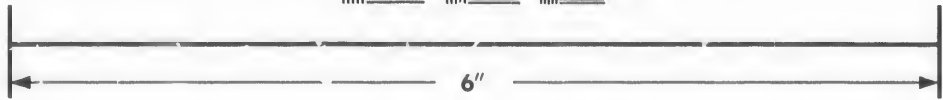
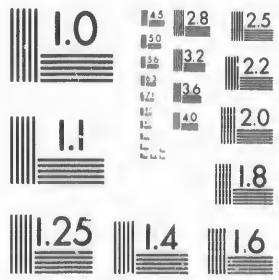


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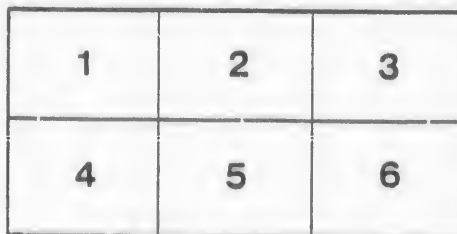
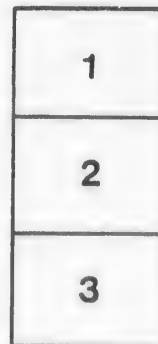
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A
S E R M O N,
PREACHED AT
S I S S A B O O,
NOW CALLED
W E Y M O U T H,
IN
NOVA-SCOTIA,

On the 15th October, 1797.

BY ROGER VIETS,
RECTOR OF DIGBY, AND MISSIONARY FROM
THE VENERABLE SOCIETY FOR THE
PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL
IN FOREIGN PARTS.

SAINT JOHN:
PRINTED BY JOHN RYAN, FOR THE AUTHOR.
— 1 7 9 9. —

TO
The Worthy Inhabitants
of
SISSABOO, or WEYMOUTH,
THIS SERMON,
With the Sincere Friendship,
The liveliest Gratitude,
The highest Esteem,
and
The most cordial Affection;
is
DEDICATED,
by
Their most obliged,
and
Most Obedient Servant,
THE AUTHOR.

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II. Corinthians, 5. 20.

WE are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us : We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

We find the Apostle, in this part of his Epistle, earnestly labouring to reconcile men to God through Jesus Christ, by faith, repentance, and new obedience.

He tells them in the 17th verse: *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away ; behold all things are become new.*

If any person has come into the service of Christ, and has become his true disciple, he is so changed, from what he formerly was, whilst un-

der the dominion of Sin, that he may be called *a new creature*: His desires and propensities are essentially altered.*

And in the 18th verse he tells them *all things are of God*. This good work, this happy change is wholly to be ascribed to the power of God, *who hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us, the Apostles and Ministers of his word and sacraments, the important office of inviting and persuading men to become new creatures, and to be reconciled to God; for which reason our function is called the Ministry of Reconciliation,*

God hath appointed us his ambassadors; that we might, in his name, sign, seal and deliver to sincere penitents, full and free pardon of sin; absolution from the curses of the law.

In the 19th verse he speaks very plain. That the power of God works in the reconciling office of Christ, bringing men into an obedience to God's commands, and that their sins may not rise up in judgment against them. He repeats; that the Apostles and Ministers are appointed to declare and proclaim this truth. He says that *God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

Then come the words of our text, signifying that as the messengers of God, in the name, and by the authority of God, and his son Christ, we

beseech you in behalf of our Saviour, that ye would be reconciled to the service of God, and to the gospel conditions of eternal salvation.

The proposal we make to sinners, is plain, simple, and easy to be understood: 'Tis whether they will flee from the wrath to come and lay hold on the hope set before them; or go on in their sins, and suffer eternal misery?

Can any rational creature doubt, whether light is better than darkness? whether life is better than death? Can there be any scruple which is best, happiness or misery? pleasure or pain? heaven or hell? which is preferable, spiritual wisdom or the madness of folly? good or evil? the reasonable, honourable service of God, or the mean, degrading slavery of Sin and Satan?

When life and death, happiness and misery are set before us, it would seem at first view that the determination is very easy, that a choice could soon be made. But the stratagems of Satan are so captivating, and the nature of sin has such unaccountable charms, that men are held by something like enchantment; they seem to have no power to leave their course of wickedness and come into a gospel obedience. But still the grace of God is able to dissolve the fatal charm, and rescue them from the power of the adversary. This grace is constantly offered to us, and our sincere, vigorous endeavour is the only thing wanting to raise us from sin to holiness, from death to life.

