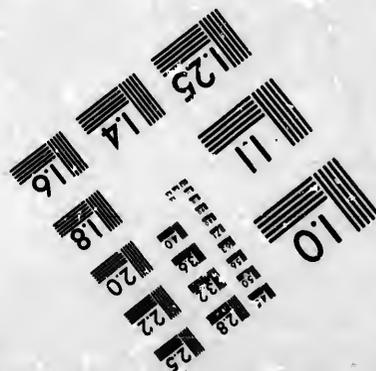
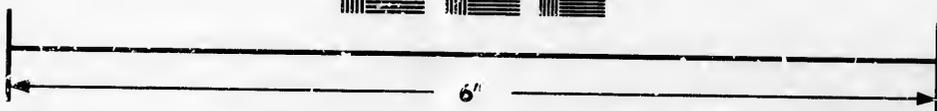
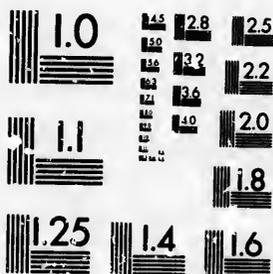


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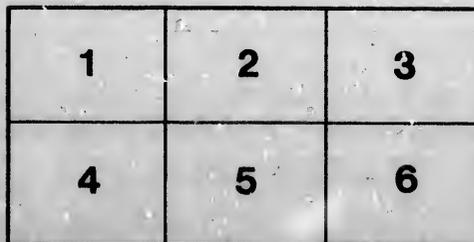
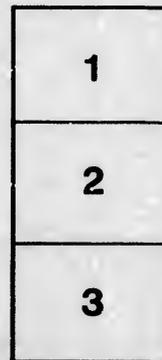
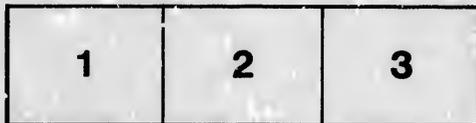
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7

Memorial Sermons.



7

# S E R M O N S

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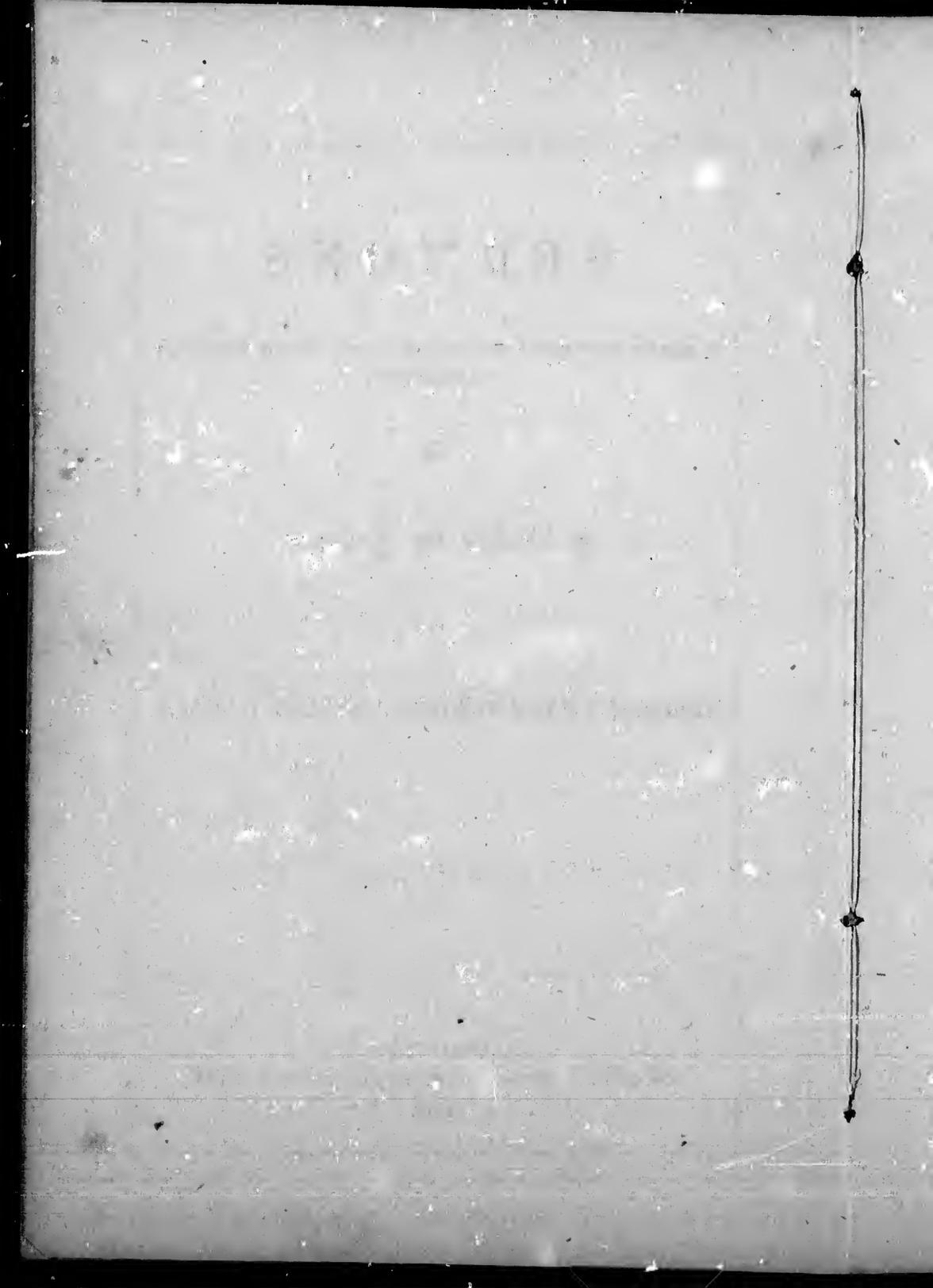
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TORONTO:

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1870.



## PREFACE.

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THE Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada, which commenced its annual session in Toronto the first Wednesday, and closed it the second Friday in June, may be regarded, in several respects, as a *Memorial Conference*. An unusually large proportion of the 600 Ministers composing the Conference were in attendance. There were also present the officially appointed Representatives of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States—a Church which now numbers its Ministers by thousands and its adherents by millions. There was likewise an exchange of brotherly greetings and of pulpits between the Conference and similar annual assemblages of several other Protestant denominations, held in Toronto at the same time; demonstrating that these denominations regard each other as building upon the one True Foundation of Christian Faith, as fellow-soldiers in different regiments

of the one army of Truth against Error, of morality against vice, and of Protestant liberty against Papal despotism.

There are, furthermore, two other grounds on which this Conference may be regarded as a Memorial Conference. The arrangements and regulations were finally adopted by which the Wesleyan Missionary Society in this country and its Missions are entirely independent of the Society in England, self-supporting and self-managed; and the Book of Doctrines and Discipline of our Church, after several years deliberation and much careful labour, has been finally revised; so that an authorised and more accurate and complete edition of that important Book is to be printed for general use than has ever been published in Canada. No new doctrines or dogmas have been attempted to be created or declared, as in Rome—the doctrines of faith not being left to the decrees of man, but declared perfect from the beginning by the Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles; nor have new rules been introduced, but verbal errors have been corrected, and such modifications in the phraseology of certain parts of the public sacramental forms of service as to adopt them to prevalent modes of speech, and render them more simple and less liable to misapprehension. There have also been forms added—chiefly derived from the discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States—for laying the corner-stones and dedicating places of worship, and for admitting persons to the full membership of the Church.

In *spirit*, likewise, this Conference may be regarded as a Memorial as well as a Model Conference, as no unkind word escaped the lips of any member during the discussions, and as a very gracious influence rested upon all the proceedings and services.

As a Memorial, and for the edification and gratification of great numbers of the Ministers and members of our Church, the Conference requested written copies of the four principal discourses delivered by distinguished Ministers during the session, with a view to their publication in a Memorial volume. The first of these discourses is a sermon of great eloquence and value by the Rev. W. Morley Punshon, A.M., President of the Conference, on the Objects, Work, &c., of the Christian Ministry, addressed to candidates before their ordination. The second is a sermon of great excellence on the Atonement, by the Rev. Gervase Smith, A.M., of England, who, though simply on a private tour of health and friendship, contributed much to the delight and profit of the public services of the Conference by his addresses and discourses. The third discourse is by the Rev. J. W. Lindsay, D.D., Professor in the Methodist Boston Theological Seminary, and Representative to the Canadian Conference of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States. The subject of this admirable discourse is Self-consecration. The fourth discourse is by a second Representative of the same Church,

the Rev. Dr. Lowrey, of Ohio, whose discourse and addresses afforded great satisfaction to all who had the privilege of listening to them. The subject of this excellent sermon is the Divine Beauty as displayed in the Church.

It is believed that these instructive and eloquent sermons thus collected and published in this little volume, will be read with profit and pleasure by thousands who had not the opportunity of hearing them.

TORONTO, June 20th, 1870.

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THE MINISTERIAL COMMISSION.

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A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION OF CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY, IN RICHMOND  
STREET CHURCH, TORONTO,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 5TH, 1870.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM MORLEY PUNSHON, M.A.

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WESLEYAN BOOK-ROOM, 89 KING STREET EAST.

1870

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# THE MINISTERIAL COMMISSION :

A SERMON

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM MORLEY PUNSHON, A.M.,

PREACHED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 5TH, 1870, IN THE RICHMOND STREET CHURCH,  
TORONTO.

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"BUT RISE, AND STAND UPON THY FEET, FOR I HAVE APPEARED UNTO THEE FOR THIS PURPOSE, TO MAKE THEE A MINISTER AND WITNESS, BOTH OF THESE THINGS WHICH THOU HAST SEEN, AND OF THOSE THINGS IN THE WHICH I WILL APPEAR UNTO THEE ; DELIVERING THEE FROM THE PEOPLE, AND FROM THE GENTILES, UNTO WHOM NOW I SEND THEE; TO OPEN THEIR EYES, AND TO TURN THEM FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT, AND FROM THE POWER OF SATAN UNTO GOD, THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, AND INHERITANCE AMONG THEM WHICH ARE SANCTIFIED BY FAITH THAT IS IN ME."—ACTS XXVI, 16-18.

If the emotion of sublimity be aroused, as the old Greek critic said, by that "of which the conception is vast, the effect irresistible, and the impression lasting," it must have been a sublime scene when in Agrippa's judgment hall, the Apostle Paul described the sublimer scene among the avenues of Damascus, where Jesus met him by the way. Two years of suspense had not abated the anger of the Jews against Paul. As violently as in the days of Felix, they clamoured for his arraignment and death. The Apostle, by a master-stroke of policy, removed himself from their hands,

and exerted his allowed privilege of appeal unto Cæsar. Festus, the new Governor, a law-abiding Roman, anxious to be at once conciliatory and just, and without sharing somewhat in the national contempt with which the Romans looked down upon the Jews, found himself in some perplexity as to the report which should accompany the appellant to Rome. He, the cold, proud, sceptical man of the world, knew nothing, as he confessed, of Jewish theology, and talked uncertainly, as such a one would be likely to do, of "one Jesus, which was dead, but whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Herod Agrippa, second of that name, had come with his sister Berenice, on a complimentary visit to Caesarea. He had been familiar with the Jewish law from youth, and was at this very time superintendent of the temple, in whom rested the appointment of the High Priest himself. Of his superior knowledge Festus was glad to avail himself, that he might draw up the indictment in proper form. Hence sprang the opportunity for the apostle to vindicate his Master, and to deliver his own soul. You can image the scene: the Jewish accusers, livid with rage and scorn; the pomp of soldiery, haughty and careless in their burnished armour; the chief men of the city, earnest and wondering; the stern Roman Governor; the royal voluptuary, with the beautiful harlot by his side,—making up the audience thus strangely gathered together; and in the midst, small of stature, but great in soul, the unfriended Apostle, lifting the hand by which he was chained to the soldier beside him, recounting his conversion, his call, his hope, his purpose: bewildering the intellect of one, startling the conscience of another; and at last finishing with that inimitable climax which must have sunk straight into the hearts of all, as thunder drops upon a sleeping sea,

—“I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”

It is a scene on which we love to linger, but a scene of yet greater sublimity summons us away. This is Damascus, the oldest city in the world, founded before Baalbec and Palmyra, and surviving them; a city that is prosperous still, though “Babylon is a heap in the desert, and Tyre a ruin on the shore.” Round about it on every side is the wilderness, its strong-hold of defence. Winding through it are the glittering rivers—which the Greeks call golden—the “Abana” and “Pharpar,” which Naaman, not unnaturally, preferred to the waters of Israel; and these are both its ornament and its life. On the banks of these rivers are the gardens, which are the pride of Syria; with flowers of every hue, and fruits of every kind, and trees of overarching shade, stretching into long arcades of beauty. It was here, in the hush of noon, when the cattle rested from labour, and the birds from song, that a company of travellers were stricken to the earth, as there shone from the cloudless sky a light, which to their astonished vision, seemed “above the brightness of the sun.” To most of them it was a portent without significance, confusing the senses, but leaving no trace upon the mind. But upon one prostrate spirit the light broke with terrible avenging power, and the flash which sealed the outer world for a season, but turned the eye inward—that, like the drowning, he might behold a life-time in a moment—and recall remorsefully the pride and perversion of years. He saw a sorrowful face, from which their eyes were blinded. He heard a reproachful voice, which fell not upon common ears. While to his companions in travel there was but a blinding light and an un-

certain sound, he saw the face of Jesus whom he persecuted, and heard, out of the heavens, the voice of the Son of God. Subdued and contrite, and ready for all the will of the Master whom he was at once constrained to acknowledge, he rose from the ground with blinded eyes, but with enlightened soul. For three days the outer world was sealed to him, but the inner eye became purged from its films, and opened gradually to the brightness of celestial vision. In those three days,—more memorable to the world than any other three in its history, save only those during which the sepulchre held the Saviour,—the Gospel achieved one of its grandest triumphs, for the blasphemer became the apostle, who went forth to preach the faith which he once destroyed. The zeal which lately burned with the fiery heat of passion, was now the holy flame which prompted to the consecration of a life; and baptized in those “rivers of Damascus,” which had been ineffectual to cleanse the leprosy of Naaman, he rose from the flood a confessor for Jesus, and His minister and witness among men.

