

are in themselves the most dangerous, and that to them the lesson of the text is expressly directed.

In the word of the Lord we find the warning, and address it affectionately to every reader—Beware of blaming any Christian for the supposed excess of his devotional ardour, because it glows more warmly than your own. We have no right to compress within our approved moulds the bursting emotions of a soul that is bought with a price, and “weary with holding in.” It may be quite true that we feel a jar,—that the words and ways of that young and eager convert are not in harmony with our judgment and our taste; but to say the least, it may admit of question whether the cause of the incongruity be that he is above or that we are below the standard of zeal proper to the redeemed of the Lord. Whenever any extravagance occurs in the name of religious fervour, by all means let sober Christians gently reprove or firmly repress it. In a time of great and miscellaneous development of religious forces like the present, it is lawful, perhaps we should say expedient, to watch carefully, not only deeds and doctrines, but the times, measures, and forms of expressed devotion; but much depends on the attitude of the watcher. If he lie in wait for errors in the path of his neighbor, he will probably mark as vices some things which are already marked as virtues in the Master’s book. If hopeful and liberal, he rejoices in the good that is doing, and faithfully rebukes the evil that may occasionally mingle with it, he will serve his generation well. The times are not stagnant; a broad stream of blessing is flowing through the Church. We do not affirm that its whole volume is absolutely pure; but the dry chaff and withered leaves that here and there float upon its bosom disfigure its surface rather than pollute its mass. Rash and short-sighted are those who, at first sight of these excrescences, rush into the river’s bed and strive to stop it bodily.

We do not deny the existence of spiritual excesses in the church, but we believe that, in this country at least, for one who transgresses the rules of propriety in the manifestation of the zeal for Christ, ten lie freezing below zero in the spiritual thermometer. For one simple Mary, with her heart melt-

ing and overflowing into abnormal and lavish devotion, there are twelve disciples, not to mention traitors who are more notable for maintaining the conventional properties of earth, than for catching the fire of heaven.

In this case, true disciples were found sneering at an expression of devotion which their Master appreciated and approved. What happened in those ancient times may happen again in ours. We must be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, lest we should be found loathing what the Lord loves. It was the interested, dishonest Judas that led the eleven on that occasion into an error of judgment. Evil communications corrupt good manners. Sometimes one who is not the spirit of Christ at all, obtains a place and influence among Christians which he does not deserve. It is the wiles like these that the adversary obtains an advantage over us. The Lord on one occasion, addressing Peter, said, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” That was full of warning. Peter at that time was a true disciple. His heart trusted in the Saviour, and his name was written in the book of life. This case shows that the tempter succeeds in partially perverting the judgment, even after the heart has conclusively submitted to another Lord. Genuine Christians caught and carried away at the time by the spirit of the world, do more harm than the profane. Judas desires to put down Mary’s ardour, a piece of mischievous fanaticism; but he will succeed better in his object if he can persuade simpler and better men to adopt his cry. Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Justly righteous judgment.

Perhaps the multitude may shout their hosannas more loudly than melodiously; perhaps the children may cast their palm-branches. Christ’s path with more energy than discretion. What then? If the cry be a hosanna to the Son of David, and those branches be true emblems of his victory, he who looketh on the heart receives and loves the offering. Let us beware lest we should condemn what our Master approved. We saw Mary’s ardent offering, and the mistake of the twelve regarding it, and the Lord’s decision on the case, all before me, I must be very sure of my ground ere I venture to denounce as waste