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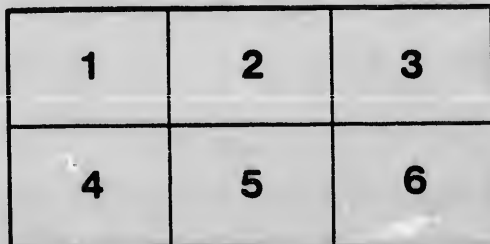
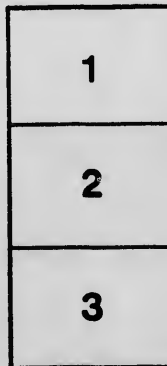
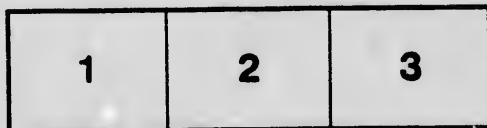
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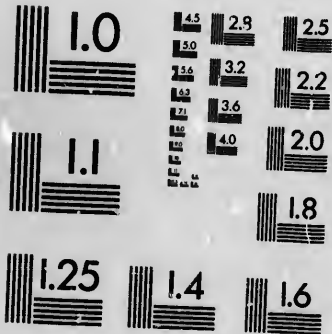
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A
SERMON

Preached in the Cathedral of Quebec,

MAY 2, 1875.

— BY —

JAMES WILLIAM WILLIAMS, D.D.,

BISHOP OF QUEBEC,

— AND —

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

QUEBEC:
PRINTED AT THE "MORNING CHRONICLE" OFFICE.

1875.

JOHN I, 40.

COME AND SEE.

Twice in the opening of the Lord's ministry, these words were spoken, by different persons, but pointing each time to the same sight.

Whilst, after His baptism, Jesus remained still in the Jordan Valley, John stood one day with two of his disciples; and, looking upon Him as He walked, said "Behold the Lamb of God." The disciples follow Him so pointed out. Jesus turns: He sees them following; and He says: "What seek Ye?" They seek Him. Their answer, or rather their question, is full of significance. It indicates at once a reverent respect for what they know of Him, and an earnest purpose to know more. They say "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" Gracious was the Rabbi's reply, compliant and complete:—"Come and see." They came and saw. What did they see? Their own words tell. Said one of them, Andrew, to his brother, "We have found the Messias."

Again on the morrow, when Philip, whom also Jesus had called, found Nathanael, he said, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law wrote, and the prophets,—Jesus of Nazareth." Not at a distance, even by an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile, can Jesus be known for what He is. Scorn was in the reply of Nathanael, and incredulity: "can any good thing come out of Nazareth." Philip saith unto Him "Come and see." That is the history of the phrase.

Come and see; now as then, this is the way to truth; this is the solution of doubt. This is,

- I. The right directory for an inquiring soul, and
- II. The true answer to a cavilling spirit.

(1.) It is the right directory for the inquiring soul. Seeker after truth, whose mind is bewildered by perplexities, who strive in vain to read the riddle of this world, and all that therein is—you who find it hard to reconcile the hopes you feel, with the things you see,—who when you

"Trusted God was love indeed,"
 "And love creation's final law,"

Have found that

—"Nature red in tooth and claw
 "With ravine, shrieked against your creed ;"

And shook your mind with thoughts beyond the reaches
 of your soul—You, who seek and search through the
 world without you, and the world within you, to find out
 God :—

"An infant crying in the night,
 "An infant crying for the light,
 "And with no language but a cry,"

Come and see ; "For God, who commanded the light to
 shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give
 the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face
 of Jesus Christ."

You, who in the unrest of a Soul unsatisfied bear about
 a deep disturbing feeling of sinfulness, and a longing for
 spirituality, for peace, for holiness,—come and see! come
 and see Him, the fashion of whose countenance was altered,
 as the bright cloud overshadowed Him, and the voice
 proclaimed Him the beloved Son ; and you, too, will say,
 it is good for us to be here. Come and see Him who gives
 to all that come a peace the world cannot give ;—come to
 the "Holy one of God," "that ye may be partakers of His
 Holiness." Listen to His words. Realize his Person. It
 may not unveil the mysteries of existence. It may not
 solve the insoluble problems of thought. It will disclose
 their irrelevance. He, who has stood in the hallowed and
 hallowing presence of Immanuel, can afford to leave many
 questions unanswered. He can wait, and possess his soul
 in patience. Time will reveal all. When a man stands in
 the sun's full light, you cannot shake his conviction of the
 fact by questions and difficulties about what has become of
 the stars. Come and see. This is now as ever the true
 solvent of doubt—the best directory for an inquiring soul.

II. And, now as'ever, this is the best answer for a cavil-
 ling spirit :—a spirit that has by no means ceased from
 "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down
 in it."

