

A SERMON:

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"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits." Matthew vii. 15, 16.

In the time of the judges Israel was sorely distressed by the Midianites seven years. After waiting until the Israelites had sown their land and the harvest was ready to be gathered they would sweep down and carry off the fruits of all their toil. They were a nation of robbers. We would not expect to see any nowadays carrying on such a nefarious trade, and yet there are spiritual Midianites who have not honest principle enough to take up and cultivate ground for themselves but must reap where other men have sown and laboured. What would men say to a thief who, going into his neighbor's house or store did not satisfy himself with taking what pleased him, but abused the owner for not casting away what he did not admire? Gideon was raised up to deliver Israel from the yoke of Midian, and we take the field against the spiritual Midianites with the old battle cry: "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Among the many "ragabond exorcists," or religious Midianites, none are more unscrupulous than those whose teaching and conduct I profess to examine. I feel happy in looking at this matter as I am confident that all that is needed to prove the unscripturalness of much of their teaching is a quiet reference to God's word. A plain and simple argument is all that is required, and if that can be found in Scripture our opponents cannot object, as they profess to base their theories upon that. "To the Law," then, and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

This strictest of the sect is but of recent origin. As evidence that I have no desire to say anything unfair of them let us glance at their origin, and at some of their avowed principles. In the year 1812, Alexander Campbell left the Presbyterian church, and was immersed. He then joined the Redstone Baptist association; from which he separated at the end of ten years. Because his new fangled notions were not entertained he went over to the Mahoning Association of Ohio. This was the beginning of the sect of Campbellites. They call themselves "Disciples" or "Christians;" but that they do not adhere to the teaching of Christ, I shall endeavour to prove.

They started with the idea that there were no Christians in other churches. Think of that will you. For over eighteen centuries the just and holy God had allowed men to live and die, in at least partial darkness, ignorance and sin: that the mass of professing Christians were all astray until the year 1823, when restoration of the original gospel and original things began to be advocated by Alexander Campbell, Luther and Calvin; Arminius and Knox; the British Reformers, the Pilgrim Fathers, Whitfield and Wesley, were all going the wrong way, and leading others astray. Perhaps you think I am using language too strong, that these Campbellites do not think others wrong. They shall speak for themselves. "They regard all sects and parties of the Christian world as having in greater or lesser degree departed from the simplicity of faith and manners of the first Christians." Am I wrong in saying that they teach that other churches are unchristian? Perhaps you fancy their opinions have changed. Not at all. If you doubt this I refer you to a published report of a discussion between Mr. Blunes of the Christian church and Mr. Archibald of the Presbyterian church. They don't regard any man a Christian till immersed. We are commanded to "try the spirits whether they are of God," and as these men reject the name Campbellites, and claim to be Disciples of Christ I propose to examine this claim.

I adduce the spirit manifested by them as evidence that they are not disciples of Christ. According to Webster a disciple is one who receives or professes to receive instruction from another; a scholar; a pupil; as the disciples of Plato. Accepting this definition, we see that to know the spirit and teaching of the master is to know the teaching and spirit of his disciples, or vice versa. Thus if you know the doctrines of Plato you know what the Platonists believe, or to take a more familiar illustration: if you know what Alex. Campbell taught you know what the Campbellites teach. But I assert you cannot obtain a correct idea of the spirit and teaching of Christ from the spirit of these so-called disciples. Do not take my word for it, but examine the Saviour's character as set forth by inspiration. Isaiah, speaking of the promised Messiah says: "Behold my servant whom I uphold: mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." This spirit of gentleness was ever manifested by Jesus. He could say, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart;" but these disciples manifest anything but "a meek and quiet spirit." Their spirit is that of the Pharisees, they separate themselves, and in effect say, "Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou. I have been put under the water by the hands of a disciple."