When our interest is at stake, it is the part of wisdom, it is the part of prudence, it is the part of common sense, to exert ourselves to secure that interest. And the greater the interest at stake is, the more vigorously should we exert ourselves. No interest can be greater than the interest of our souls for eternity. Then what prevents our utmost exertions in this greatest of all concerns? in this weightiest of all affairs? Shall we give attention to the business, the pleasures, the trifles and the amusements of this transitory fleeting state, and disregard the business of our souls and of eternity? Shall we listen when worldly interest calls, and turn a deaf ear when the word of God speaks to us? Shall we listen to every voice, but the voice of spiritual wisdom? And shall that divine voice cry aloud and no man regard it? Shall the house of God be neglected, the ministers of the Gospel be despised, and the sacraments of the Christian religion be lightly esteemed? Shall we be frugal of all the six days which God has given us for our worldly employments, whilst we esteem the day which he has reserved to himself as lost time; or rob God of *that* day's service, converting it to secular business, idleness, vice, or vanity?

Although a discourse on this subject, can with propriety be addressed to people of all ages; yet the middle aged, and more especially those of advanced years, ought to consider it with uncommon attention, with double anxiety. We, who are approaching the last stage of our pilgrimage, must (of all men) be sensible that we have no

time to lose. Let the time past be deemed sufficient that we have served ourselves, the world and Satan. Let us devote our few remaining days to the service of the true and living God.

Our secular business and wordly interest justly claim a due share of our time and attention; but still an ample portion of time can be spared for the service of God and the care of our souls. Six days in seven are generally sufficient for temporal affairs.

I would by no means advise to expend so much of your time in the exercises of religion as to neglect the necessary affairs of your calling and your families.—How much time is to be expended on temporal matters, and how much on a preparation for eternity, the word of God and your own discretion must determine.

The first day of the week, as a christian sabbath, must be devoted to religious exercises; to meditation, reading, secret devotion, savory conversation, and especially to public worship.

In addition to *this*, a few feasts, and fasts of legal appointment, are to be conscientiously observed. A small portion of the morning and evening is requisite for family devotion; and for secret prayer whenever time and circumstances permit. When we are most busy in mechanical, agricultural, or commercial matters, we can lift up our hearts in silent ejaculations to God, who perfectly understands the language of the heart. In the silent, solemn hours of the night,

upon our beds, what precious opportunities have we to search our hearts, and lift up our souls, in fervent aspirations to God for his grace, comfort, and assistance: To examine our conduct through the day past, and establish good resolutions for the day coming:

When all this time is expended, and all these precautions taken, for the interest of our souls, there will remain time fully sufficient for the discharge of worldly duties, to provide for the body, for our families, and for the community of which we are members; provided our time be improved with industry, prudence and œconomy.

But you will enquire "Is there no time to be allowed for diversion and sociability? would you recommend a solitary monastic life? would you debar us of all amusements and social comforts, of which all social beings are very fond, to which our nature is strongly inclined, and perfectly adapted?"

I have no objection to such amusements and recreations as are innocent and decent. But let them be few; and take special care that the companions of your diversions be discreetly chosen; persons of modesty, honesty and reputation. The force of example is great: it attracts stronger than is generally imagined. *Evil communications corrupt good manners.* One half of the wickedness in the world, is, perhaps, communicated by example.

Very much depends upon the choice of the times, places and companions of your diversions. The baneful contagion of bad example corrupts the mind, blasts the reputation, and ruins the soul, especially, of the young, the innocent, the unexperienced.

After allowing the time requisite for the needful business of this life, and a moderate share of time for amusements: The remainder of our time (for the short period we have to live) let us devote to the service of our God, and the salvation of our souls.

Leave the perishing treasures of this life to those who love them supremely, and be contented with what is barely convenient. Leave temporal honours to those, who do not see the vanity of them. Leave sensual pleasures to the lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God. Leave wickedness to the reprobates: And let us apply our chief attention, and use our utmost diligence to seek and strive for faith, repentance, charity, holiness, and everlasting life.

Our day of grace is not past; the hope of salvation is not quite gone: 'Tis still the time of probation with us. God is still calling us; Christ is still stretching forth his merciful arms to embrace us; the Holy Ghost is still inviting us, and crying "Come unto me that ye may have life." He offers to hear us in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation he will succour

us : *Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.*

Since this life is of all things the most precarious, and but very short, at the longest ; let us not defer or postpone the work of our salvation for one month, one day, or one hour. The longer we defer it, the more excuse shall we find for further delay ; and the less inclination shall we find to prosecute it. Therefore now is not only the accepted time, but the *best* time to secure an interest in the precious blood of the Lamb of God ; to gain an heirship in the blessed mansions of eternal rest ; to make our calling and election sure.

The usual snare in which Satan entraps heedless souls, is persuading them to procrastinate the interesting business of their salvation. Each day the maxim is " to-morrow I will consider, repent, and amend, and

———" Each succeeding morrow
" Has lighted fools to their eternal home."

During our whole lives, we are resolving to turn to God, not at present, but on a future day, till at the age of fifty, sixty or seventy years, we die the same unprepared, unrepenting, unreformed sinners.

