. Out of this lost and corrupt world, God determined to select and save a people. This people is his Church, called in the Apostle's Creed, the Communion of Saints. The members of this Church are strictly and truly members of Christ; from out of the world they were selected by the Holy Ghost; they were converted and united to Christ, as a branch is united to a vine, and being thus united, they bring forth the fruits of holiness to the praise and glory of

his grace. To such there can be no mystery, when we repeat the language of our Saviour and say, "Call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ." There is also an outward and visible Church, as well as an inward and spiritual one; as there is an outward and visible part to a sacrament, and an inward and spiritual part; and we are bound to pay great deference and regard to the outward and visible Church, and to pay *all* that we are commanded to pay, and *all* we have solemnly and deliberately and voluntarily vowed to pay. But with all proper regard and veneration for the visible Church, there will, I apprehend, be a vast space in every enlightened Christian mind, between the Church visible and its Rulers, and the Church spiritual and its great and Divine Head. The one is composed of human materials, the other of divine. The one is imperfect and fallible, the other perfect and infallible. The one has always been erroneous in a degree, and at times polluted and debased. The other is pure and holy, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. The one is confined to place, and its blessings are restricted to a few persons ordained and set apart for the purpose. The other is universal, is spiritual, is in every place, and is acces-

sible to every true member of Christ, and at all times. Now that men may be members of one, and not members of the other, is evident from our Saviour's own words, "Many will say to me, Lord, Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." But he shall say, "I know *you not*." These were men admitted by baptism and the holy communion into the Church visible. Yet our Lord will not acknowledge them as members of the Church spiritual. Men who, like Simon Magus, are in the gall of bitterness; who, after baptism, visibly pressed with their teeth the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, and who yet in no wise were partakers of Christ, but rather to their condemnation did eat and drink. Such men undoubtedly are to be found in all Churches, and abound in some; and when such men so increase as to acquire the rule and authority in any Christian body, then the outward and visible Church is advanced over the inward and spiritual. The ways of Zion mourn. Human rulers become of more account than divine, and homage is paid to the creature more than to the Creator. Men talk continually of their duty to ecclesiastical superiors, and dwell and dote upon the visible Church and its government; apply with superstitious reverence the titles of Holy Mother, to the

Church, and Holy Father to its chief ministers, and thus merit the rebuke which came from the lips of our Lord, when he said, "Call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ." The mere change of the object of our veneration is an evil of magnitude enough, and indicates plainly the state of our affections.

But there is here a more immediate and practical evil. Men, when they change the object of their veneration, change also their standard of faith and practice; when a man is converted from sin to holiness, he is converted, not by religious ordinances or sacraments, but, as we are taught in Scripture, by the incorruptible seed of God's word. "Being born again," saith St. Peter, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, that liveth and abideth for ever." Now, every one who is born again, and is well instructed in God's revealed truth, takes the Bible as "the man of his counsel." To him there is a wide horizon, a clear sky, and a bright sun; God is his Father, Christ his Redeemer, the Holy Ghost his Comforter,—and the truth revealed by holy men, who were inspired to reveal it, is the great oracle of his study. Here he ponders, hither he flies in all times of trial or of doubt.

Upon the precious promises of that book he lays his hope and builds his house, which is to stand when at death the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow. It is certain that all true and spiritual Christians love, honor, read and obey the Bible. It is certain that it was written for their learning; that they are able to read and understand it, and equally certain that they are to be tried and acquitted or condemned by the letter of the law therein contained. True conversion and union with Christ and the Holy Scriptures, place the Christian in the whole armor of God, and enable him to stand and to contend against the wiles of the devil. Now, it requires only the observation of a child, to detect the influence of false doctrines on the mind. It withdraws a man's reverence from the Bible; it fills him with doubts concerning the authority of that holy book, and sinks God's word written, below the supposed word of God conveyed by oral tradition. This is the first step, and this is the most fatal step in apostacy. Once remove a *house* from a good foundation, and in time you shall see its ruin; once remove wholesome food from men, and in time you will see disease and death. "The Bible," said one of the greatest minds of which we have read, "has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth,

without any mixture of error, for its matter. Study it, especially the New Testament." The Bereans were more noble than the Thessalonians, because they searched the Scriptures daily.

Now, some difficulties may be started on this subject, which it may not be easy for us to remove, at least by a few words.

A too rigid adherence to the letter of the Bible by men who are really ignorant of that book as a literary composition, or who neglect to make it their study,—the field in which they dig, as we dig for hid treasures—may be accompanied by evils. But these are such evils as remedy themselves; a little more study of the Bible, a little more experience of the power of Divine grace, and a wider observation of the world can easily correct these evils. But once let your hold on the Bible as the rule of faith; once abandon the Bible as the balance in which every doctrine is to be weighed; once yield up your individual right to try every doctrine, and practice by that infallible standard, and you are gone! Habit may keep you for a while in a pure and Protestant Church, many considerations may induce you to remain an uneasy and dissatisfied member. If a clergyman, your family and friends may detain you, or you may not possess the moral courage to carry out your views in a Protestant community. But you

have sold your faith—you have sold your hope—you have sold your great spiritual birth-right, like Esau, for a mess of pottage.