Our Blessed Lord never caused discussion among his followers. He was lamb-like and patient; but who does not know that from the very rise of this sect its advent into any place has been the signal for discord and religious strife. How peaceably you dwell together here until these disturbers appeared. In this respect they prove themselves disciples of Campbell and not of Christ. After doing their utmost to draw away members from other churches, and unsettle and divide, they profess a desire for peace. That is just like the wolf. Going into a flock it will satisfy itself and then lie down with the lamb inside of it. Point me to the place where Jesus boasted of what he had done.

After stilling the tempest, He did not go into the streets of Jerusalem and publish the fact. When he cast out the legion of devils, He did not insert the miracle in the journals of the day. No. It remained for his disciples after disturbing a community, to boast that they had done a great work. In his intercessory prayer Jesus said, "I have glorified thee on the earth," and if these Campbellites had been his disciples they would not have gone to the Western Chronicle to inform the world what great men they were, but would have said, "Not unto us O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."

If these are the disciples of Christ how much they differ from others they will agree among themselves and all teach the same things. We have a right to expect this from their high pretensions. Their professed aim is to restore primitive simplicity. In the Acts we read that the early Christians "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine;" teaching; but these Campbellites do not. If they do not agree, then some are wrong, but they rob themselves of any excuse, all their members have been immersed, and therefore according to them, regenerated. They teach that those who have departed from primitive simplicity, are not Christians; they themselves have so departed; therefore they are not Christians. This is their own argument.

II. Let us examine their teaching in reference to the personality and Deity of the Holy Ghost. No doctrine of Scripture is of greater importance than that of the Holy Trinity. The Bible teaches most plainly that in the unity of the Godhead there are three divine persons. The book that teaches us to denounce, to abhor, and flee from idolatry, cannot inculcate idolatry. It cannot threaten the heaviest penalties against those who multiply gods, and then claim our faith and worship for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, unless these then are one in substance, power, and eternity. We must renounce our reason or accept our creed. We are shut up to the faith. The catholic faith is this, "that we worship our God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal." These Campbellites accept the truth as to the Father and the Son, but deny the proper personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost. They teach that apart from the word there is no Holy Ghost, and that to offer divine worship to Him is idolatry. In directing your attention to this part of our subject, let us inquire first—What is a person? "A person is one who possesses personal properties. But what are personal properties? Such as indicate the possession of mind or intelligence. A person is an intelligent agent. That which contrives, which can design, must be a person. These qualities constitute personality; for they imply consciousness and thought." If we prove from Scripture that the Holy Spirit possesses these qualities, His personality will be beyond doubt.

1. In proof of the Spirit's personality, I remark that present qualities are ascribed to Him. Active intelligence, as we have just seen, is a prime personal quality, but this appertains to the Holy Ghost. "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." "Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the spirit which is of God that we might know the things that are fully given to us of God." "For the Spirit searcheth all things even the deep things of God."

Volition is another personal quality possessed by the Holy Spirit. "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will." "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than those necessary things."

Capabilities which can properly belong only to a person are assigned to the Holy Ghost. Thus he is said to be resisted. "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did so do ye." "To be vexed and grieved." "They rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit." "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." "To be blasphemed against." "The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." "Whoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him." "To be led to." "Ananias why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost?" "To be tempted." "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" And other such like things of which a person only can be capable. If this were our only argument it would be unanswerable, but we will proceed to show that personal acts are ascribed to the Holy Ghost. He hears and receives. "Whatsoever He the Spirit of truth shall hear, that shall he speak." "He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you."

He calls and sends forth messengers. "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me, Barnabas, and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." "So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost departed unto Seleucia." He forbids. "They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." "They assayed to go into Bithynia but the Spirit suffered them not."

He convicts, seals, sanctifies. "He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." "Ye are sanctified by the spirit of our God." Surely here is sufficient to convince the most sceptical. Let us now proceed to examine the teaching of Scripture respecting the divinity of the Holy Ghost.

I call your attention first to the fact that divine names are ascribed to him. He is called God. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost?"

Thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God." "Know ye not that ye are the temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" When the Spirit of God dwelleth in us he makes us the temples of God: He must therefore be God. The body of Christians is the temple of God, according to the text just quoted; but it is in the same sense the temple of the Holy Ghost; therefore the Holy Ghost is God. Christian believers are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Call to mind our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus. He three times uses the phrase, "Come of the Spirit," a phrase which, in that exact form, occurs nowhere else. But St. John, who records that conversation, when speaking of the very same change, uses the phrase "born of God," and that frequently; therefore, to be born of the Spirit is to be born of God; the Spirit is God.

The Spirit is called Jehovah. "Mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of Hosts. And He said, Go, and tell this people. Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not." St. Paul, referring to this passage, says: "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers."

And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted Jehovah, saying, "Is Jehovah among us or not?" The Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, where your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years." The Holy Ghost, then, is Jehovah, whom the Israelites provoked and tempted, and who swore in his wrath, "They shall not enter into my rest."

Divine perfections are also ascribed to the spirit. He is omniscient. "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?" This is both a declaration of omniscience and a challenge in its defence; and a part of it is quoted by Saint Paul, when speaking of the glorious perfections of the Most High, it is therefore justly regarded as another proof of the Spirit's proper Deity.

He is omnipresent. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?" etc. As He helps the infirmities of God's people; dwells in them; leads them; He must be intimately present with them all, which he would not be if He were not omnipresent.

He is the author of miraculous agency. When St. Paul gives us a remarkable enumeration of the Holy Spirit's manifestations, among which he places "working miracles," he adds: "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit." Jesus said to his disciples: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." The Apostle also speaks of mighty signs and wonders wrought by the power of the Spirit of God.

That he is also eternal and immutable is shown by all the testimonies of His preexistence, as before the flood and before the creation; and it is expressly declared, when St. Paul says that "Christ, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God."

Divine works are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. He is the Creator. "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." "By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens, made and all the rest of them by the breath, as Spirit of His mouth." Job said, "The Spirit of the Lord hath made me and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life."

Providence, as it causes things to fade and re flourish, is ascribed to Him. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." "Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created and then renewest the face of the earth."

Agency in the transactions of man's redemption are ascribed to him. As the miraculous conception of Jesus. His descent on the Saviour at His baptism, in consequence of which He was full of the Holy Ghost, and returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. His agency is seen in the miracles of Jesus, for "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." Jesus cast out devils by the Spirit of God. He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

He works in the heart of man as the spirit of conviction, adoption, regeneration, and sanctification. The impressive majesty of the Holy Ghost is asserted by the Scriptures attaching the deepest malignity to any committed against Him. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was against the Holy Ghost. "A nebulosity of hypocrisy against the truth and sincerity He dictated—pride against the humility He taught—and covetousness against the glowing benevolence He inspired." So heinous was the crime that the guilty persons were struck dead upon the spot. Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is still more awful. It is a sin never to be forgiven either in this world or that which is to come. "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." What is the sin here intended? Will the professing Campbellite doctrine tell us? Oh! I tremble lest your sins become unpardonable.

The Pharisees said Jesus cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils. They sinned by maliciously denying the dignity and power of the Holy Ghost as manifested in these wonderful works. In view of this who dares charge me with blasphemy and idolatry because I invoke the presence and aid of the Holy Ghost. But the question which bears directly on our argument is this. "Why should blasphemy against the Holy Ghost be unpardonable? Can it be because He is a creature, an attribute or a figure of speech? Such a notion is as impious as it is absurd. If

the possibility of sinning against him proves his personality, the supremely aggravated nature of this sin proves his supreme Divinity." "Sin we are told, "is the transgression of the law," and therefore sin against the Holy Ghost must be transgression of his law. Nothing can more plainly declare the Godhead of the Holy Ghost, or solemnly and loudly admonish the captious unbeliever of his dangerous position. If this be the true doctrine respecting the Holy Ghost, and you see I have simply given you the naked statements of Scripture; what shall we say for that teaching which dishonors the Blessed Spirit? Who would be the man to stand here and say it is idolatry to render divine worship to the Holy Ghost? Beloved friends if any of you have been beguiled by cunning men, let me urge you at once to flee to God for pardon; seek the grace and power of the Spirit to renew your hearts. Escape from the precipice on which you are standing lest you stumble into hell.