There is something notable in the words which were spoken on this memorable occasion. The commission which was given to the apostle was a commission given by Christ Himself, and in the terms in which it was couched we may read Christ's own estimate of what constitutes Christ's own Gospel. It is but rarely in the Scripture that we can gather doctrinal statements from the lips of the Saviour. We look to the Epistles for our fullest views of the truth, and our richest contributions to what we call systematic theology. When Paul writes, to the Colossians, of the person and work of Jesus, or, to the Ephesians, of the nature of his kingdom, or to the Hebrews of the fulness of his sacrifice, or, to the Romans, of the means by which it is made

available for man,—we read that we may know all that our souls covet to know, of matters so sublime and solemn; and in the writings of the servant we discover what the words of the Master have often failed to reveal. We need not go far to find out the reason of this. Those who make history do not often write it. The warrior who cleaves by his trusty sword his country's path to freedom, rarely writes the record of his own campaign, nor sets forth the principles which urged him to the war. So Christ was the embodied glad tidings,—Himself the gospel of which His apostles wrote and spoke. His ministry was too brief and burdened, his life too active and benevolent for the elaboration of schemes of doctrine from His lips. Not that He was silent on the world's great rules of faith and practice. His teaching was unapproachable in its perfection as His life. But his utterances were condensed truth, yet truth which burnt into the hearts of men, of which all apostolic teaching was but the expansion, and which was the inspiration of those living lips which startled and subdued the world. What was there, for example, in the whole of Paul's preaching, from his youthful to his veteran ministry, which is not embraced in the words of his earliest call? God's message in God's order, the Truth commended by sanctions of power and by promises of grace, all that an apostle should be and should teach, all that the world to whom he is sent were, and are, and may become; you find them all in these marvellous and inspiring words, fastened ineffaceably upon the heart to which they were spoken, rescued from oblivion by the necessities of his public vindication, and remaining, a law and a life, for all time.

You have not come hither, dear brethren, I am persuaded, without much searching of heart and

prayer. On the threshold of your separation to the most honourable office upon earth, you would be shamefully unfit for the service, if you had not "pondered in your hearts" both the characters which you are to bear, and the work which you have to do. In the need and solemnity of the occasion, and in humble dependence on the Divine blessing, we may all be stimulated and instructed by these words of the ascended Saviour, spoken, not from earth, but from the midst of the "excellent glory." It would be quite impossible to exhaust, or even fully to consider, a passage so comprehensive in a sermon; but we may crystallize some truth from it which may counsel and bless us all. There is—

1. *The apostle's call and character.* (1) *The source of ministerial authority is distinctly stated in the passage.*

"Unto whom now I send thee." The apostle in his Epistle to the Galatians anxiously vindicates the divine origin of his apostleship. "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man." (Gal. i. 11, 12). It is from Christ alone, the exalted Lord of the new covenant, the head over all things to His church, that all the ministers of the covenant derive their official existence. His spirit speaks in their hearts to impress them, to constrain them into the field. The office of the ministry is not a profession for which men can be educated in colleges, and which they may lawfully assume at will—still less is to be entered as a means of preferment, or with the hope of gain. Following that delusive misnomer which connects a cure of souls with a "living," a father may designate his child to serve at the altar of the Lord: to that end he may be taught to direct his studies, he may become eloquent

and accomplished, his mind stored with the wealth of the ages, his conversation aglow with the light of the classical olden time; he may be a chosen flamen in some modern temple of Isis or Apollo; and then, by influence or patronage, he may be set over a people, like David in Saul's armour, to wield weapons which he has never proved; but if there be not the Divine call to labour—the inward moving of the Holy Ghost—he is but an intruder into a sacred office, a gainsayer after the pattern of Korah, who was judged and doomed for the offering of strange fire. Look to it, dear brethren, that ye do not run before ye are sent. You have professed to hear Christ's summons, not in miraculous utterance, nor pomp of attending thunder, but in the still small voice of the Spirit, and the concurrent invitation of the Bride. I trust you hear it still. There are those on the earth to-day who cared not to listen for it, and they show but the false flash of their own fancy's kindling, and ensnare the souls of men. There are those on this earth to-day who refused to hearken, when the voice spoke clearly and loudly within them, and they wander through a life of blighted hope and ruined fortune, and while their neighbors are at rest and grow strong, they are withered and shrivelled, and nothing about them seems to prosper, and it is of God's great mercy that as, like a beauteous wreck they drift along the dark waters, they are suffered "on broken pieces of the ship" to get safe to land at last.

II. *The extent of the ministerial commission is also stated in the passage, "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee." The term "Gentiles" is "nations" in the original, and is intended to include all those of whatever clime, or colour, or tongue,*

who are not of the family of Israel. You observe the specialty with which the call to the Gentiles was proclaimed. There is something here which underlies all that was individual and temporary in the case of the Apostle Paul. There is the assurance that the revelation of God was to be no longer a Jewish heritage—but a world-wide gift of grace—that the dispensation of the restrictive was to end, and the dispensation of the catholic to begin; that the light which had aforetime shone upon one favoured people, and upon them obscurely, would hereafter fling forth its rays without hindrance, broad as the firmament, and bright as the stars. And this is the genius of Christianity. It recks not of partial lordship or permitted sovereignty. It claims the empire of the world. It overleaps all boundaries, and disdains all limitations. It admits no exclusion of character, or condition, or colour. It flings over the feeblest its comfort as a seven-fold shield; and its most royal satisfactions are when it presses upon the vilest and most rebel, the welcome of forgiveness and peace. And this is your work still. You are to preach to all. Particular circumstances and church regulations may limit your sphere of action; but you are bound to minister to the Gentiles until the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in. The Revelation angel must always shake the light from his wings, as he flies through the midst of Heaven. You mistake the spirit of your calling if you deem that any are out of your parish, or beyond the pale of your mission of mercy. In the highways and hedges, in the mine, in the cell, in the lazaretto where the lepers are exiled from the world, among the wounded whom the world passes by; there, where the fools make mock at sin and the scoffers deride the godly; where the rich are haughty and the poor are sullen, where earthly law is powerless, and earthly

charity turns abashed and despondent away; there, wherever hope can find a door, or love an object, or faith an inspiration, or courage an opportunity for daring,—your Master and Lord has sent you to preach his gospel *there*.

III. *The requirements of ministerial character are also stated in the passage.* "A minister and a witness." The word minister is used in various senses in the Scripture. It is used of the ancient priesthood. "Every high-priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices." It is used of those who wait and serve. "Are they not all ministering spirits." It is used of magistrates as a term of authority. "For they are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing." It is used to express tender attention and care. Thus the apostle says of Epaphroditus, "He that ministered to my wants;" and of the Gentiles, "Their duty is also to minister to them in carnal things." All these uses of the word are expressive of some function or spirit of the ministerial office, as its obligations have fallen upon you. Do they minister who stand at the altar? You have, not indeed to offer a sacrifice, but to point to a sacrifice which has been offered once for all; a sacrifice unblemished, complete, accepted, availing for the most atrocious sin of the most atrocious sinner, and retaining its crimson through the illimitable years. Do they minister who wait and serve? You are to wait upon your ministering with an absorption of energy, and with a frugality of time; with a devotion intenser than is given to aught beside, and with a patience which wearies not, though the clouds are dark and though the harvest tarry. Do they minister who have authority to adjudicate and to reprove?

You are called to the oversight of the church, to reprove the erring, and to quicken the languid, to chide the careless, and to hearten the faint of soul, not arrogantly, as lords over God's heritage,—but as those to whom a stewardship has been committed, whose responsibilities you may not transfer, and of whose rule a strict account will be exacted by the Master at last. Do they minister who abound in loving watchfulness? You must have, as one of the chiefest qualifications for your office, a loving sympathy for sinners, that yearning human tenderness which will shed its balm of spikenard upon all, by which the erring will not be harshly chided, which will moan over the unrepentant and the prodigal. "My brother! ah! my brother!" and which feels as though it would not spare, were sinners but reached and saved—the costly offerings of the life and of the blood.

Then you are not only to be the minister, but the "witness." Paul was chosen to testify of the things which he had seen, of the rise and spread of the new faith, based upon the death and resurrection of Jesus, and of those matters of fuller revelation which were yet to be vouchsafed to him, but his testimony embraced not only matters of fact but matters of experience. He told of the wondrous circumstances of his own conversion, of the influences which had touched his heart, and changed his life, and had brought him into those new relations which glorified existence with the inspirations of the immortality beyond. This is indeed the chief idea which the word "witness" embodies. A witness speaks of something which he knows, has realized, has felt; and you, when you go forth as God's messengers, in His name, and with His tidings, must be able to speak thus: that the

heart may answer to the history, and that the truth, enlivened by your experience of its power, and leaping from your lips in words of living fire, may be "commended to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Listen to the witness as His testimony rings out upon men. "That burden of sin of which I speak to you, and from which I urge you to be delivered, I have felt it, and its load was intolerable to be borne. That crushing sense of guilt and wrath from which I implore you to flee, its terrors fell upon my soul. That atonement of Jesus by which the sky has been cleared, and the sepulchre opened, and the whole future been made radiant with promise,—I have trusted in it, and it avails for me. That voice of kindness to which I invite you to listen,—it fell upon my tempest-tossed spirit, like a hush upon vexed billows of ocean, and there was a great calm. That hope which I would fain inspire within you,—my own soul is aglow with its brightness, and rests in the perfection of beauty which it anticipates and unfolds. That salvation which I preach, I feel, and through the infinite lovingness of Jesus you may feel it too. My soul yearns so tenderly for sinners, that I would fain enwrap the world, as in the arms of the covenant angel, and bear them with me from the peril to the prize." Ye see your calling, brethren. Thus, ministers and witnesses, you are to speak to dying men; your voice clear as a clarion in its summons and warning, your heart glowing as a seraph in the fulness of worship and love.

IV. *The compass of ministerial teaching is embraced in the words.* Man's helplessness, the method of his recovery, and the completeness and freedom of the deliverance wrought out for him; the proclamation of these is the life-

work of the Christian preacher. In their Divine fulness, and in their Divine *order*, he is to declare them unto men. "To open their eyes." The world is represented in the scripture, as in darkness, and content in darkness. As when the night wraps all things in its embrace, we close our eyes for slumber, with no sense of constraint, nor fear of harm, so men live in moral darkness, as their soul's congenial element. As when some anodyne hath sealed the eye-lids, the sleeper is not awakened by the morning, but prolongs through the glare and the tumult his desperate repose, so in the moral world the eyes are closed even amid the noon-tide of privilege; "the light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not." The minister's earliest duty, therefore, is to convince men of their need and of their danger. The Pharisee mind is yet as haughty in its disbelief, and the Pharisee lips will be as indignant in their denial as in the days of the incarnate Saviour. "This people which knoweth not the law are cursed, but we, rigid and reputable; we, who from the minarets of the temple cast our cold bright glances upon the worshippers below, and have so much keener and more sweeping vision, are *we* blind also?" You will have to answer in the words of the Master. "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye *say*, we see, therefore your sin remaineth." Dear brethren, you will meet with instances of this marvellous self-deception in your every-day intercourse with the world. Men will ask you to credit them with Christianity, who have never felt the plague of their own hearts, and are therefore ignorant of the foundation fact on which all the scheme of atonement rests. — Men will dream of heaven through a lifetime, who have never acquired the faintest measure of preparation for its enjoyment. You will have many in your

congregations, spiritual somnambulists, walking abroad through the darkness, with wide-open eyes, and a ghastly semblance of life, who will tread with seeming safety upon a giddy parapet, from which, waking, they would shrink with horror. Now, how are you to deal with these men? When they cry peace, are you to chime in with the obsequious echo? Are you to croon out the lullaby that their disastrous slumber may continue? Will you hesitate to shock and startle them if they may thereby be saved? Would you rather they be destroyed than disturbed? Shall you forbear to probe the wound, because modern empirics tell you that the patient must be healed first, and feel the smart and the stinging afterwards? NO, a thousand times. No! If the soul is not aroused to its need it will never flee to its Saviour. If the eyes are closed to the realities of their own condition, there will be no imploring for the light, for the loss of it will never be felt, and it will stream forth like the sunlight on a sepulchre, which wakes no radiance on the faces of the dead. Your duty, your first duty—Christ has told you so from heaven—is to “open” the world’s eyes; Christ sends you to preach repentance and remission of sins, to preach repentance *in order to* remission of sins; and in spite of gainsayers who will scoff at your bigotry, and false teachers who will counterwork your toil, I charge you, pause not in your Gospel warning, but let the words come, tenderly but bravely, upon the ears of all men, with your honest eyes straight flashing into theirs.—“Except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise perish.”

