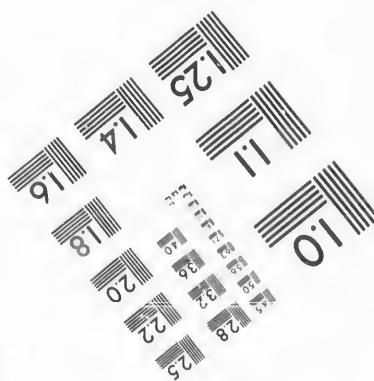
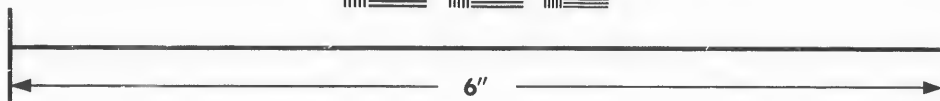
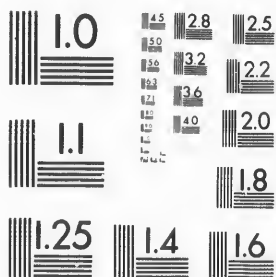


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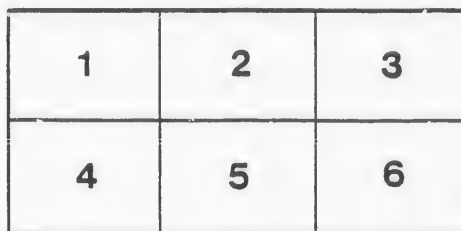
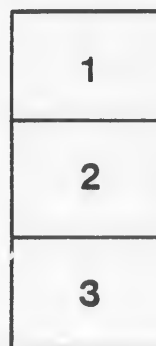
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*From the Author
to His Grace*

CHRISTIAN THANKSGIVING.

A SERMON,

PREACHED TO A COUNTRY CONGREGATION,

IN PREPARATION FOR THEIR FIRST SOLEMN

HARVEST THANKSGIVING,

ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11TH, 1863,

BEING THE SUNDAY AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE.

BY A LITERATE PRIEST.

*Rudolf Gilbert, V. Heathcote
Rector of Hopton Causeford
Hylton*

London:

J. T. HAYES, LYALL PLACE, EATON SQUARE.

1863.

NOTICE.

Should there be any profit from the sale of this Sermon, it will be given to the Society for providing Additional Curates in populous places.

SERMON.

Psalm xcvi., 8, 9.

“GIVE THE LORD THE GLORY DUE UNTO HIS NAME: BRING AN OFFERING, AND COME INTO HIS COURTS. O WORSHIP THE LORD IN THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS: FEAR BEFORE HIM, ALL THE EARTH.”

WITH what better exhortation than this can I speak to you, my friends, about the work in which we propose to engage ourselves here next Sunday, of offering to GOD our hearty and humble Thanksgiving for that mercy of an abundant Harvest, with which it has pleased Him to satisfy us this year?

Who is there of us—I do not believe that there is any—who does not desire to give in this matter, as in all others, that glory to GOD which is due unto His Holy Name? We do not claim, when we look forth upon our well-filled rickyards, our overflowing barns, our teeming gardens, that it is our hand and our power that has made all these to abound with their treasures for our comfort. No! Christian Worshippers of the true GOD are we all! And there will be, I know, but one thought in all this Congregation, that GOD it is Who has reserved to us the

appointed weeks of the Harvest; that if we have laboured, it is GOD only Who hath given the increase; and that to Him that answereth the prayer it is most justly due that all should draw near to give Glory, who confess that they have received from His open hand, and from Him only, an answer to their prayer, "Give us day by day our daily bread," so abundant as that for which we are rejoicing now.

If so we think about our harvest blessings, and if we wish for those benefits which He has done unto us to give the LORD the honour due unto His Name, it will be no unwelcome lesson to learn how we may so do, worshipping Him with a Holy Worship. We shall be glad that is to find out how we may make our Harvest Thanksgiving a real rejoicing before GOD: how we may so thank Him as that He may accept our thanks: and how our joy and thanksgiving for this earthly harvest may be carried on to that other, the Harvest of earth, which we know draweth near, of which the end of the world shall be the Harvest Home, and we ourselves the Fruit, and the angels of GOD the Reapers.

It is just this which our text teaches us. Bring an offering and come into His Courts:—Worship the LORD in the Beauty of Holiness:—Fear before Him all the Earth:—so are we bidden; as we read in another Psalm, What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits towards me? I will take the cup of Salvation and call

upon the Name of the LORD ; I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people ;—I will offer the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving :—and again elsewhere, Serve the LORD in fear, and rejoice unto Him with reverence.