The teaching of the Campbellites contradicts this plain statement of the Scripture, and is involved in much absurdity. We have already proved the Spirit operates everywhere. There is not a spot or point in space where He does not exert His all sustaining power. Even those who deny his supreme Divinity are indebted to Him for power to move hand or tongue. "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, &c.?" But the "Disciples" say outside the book there is no Spirit. "The Word is the Spirit. Now shall we believe God or man? It cannot be denied that there are large portions of the world without the Bible; but if Campbellism be true it follows that these countries are also without the Spirit of God. By what power are these places sustained? To whom are these peoples indebted for their balmy springs and fruitful autumns? Does the devil reign there? If they tell me God the Father works there, upon them rests the onus of proving that the Father works without the Spirit.

This theory is as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural. By denying to the Spirit an existence separate from the word, they confound the Author with his work. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." But we are now informed that the Holy Spirit inspired men to write Himself. Do we really find the Spirit in the paper and types of our Bibles? When I take up Shakespeare works, I take up Shakespeare himself, do I? The Scripture is as truly a product of the Divine mind, as "Macbeth" is a product of Shakespeare's mind; but the mind and the product are not identical. To say the word is the Spirit is about as reasonable as to say that a saw mill is the man who built it, and not the product of his hand and brain.

Again this theory robs believers of comfort and takes from the divine promises. God says, "I will pour my Spirit upon thee." "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" If I am told these promises were given to inspired men, I refer to Paul's words to the Romans, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption." If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." To the Ephesian converts St. Paul said, "Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise;" and to the Galatians, "Because ye are sons of God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." The Spirit is Divine or He is not. If He is Divine I am justified in offering to Him divine worship, and invoking His presence and aid, and no one has a right to charge me with idolatry for so doing.

III. What is the Campbellite theory of regeneration? They teach that the Holy Spirit is promised only to those who believe and obey the Saviour. No one is to expect the reception of the spirit till he obeys the gospel by being immersed. Thus while they proclaim faith and repentance and a change of heart, it is only as preparatory to immersion. Here I would ask if no unregenerate man has the Spirit of God by what power is he enabled to repent and believe? How is he made conscious of sin? Can he realize of himself these precious dispositions necessary to a new life? God has promised the Spirit to remove the worst of sin. He has said "My Spirit shall not always strive with man;" and we are exhorted not to quench the Spirit, all when prove that the Spirit is given before a man is regenerate. Repentance and faith are, moreover, declared to be "the gifts of God."

These Campbellites teach that baptism is designed to introduce the subjects of it into the participation of the blessings of the death and resurrection of Christ. Examining these statements thoroughly, if baptism by immersion introduced its subjects into the participation of the blessings of Christ, then as a natural consequence all who are not immersed are ignorant of Christ and destitute of His saving grace. Perhaps you think I am not representing them fairly and so they shall speak for themselves. "Therefore none but those who have first believed in Christ and repented of their sins, and that have been intelligently immersed into His death have the full and explicit testimony of God assuring them of pardon." Listen attentively all ye who have not been immersed! You are by these charitable nineteenth century disciples handed over to the devil. You were all deluded when with deep contrition and penitence you cast your souls on Christ and thought that God the Divine Father accepted you. You are now informed that the Spirit of God never bore witness to your adoption. According to these latest teachers none can be regenerate without immersion. One of their number says, "In reference to regeneration the Disciples teach that an individual is enabled to enjoy the life of God when immersed into Christ. Baptism succeeding faith and repentance consummates regeneration. Penitent believers are born children of God by baptism

—that salvation is connected with baptism—that remission of sins is to be enjoyed by baptism—that persons having previously believed and repented wash away their sins in baptism—that believers put on Christ when baptized—that we are saved by baptism—and that the answer of a good conscience is obtained in baptism."