“And to turn them from darkness unto light.” So soon as the disease is felt you are to be ready with the announcement of the remedy; when the eyes, long accustomed to the darkness, are impressed

with desires for the superior element, you are to exhibit the light for which they long. Light is the great scriptural emblem of knowledge, of favour, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all excellencies cluster, and through whom alone the knowledge of God can be imparted, and the favour of God shine forth upon the soul. Hence to turn men from darkness to light is to bring them to Christ, to instruct them in the knowledge, and to introduce them to the favour of God. And this is the glorious privilege to which, under the name of work, you are called. Formerly ignorant of the character of God, and of their own relations to Him, of their personal sinfulness and the death in which it is naturally "finished," of the work of Christ and its magnificent provision, it is yours to pour into their wistful ears the "truth which maketh free"—heralds of the "true Light, which, coming into the world, enlighteneth every man." Formerly under the condemnation of a broken law, their life a stupid security or a feverish searching after rest, with darkness in the destiny, and remorse, an avenging spectre, preying upon the unreal joy; it is yours to bear them tidings of pardon, of a peace that is deep as an ocean, and of a hope that is golden as a sunset, of pleasures, whose perennial raptures leave no sting behind, and of the Saviour whose love makes all the present radiant, and the fulness of whose unutterable salvation they must die to know. From darkness to light! What a comprehensive and blessed transition! The mind, enchained formerly by a long bondage in error, receiving intellectual freedom, its questions answered in the light of the word and of the throne; the conscience, once an unfaithful guardian, bribed into slumber, or seared by the neglect of years, now wise to discriminate, and quick to reprove, a warder on the towers of the spiritual citadel, watch-

ful as "in the sight of God." The heart awhile ago condemned and agonized, now vocal with the joy of recovery, and happy in the consciousness of rest. Dear brethren, does it not thrill your souls—is it not to you a compensation for the hardships, and in some sort for the responsibilities of the ministry—that you are permitted to bear to your perplexed and sorrowing fellows, these glad tidings of great joy? There is no loftier honour on earth, no dearer task could be committed to archangel hands, than to be "the messenger of the covenant" to a world of guilty men.

Thus aroused to a sense of guilt, and comforted with the tidings of pardon, it is your mission further to turn men instrumentally "*from the power of Satan unto God.*" They are to be no longer under the rule of the evil one. Theirs is to be not only an emotional but a practical godliness. They are to receive not only the sense of light and of grace, but of freedom and mastery over sin. The great purpose of Christ's coming is declared to be "to bless you by turning every one of you from his iniquities;" and the practical deliverance from the power of sin is as essential to the gospel, and must be as strenuously insisted on as the removal of the curse. The faith indeed, which does not vindicate its existence by a holy life, is profitless and dead. If a man comes to me, boastful of the treasures of a rich experience, of a comfort so constant that he fears no penalty, of a peace that flows like a river, of a close and enrapturing fellowship with God, how am I to judge him? I am no discerner of spirits. I cannot enter into the secrets of the inner man. All that is between him and his God is a sealed book to me, a hieroglyph, which I possess but one cipher to unravel. That cipher is his outward life. Out in the broad world, in the

haunts and homes of men, this is ground which is common to both of us. I ask of his habits, of his conversation, of his dealings with his fellows. Do they bear out his profession? Is his life a sermon which the scoffers cannot gainsay? Does he speak honestly and act rightly, though loss and shame should follow speech and deed? Is his piety always fragrant, like the violet which flings its odours as freely over swamp and hedge-row as in the Parian vases of the patrician household? If so, I honour him, I will accredit his experience, I will gladly sit at his feet; but if his life be otherwise—if there be no exemplary testimony in the record of every day—then I have a right to say that the faith which shows no fruits above, has very slender roots below. He may speak as he pleases about the intimacy of his fellowship with God, but if when he walks among men no glory lingers on his countenance, it is difficult to believe that he has been on the summit of the mountain at all. See to it, my brethren, that you preach a thoroughly practical gospel. There is no Antinomianism in the Apostle's utterances. There must be none in yours. In these days especially, when theoretical acquaintance with the truth is so generally diffused, there must be downright earnestness on this matter. There is no merit in good works, if a man could pile them, like another Babel, to the heavens; but if life be spared, and opportunity given, there can be no salvation without them, for they are the fruits of a living faith, the forthputting of the new nature, and the evidence of a good conscience toward God. Holiness to the Lord, as in the ancient prophecy, must be "upon the bells of the horses" by which the chariot of salvation is drawn; and in the city to which the chariot speeds, there can "in no wise enter anything that defileth, or that loveth or maketh a lie."

The "fruit" of every day must be "holiness," if the glorious "end" is to be everlasting life.

But a word can be spoken upon the *results* which are promised from a faithful ministry to those who hearken to its message. How rich and rare the promise! that they may receive "forgiveness of sins." This is the earliest blessing which you are empowered to proclaim. You may proclaim it *freely*, the removal of the blighting curse which shadows the lives of men, the lifting from the spirit of that sore condemnation which blanches the cheek of the stout-hearted, and loosens the limbs of the warrior into a palsy of terror. You may proclaim it *fearlessly*, for the law is vindicated, and there is no weak yielding of claim, nor caprice of indiscriminating tenderness; but pardon for a REASON, a reason which justice sanctions, and in which mercy triumphs. You may proclaim it *unto all*, for the blessing has gone forth widely as the curse; and there is none so foul, so feeble, so remote, so leprous, as to be beyond the reach of the bountiful provision. Oh, most enviable work in which man can ever be engaged, to be set apart to proclaim forgiveness of sins! Cry aloud and spare not, brethren, it is worth some waste of lungs and labour. Pardon! Sound it, out through all the avenues of this vast Necropolis of a world, that the dead souls may hear it and live. Pardon! Let the echoes of it roll up the far arches of the sky, that seraphs may gather from it loftier praise and sweeter song, for the most exquisite melody of angel harps is struck yet to that old, old story: "This my son was dead, and is alive again, and was lost, and is found."

The words swell into still higher privilege. A man may be forgiven,—and forsaken;—brought out of prison, but left to starve or to steal;—saved from the penalty

of wrong-doing, but exposed to evil associates and evil forces as before; but the gospel which Christ has provided, and which you are to preach, is a complete gospel. It not only confers forgiveness of sins, but "inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith that is in Christ." The same love which lifts the curse, renews the right spirit within, and by the same instrumentality too, for they are "sanctified by faith." Brethren, it is yours to lead your people into this promised land. Through all the wilderness of Midian, through many an Amalekite ambush, and Philistine battle, you are to guide and urge them into this Canaan of perfect love, where sin is beaten out of the field, where Satan is bruised in the head of his power, and trampled under the feet of the believer; where the motions to evil are repressed as soon as they rise; and where the soul rests in the great calm of a sufficient atonement, of a complete Saviour, of a hallowed conscience, and of a God pacified from His righteous anger, and opening out, not in wrath but in blessing, His Godhead's deepest sea. And then what remains but the "inheritance." Oh, aptly chosen word! "Not by might, nor by power," comes an inheritance. It must come by birth or by adoption. Boasting is excluded. Merit hath no place. There have been cases in which the rich or royal sire has died before his child was born, and broad lands awaited the heir who should enjoy them, and regal dignity has sat idly upon the infant of an hour. It is so that we enter heaven. The holiest amongst us has no other claim; the vilest amongst us needs no other plea. "We have received the *adoption* of sons." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy, hath be-

gotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

And now, dear brethren, Christ has called you to this, to be ministers and witnesses unto Him, to preach these truths, and to hold out these blessings before the people of your charge. Who is sufficient for these things? The mind may well quail before the prospect of responsibility so solemn. But there, close before you, very near you, is Christ, whispering the watchword and the consolation together, "Faith that is in me." Behold the Divine man! Listen to the incarnate God! What was the burden of the Old Testament? Through rite and rubric, in the heart of that old Leviticus lay the unchanging duty of Faith. "*Trust* ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." How grandly does Christ take all these ancient precepts, and appropriate them to Himself. "Believe also on me." These precepts spake of *me*. These promises centred in *me*. These seers predicted of *me*. I am the Shiloh of Jacob, and the Star of Balaam, and the Desire of Nations, and the Ancient of Days, and the Angel of the Covenant, and the Jehovah of your fathers. "Ye call me Master and LORD, and ye say well, for so I am." I claim your obedience. I invite your faith. Cast your burden upon me, I will bear it. Say to the mountain in my name, Be thou removed, and all your difficulties shall vanish from your presence. Work for Me in patience, and hope, and singleness, and faith, and I will receive you into heaven, and will summon the angels to the coronation of the "man whom the king delighteth to honour."

It is in this attitude that the voice should find you. Like the Scots at Bannockburn you must kneel before you fight, and the prayer must make ready for the victory. There, in

the stillness of your hearts, midst busy multitudes alone and  
humble before God,

Let your quiet spirit hear  
His comfortable voice,  
Never in the whirlwind found,  
Nor where earthquakes rock the place,  
Still and silent is the sound,  
The whisper of His grace.

Dear Brethren, do you hear it? Then "rise and stand upon your feet," for the world's heart is faint, and truth is feeble, and error is strong, and men wail out of the darkness for the light. Rise and stand upon your feet, brave against the scoff of the sinful and the blast of battle; bold amid conventional hypocrisies and guarded lies; fearless of the western Brahmin's insolence, and the western Mollah's scorn. Rise and stand upon your feet, preachers of righteousness, with eyes brimming over with tears of pity, and hearts so warm and so large that they swell to the measure of the Saviour's. Rise and stand upon your feet, gird yourselves in the strength of the Lord who sends you for manful and valiant service; swear on the altar of the cross eternal war with sin in all its forms; render yourselves wholly to your appointed service, as befits the Christian warrior. Your Captain summons you to the field, and the church which equips and sustains you, bids you go with a blessing and a prayer.

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THE  
SACRIFICE AND SESSION OF CHRIST.

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A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE ADELAIDE STREET WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH, TORONTO,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 5TH, 1870,

BY THE

REV. GERVASE SMITH M.A.

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# THE SACRIFICE AND SESSION OF CHRIST.

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"BUT THIS MAN, AFTER HE HAD OFFERED ONE SACRIFICE FOR SIN FOR EVER, SAT DOWN ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD; FROM HENCEFORTH EXPECTING TILL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE HIS FOOTSTOOL."—HEB. X. 12, 13.

THESE words are nearly at the close of the doctrinal portion of this Epistle, and form part of the Apostle's general conclusion as to the supremacy of Messiah's priesthood. The preceding chapter is devoted to a subject on which it was necessary to dwell, if he intended his argument to have weight with the Hebrews, viz., the inefficacy of Levitical sacrifices to take away sin. On this their views were most erroneous. Well nigh indelibly was the notion fixed that these offerings were availing to the removal of sin, both as to its guilt and penalty. Whoever, therefore, should undertake to supersede them, must be able to show with the force of demonstration that they were insufficient. Nor are we surprised at the tenacity with which the Jews clung to their ritual. They had been educated in the conviction of its

efficacy, so that St. Paul's first duty is to remove their wrong impressions, and to put before them in clearest light the inadequacy of that ritual as a spiritual agency.

The commencement of this chapter may be regarded both as a supplement to that which precedes and an introduction to this which follows. "For the law having a shadow," &c., (v. 1). In the law there was a *shadow* of gospel blessing, but it was a mere sketch—the first pencillings of the artist shewing in rude outline his future work. There was only an *adumbration*, not a "full image," as is here intimated, of the good now offered to us; so that even the offerings of the great day of Atonement, which were regarded as the most efficacious, could not take away the guilt, nor ease the conscience of the temple worshipper. In proof of this St. Paul refers to the frequency with which they had to be offered. "For then," putting his proof in the form of a question, "would they not have ceased to be offered?" If they were perfect they needed not repetition. "Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience," or consciousness, "of sins. But," because of their imperfection, "in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year," for as oft as the offerings are presented is there an implication of guilt. "For it is not possible," &c. Theirs was blood of *another* nature, of an *inferior* nature, of a nature that had not committed and could not commit sin. So that while that blood cleansed the worshipper from *legal, ceremonial* defilement, it could not remove moral impurity. The Apostle then draws an important inference. "Wherefore when he," Christ, "cometh," &c., (v. 5-9). "The amount of this reasoning," is thus stated:—"Ritual sacrifices for sin are not accepted by God as sufficient to remove the penalty due to the moral

turpitude of sin. But the obedience of the Messiah unto death, the offering of his body on the cross, is sufficient and fully supersedes the other sacrifices." The whole argument is now brought to a close by a pertinent and convincing contrast, "And every *high priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices,*" &c. "But *this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat,*" &c.

#### I. THE SACRIFICE, and, II. THE SESSION OF CHRIST.

##### I. "But this man . . . offered," &c.

The person who offers this sacrifice is Jesus, "the High Priest of our profession." The word "man" is in our translation, but there is nothing in the passage to mark distinctly either humanity or divinity. It is evidently put antithetically with the term "priest" in the preceding verse. The Jewish priest offered ritual sacrifice, but this man—this priest—offered the one sacrifice for sins.

1. *Mark its Nature.*—The word is of frequent use in the Scriptures, and has three generic significations.

There is the *Christian's sacrifice* of heart and life, which is both eucharistical and dedicatory: the *Levitical sacrifice*, offered at various times, and on specified occasions; and the *vicarious and perfect sacrifice of Christ*.