I have only time now to add one qualifying remark. When we teach the doctrine that the Bible is the rule of faith; that is, that every Christian has a right to go to the Bible, and to try every doctrine by that—we mean exclusively for himself. We do not teach that an assembly of unlearned persons, although spiritual Christians, are capable of defending the church against learned infidels and heretics, nor that such men could write commentaries on the sacred text. But we do mean, that every converted man who can read, and understand what he reads, and who does read carefully the Bible, and who prays for assistance from the Holy Spirit, we mean that such a man is able to acquire all the knowledge necessary for his salvation out of the Bible—can learn all that he will be expected by his Maker to know and believe, to his soul's health. Nor do I hesitate to affirm, that an assembly composed of such plain persons, converted, spiritual Christian minds, taking into consideration the great doctrines of grace and the great duties of life, would be safer guides to others, than a council of learned and unconverted ecclesiastics—however high in position they may be.

“It were to be wished,” says Bishop Horsely, “that no Bibles were printed without references.” Particular diligence should be used in comparing the parallel texts of the Old and New Testaments.

“It is incredible,” he adds, “to any one who has not made the experiment, what a proficiency may be made in that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation, by studying the Scriptures in this manner, without any other commentary or exposition than what the different parts of the sacred volume mutually furnish for each other.

“Let the most illiterate Christian study them in this manner, and let him never cease to pray for the illumination of that Spirit by which these books were dictated: and the whole compass of abstruse philosophy and recondite history, shall furnish no argument with which the perverse will of man shall be able to shake this learned Christian’s faith.”

Two general reflections upon what has been said, will conclude this introductory discourse.

It is painful to observe, that while we boast of the Bible as our great rule of faith, we give to its perusal so small a portion of our time. Nothing can be more unreasonable than to expect the Bible to keep the mind pure from heresies, while yet the Bible is not read, is not studied, and studied with a direct reference to doctrinal as well as

practical errors, for such now abound, and always have abounded. It may be Utopian to expect that all mankind will become readers, or that uneducated men in the church will acquire literary tastes and habits. But all men who have sought admission into the school of Christ—all who have in sincerity professed the Christian religion, have been furnished with this volume for their study; and, as the days of miracles have ceased, have been shut up to this oracle for wisdom. So that whenever the question arises in the mind—what am I to believe on such a subject, or what am I to do in such an emergency?—the finger of God points to the Bible, and the Spirit of God whispers, “to the law and to the testimony.”

But the Bible, say objectors, “is a library,” it cannot be read through to solve our difficulties. The reply is, that no true and tried Christian can prayerfully read through one book of the Bible—the book of Proverbs—without meeting with a solution to most practical perplexities; nor peruse the Apostolical Epistles without obtaining light upon almost any doctrinal difficulty. Now, my brethren, if we would have the Bible our rule of faith, we must read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it. We must not merely peruse a small portion of it at morning and evening prayers, but we must make it the man of our council.

Would we be armed against the errors of the times, we must change greatly our present habits. Books of fiction and works of mere human invention, must be abandoned for the solid and solemn instruction of God's holy word. We must resolve to find in that great mine the pure ore of God's truth. We must dig therein as for hid treasures. We must ask for divine assistance; and we must, from out of that volume, be ready to give an answer to every man that asks us, a reason for the hope that is in us.

If, happily for ourselves, and perhaps for other precious immortal souls, we should thus be rooted and grounded in the truth, we shall remain unshaken in mind and heart, even though the whole Church around us, should, as it did in the days of Elijah, apostatize to Baal; and from out of some cavern or secure retreat we shall see the stately movings of God's providence, and hear the still small voice of his Spirit bringing comfort and support to our souls. A man once fortified and entrenched in that great citadel, shall remain unshaken, though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the depths of the sea. He, though a simple and humble Christian, shall remain safe and quiet in a pure faith, while men of vast attainments and brilliant talents, relying upon something short of the truth of God,

shall be carried away and swallowed up in false and fatal delusions.

But the most melancholy deficiency of the present day is the paucity of true spiritual piety. If we are to call no man master upon earth; if, indeed, we have no other master but Jesus Christ; if we are to say, one is *my Master*, even Christ, then is there a service of a most religious and spiritual nature. Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world." We have yet to cultivate with far greater assiduity than we have, the graces of the Holy Spirit. We cannot serve God and Mammon. It is true that Christ's service is not intolerable; Christ is not a hard master. His yoke is easy and his burden light. Still a holy, undefiled, self-denying, charitable life, is that which is set before us. "We are not our own," but we have enlisted under the banner of the Cross, and we must disentangle ourselves from the service of men. True spiritual, inward piety must be cultivated in the heart. The religion of the family, and the religion of the closet must be pure and simple, fervent and exemplary. It will not be enough for us to call Christ *Master* and Lord; we must do what he has commanded. We must cause men to see that we have been with Jesus, and compel them to say that God is with us of a truth. O for a single eye to the glory of God! O for a

heart fixed on Christ! O for singleness of purpose, the ability to say, "One thing I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life!" Where is this piety? Where are the cross bearers? Where is the self-denial of Protestants? This has been the inquiry of some whose corruption of doctrine has given cause for the rebuke of our Lord. One is your master, even Christ.

Out of the Church of England many have doubtless departed, because of the laxity of life and morals among both clergy and laity. Out of our own Protestant Episcopal Church no man need retire. Here his piety may shine as the sun. Here in the wise and ample provision of the Church his soul may be sanctified, and he made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and here, if in no other Protestant Church, he will be sure of hearing large portions of God's Word read, expounded and enforced. And now that we may be all preserved pure and blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, God in his infinite mercy, grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE END.

PUBLISHED BY

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