In connection with this theory of baptismal regeneration, I remark that it is inconsistent with other statements which they have made. They say, "We had not, at first, and we have not now, a favorite opinion or speculation, which we would offer as a substitute for any human creed or constitution in Christendom." To one who has listened to the pulpit utterances and private discussions of so-called disciples on water baptism, such words mean simply nothing. It is a bare-faced falsehood to say they have not a favourite opinion or speculation." What is baptismal regeneration, as taught by them, but a favourite speculation? Are they not doing every thing in their power to get all Christendom to relinquish its creeds and accept this favorite dogma of theirs? Why do they preach so much water? This is their element. In water they live, move, and have their being. If they get a man into the water, he is regarded by them as safe and regenerate. Taking their own utterances as evidence, I convict them of falsehood. They either do not believe in baptism as a saving ordinance, or they do; if they do not, why do they unchristianize us? If they do, how can they say they have no favourite opinion?

This theory of regeneration is opposed by the teaching and facts of Scripture. The Scriptures uniformly represent the Holy Ghost as the efficient cause in regeneration. That Divine Being who, in the beginning, moved upon the chaotic mass, transforming it to life and beauty, is the agent in the sinner's renovation, beginning, carrying forward, and completing the work of grace. It is the Holy Spirit that convicts him of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. When born again, it is of, or by, the Spirit. His renewing is of the Holy Ghost. But this ceremonialism which presents itself under the patronage of Campbellism impugns the reality of the spiritual change and the proper agent to which it is ascribed, assigning to the rite of immersion that efficacy which the Scriptures attribute to the Holy Spirit. It is well for mankind and the cause of Christian holiness that such doctrines are not taught in Scripture. Let us examine the principal texts upon which this theory is based. The first is John 3: 5, when our Lord declares, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." That our Lord did not in these words speak merely of the ceremony of baptism is evident from the fact that he distinctly and expressly speaks of the Spirit. Had the Saviour intended merely an external ceremony, there would have been no occasion for the surprise of Nicodemus, or for his inquiry, "How can these things be?" for, as a Jew, with forms and ceremonies, with sprinkling and ablutions, he was already familiar. There was a depth and spirituality in our Lord's words which the carnal mind of Nicodemus did not perceive. An external baptism he fully understood, but if our Lord referred to a divine and spiritual change, as doubtless he did, there is no wonder that he should not comprehend him. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." It is not this carnality of heart which induces these disciples to contend so earnestly for the efficacy of external ceremonies?

Though water is mentioned here, it seems to be figuratively: as the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace. Nor is this at all inconsistent with the usual style of the sacred writers. "On the contrary, nothing is more common than for the inspired writers to employ, first a figure, and then, in the same sentence to introduce, exoterically, the object itself; or vice versa, first to mention the object itself, and then, in the same sentence, to introduce a striking figure of the same; yet no one in such cases, supposes that two divine subjects are intended." We have an instance of this in Matt. 2: 2, when John, speaking of Christ, says: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Surely he does not mean that the Saviour should give all his disciples two baptisms, one literally of fire, and another of the Holy Ghost? No one can entertain such a notion. What, then, is intended? All must see at once that the one gift of the Holy Ghost is intended, of which fire is a striking image representing His enlightening and purifying influences. When God said to Israel, "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doing," but one duty was enjoined, that of ceasing from sin. In the first clause of this sentence this duty is represented figuratively, and in the second literally. These passages explain the meaning of our Lord, when he speaks of our being born of water and of the Spirit; the former is the emblem of the latter. What water does for the body, the Holy Spirit does for the soul—cleanses and purifies it. Thus we see this passage affords us support for the theory of the disciples.

The other text upon which they lean is Titus 3: 5. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Though this passage is pressed into the service of these Campbellites, it affords them no support. The principle of interpretation applied to John 3: 5, is just as applicable here. This, in fact, another instance of the custom we have referred to; the custom of giving in the same sense a figurative and a literal representation of the same subject. "There is but one subject here—namely, the great spiritual change experienced by every true believer. It is first spoken of figuratively, as regeneration, then literally, as renewing. This change is first ascribed figuratively to a washing, or to the laver; then literally to the Holy Ghost. Thus the second member of the sentence