This is the offering of His own life as an atonement to satisfy the claims of justice on account of sins committed, and as a provision for the future and final salvation of the sinner. There are two things required in a proper sacrifice: it must be *voluntary* and *actually offered up*. The offering is sometimes said to be His own *body* and *blood*, sometimes His *soul*, and sometimes and pre-eminently it is said to be

*Himself.* This was done *voluntarily*. There was no absolute constraint. "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power," &c. The Jewish crowds, headed by the priests and Pharisees, might clamour for His death, but a divine volition would have struck them dumb. An infuriated band *did* once attempt to seize Him before His hour was come, but by one glance of His eye they were smitten to the ground. That being, whose omnific word stilled in a moment the foamings of the Galilean sea, could in as short a space have calmed the tumult of an excited people. With an entire freedom from obligation, except such as His own benevolence imposed, did He lay down His life for a guilty world. In some sort this may be called a *compact* into which the Father and Son voluntarily entered, the one undertaking the work of redemption, and the other engaging a successful issue, and vast revenues of praise and glory. Jesus says, "Lo I come," in the fulfilment of this covenant made, "to do thy will, O God." And the Father saith, "Therefore, will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." So that "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, now crowned with glory and honour."

This sacrifice was *actually offered*. In the proper and ordinary acceptation of the term, *Jesus died*. We reject all the glosses and periphrases which have been made of and put upon this word. Define it as you please. State the "antecedent causes" and "signs following" as you think fit, we aver that they will apply to the death of Christ upon the cross as strictly as they will apply to the death of any human being. He is said to be killed or slain, to perish or be destroyed, to be cut off, to be slaughtered, to be sacrificed, all which expressions imply that he endured a true, real, pro-

per death. The by-standers, both enemies and friends, concurred in this belief, for the one uttered a shout of savage joy at the consummation of their cruelty, and the other "were ready to perform their last offices of kindness in procuring a decent interment of His body." The sun in mourning was proof of its reality. The deserted graves, the trembling ground, the enfissured rock, all nature in upheavement and disorder is our confirmation. You do not suppose that the soldiers were influenced by pity to their victim when they refrained from those acts of violence with which they visited the malefactors. They "brake not his legs," because their murderous purpose was already accomplished. Their object was His death, and when that object was secured, even their blood-thirstiness was quenched.

This death was both *presignified* and *predicted*. That the Levitical sacrifices pointed to Christ is certain from the facts that the New Testament writers often use them as representations of gospel blessing, that merely corporeal defilement needed not to be washed away by blood, and that the conformity between the two is so minute and exact, that it cannot be accounted for in any other way. The train of prophets, with ever-brightening distinctness, announced the fact. "But those things," says St. Peter, "which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled." John the Baptist, as the forerunner of our Lord, designated Him the sacrificial "Lamb." The Saviour himself made many references to His death. So that we have no doubt as to the reality of the sacrifice offered: a sacrifice possessing virtue which extends in every direction and meets every case, perfuming a desert world with its fragrance, and producing a rich harvest of millennial glory.

2. *The specific character of this sacrifice.*—It is “a sacrifice for sins.” The word *sin* is used to denote not only the *act* of transgression, but the *punishment* due to its committal, and also the *person* by whom its penalty is endured. Some of the ritual sacrifices were called “sin-offerings,” *i.e.*, offerings as a punishment due to sin. So concerning the Saviour’s atonement: “Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,” *i.e.*, liable to its deserts. “For he hath made him to be *sin*”—exposed to the punishment of sin—“for us who knew,” &c. The *vicarious* character of sacrifice is that of the text. All who deny the divine nature of Christ set themselves, most consistently, against this doctrine. A peculiar atonement destroys altogether the Socinian theory. It is not without reason that the friends of manhood and truth maintain so strenuously the doctrine of this passage. It is our life.

The most prominent thought in expiatory sacrifice is that of *substitution*. A question arises, therefore, which should ever be answered by reverent lips. Is it righteous or unrighteous to offer atonement by proxy? Is it, or is it not, unjust to the sufferer? The objection has been raised: “Why should God transfer the penalty of the guilty to the innocent? Since the justice of the punishment must arise from the demerit of the delinquent, the punishment can in justice be inflicted only there where the demerit is; and if our Saviour was no sinner, neither ought he in justice to have been a sufferer?” The objector seems to forget that the *principle* of expiation is acted upon in every civilized society, and embodied in the concerns of daily life. That one man may become surety for another is palpable, and if the one fail in the discharge of his obligation, no one questions the right of the other to require of the surety the fulfilment of his bond. So in the law of nations. Hostages in war, whose lives are

offered as guarantees for the fulfilment of acts by their countrymen, are not said to be treated unjustly, if, on the breach of treaty, their lives are sacrificed. The objection as to the injustice of substitution vanishes, if the sacrifice have these three marks upon it:—"1. That the party, bearing the punishment of others, do it by his own consent. 2. That he have the right thus to dispose of himself; and, 3. That the *ends* of punishment be as effectually answered by such a transfer of it as they could have been by inflicting it upon the principals themselves. Suppose full consent, and the party suffering cannot receive wrong; suppose full power of consent, and no other party receives wrong; suppose the ends of penal laws as effectually served by such an expedient, and the public receives no wrong." That all these marks are upon the sacrifice of Christ there is no doubt, so that without hesitation we accept and embrace and cling to this atonement which has been made "for the sins of the world."

The evidence of its vicariousness we trace retrogressively. The statements of the Apostle's are strong and convincing; with a freshness and power known only to inspiration, do they discourse of the sufferings and death of Christ; and of all the features of the atonement there is none upon which they insist more strenuously than the one before us. But the life of our Lord furnishes abundant proof. What make you of that mental conflict, of those soul agonies, of the internal and hidden struggle alternating in its cause between heaven and hell; of those mysterious pangs, sometimes inflicted by the divine and loving Father, and sometimes by the concentrated malignity of devils? Is there a human being so fallen on earth, or a spirit so blasted in the bottomless pit, that would even insinuate that these sufferings were for *His own sins*? The man would be loathed who should

say that Jesus deserved His agony. The conclusion is irresistible that He suffered *on behalf of others*,—to reconcile God and man.

The voice of prophecy on this subject is neither indistinct nor uncertain. There are many emphatic testimonies, but the mind wings itself at once to the Sun and centre of Isaiah's predictions. Here "all other glory is excluded by reason of the glory that excelleth." "Surely he hath borne," &c. (liii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12). The man has a most ungracious and unenviable propensity to cavil, who can in face of this chapter object to the death of Christ as an expiation. Every sound principle of criticism must be invaded, every sensibility of the heart must be stunned, and every dictate of common sense must be held in abeyance.

Look now at the facts of the great day of atonement as detailed in 16th chapter of Leviticus. The high priest commenced the proceedings of the day with certain personal preparations which the ritual enjoined. He then offered a bullock with special reference to his own sins and those of his family. He next cast lots upon two goats. That upon which the Lord's lot fell was slain as a sin offering. Upon the head of the scape-goat he laid his hands, confessed over it the sins of the people, and sent it away into the wilderness. In this latter ceremony is our proof of expiation. Let it be remembered that the two goats constituted the one sin offering. The scape-goat was as indispensable as the slain goat. That there was a symbolical substitution is evident from the imposition of hands. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel," &c. (Lev. xvi. 21, 22). The sins of the people were put upon and confessed over the head of the victim, and with these sins on

its head was it led away. Mark the change which this ceremony produced. The goat was both clean and perfect when brought to the priest. Immediately on the imposition of hands it was polluted. Whoever touched it was defiled, and even the man who led it away had to undergo the legal process of purification. The humiliating treatment which the scape-goat received from the people is another proof. They heaped on it contumely, they spat upon it, they pulled and clipped off its hair. And to this day do the Jews cling to the doctrine of propitiation. They are not in circumstances to keep up all the ancient ritual. But on each anniversary of this solemn day does the head of the family take a bird, and putting his hand upon it say, "Let this bird be a substitution for me, let death be allotted to it, but to me and all Israel a happy life." Its external parts are then consumed by fire, but the internal—representing sin—are exposed on the roof of the house to be carried away by the fowls of heaven, just as the scape-goat conveyed the sin of the people into the wilderness. We may also add that heathen nations are not unacquainted with this practice. The Egyptians, according to an old historian, never eat the head of a living creature; and when one was sacrificed they uttered over it a solemn execration, and prayed that all evil by falling on it might be averted from their country. If then the sacrifices of the Mosaic law were typical of Christ's atonement, and if those sacrifices are thus shown to be expiatory, it indubitably follows that this is one of the features of the death of Jesus.

A step farther back brings us to the dispensation of the Patriarchs. It is difficult to understand the objection, as raised by an orthodox Christian, that the doctrine of atonement was unknown to the world previous to the delivery of the law by Moses. The fact is on record that when the

Israelites entered Canaan, they found its population in the regular practice of offering human sacrifices ; and that these offerings were supposed to be vicarious is the teaching of inspiration, for when the prophet refers to them he asks, " Shall I give my first-born an offering *for my transgression*, the fruit of my body a *sin-offering for my soul* ?" The *notion* of expiation was in the world long before the promulgation of the law. In the book of Job there are two distinct instances of sacrifice, and in each case there is presented the peculiar victim. Noah, after his miraculous deliverance, offered not only the Eucharist, but the substitution, and the Lord " smelled a sweet odour of rest." Abel's sacrifice was for his own sin and a type of Christ. Almost as soon as man became a sinner, he was pointed to a Saviour. By some divine intimation or express command was he led to the rite of sacrifice, so that from the first days of manhood he was directed to the cross.

A few collateral remarks, in addition to the historic evidence, will close the argument. There is the *practice of heathen nations*. And let not heathen testimony be disregarded, for though neither the instincts of nature nor tradition may be looked upon as a religious rule, they may both *confirm* a higher revelation. It is confidently asserted that " throughout the world the religion of paganism maintained the expiatory power of animal sacrifice." It required that " kings and rulers should, in the event of great public calamities, devote *as a ransom to the avenging demons* the best beloved of their children *in the place* of the destruction of the whole community." One of the early Phœnician kings sacrificed in time of war his only son vicariously, and the historian adds very remarkably that persons thus devoted were sacrificed *mystically*.

The word denoting *substitution* is constantly used by the inspired writer "He died the just *for* the unjust." "He suffered *for* us." He "tasted death *for* every man." He "gave himself a ransom *for* all." He "is the propitiation *for*," &c. That this particle denotes *substitution* who can doubt? What meant the high priest by it when he said, "It is expedient that one should die *for* the people, and that the whole nation perish not?" Either Christ or the nation must suffer, and the Saviour's death is evidently regarded as a substitution for that of the people. And, finally, the innocence of the Redeemer is a powerful proof of His peculiar atonement. It was a sacrifice *for sins*. This great truth was taught by the Apostles and the Saviour himself. It was predicted by the Seers. It was set forth, not only on the solemn day of atonement, but by the more than ten thousand victims which were offered for about four thousand years. The Patriarchs beheld the cross. Noah and Job, and Abraham and Melchisedek, looked on to Calvary. The immediate offspring of our first parents were told of Jesus, and Abel brought his lamb, looking towards Zion. The practices of the Gentiles, the very terms of the Bible, and the character of Christ, are so many confirmations of the text. God was angry with the sinner. The sinner dared God's vengeance. Justice claimed satisfaction. The gleaming sword was wielded. Our Saviour met the stroke. He "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever."

3. *The sacrifice in its perfectness.*—A two-fold view of it is given. It is perfect *in its unity*, for it is *one* sacrifice. It is perfect *in its efficacy*, in that it has not to be repeated. It is "*one sacrifice for ever.*" It is *one* in opposition to the *many* sacrifices of the law. It is *for ever* in contrast with the frequent repetition of the ritual victims. The Papal

ceremony of the mass is not only *imperfect* because of repetition, but it is *sinful* in that it attempts to supersede the one complete and eternal sacrifice of Christ.

The glory of Christianity is a perfect atonement. We deny not to former dispensations a degree of glory. If our religion must be adjudged by its ritual and external services, we shall have to put it second to Judaism. It is confessed that in the routine of that economy—its ablutions, its voice of song, its fuming incense, its flowing and sprinkled blood—there was a sensuousness, an imposing magnificence and grandeur which belong not to Christianity. But is it not in this very particular that the superior glory of the gospel is manifest? Any ceremony which shall seriously impress the mind, and show the aggravation of sin, and reflect the out-beamings of mercy, may be a blessing to us. But if instead of making the impression through the senses, there is now a spiritual agency which makes its way directly to the heart, and offers pardon on simpler conditions, there surely can be no question as to which of the two is the better economy. No doubt the Jewish multitude gazed with blended reverence and joy on their high priest as he, arrayed in gorgeous robes, and bearing in his hand the reeking blood, went into the holiest to make the propitiation for sin. But is there a Christian who is not more impressed as, climbing the hill of Calvary, he beholds that sacrifice to which all other had reference, and in which all were lost; and as he thinks that without the intervention of human priest he may come at once and boldly into the holy of holies, and feel on his conscience the sprinkled blood? Those sacrifices have passed away: this is now being offered. Their blood availed only to the purifying of the flesh: this blood cleanseth from all sin.

They were chiefly for the benefit of a small nation : this for a world.

“ His blood atoned for all our race,  
And sprinkles now the throne of grace.”

## II. THE SESSION.—He “ sat down,” &c.

The incidents of the Redeemer's life are clothed with surpassing interest. No product of the imagination merely can ever rival the sublimity of fact. Works of fiction may produce a momentary thrill of pleasure, but the result is unsatisfactory. Time is lost, the imagination is intoxicated, the intellect is weakened, the heart is seduced, and this chiefly because you are brought in contact with that which is not true. The gospels are inspired histories of fact. Every successive scene of our Saviour's life more deeply rivets your attention, and as the drama nears its end you become lost in sublimest ecstasy. The events of His public life brought Him to the cross. His death was quickly followed by the resurrection. The interval between His resurrection and ascension—that glorious supplement of His earthly existence—was crowded and interspersed with interview and travel and teaching. The day of parting came—a day full of sorrow to the disciples, but of blessing to the world.

“ Cherubic legions guard him home,  
And shout him welcome to the skies.”