(1) "Can a man of culture seriously believe in supernatural religion?" Says one. "Can modern thought accept a God who became a man, and allowed men to kill him?" Says another. "Are not these fables the foundation of all religions?—Every where the crude attempts of immature thought? Can we be expected to believe that God gave a revelation of His word; and then left it to the careless keeping of indolent, ignorant men, whose incapacity has made it a mass of disputed readings, and doubtful texts? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Come and see! Let speculative objections stand for what they are worth. Answered, or not answered, they do not account for Christ and Christianity. Christianity is a fact; and as a fact it must be dealt with. Do not waste words about that could have been, or could not have been, come and see what is. Jesus, who is called Christ, lived; nobody doubts that. Then hear him, hear what he said and taught, and compare this with the sayings, and the teachings of the best and wisest of mankind—only hear with a fair mind, and I have no doubt that your verdict will be, "never *man* spake like this man." Look, I do not say at the lepers cleansed, the lame walking, the dead raised—these (though they are not to be ignored nor shunted with a sneer) are lesser matters,—but see the extortioner on honest man, and scrupulous; see the lost one restored, penitent, pure; see the hard heart softened; see the power of Jesus upon the human heart; and you shall say, with Nicodemus, "no man can do these miracles which thou doest except God be with him." Follow out with an honest heart the story of the Sacred Life, and your heart will echo the judgment of the Roman officer who superintended the crucifixion—"truly this was the Son of God."

(2) "Well but," says another, "religion is such an unmanly thing—only fit for women and children, and weak minded men. It is destructive of the high spirit, the prompt courage springing quick at honor's call, which become a man."

Is it so? Come and see. Christ is the Christian's model. And was Jesus this timid, poor spirited thing? Of arrogance indeed, and overbearing rudeness, His demeanour

shews no trace. Peace and gentleness attend Him, and all the courtesies of grace Divine. He condescended to men of low estate. To the weak and the unhappy, He was pitying, kind, affectionate. But who so bold against strong-handed wrong? Who so swift to denounce the vices of the great, and expose the hollowness of high placed hypocrisy? Did He crouch before wealth, interest, power? Did He ever flinch from the face of man? The chiefs of the people had the desire, the design, and the influence, to procure His murder by form of law. But what cared He for their malevolence on their machinations? Read the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. There you see how he dealt with the cruelties, oppressions, and deceits of the strong—strong in the relentlessness to which their life had schooled their natures—strong in the strength of a debauched popular sentiment, and of their basely gained capacity to wield the populace at will. Did He cringe to wickedness because great and strong? Did He spare these exalted sinner? Cringe! Spare! His exposure cuts like a knife. He pours out His indignation like a flood. He filled the air with His invectives. He blazoned their infamy. Their pride, their greed, their falseness, He hangs out, for a sign and a proverb, in the withering light of that everlasting scorn. He knew His danger, and He dared to be true. Oh! there was no pusillanimity in Him! Come and see! Do not believe these cavils and reproaches about the unmanliness of religion. Come and see; see for yourself, and you shall find in Jesus the model of all manliness, the true knight, without fear, and without reproach. Taking Him for your type of true manhood, you shall find that a man may be tender without being effeminate, gentle as a woman, and dauntless, with all the high courage of the bravest man.

(3.) But we are not through these cavils yet. There is yet another sort of men who are calling out perpetually "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "Is not all this religion which we see around us, and which pretends to be a divinely working power—a regeneration of society, and a new birth for mankind,—an unreality and a sham? Look at the state of society in what calls itself a Christian land. Compare the grasping after wealth, the jealousies, the pride, the spite, you see there:—compare the ordinary routine of life in Christian Society—with its nominal re-

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after wealth, the jealousies,
there:—compare the ordinary
society—with its nominal re-

cognition of the brotherhood of all, and its real separation
of classes, interests, and sympathies."—"Compare all this,"
they say, "with the sermon on the Mount, and it will seem
that our modern Christianity retains no touch of the original
—is, in fact, no better than civilized Heathenism."

(a) Well, I have no mind to extenuate, or to excuse, the
shortcomings of Christian people. Upon occasion, I can say
a good deal about that. But if it is meant that Christian-
ity, as we have it, is a failure, because it has effected no
moral improvement in society; and has failed to render
life purer, and better, than it was in the best forms of
heathen civilization;—if this is what is meant—then I say
that the statement can only be made in utter ignorance;
by one who neither knows what heathenism was; nor what
Christianity is. It is easy enough to point to the inconsis-
tencies of professing Christians, and to say, if this Christian-
ity is licentious, and that one a cheat, our Christianity is a
sham: easy enough, but nothing to the purpose. There
will be bad men, but that does not prove that there are no
good ones. Come and see! If there are those, whether they
be high or low, rich or poor, who, in the daily companionship
of Jesus, out of their delight in Him, and all that is of Him,
are walking with God, loving mercy, doing justice,—then
Christianity, even in this nineteenth century, is no failure.
And such there are: no manner of doubt! And even when
a man has not attained to this—when he falls, and sins, it
does not follow that Christ is not a living power, even in
Him. You know not how far he has gone in the forma-
tion of a virtuous mind;—how far he has resisted;—how
soon he will resist unto death, if need be.