No rational creature expects or consents to suffer eternal torment : Yet he knows that there is no way to escape this torment, but by repentance, faith, charity and new obedience : These

christian virtues he intends to put in practice, but defers the time repeatedly, till, alas ! time is gone, never to be recalled ! Oh that this very day may be the happy date of our beginning a rectitude of heart, and reformation of life. That we may from this hour become new creatures ; that we may become through Christ reconciled to God the Father, by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

It is my duty, my office and my inclination, to *testify repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all spiritual wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.* Woe to me if one soul of those who attend on my ministrations should be lost by my neglect or carelessness.

Let me therefore beg of you by the great God, who made you, and supports you ; by that God, and all his perfections, and all that he has done for you ; by his creating power, his preserving mercy and his universal benevolence ; by his infinity and unchangeable nature ; by his omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence ; by his unspotted holiness, and his strict justice ; by his infinite goodness and perfect truth ; let me pray you to be reconciled to HIM.

Let me conjure you, by Jesus Christ, the son of God ; by his Godhead, his merits, and mediation ; by all that he has done and suffered ; by his humble birth, his diligent life and pain-

ful death ; by his miracles and mighty works ; by his holy doctrines and perfect example ; by his traduction, his stripes and insults, his condemnation, crucifixion ; and by his final coming to judgment : By all these, and all other motives, I conjure you to be reconciled to God, through him.

Suffer me further to urge you, by the Holy Ghost ; by his mission into the world, and his constant assistance and counsels ; by all the consolations he has administered to faithful christians of all ages, which he is now affording us, and which we further expect of him ; by all these I urge you to embrace the offers and secure the privileges of eternal salvation.

By the sacred memory of all the prophets and godly men of old, who laid a secure foundation of our faith by their infallible predictions ; who plainly foretold events, whole centuries before they came to pass ; by all these I call upon you, to begin immediately to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

I plead with you by the lives and characters, by the zeal and sufferings of the holy Apostles of Christ ; by the first and chief propagators of the gospel ; by the godly lives and exemplary conduct of the primitive christians ; by the many millions of sincere christians during eighteen centuries past ; by all these, I plead with you immediately to embrace the offers of salvation through the redeemer.

I exhort you, by the dreadful, dreadful consideration of the eternal torments of those millions of souls, who have refused to accept of the offers of salvation, and have maliciously opposed our Saviour and his religion; by all this I zealously exhort you to flee from the wrath to come, and escape the agonies of hell fire.

I beseech you, by the melancholy consideration of the millions of the present age sold to sin, and in the service of Satan; and of the multitudes within our own knowledge, in the present impious and absurd *Age of reason*, who foolishly deny the Being of a God, and blaspheme the Saviour, the word of God, and the Holy Ghost; and the many others, who by *Works* deny God, and by daring wickedness are heaping up wrath against the day of wrath: by all these I beseech you to avoid their example and escape their punishment.

I adjure you, on the contrary, by the faith, sincerity, and christian piety of millions of faithful christians, now living; by their prayers and devotions, their charity and godly desires, I adjure you to come into their number, and with them to partake of eternal life.

I intreat you by all the reverence you have for the faithful, regular ministers of the gospel, and all the affection they have for you, that you would fulfil their hopes, their wishes and their prayers for your salvation.

Ye that are young, in the morning of life, especially those whom I have admitted to God's Church by baptism, the laver of regeneration, ye tender plants of my hand, ye dear children of my prayers, let me persuade you by the innocence and tenderness of your youth, suffer me to press you by all the advantages of early piety, to be reconciled to God through Christ.

Ye middle aged, in full vigour of human life; By your complete powers of body and mind, permit me to advise and importune you to obtain a seasonable reconciliation with your God, your Saviour, and the blessed spirit of God your sanctifier.

Ye aged, who are swiftly verging to the close of life, and are tottering on the brink of eternity; I admonish and solicit you, by all the changing scenes of your past lives: by all the opportunities you have neglected, the privileges you have enjoyed; and by your long experience of the troubles, the vanities and the disappointments of this world, that ye would lay hold on the last opportunity of reconciliation with your God; that ye would come in at the eleventh hour, and eagerly embrace the last and only offer of grace and salvation.

Let me address myself to the old, young and middle aged, in the most sincere, pathetic strains which language will admit; and remind you all, of the unspeakable importance of a timely recon-

ciliation with God, who is justly offended, but graciously willing to be reconciled.

I call upon you to make your peace with the King of Heaven, to appease the offended Deity by repentance, faith, gratitude, charity and gospel obedience. I appeal to common understanding; to every obvious maxim of reason; to every feeling of nature; whether any thing can be more evident or more interesting than these doctrines and exhortations.

Finally, my dear christian fathers, brethren and children, I beseech you by the welfare of your own immortal souls; by all that is near and dear to you in time and in eternity; by immortal hopes and endless torments; by crowns of glory offered, and everlasting burnings threatened; I beseech and earnestly intreat you, that you would immediately be reconciled to God, and secure your eternal salvation.

T H E E N D.