And then for purposes bearing upon His own glory, and the destinies of men, He entered upon His session at the right hand of the Father.

1. *The place of His session.*—“ On the right hand of God.” It is scarcely needful to say that this is one of those meta-

phors which, from consideration to human infirmity, the angel of inspiration has sanctified as the medium of communicating truth. You will not degrade the divine Being by clothing Him in human attributes. His spiritual existence knows nothing of corporeal faculties; but as those faculties are to us the representatives of thought, He condescendingly *assumes* them while He speaks to man. The *hand* is that member which is the most prominent, the most active, and is sometimes put for the whole body. The *right* hand is by habit more in exercise than the left, and thereby acquires a firmer strength. The general idea of the text is taken from royalty. The throne-room of the palace is suggested. The science of its architecture, the skill of its arrangements, and the beauty of its decorations may not be overlooked. But its living occupants arrest the attention, (for there is in the human face a study such as you meet not elsewhere), and the centre of attraction is the monarch himself. What he says is caught with eagerness, and what he does is noted and applauded. His servants stand behind him, his ministers stand around him, but the seat at his right hand is reserved for the royal heir, or the favoured guest whom "the king delighteth to honour."

There are three thoughts in this expression. The right hand is the place of *happiness*, where favours are bestowed and the guerdon is awarded. "In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are," &c. It is also the place of *power*, for in the midst of the Saviour's passion, and when the priests and scribes tempted Him with the question, "Art thou the Christ?" He replied, "Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God." It is, moreover, the place of *honour*. When Bath-sheba undertook to mediate between Adonijah and the king, she went

into Solomon's presence. "And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand."

When Christ, "who being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, had by himself purged our sins," he "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Because he submitted to the dishonour and indignities which men inflict, he is now raised to honour and power and felicity at "the right hand of God." The depth of his humiliation cannot be embodied in human language. "Though he was rich"—in all the manifested glory of the Godhead, in the dignity of divine and universal heirdom, and in the grateful ascriptions of unfallen spirits—"for our sakes he became poor," divesting Himself, not of the Deity, but of the *form* of it; reducing Himself to beggary, and descending to the lowest level of human wretchedness; exposing Himself to contumely, bondage, sufferings, death—the death of the cross, "that we," who were poor indeed, "through his poverty might be made rich" in the possession of grace on earth and glory in heaven. He ought to be exalted. The Father recognizes and ratifies His claim. All heaven in jubilant procession comes forth to meet Him as He returns from his scenes of sorrow. Some of the angels had left heaven sooner to attend Him all the way. These, as they neared the portals, chanted the request, "Lift up your heads," &c. The gates were opened, and at the point of meeting between the ascending convoy and the descending host, the choral swell was perfect. The gates were passed in triumph. Jesus was conducted to the throne, and amid rejoicing shouts

and hallelujahs, He was installed in mediatorial dignity at the right hand of God.

2. *The act of His session.*—He *sat down*, &c. Our Lord is represented as *standing* in heaven, when the holy Stephen had his glorious vision. He “looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus *standing* on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heaven,” &c. But it is believed that this is exceptional. He beheld the proto-martyr’s suffering. He had witnessed his constancy, and now that heaven was about to claim him, Stephen’s Saviour rose from his throne to assist his servant, and hand him up to the skies. But the posture in which Christ is commonly presented is that of the text. He *sat down*. The expression implies the *completion of His work on earth*. He came into the world for a special purpose, and when that purpose was accomplished, He returned to heaven. One part of His mission was to introduce and reveal the gospel as the perfection of former economies, and that he fulfilled. Another was to present in His own life an example of toil and suffering, and this he did. But the emphatic purpose was to give Himself a sacrifice for sins, and when He ascended into heaven the offering was complete. His very posture is that of perfection. The expression “*for ever*,” which we have applied to His atonement, is sometimes associated with his session. He “*for ever sat down on the right hand of God*.” The notion that his work is not complete, and that he must leave the mediatorial throne for earth again to battle with his adversaries till they are all subdued, is contradicted here. If you are expecting Him to do something more for your salvation, or the salvation of the world than He has already done, you will be deceived. Indeed

what more can you ask Him to do? He has died for you. He has given his gospel to you. He has purchased the Spirit's grace to help you. The whole machinery of your salvation is complete. It only wants well working. There will never be any addition to it. Not another wheel will ever be set in motion. If you are not saved by this method, you will not be saved at all. And to show that every part of His work was accomplished, and, as it would seem, to forbid any farther expectations, Jesus took his seat upon the throne; and never will he leave it till he comes to judge the world.

There is in this word the thought of *rest*. "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day," &c. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," &c. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business." When, however, the work was done, the glory came. The toil was followed by the rest. He wandered up and down the earth, but He *sat down* in heaven.

This is, moreover, the *posture of the Judge*. Solomon says, "A king that sitteth on the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes." And the prophet declares that "in mercy shall the throne be established, and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness."

Jesus is our king. All power is given to Him in heaven and on earth. He now sitteth above the water floods and reigneth King for ever. The government of the world is on His shoulder. Every event of human existence is under His judicial eye. His sceptre guides and controls, and overrules, and there is nothing, great or small, which is not made tributary to the final issue. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the highest, and the Lord God

shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house," &c.

3. *The period of His session.*—"Till his enemies," &c. By a gracious blending of His interests with ours, the enemies both of the one and the other, He has undertaken to subdue. They may be arranged in three classes.

The first is *sin*, both in itself and its multiplied manifestations. It is of itself darkness, impurity, unrighteousness; and standing opposed to the light and holiness and justice of Jehovah, it is adverse to God and inimical to man. Whether you regard its working in each human heart, or its more palpable characteristics in the irreligious systems which disfigures and debase our world, you want no farther proof of its enmity, and no more powerful reason for its conquest.

*Satan* is Christ's enemy and ours. He is both tempter and destroyer. As "prince of this world," he is a tyrant; and as king of hell, he is the dread avenger.

*Death* is our foe. The monster gained a fearful victory at first, but his overthrow is predicted, and his destruction will be marked.

These enemies shall be made *His footstool*. The Apostle says precisely the same thing in another epistle. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Although the ceremony is not observed in modern warfare, it is well known as an ancient, eastern custom. When the five kings were brought out of the cave, "Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings; and they came near and put their feet upon the necks of them. And Joshua said to them, fear

not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage, for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight." The expression implies that there will be a severe conflict. They must be *made* His footstool. They are not craven, coward adversaries. They will not capitulate without a struggle. Don't expect that the victory will be gained without a battle. But then, the more determined the opposition, and the hotter the contest, and the more dreadful the carnage, will be more signal the defeat, and more glorious the triumph.

Sin will be conquered. Each human heart shall have the usurper expelled from it, and become the fitting throne of its rightful king. All devil and men-made systems of irreligion will be annihilated. There is no possibility of their improvement; they never can coalesce with Christianity. They must be destroyed and give place to the Saviour's gospel.

Satan is also a doomed adversary, for Christ was a partaker of flesh and blood, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death," &c. And death itself shall also die. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." "O death, I will be thy plague. O grave, I will be thy destruction."

See the final struggle between death and the Christian. The monster levels a dart at the good man, and it takes effect. The poison of that dart circulates through the system. Disease produces a rapid decay, and the time is approaching when death and the Christian shall stand face to face. They approach each other: the one with horrid and malignant visage, and the other with brow serene and heaven shining in his countenance. Now there is the hand-to-hand encounter. All hell urge on their chief.

A voice of more than earthly music whispers courage to the dying man. Another stroke and another groan and all is over. But who is conquered? The Christian? No: for he is already caught up to the throne and adorned with the crown of triumph. You do not crown the dead and reward the vanquished. The Christian lives and sings above. His days of warfare are over, and high in the favour of his Sovereign he is rewarded for ever. But look again at the scene of conflict and you see which is defeated. There is the enemy death, with all the marks of death upon him—silent, motionless, breathless. "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the," &c.

Till this conquest is universal the Saviour sits upon the throne. He does not leave the throne to come and finish the conquest, but he maintains his seat till the victory is perfect. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right," &c.

Now *mark His bearing* in the interval between his session and the final consummation, "*From henceforth expecting.*"

*What* he is expecting is already seen—the progress and perfection of that work which, as far as he is personally concerned, was completed on Calvary, and the universal subjugation of the world to himself.

"Come, then, and added to thy many crowns,  
Receive yet one as radiant as the rest,  
Due to thy last and most effectual work;  
Thy work fulfilled,—the conquest of a world."

*How* is he expecting? It is not the expectation of *listlessness*. There is nothing of indifference or carelessness in the attitude. Do not suppose that, because he finished his work on earth, and because the Father has covenanted with

him as to the final issue, he has now abandoned his office, or only holds it without duty. He is still on the throne, and with infinite wisdom and untiring exertion, is guiding and controlling and working the vast machinery of salvation. It is not the expectancy of *anger*. Because he has experienced already the malignity of his enemies, he is not influenced by a feeling of revenge, nor does he bide his time to show his anger and inflict his wrath. The wild beast in his lair watches with dreadful eye the prey, and throwing himself back on his haunches, sits expecting till the moment comes, and then with terrible howl and bound springs upon and crushes the victim. But the Messiah is full of tenderness, and prays for his relentless enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

It is not the expectation of *strategy*. The science of war aims at the largest loss of life and property by the smallest means. It goes a great way to make up a hero, if by some sudden surprise a whole battalion may be cut off. When an ambuscade is formed the soldiery crouches in its hiding-place *expecting*, and as soon as the adversary is entrapped, there are the shout and onslaught and death. But our victories are not gained by strategy. The gospel neither practices nor tolerates deceit. The Redeemer is "a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

But it is the expectation of *calm assurance*. As he sits on his throne elevation, the whole future is before his eye. He sees the progress of the past, the present position, and the final glory. There are many things going on in the world which disturb *our* quiet and excite *our* fear. In some instances the enemy seems to be gaining ground. The ark appears to be in danger, and in a moment of distrust we are ready to put forth our hand as though it needed our protec-

tion; and giving way to despondency we think everything is wrong. If we sat by the side of Jesus, and could see with his Omniscient eye, how different would be our feelings! In all probability the raw recruit and the officer who had not before seen service, would look very differently upon the parts and points of an engagement to the Field Marshal, who has taken his stand upon the hill, and has the whole view before him. They are down in the ravine, or the redoubt, and see little but their immediate position. But their General sees all, and expecting that they will do their duty, he calmly expects the victory.

Jesus is thus expecting. He sees not yet all things put under him, but he sees that they will be, and that the process of subjection is now going on. His expectation is not altered by circumstances. When in any particular locality the work is making rapid progress, it is what he expects. When reverses come, and infidelity or worldliness sweeps the nations as a flood, it disturbs not the divinity of his calmness. He moves not from his position, but still sits expecting. There is on his mien the impression of assurance, there is on his lips the expression of confidence.

It is moreover the expectancy of *resolution*. You look with pity, not to say contempt, upon the craven spirit who fears to breast the tide, or cowardly yields himself as a prey to circumstance. You would not claim acquaintance with the man who is unwilling to meet a difficulty. And if you speak of resolution as an attribute of manhood, you will not deny it to him who has restored to manhood all the good it has, and who is moreover "King of kings, and Lord of lords." The resolution has been taken, and it will neither be revoked nor annulled. "To him every knee shall bow."

The passion of men and the hatred of devils, the wickedness of the world and the malignity of hell, the attacks of enemies and the faithlessness of friends—they avail nothing, nothing. "These mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." Those who will not bend must break. By love or by judgment there must be an universal submission. "Then cometh the end when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power; and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

And now comes the question, *from whom* is he expecting? We apprehend that this specially refers to those to whom he has committed the responsibility of this work, and who are in some sort accountable for it. Not that any unfaithfulness of ours will interfere with the great consummation, but we may retard it. His expectation rests, not upon the Holy Spirit, for his agency is secured and certain; not upon his adversaries, for as far as he thinks proper, he will employ them for his glory whether they will or not; but upon his Church, and upon every member of it. It is not too much to say that even the smallest duty imposed upon the humblest Christian has its intimate bearing upon the salvation of the whole world. Each moment of your history the Saviour's eye is fixed on you. He looks expecting. He has linked your effort with his own victory, and his own victory will not be complete till you have had a full opportunity of taking your share in it. In the midst of your usefulness you are pushing on the triumph. In your supineness and indifference you are holding back the chariot. He

