

about these matters? Or, do we not rather take a vastly livelier interest in the fact that we are called by one name or other of the many diversified sects that prevail in what we term the Christian world?

To bring the question to a practical issue, let me suppose a case. Within the last ten days, a vessel that had only a few hours before left our harbor, returned, not because she had encountered a tempest, and was dismasted, nor because she had sprung a leak; nor because she had proved to be in any respect unseaworthy. No, for a sadder reason—for one of an entirely different order. A murder had been committed on board of that vessel—a murder, if we speak of degrees in such a crime, of a character peculiarly atrocious and shocking. And now there lie in our prison three men awaiting their trial for this dastardly crime—destined, if proved to be guilty, to be put to the poorest use to which human beings can be put—to die the death justly incurred by their fiendish cruelty.

Now, we claim to be a Christian people. The vessel referred to sailed from a port of a Christian country. Its sailors had been living in the midst of a professedly Christian community. They left our shores prepared for the crime of which they were guilty by the habits which they had formed, and the appetites which they could indulge—for indulgence in which, provision was made, exists, is tolerated, sanctioned, legalized in our streets. Brethren, that crime was virtually committed in our streets. We are, all of us, in measure greater or less, answerable for its commission. That blood—of a foreigner—a stranger—is in a manner on us—cries out for our condemnation as well as for that of the wretched men directly implicated. For clearly, such things ought not to be,—ought not to be possible. It ought not to be possible that a ship should leave our harbor—we being, as I have said, professedly a Christian people—with its crew in a condition, from the habits permissible to them among us, which justifies us in calling that ship a floating hell.

Now, suppose that we attempted to start a church, or organize a congregation, of which, more than any particular

scheme of transcendental doctrine, this should be the distinctive peculiarity; that we should resolve, God helping us, to put down those accursed habits and that accursed traffic, in connection with which such a crime became possible; that we should care for our seamen, protect their sobriety, defend to the utmost of our ability against the harpies that prey upon them ashore, and send them aloft in the condition of demons; that we should aim at delivering our city from sources of crime on which only too many get rich—rich at the price of their brother's blood; that we should not cease our efforts until these habits and this traffic became utterly, absolutely, in all forms and shapes, from the highest to the lowest, disreputable—till all engaged in them should slink out of sight, not daring to flaunt the proofs of their blood-bought gains before the public eye—and till, as a consequence, the strong arm of the law, instead of shielding and legalizing these habits and this traffic, should devote its energies, backed by the healthy public opinion thus created to their total suppression. Suppose this. Would such a church prosper? Could it be established? Nothing can be clearer than the evils referred to, and the manifold others of a kindred character to which time will not now permit reference, are the real foes of Christ and Christianity; these, not the holders of different views from ours about abstract doctrines, and forms of worship, and modes of church government, and all the paraphernalia of ceremony and rite, absurd though many of these be; these, not such as claim, in their silly conceit (as was lately done, we are told, in this community), to be the one true Church, in comparison with whom all others can expect, at utmost, only uncovenanted mercies,—such views, if they please any, let them hold them. They hurt nobody but the holders. Our worst, our real foes are the demons of vicious tendency and appetite and passion, that rage in our fleshy natures and war against the law of the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet, Churches exist and flourish, by virtue of some wretched crotchet or other of doctrinal or ritual peculiarity. Where, brethren, where in all Christendom is the Church that takes its stand upon