It is all very well to look upon the bright side of ancient
life, and to say that Christianity has made no improvement
upon a civilization which had advanced so far in art, litera-
ture and social amenity; but what about the moral state
of these polite people? What sort of humanity was theirs?
What their purity? Where were their hospitals? What
did they do with their poor? How did they treat their
slaves? What was the character of their wars? What
were their notions of chastity? Every man, I say, who has
looked into these things with his own eyes, knows that,
with all shortcomings Christianity, where it has been ac-
cepted, (and in a less degree indeed, but measurably, by

force of shame and the education of opinion, where it is known but not embraced) has effected a real transformation in the moral standard, and in the practical morality of mankind. There is no time now to produce the evidence, (and much of it is not producible) but I will give you a judgment upon the general question of one competent, certainly,—whatever we may think of his interpretations, or his inferences,—competent, by reason of his knowledge, to pronounce upon the facts of the case.

Says the author of *Ecce Homo*, "compare the ancient world with the modern. Look on this picture, and on that.—One broad distinction in the characters of men forces itself into prominence. Among all the men of the ancient heathen world, there were scarcely one or two to whom we might venture to apply the epithet holy. In other words, there were not more than one or two, if any, who besides being virtuous in their actions were possessed with an unaffected enthusiasm of goodness, and besides abstaining from vice regarded even a vicious thought with horror. Probably no one will deny that in Christian countries this higher toned goodness which we call holiness has existed. Few will maintain that it has been exceedingly rare. Perhaps the truth is that there has scarcely been a town in any Christian country, since the time of Christ, where a century has passed without exhibiting a character of such elevation that his mere presence has shamed the bad, and made the good better; and has been felt at times like the presence of God Himself. And if this be so, has Christ failed? or can Christianity die?"

(b.) But Christianity is pronounced a failure, not in contrast with Heathenism only, but in contrast with itself. Christ's principles of Christian living, it is said are not carried out. His ideal of a Christian commonwealth is not realized.

If it be meant that because men do not literally turn the left cheek to him that smites them on the right, and that because they do not actually sell all they have, and give to the poor,—that therefore Christian principle is not, and is hereby proved not to be, a force, and a motive, in human society,—then this assertion comes from a state of mind against which I find it impossible to argue. I do not



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apprehend it. If a man, looking into the lives and con-
duct of his fellow Christians; (so called at any rate,) and
looking into his own life and conduct, does not find that
he and they, have done many things that they should not
otherwise have done, and have left undone many things
that they should otherwise have done, in consequence of
their belief in, and desire to rule themselves by the com-
mands of, Jesus Christ—why the gulf between his experi-
ence and mine is impassable. No bridge can be built across
it. Till we can see our facts with eyes more alike, it is
idle to discuss them.

If, however, this allegation touching the failure of Chris-
tianity only means that many in countries and communi-
ties having the form of godliness deny its power, this is no
more than saying that the religion of Christ is what He
professed it to be, and that it always would be. He told
us plainly, that the net would always have the bad fish as
well as the good:—That the tares would be mingled with
the wheat; and that no separation could in this life be made;
that so it would continue to the judgment day. All this is
plainly set down in the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew's
Gospel. And as he said it would be, so it was, from the
first. The Christians at Corinth were a very mixed body.
And, amongst the very *elite* of Christ's own most inner cir-
cle,—out of the twelve—there was one who had a devil.

Let go then these idle questions about what Christianity
has not done; and come see what it has done—is doing
now. It has been, and it is, a death unto sin, and a new
birth unto righteousness in many a soul. It has upheld—it
upholds—many and many a sorely tempted one; stops the
foot going down to vice; withholds the hand stretched out
to steal. The love of Christ has come upon many a man
in these times with as compelling power as that which
constrained Zaccheus, when he had done any wrong to any
man, to restore four-fold. Some it moves to give their sub-
stance, some to give themselves, for Christ's sake, and the
help of humanity. Oh! there is much good comes out of
Nazareth yet! Look, where goes that Christian woman,
delicately nurtured, unsparing of self, to tend the sick, the
wounded, and the dying. See where passes that other
into the abodes of misery, to rescue Christ's little ones from
their doom of infamy. Mark the white sails of yonder

ship, that carries the accomplished Pateson to a hero's death; and say not that Christ has lost his power in the kingdom of men. He lives. He reigns. His reign is here, and now. Come and see! Enter His presence. Kneel at his throne. You shall feel the might of His Majesty upon you. Still His call is "come:" "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."