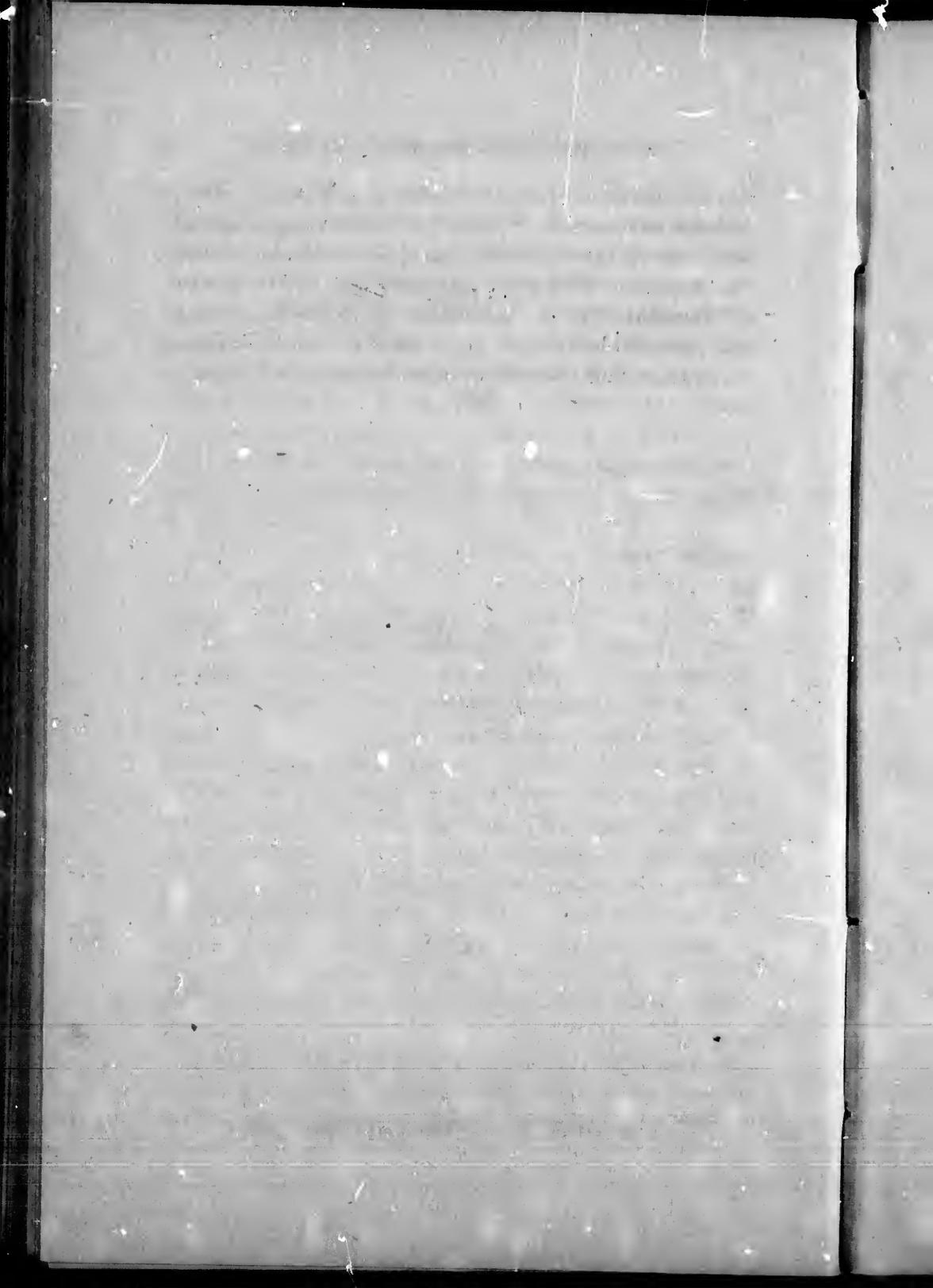
has commanded you to cultivate the work of personal holiness as a preparation for future usefulness ; and he now sits, expecting your entire sanctity. He has set before you different spheres of duty, but all are associated with his purposes of grace. He lays upon the mind of one the care of the young, to another he commits the sick and needy ; and now having shown you your duty, he sits on the throne expecting you to fulfil it. If you hesitate or refuse, the world's happiness and the Saviour's claims are kept back to that extent. You do a damage to the interests of humanity and tarnish your Master's honour every moment you are not at the post of duty.

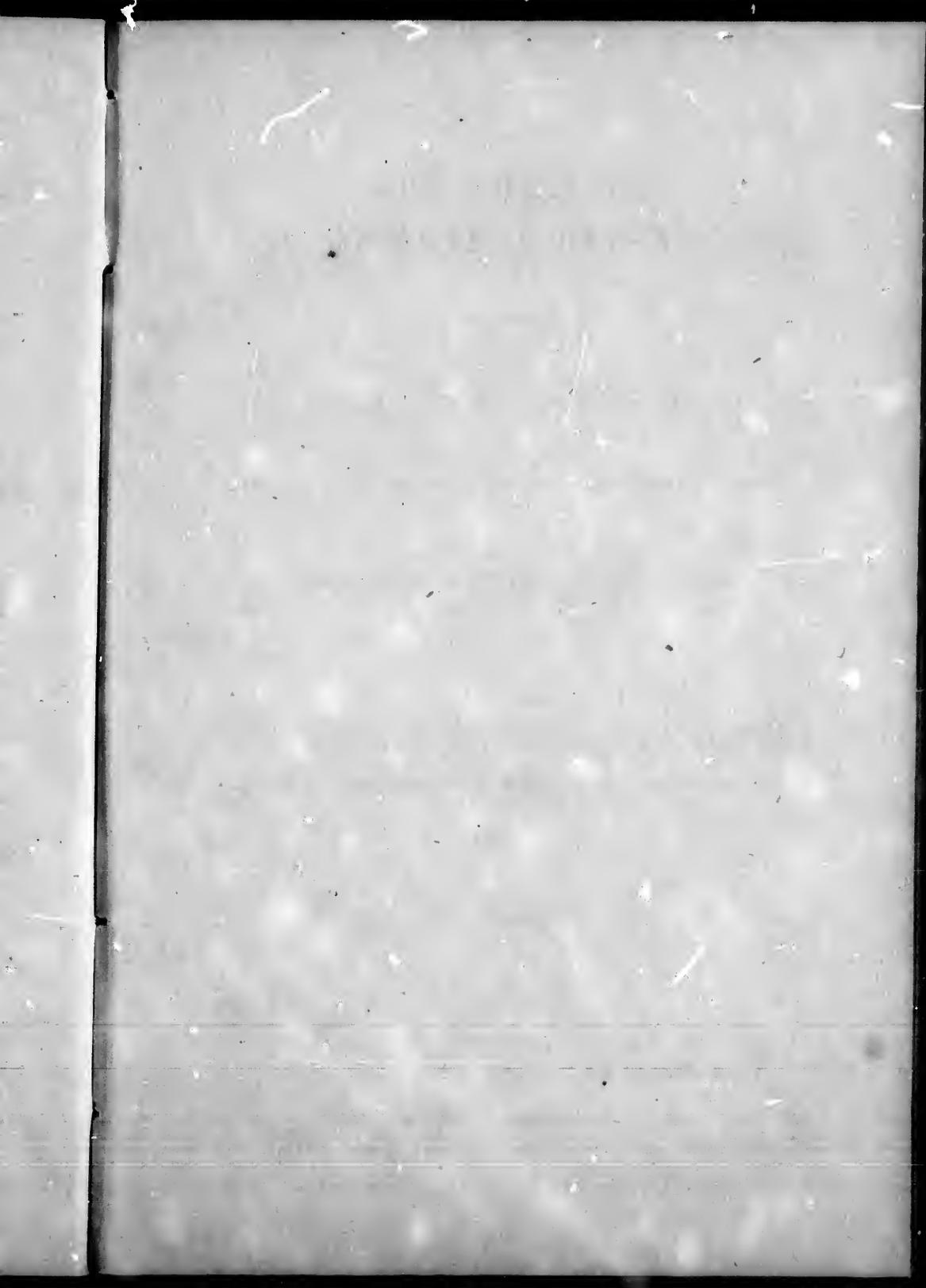
It may be that He has given to some young man a commission to preach His gospel. You are called to go into "the highways and hedges" of your own neighbourhood, or to give up the comforts of home and the privileges of your fatherland, and preach among the heathen "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Your compliance is interwoven with his great designs. He is now looking upon you and expecting you to do the work. Do you object? He is still expecting. If you won't go, he will send another ; but that will not lighten your responsibility. Who can conceive the agony which will be realized at the judgment day on the review of opportunity misimproved and duty neglected? Who can think, without a shudder, of souls destroyed and the earth's great jubilee retarded, because we were unfaithful to our trust and disobedient to the heavenly call. "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

But on the other hand, who can express the joy of the humble and devoted Christian, when at the last tribunal he looks upon the past! He knows that there is no merit in

his life, except as Jesus has made it meritorious. But he sees his unworthy efforts joined to the Saviour's mediation, and from the lips of Him who spoke his pardon, he now hears the sentence, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."









THE CHRISTIAN  
LAW OF MUTUAL DEPENDENCE.

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A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE ELM STREET WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH,  
TORONTO,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 5TH, 1870,

BY THE

REV. J. W. LINDSAY, D.D.,

DELEGATE FROM THE M. E. CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES, TO THE WESLEYAN  
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BY THE

REV. J. W. LINDSAY, D.D.,

PREACHED ON SABBATH EVENING, JUNE 5TH, 1870, IN THE ELM STREET CHURCH,  
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“FOR NONE OF US LIVETH TO HIMSELF.”—ROMANS XIV. 7.

WE are all placed under a law of mutual dependence, unerring in its operations, yet liable to be affected by so many different forces, that we do not always observe the regularity of its sequences. By unseen bonds we are connected with others so constituted, that we give and receive influences for good or evil continually.

God has ordained the social relations of life. He “has set the solitary in families.” His delight is in the habitable parts of the earth, and the nations are appointed of God.

From the highest to the lowest there are sympathies and interests which show relationship and dependence. All necessary one to the other, if there is to be a harmonious working of the whole. The eye cannot say unto the hand

I have no need of thee, nor, again, the head to the foot, I have no need of thee. If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; if one member be honored, all rejoice with it.—1 Cor. xii. 21.

No one can isolate himself from his fellow-men. A perverted conscience may have led men to make the attempt, but in their very efforts they have shown both that they needed human society and were affected by it. And have shown that their fellow-men needed them and were influenced by them even in their apparent isolation. In the early ages of the Christian Church there was a St. Simon dwelling on a lonely column, day and night, in solitary meditation, with no word to comfort nor cheer the thousands that were perishing in their sins. A St. Anthony, of wealthy and noble parentage, bestows all his goods to feed the poor, yea, is ready to give his body to be burned, and yet, with great harvest-fields all around him, waiting for the reaper, he turns to the solitude of the desert, and for twenty years hardly seen by his fellow-men, holds imaginary conflicts with imaginary fiends. These mistaken men in their isolation were wielding an influence potent in their own age; were sending out, to act upon the Church, a great moral force which has not spent itself during all these past centuries. They almost peopled the solitude of the desert of Upper Thebes with deluded followers. Though a lofty, self-denying spirituality prompted the founders, how soon the system degenerated into corrupt asceticism!

How closely the past is connected with the present! The history of the race shows that no generation has in itself the power to develop its own culture. Nations receive their wide inheritance, not legacies of territory, of institutions,

laws, literature, noble deeds of ancestors. The present gathers into itself the results of the past.

"No man liveth to himself." He has before him a thousand influences that go to model his life and develop his character. In him the culture of the great may centre. The men who lived ages ago are modifying his thoughts, are making his creeds. There is no independent isolated life. Man is to-day the product of the past! he is a factor of the future, setting in motion forces that shall go on producing their results. Whatever he says and does cannot be inoperative. All his acts and words have become living forces, working for good or evil. Endowed with life, he cannot recall them. Moving with accumulating power, they become immeasurably mightier than their author.

Not long ago, a writer in seeking to illustrate the omniscience of God, beautifully carried out the thought that all our acts are possibly to be seen somewhere in the universe of God. That the whole history of the world, biographies of all men, may be read to-day in the moveable air. That light has taken notes, and is bearing them to far-off realms. So are we impressing upon the sensitive human souls around us our thoughts, the images of our moral character. In daily communings with our fellow-men, at times when all unconscious of emitting power, there have flashed from us rays of the light of our own moral nature, that have brought out in strong outline and coloring a moral image in the soul of another.

It is the natural impulse of the soul to utter its joys and sorrows. They come from the heart as spontaneous as the song of the bird. Heart answereth to heart, and soul to soul. Our common nature is like the wire along which runs the magnetic current of sympathy which speaks of our

common brotherhood. We must have communion with our kind : in solitude we die. We long for those to whom we can impart the deepest feelings of our souls. Joys beam brighter when reflected back from the heart of a friend, and sorrow seems lighter if we tell our heart's burden to another. No one can live to himself. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee.

The power of influencing others exists in very different degrees. The parable of the talent illustrating this, also shows us that God will require of us an account of the manner in which we use this power.

To the gifted few, God has given influence in the possession of lofty intellect. Some men have left their mark, not only on their own age, but have swayed sceptres of thought long after they were in their graves. But it is a rare prerogative to be able to control the human mind for centuries, like an Aristotle or a Bacon. These few great minds that have appeared at intervals in the world's history, have set in motion influences that are still living and acting. And yet we are all immeasurably more affected by the living thinking men of our own day, who lay their hands upon us, who imbue us with their spirit.

To some God has given influence from rank and position in society. We may think that these will be the leading minds. Yet how often others arise who are to be far mightier. As Paul stood before Agrippa in that proconsular court, who dreamed of the mighty power that lay in that prisoner in bonds ?

All through the history of the Church, how fully has it been shown that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men!"—1 Cor. i. 25. Not many wise men, not many mighty, not many

noble were called ; and yet how soon the religion of Christ took possession of the nations ! It had no wealth, position or state influence to aid it. All these were arrayed against it. But those early disciples went forth in the spirit of their Master, not counting life dear unto themselves. They took no narrow, selfish view of their calling. Their field was the world. They soon learned to call no man common or unclean ; all mankind were their brethren. The brotherhood of humanity was a new revelation to the world. In a few years the gospel of the crucified Nazarene had been preached at learned Athens, at voluptuous Corinth, at idolatrous Ephesus, at proud Rome. It came to the dwellers in Jewish villages, and to the conquering legions of Rome, to the degraded outcasts of society, and to the emperor's household.

What gave it such efficiency ? Not merely the truths it taught, but the divine impulse it communicated. Lifted up to the lofty height of self-abnegation, they could say, I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren.

