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"IF I FORGOT THEE, O JERUSALEM! LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET ITS CUNNING."—*Ps.* 137. v. 5.

Sermon,

By the Rev. Simon McGregor, A. M., East River, Pictou.

"I am the light of the world."—*JOHN VIII. 12.*

Nothing presents a more sublime and solemn spectacle than a human soul striving to unravel the mysteries of its being, and discover the object and end of its existence. And without the aid of revelation, the spectacle is one of the saddest and most painfully melancholy which can possibly engage attention. As we gaze upon such a scene, we see the chained giant conscious of innate strength struggling with fetters which he cannot break, until, at length, wearied with his unavailing efforts, he sinks back spiritless and exhausted. Or it reminds us of the caged eagle gazing heavenward with a wistful eye. Knowing instinctively that his native region lies beyond the dark rolling clouds—in a more bright and sunny atmosphere; but ever as he expands the wing for a rapid and joyous flight thither, he is reminded of his captivity by the obstructing walls of his narrow prison-house. Yet such are the scenes with which heathendom abounds, which have been and may still be witnessed in every land where the declaration of my text has been unknown or disregarded. The cry which in every age has arisen heavenward—bursting forth from the bewildered traveler—rising upwards from the hearts of disappointed philosophers, weary of their speculations and conscious of failure, has been for light. It has come from the hoary sage who had tried every system of life and action, promising, as a reward to its votary, mental happiness, rest and peace. It

has come to our ears wafted down through the long vista of ages—borne downwards with the groans of myriads of human spirits tossing in the uncertainty of doubt, starting backwards with horror from a dark unknown futurity, recoiling with blank dismay from a supposed annihilation. It breaks upon the ear with an intensified meaning when it is the utterance of those higher spirits whose clearer reason and deeper instinct pointed unmistakably to immortality, but who could not soar beyond or overthrow those high adamantine walls which veiled futurity from their gaze. Yet never, in the whole course of history, was this cry more universal, or uttered with greater fervency, than at the time when the sublime words of my text first sounded in the ear of humanity: "I am the light of the world." Systems of philosophy had constituted themselves the guides of humanity towards the good, the beautiful and the true, but the human spirit could find no resting-place in the wide field of their speculations, and, like the dove sent forth from the ark, returned on weary wing to the original starting point. Another and yet another attempt followed, but with no better result; the voice even of the heathen oracle was no longer heard with unhesitating belief—universal scepticism began to settle down on the whole face of creation—and man to find his rest on the helplessness of despair. Oh! how joyous the words of my text would at such a moment have sounded in the ears of the world, were mankind really to believe that the Divine Teacher had come!—a Teacher capable of pointing out the way to true happiness and peace. Yet how strange must