To give then the LORD the Glory due unto His Name, in the manner in which He has pointed out to us that He will be pleased to accept it, (and anything different from this becomes perilously like offering insult and dishonour to Him, and at the best is but labour thrown away, and useless,) two things are needed—First, to bring an offering and come into His Courts--that is, to offer alms publicly, in the congregation, as an acknowledgment that He is the giver of all good gifts, and that thus according to His Will we return to Him a portion of what is His own but entrusted to us to use, that He may be pleased to bless, to our eternal as well as temporal good, the rest which we keep for ourselves: and Second, to worship Him in the Beauty of Holiness, or in the Glorious Sanctuary,—with that which is both the best worship that we can offer, and the means of nearest approach to Him Whom we worship: But both these together with, and as a proof of, a godly fear of Him with Whom we have to do, on Whose good pleasure we, and all that we have or see, depend, for life and breath and all things.

Thus are we taught therefore of what kind our harvest Thanksgiving should be. It must be with giving of alms, such as shall make all the rest of our property that we keep

for our own use, and ourselves also in the using thereof, clean before God;—abundant therefore, that we be not found appearing empty before the LORD, contrary to His own expressed will, and to the fear thereof which—as is indeed but reasonable—we profess to have. Also that, since we are Christians, it must be with Holy Communion, at once the most necessary and the highest Act of Adoration which we can offer, being, as it is, the only public worship which the LORD Himself commanded us to use, and that also which shews forth and pleads before GOD the Father that great Act to which all worship refers, and from which all service derives its power,—the Death of our LORD and Saviour: Which also is the opening to us of the Presence of GOD, our especial means of worshipping in the Glorious Sanctuary, being, as it is, the receiving of the LORD JESUS Himself—the becoming one with Him Who is the Son of the most High GOD: Which therefore itself makes, as nothing else can make, our worship to be in the Beauty of Holiness, and ourselves the worshippers to be in the very Throne-room of Him Who inhabiteth the Glorious Sanctuary of Eternity. For who is Allbeautiful but the only Begotten Son? Who is so near to God as He Who is in the Bosom of the Father? And by this Sacrament we, becoming joint-partakers of Him, the Redeemer, are ourselves made free from sin and abiding in GOD, true worshippers and thankful givers of Glory as are none else.

For indeed a Heathen can give Glory to GOD for the fruitful season which shall fill his heart with food and gladness; and a Jew can come into the Courts of the LORD in thanksgiving for the same, appearing not empty: but we are Christians, nearer to GOD and more highly favoured than either Heathen or Jew; and more perfect therefore should be our worship of thanksgiving than that of either of them, as the Gospel is the Perfection and Fulfilment both of natural religion and of the Mosaic Law.

Backwarder than the Heathen to offer Thanksgiving to the GOD Who is manifest in Natural Blessings, surely we will not be: More closefisted than the Jew in giving alms of the abundance which GOD has given to us, we shall think it a shame, to the GOD of Revelation Who has required this of us, to shew ourselves: But more than this is needed to make our service that of Christians. It is needed that the Sacrifice of the REDEEMER sanctify both these other Sacrifices of Praise and Almsgiving, and that they be united to It. This, the Holy Eucharist--the Sacrifice memorial and greatly thanksgiving,—the Holy Communion—the Sacrifice effectual and closely uniting,—can alone do. Wherefore, my friends, our Thanksgiving may be, perhaps, as valuable as that of Heathens, if our words are earnest; or even as that of Jews, if our alms are abundant: but it will not be worthy to be called Christian, neither perfect itself, nor helping to perfect us, neither acceptable nor

making us accepted, unless it be joined to the Great Sacrifice of CHRIST, by the fit celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and the worthy reception of Holy Communion.

And because you are Christians, and wish, I am sure, that your thanksgiving to GOD for any mercies should be Christian, better than any Heathen or Jewish service, therefore I exhort you, my friends, as you do really feel the fear of GOD and the need to give Him the Glory which is due to Him,—and in such a service, therefore, as He shall accept,—to draw near to these His Courts next Sunday, with an offering to Him of worldly goods fit for the occasion, and of yourselves also; but both these in and by that Sacrifice of Christian Thanksgiving, which is your reasonable service: wherein you offer the best thanks for any mercy with which GOD has blessed you, in that you do in the remembrance of His Greatest Gift and Mercy, what the Only-Begotten, Who was given for you, desired that you would do; and also the most acceptable prayer, both for the past and for the future, in that by it, shewing forth the LORD's Death till He come, you plead in the most lively manner, and by a true, albeit unbloody Sacrifice, that awful Sacrifice of the of the Body broken and the Blood poured out, by Which only can your sins past be forgiven, and your life yet left to you be made holy.