What elements of power may be found still in the world, in the hearts of humble Christians, who have the self-dying spirit of the Divine Master ! Christly zeal and sympathy for souls, patient endurance and trusting faith, are still mighty, through God, to the overthrow of the works of darkness. Deeds of nobleness and truth possess an undenying influence. Some time ago I saw a workman in the streets of one of our large cities, looking with much interest at a picture in a window, of the Scottish maiden, who, by cruel persecuters, was fastened to a stake on the sea-shore, and overwhelmed in the waves, dying a martyr to her fidelity, to her faith. Though she was dead for centuries,

yet her noble courage and steadfastness were still speaking to the hearts of others, and inspiring them with something of her faith and fortitude.

You who are working for God amid obscurity and discouragement, should therefore be courageous. Though weak in yourselves you may be strong in Christ. The seed sown in weakness is instinct with life, and shall in due time yield rich harvests of golden grain. Like the seed for centuries held in the hand of an Egyptian mummy, which when cast into the soil budded and blossomed, so your efforts for God shall yet, under the genial influence of His Spirit, be fruitful in results. Nothing done for Christ is lost. The alabaster box of ointment was a small thing, yet it has come down the centuries, making them fragrant.

II. If our influence is so constant and far-reaching, what is the law of Christian responsibility? It is a grand and mysterious principle of being, that makes each one hold such fearful sway, not only over his own destiny, but even over the destiny of others. Are we so linked together that every movement of one seems to affect others? I should be startled at the results to which my own argument would lead me, if I did not also know that God has fully given to each human soul the power to decide his own destiny. However he may be affected from without, the kingly sway is from within. The kingdom of God is within you. Nothing can relieve us from personal responsibility for ourselves. To our own Master we stand or fall.

The work we each have to do can be done for us through no other agency. Christianity exalts humanity. The divinity of man lies in what it is possible for him to become. It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but when He who is our life shall appear, we shall be like Him. Glorious

possibility! transcending all human conception, for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things that God hath in reserve for them that love Him.

But here in probation life-powers and capabilities are slowly, and it may be painfully, matured. The highest form of spiritual culture, the noblest conception of a Christian life, can only be attained by active efforts for the good of others. The burden of the teachings of Christ shows this. "Work while it is called to day." "Go work in my vineyard." Christ's own example impresses the lesson. With Him, what forgetfulness of self! What absorption in His work! "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of Him who sent me."

Now the Christian has, by virtue of his connection with Christ, taken upon himself a new law of life, so that he can say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Such a life as human thought could not reach, yet attainable by every true disciple of Christ.

It is one of the rules of the followers of Loyola, who arrogate to themselves the name of the Society of Jesus, that the disciple should be a corpse in the hands of his superior. No will but the will of his master. So are we to become dead unto the world, but alive unto God. The soul is possessed of its loftiest powers when it fully renounces self. "When I am weak," says Paul, in one of his striking paradoxes, "then am I strong." This Christian philosophy is more powerful, more sublime than the indifference of the Stoic, for while it looks from the height of its soul-ascension upon the world, and says, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of

Christ," its yearning love and sympathy exclaims, "I could wish myself accursed for my brethren."

A disposition to labour for others, presupposes a heart consecrated to Christ. Such work can have no attractions for him whose soul is not filled with love to God. To be useful we must be holy. Communion with God, the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, must be our preparation for the work to which, as fellow-labourers with Christ, we are all called. We need humility, we need self-sacrifice, we need devotion to our work, we need the *mind* of Christ, more than we need wealth, or rank, or station, or tongues of angels. These are cold, powerless, until the spirit has breathed upon them and they live, until the warm heart of Christ has touched them and they glow. The man who has this constant communion with God, yea, whose life is hid with Christ in God, may not have the graces of the schools, nor elegance of culture, but he will have more, for with him are the hidings of God's power; he seems to come with his message right from his Master, and be he priest or layman, I count him an apostle, who can say, as he lays his hands upon those around him, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Such a human soul becomes, as Chrysostom, the eloquent preacher of Antioch, used to say, God's true Shekinah, where the divine flame does not wave and flicker, as it did of old on the altar between the cherubim, but fills the whole man, and he becomes a "temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in."

What fields for Christian activity lie all around, fields that are waiting for the laborer! "Say ye not, four months and then cometh the harvest?" "Lift up your eyes," said the Saviour, "and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest." Opportunities for good, which if not

improved, will float into the irreparable past. Know that every opportunity brings also its responsibility. Bear in mind also that each of us may be to some the representative Christian. The ideas which they have of the religion of Christ will be such as we by our words and life impart. No analysis can detect, no formula can express, the power of each human life. Yours may not be the gift to heal, but in the ministry of God, like the angel at the pool, you move the healing waters.

"She hath done what she could," said Christ. What more could he have said of any one. But remember duty is measured by ability. We cannot do what others have done, cannot do what our Master did. But did he not say, "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father." "Without Christ we can do nothing, with Christ I can do all things." How far removed then are the boundaries of the possibilities of the Christian life?

It is true that few may be called to engage in those great moral enterprises that mark epochs in the history of the Church, few are made a spectacle to the world, to men and to angels. Few may be called to martyr fires and martyr death, but all can find duties requiring the same spirit of self-sacrifice. The Church needs its martyr spirits, its moral heroes of whom the world is not worthy; but it also needs its thousands and millions of laborers. There is work for all in the vineyard of God. "Say not I am weak, for God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

The Christian Church prays for the conversion of the young who assemble in our colleges and seminaries of learning. Prayer goes up to God from the myriad Churches of the land, that talent and culture may be consecrated to His

service, that the Lord of the harvest may send forth laborers into the fields waving with grain ripe for the reaper. True, we need a consecrated ministry ; we need, too, a consecrated Church. Christians who shall feel that they are all kings and priests unto God, that they are working under the eye of their "great Task-master above," and that what their hands find to do, they are to do with their might.

When God calls us to account for our influence, yea, for all the talents he has bestowed, the question will not be, What have you believed ? but, What have you done ? It will be of no avail that we ask with guilty Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper ?"—for God has taught you by the relations of human society, by your experience of their workings, that you are responsible for the misery, for the sin, for the wretchedness you might have prevented or alleviated. There is no one so hardened as to justify you in saying, "Leave him alone ;" there is no one so degraded as to justify you in leaving him to perish. Amid the wretchedness and guilt, the revelling and wantonness of the lowest forms of vice, you should still hear the mournful cry, "No man careth for our souls." Remember that all these were in the heart of Christ. That he came "not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Remember that just such as these he calls "brethren," and what you do for them you do for Christ.

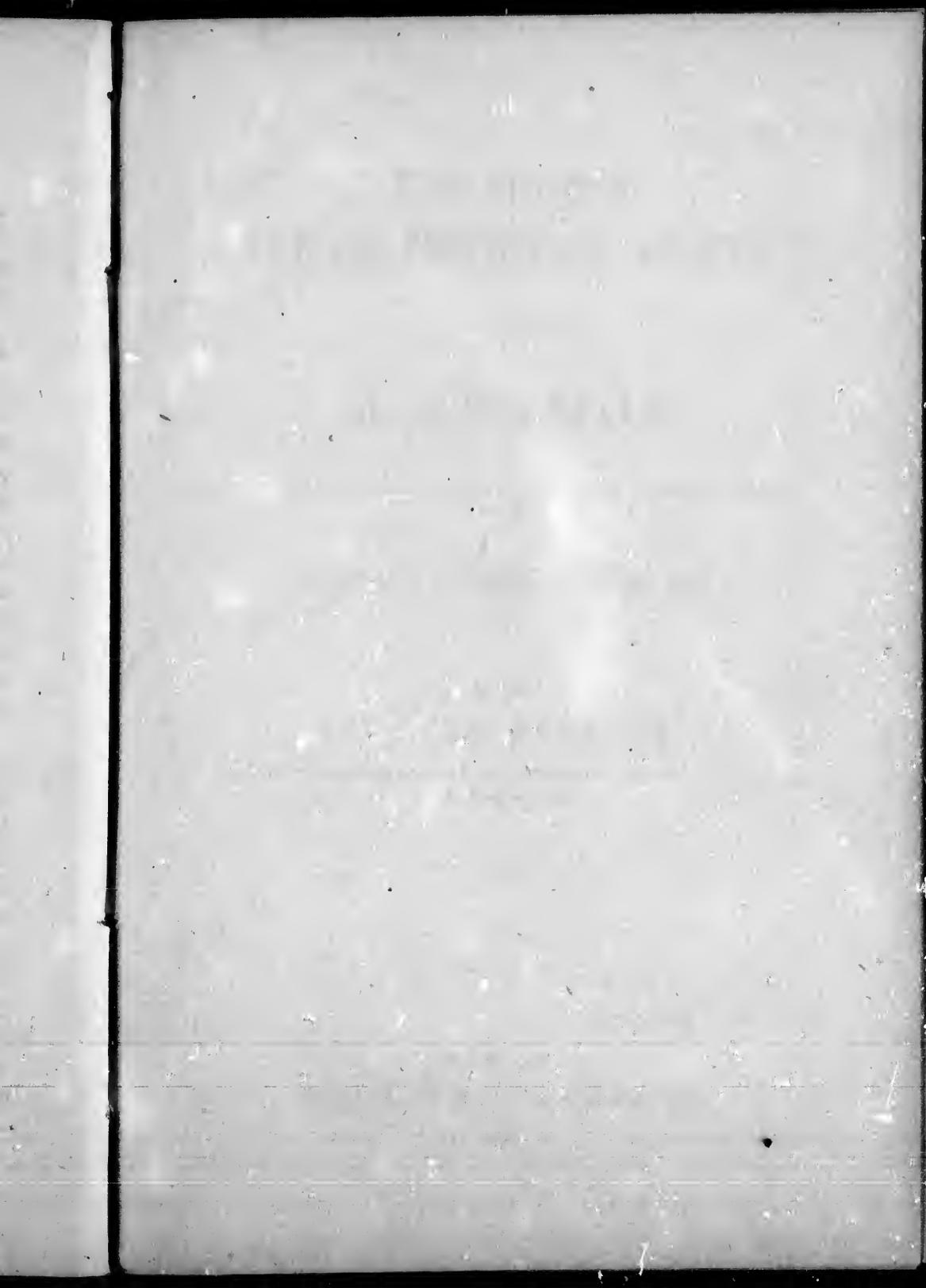
"When the Son of Man shall come in his glory he shall say to them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. For I was anhungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, sick and ye visited me, I was in prison and ye came unto me," and they reply "When saw we thee anhung-

gered and fed thee, or naked and clothed thee, when saw we thee sick or in prison and came unto thee?" Christ will answer, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Listen again unto the words of Christ, "Thou slothful, thou unfaithful servant." "Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me ye cursed, I was anhungered and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink, naked and ye clothed me not, sick and in prison and ye visited me not." Then shall they answer, "Lord, when saw we thee anhungered, or athirst, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" Then shall he answer them saying, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."—Matt. xxv. 34.

Dear Sir,  
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the matter mentioned therein. I am sorry to hear that you are not satisfied with the result of the investigation. I have, however, done all that was in my power to ascertain the truth of the matter. I have also taken the liberty to inform the proper authorities of the result of my investigation. I am sure that you will understand the necessity of this course. I am, Sir, very respectfully,  
Your obedient servant,  
J. H. [Name]

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15th inst. in relation to the matter mentioned therein. I am sorry to hear that you are not satisfied with the result of the investigation. I have, however, done all that was in my power to ascertain the truth of the matter. I have also taken the liberty to inform the proper authorities of the result of my investigation. I am sure that you will understand the necessity of this course. I am, Sir, very respectfully,  
Your obedient servant,  
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THE CHURCH  
THE PERFECTION OF BEAUTY.

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A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE RICHMOND STREET WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH,  
TORONTO,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 5TH, 1870.

BY THE

REV. A. LOWREY, D.D.,

DELEGATE FROM THE M. E. CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES, TO THE WESLEYAN  
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# THE CHURCH THE PERFECTION OF BEAUTY.

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“OUT OF ZION, THE PERFECTION OF BEAUTY, GOD HATH SHINED.”—Ps. 50 : 2.

This text contains two propositions :

- 1st. The church is the perfection of beauty.
- 2nd. Divinity shines out through it.

The ancient temple and its surroundings symbolized the Church of God. Nor could a more fitting symbol have been selected. The range of mountains on which that august structure lifted its pinnacle to the skies is the most sacred spot on our planet. There Abraham gave the tender test of his faith. There David pitched the tent for the ark of the Lord, and fixed the seat of his government when he removed from Hebron and became king over all Israel ; there were the city and tomb of this great king, captain, and poet, and prophet—a man of great moral contrast—a rare genius—and the most illustrious progenitor of our Lord’s family ; there were located the holy of holies, and the altar on which heaven-lit fire continually burned ; there shone the Shechinah or manifestation of the divine presence ; above all, there was the tragic scene of redemption—a scene which included the midnight and morning of human hopes, because it necessitated the greatest depression and highest exaltation

of God-head ; there sin was canceled by strange and awful blood shedding—the grave blessed by a divine but transient visitant, and life and immortality brought to light by the transmission of a risen body to heaven, as the first fruit and pledge of a general resuscitation. The church thus symbolized is not only a thing of beauty, but the perfection of beauty. Among all the varieties of esthetic objects and grades of perfection, the church takes the highest place. On her brow is written *excelsior*. There are other objects of beauty. The sun and moon that walk the heavens in robes of gold and silver brightness, and the stars that twinkle sweetly on and on with undiminished lustre from age to age, are beautiful. The earth, with its diversities of hill and glen, field, forest, flower, and fruitage, is beautiful. The birds in form and feather and song are beautiful, and the flowers in their tints and hues and graceful foldings. The human face and figure and voice, together with man's mental outgiving and works of art and genius, are almost divinely beautiful. But among all these specimens the perfection of beauty is not found. The cabinet remains incomplete until the church crowns the dazzling gradations.

It is not, however, the beauty of a grand exterior nor that of imposing ritual. Nor is it chiefly the perfection of intellectualism, eloquence and learning. These belong to the church, but not as organic elements. They wait on her as ministering servants. They are the golden bowls and tongs and candlesticks, not her real excellence. Her silver vases and lamp fixtures, not her show-bread, her oil, her salt and her light. They are her sandals and staff, not her diadem of glory. The office of culture is not to create, but to lift up and move the panoramic picture of her beauty before the eye of the world.

The perfection of beauty in the church is the perfection of moral qualities. These are the media through which God shines. Like a jet of flame located within a transparency his beams gleam forth. These qualities being pure and un-mixed like clear glass and crystal water allow the penetrations of the Divine rays. Perhaps a translucent substance will more correctly represent the media through which God shines—a substance which conceals the essence and form of the illuminating body, but through which its light insinuates and widely diffuses itself. Like the mellow cloud which intercepts and tempers the direct and ardent rays of the sun, and shuts out of view his majestic globular form and face of fire, and yet interferes not with the broad light of day, so with the illuminations of Deity. No man hath seen God at any time. He has never exposed his organism and essence. It is not his method to shine upon man directly, but mediately. The holy of holies where he dwells is always separated from the outer sanctuaries of earth, and the courts of humanity by a veil. It is through the translucent windows and mists of material things and moral qualities that God shines. True, we meet the manifestations of God everywhere. In every grain of sand and spire of grass, and blazing star and sparkling intellect. But through these God only glimmers. It is through the church only that he reveals his light and glory in great effluence. Not through her as an organization, but as an assemblage of sentient and responsible individualities.

A Christian is a cluster of moral qualities, each luminous and radiant with divine light, because each involves God. This fact makes the character of church members the most interesting subject in the whole range of ecclesiastical truth. The great object of church service and discipline is to elim-

inate sin, mould character, and educate for the skies. The institutions of the Church are a moral apparatus designed to evolve the highest style of man. It is the alembic where the admixture of depravity is expurgated from the spiritual being—a place where the process of purification converts the affections into a mirror which reflects the image of God.

What are the moral qualities which compose the Christian character, and through which come the emissions of Divine light?

*Faith is first and chief.*—This property deserves priority, because belief in the sense of credence in the evangelical system must precede the act of admission into the Church. Assent to all the minutia may not be required, but faith in the elemental truths of Christianity is indispensable. What propriety could there be in receiving a declared infidel, or an untaught heathen into the Church, except as a novice? When a man therefore declines through sheer perversity to accede to the reasonable and exalting claims of Christianity, he must be repelled at the very threshold of the Church, on the ground of general unfitness. This position is supported by the case of the eunuch. After Phillip had explained the Scriptures and preached Jesus unto him, the novitiate thus addressed his teacher:—"See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Phillip replied, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." The eunuch responded, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This circumstance establishes three points:—1. Instruction precedes and prepares for union with the Church. 2. Cordial belief in the substantive truths of religion is an absolute condition of fellowship. 3. Faith in the minor details of Christian beliefs and denominational formulas is not required. The order of God in training men for heaven

is plainly this :—First, preach the gospel to every creature. Second, wherever the faith of hearty assent in the Divine efficacies of the Evangelical system is evolved, there open the doors of the Church. Nourish incipient trust by granting access to the means of grace, and facilitate and secure internal purity by the instrumentalities which Heaven has established within the Ecclesiastic precinct. What could be more appropriate? Where but to the infirmary should the sick and dying repair? Where should the benighted resort, but to the depository of truth? Where should the helpless child be found except in the mother's bosom, pressed to her beating heart and the fount of maternal nourishment? Faith is a staple article in the spiritual life. Not only primordial, but crowning. Not only the ground work, but the last touch of the pencil in the perfection of beauty. We live by faith, walk by faith, fight by faith, die in faith. Faith is first in order, last in order, intermediately in order, always in order, and *never out of order*. It is the breath of spiritual existence, the power that overcomes the world, the safe conduct that takes us through an enemy's land, the lever that lifts the world to God. The Methodist theory is in beautiful conformity with this Divine order, but our careless indiscriminate practice of huddling impenitent persons into the Church cuts the scheme at right angles.

Another quality is visible sanctity or saintship. This consists in an open avowal of faith, and a conspicuous assumption and support of the Christian character. We perform this sacramental work by accepting the vows and obligations of religion, by confessing the work of God wrought within us, and by regulating our whole life according to the criteria of the gospel. Religion was never designed for concealment, and saints were not made for cloisters,

or mere canonization after death. It is the living creature, not the fossiliferous remains of a Christian whom God utilizes. God gave religion for public and practical purposes and everyday wear. While the subtle essence of the higher life was intended to fill the heart, its fruits were appointed to fill the world. It is largely *objective*. It was created to be as conspicuous as the spires on the house of God. The Church is commissioned to attract and refine by her perfection of beauty. By her, as a loadstone, society is to be disintegrated and reformed according to holy affinities and sinful repulsions. It is written, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness, and what concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel, or what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God. As God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you. And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Are we not authorized from this burning promise to affirm the church as a distinct corporation, a peculiar people, a sacred brotherhood; and as such commanded to stand out before the world and tread the paths of life under the Fatherhood of God himself.

What was the intent of this divorcement from the world and open re-union with God, if not designed as a visible seal of consecration, a mark of exemplary sanctity, a voice proclaiming, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them? If this be not the doc-

trine, why should the Apostolic cimeter cut asunder every cord of compromise between the Church and world, and why celebrate the nuptials of a new and divine union?

To the same point is the duty of confessing Christ and proving our fidelity to him by a cross-bearing life. "Who-soever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. x. 32.) "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." How could the great Teacher have been more explicit or serious? These trite words are pregnant with the conditions of life and death. Their applicability is universal and absolute. The subject of confession is Christ himself. This involves, no doubt, an open declaration of faith in his divinity, atonement and saving power. But is this all? Does it not also comprise an acknowledgment of his ministry within us. Does Christianity require a public recognition of the *cause*, and then command or allow a concealment of the sublime effect? What but the effect exalts the cause and declares it worthy of laudation? What, except the vitalizing heat and light of the sun, makes him the most glorious orb in the planetary system? How shall I extol the physician or his remedies, but by proclaiming the cure! And is not the merited praise always proportional with the magnitude and seeming impossibility of the cure? Then why not own justification and sanctification as well? Shall we acknowledge the less and not the greater work? Shall we celebrate our deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, and have no anthems to tell that the horse and the rider are cast into the sea?

*So with Discipleship.*—The relation cannot be maintained without such a course of holy conversation and godliness as

will make the subject of it a distinct object of vision. His whole life is a continual clash and conflict with the solicitations of the world in the most public manner. Therefore, his stern self-denial and preter-natural duties and achievements draw attention, and surround him, with singularity and sacredness. Such a verbal attestation of the results of grace in the heart is both a duty and a privilege. Nor is it restricted to the male sex. It is woman's heritage and obligation. The principle or prejudice that would doom woman to perpetual silence in the Church is a relic of barbarism. It is that which, if not restrained by civilization, would rank her with animals of burden, and blot her name from the calendar of immortalities. Who anointed man to be the exclusive high priest of religious experience? Who authorized him to hush the prayer and stifle the testimony of woman in the house of God? These godly exercises are means of grace to men. Are they not equally so to women? Must she be put on half rations while man's eyes stand out with fatness? Shame on the prejudice that so often buries superior gifts and grace in woman, that the drivelling insipidities of some weak man may have vent.

*The symbolism of Jesus supports visible sanctity.*—"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle to put it under a bushel, but on a candle-stick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." In this beautiful passage three aspects of the Church are presented. 1. She is an object of universal vision, an orb like the sun which pours her mellow light over all the world. Her position is so elevated and central, her light so expansive and brilliant, that she cannot be hid.

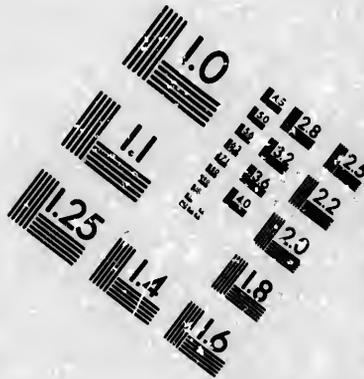
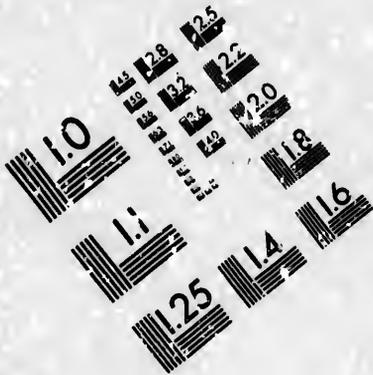
2. She was not originally appointed to obscurity, but to a world-wide visibility. If men do not commit the ridiculous folly of lighting candles to put them under a bushel, much less God in creating the luminary of the Church and the Shechinah of Christian experience. The Church is the aggregation of the tongues of fire which were visible on the day of Pentecost, a meteor ignited by the Holy Ghost, a spirit flame, a blaze of beatific fire unconfined and inextinguishable. 3. She is not so much a spectacle of admiration as an instrument of service. Her office is to shine for other men's salvation and the Father's glory. She is a motive power to lead the world into the practice of divine glorification, a body clothed with hallowing fascinations to charm us back to heaven.

"Touched by her etherial megnatism,  
The secret heart, with influence sweet,  
Is upward drawn to God."

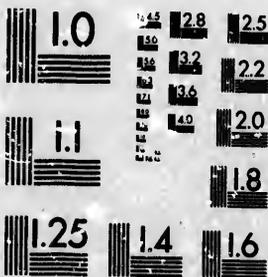
Another symbol. "Ye are the salt of the earth." The Church is an antiseptic, a conserving element in society. She tends directly to preserve manners, governments, and the streams of literature in a pure and healthy state. She preserves faith, affection, and taste from corruption. Your national glory, personal liberty, social order, peace and prospects are chiefly traceable to the lustrations of the Church. She is still the aroma of every social excellence. But for Zion's salt decay would smite all that is green and beautiful. In her alone is the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. In her grows the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. In her alone is the well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

*The Church is a belligerent.*—God has given to her an aggressive mission, that He may shine through her martial





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glory. She takes a hostile attitude towards all moral evil, and meditates a violent rupture and revolution of all hearts and societies. Christ said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword." Though the Prince of peace, though the Author of the gospel of peace, yet He wages a war of conquest against the nations of the earth, and a war of extermination against all sin. The Church is spoken to as an embattled host, clad in the armour of God. Her weapons are not carnal but spiritual, and mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. The arena of this battle is not without, but within. Its nature is not bloody and carnal, but spiritual and holy. It is a crusade against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Its object is not to overthrow governments, but to supplant the kingdom of darkness and sin, by setting up the kingdom of God in the heart, whose laws and animus are righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The leader is no human chieftain, but the Captain of our salvation :—

" Who brings a liberty, unsung  
 By poets, by senators unpraised,  
 Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the powers  
 Of earth and hell confederate, take away.  
 A liberty which persecution, fraud,  
 Oppression, prisons, have no power to bind,  
 Which whoso tastes can be enslaved no more.  
 'Tis liberty of heart derived from heaven,  
 Bought with His blood who gave it to mankind,  
 And sealed it with the same token."

*The Church is the seat of purity.*—Her body of truth, her system of instrumentalities, her sacrificial commemorations, her spiritual and divine endowments, were all appointed to evolve holiness, to operate the perfect salvation

of all who enter her sacred enclosures. She is a crucible, over which Jesus sits and watches the process of purgation and refinement until her unmixed purity mirrors back the face of God. The Lord says to his Church, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." She is a diamond in the darkness of surrounding sinfulness, a jewel among the debris of moral ruins. Unchallenged chastity symbolizes the sanctity of the Church, and holy wedlock indicates her delicate relation to Jesus. "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish."—Eph. v. 25. She is a bride on whom the affections of Jesus are lavished, a bride for whose cleansing and spotless adornment He sacrificed His life. A true Church is an aggregation of sanctified personalities; a peculiar people who, being made free from sin and become the servants of God, have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Such is the perfection of beauty. Not the beauty of the moon as she travels in her lustre, not the beauty of the stars as they are marshalled in the firmament, not the beauty of the earth as she sweeps along her orbit, mantled with vegetation and blushing with flowers; but the beauty of holiness, the beauty of heaven, the beauty of angels and God.

Out of this God hath shined. It has pleased the Lord to gather to Himself, into His Church as the seat of His

power and centre of His irradiations. From this point He sends forth His luminous expansions: He photographs Himself objectively before the eyes of the world. God hath shined in the past, and down through the ages, but with increasing intensity. Hath shined in prophecy, in miracle, in successive dispensations, in the gift of His Son and Spirit, in His works of mercy and grace, and in the promise of a world-wide diffusion of His light and salvation. This is being realized. The horizon of Gospel-day is fast enlarging. The light of Christianity now belts the world, and the corruscations of truth, like meteoric showers, are breaking over all lands.

“Trav’ler, o’er yon mountain height,  
See the glory-beaming star;  
Watchman, does its beauteous ray  
Ought of hope or joy fortell?  
Trav’ler, yes, it brings the day,  
Promised day of Israel.”

Soon righteousness will cover the earth as the waters do the sea. This done, the Church militant will brighten to the Church triumphant, and mingle and blend with the spirits of just men made perfect, and the Church of the first-born which are written in heaven.

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