In the God-appointed ways, therefore, let us strive to shew unto GOD due honour for His Gracious Gifts. Sing

unto the LORD—so the Psalmist exhorts—Wherefore, let us, the congregation of His people, praise Him with a joyful sound, rejoicing and singing praise, making melody of a happy heart and gracious lips unto GOD. Declare His Glory unto all people—Let us, therefore, make ready, with careful calculation, the offering which shall both testify (by its abundance answering to our sense of His Goodness) that we honour Him ourselves, and (being spent for the purpose of sending His messengers to others*) make those who, perhaps, hitherto have not known Him, to glorify and honour Him too. Bring your gift to the altar—Let us come to offer that which we set apart for GOD in the Glorious Sanctuary, the near and especial Presence of the Almighty, where with the blessed angels He is more fully present than elsewhere, that, by the Holy Worship there made, our gifts may be joined to CHRIST'S Sacrifice and rendered acceptable, and we be found, indeed, to render Glory to GOD in the Highest, being made active sharers in the unity of Charity on earth. And come in the Beauty of Holiness—Wherefore, let the full ranks of devout and thankful communicants prove that we of this place, who profess to wish to give to GOD the Glory due unto His Name, have regard therein not only to the meat which perisheth, which

* The Offertory on the following Sunday to that on which this Sermon was preached, which was to be the Day of Thanksgiving, was to be given to the Additional Curates Society; as will be the profits, if any, of this Sermon.

is from Him for our bodily use, but still more and more thankfully for that Meat which endureth unto Eternal Life, which He has given us in His Son; Whose Flesh is Meat indeed, and His Blood Drink indeed; in Whom,—as given to us in the most Holy Eucharist, and therewith assimilating us to Himself,—abiding, we are found in the Beauty of Holiness; Who at that altar waits Himself, to be to His faithful servants Holiness and Salvation, a very Sun of Righteousness beaming upon them with healing in His Wings.

But also we must fear before Him Whom thus we seek to honour, lest our very rejoicing condemn us. Wherefore, be careful, both that you do honour Him in the manner which, now at least, you know to be due unto His Name, and also that you do this heartily as unto GOD and not to men. In the fear of GOD, let your voice be heard thanking Him. In the fear of GOD, make your offering ample in some real proportion to that which you have received. In the fear of GOD, come to His Table to offer it. In the fear of GOD, worship Him in the Beauty of Holiness, a fresh and fresh union with your SAVIOUR. In the fear of GOD sanctify your bodily life according to that of Him to Whom you are connected. While the field is joyful and all that is in it, let the whole earth fear before GOD, for the LORD cometh to judge the earth, with Righteousness to judge the world, and the people with His Truth.

Especial thoughts of Fear should the harvest bring,

together with its joy. If we come not up to the Feast of Tabernacles, if, that is, we do not rejoice before God for this harvest gift, especial wrath is denounced against us for our thanklessness; but yet greater woes still will be ours, if, while we rejoice, that for which we thank God does not teach us its own lesson of Fear; Fear, lest when our harvest is past and our summer over, when, that is, our chance of gathering good deeds into God's garner, our time of being ripened by the sunshine of CHRIST'S Grace that we may come to His Harvest as a shock of corn cometh in its season, is past and gone, we be found not saved.

For the sweeping stroke, with which we cut the falling grain, is as the Angel of Death: the carrying home, is as the being gathered together after death to await the Resurrection: the winnowing of the threshed corn, is as the decision of the just Judge, either the gathering of true souls into the Heaven of God, or the driving of sinners into outer misery. Familiar deeds these unto us all, my friends, and every one of them a symbol of the coming Judgment, a witness to us of the strictness with which we shall be certainly tried, a warning that we be found not wanting.

Shall we, who hope to meet here next Sunday, to thank God for the grain harvested this year and waiting to be threshed, from which we expect an abundant yield, when we, too, shall have been gathered in by death, and be

waiting for the separation of the good from the bad at the Resurrection, the severing of the spiritual corn and chaff, shall we find reason to rejoice for ourselves in that Harvest Home of souls, as now we rejoice for the fruit of the work of our hands, this securing of earth's produce? Yes, we shall, if now we rejoice before GOD because He shall come to Judgment; If, as our whole year's work is a preparing for and labouring after the harvest of autumn yet to come, so our whole life is made labour, whereby we may be fitted to stand with hope before GOD; If our thoughts are so set above this world that our Death is the first of them, and we look always with godly fear and preparation to the weighing of our lives and actions in the just balance of the Judgment; If the sense of our need makes us take hold of and unite ourselves more and more firmly, by Repentance and Communion, to CHRIST; If our thanksgivings are so offered as to centre in CHRIST; If, altogether, we live and move and have our being in Him, as befits those who know Him to be the Head of His Body the Church, but the Saviour of those only who walk worthy of their membership in Him; we shall in that Day of the Earth's Harvest rejoice; but not otherwise: and considering how we live, on what things our minds dwell, and what sort of Christians too many of us are, how great a Warning is herein!

This earth is fair; its light is pleasant; its fruits sweet; its joys good; its labours useful; but all this to such only

as use so as not to abuse it. And those only so do, who are looking for the new Heaven and new Earth wherein shall dwell Righteousness; who, living here such a life as may be continued uninterrupted there, are passing through this world as on a journey to that; not making this their rest, but by the steadiness of their marching and the character of the livery which they wear,—the good deeds of righteousness with which they are clothed,—shew by their lives, even more than they proclaim by their lips, that they are the servants of a Master, Who has gone before to make ready in a better country an inheritance reserved for them, which inheritance they not only seek, but strive after.

The Day which shall bring that new Heaven and Earth, the dreadful Day of the Harvest of the Earth, shall come suddenly on most; gradually indeed as to the preparation which even now is going on through all the nations to make ready for it, which from want of Faith men understand not, but for that very reason suddenly on most men; perhaps on us! What manner of people should we be who know this Truth and would fain wait for that Day? God-fearing,—Giving the LORD the Glory due unto His Name,—Rejoicing therefore before Him as each cause for Thankfulness in the overflowing stream of His new mercies reaches us, but rejoicing with reverence,—Worshipping Him with the Holy worship which he loves of gifts given and the Sacrifice of Righteousness offered and partaken of, but humbling

ourselves before Him the whilst,—Passing the time of our sojourning here in Fear,—Thus and thus only can we hope to be of the faithful few to whom our GOD will give His Grace that we may understand the signs of the times and, when our LORD come, be it sooner or later, be found watching. But are we such as this? And if not, how fearful is our Rejoicing, for that, which in that case warns alike that we shall be judged, and that Judgment shall be Condemnation!

One Sign of the Coming End, not perhaps that it is near, but that it is certain, and needs therefore to be really prepared for—whether it is near or not to the world at large matters little comparatively, for that which shall fix our state wherein it shall find us is near enough to us all—has been given to us in the past week in a manner very unusual in our country, and therefore with the greater emphasis. The Sign of Apostacy from the Faith—Separation and Irreligion—that we are so used to that it is no longer a sign, we care not for it; nay we pride ourselves on our Liberty, as we falsely name its parent. The Sign of Wars and Rumours of wars, that as long as it seems to point away from us, we thanklessly disregard, nay even rejoice to make money by. There remains but one, the Sign of convulsed Creation, which is left. And certainly in that Earth-trembling of the other day, little in itself but enough to startle us, the low whispering rather than the loud roaring

of the Fire which shall bring the End some day, our God warned us all that that End shall be completed; that its completion shall be most terrible; and that He only restrains it in the hope that we shall use our respite to bring forth therein fruits meet for repentance.

The Warning fits strangely well with our Rejoicing. For the year's Harvest we are thanking God. With the Language inarticulate indeed, but yet even in its whispering so clearly heard, and as all have confessed so fearful in the hearing, of that which shall be for Eternity, He who is LORD of both is bidding us see that we give Him in our Rejoicing the Glory due unto His Name, who is called the LORD our Righteousness; warning us that he only rejoices well who repents truly, he only gives Thanks acceptably whose daily life is fruitful of good, he only is safe who dares now meet Judgment, and he only need not fear that who now fears to separate aught that he does from CHRIST: for that this Harvest of To-day is but the Resemblance of that which shall be To-morrow, when He shall judge the world in righteousness, Whose fan is in His hand, and he will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather the wheat into His garner, but will burn up the chaff with Fire unquenchable.

