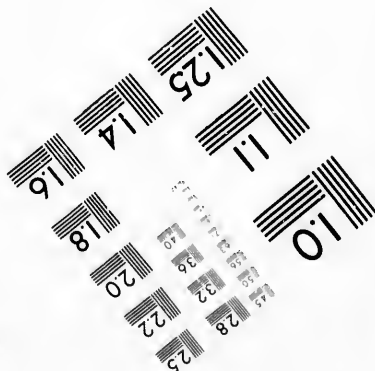
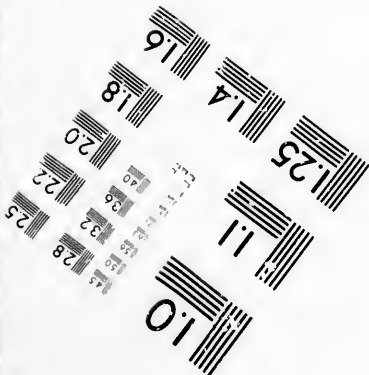
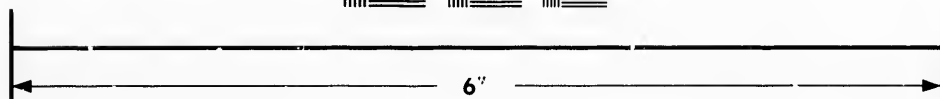
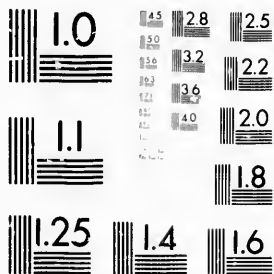


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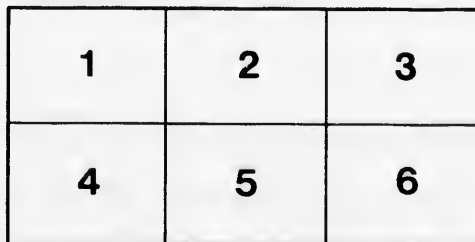
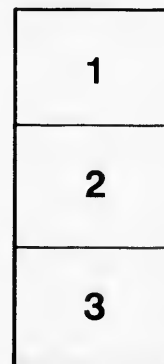
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*J. Shortburn
From the Author*

THE CHARACTERISTICS

-- OF --

Scottish Religious Life

AND THEIR CAUSES.

Sermons

PREACHED ON BEHALF OF THE ST. ANDREW'S
SOCIETY, TORONTO,

November 30, 1879, and November 26, 1882.

BY

REV. JOHN M. KING, M.A., D.D.

Pastor of St. James Square Presbyterian Church.

Toronto:

PUBLISHED BY WILLING & WILLIAMSON.

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SCOTTISH RELIGIOUS LIFE.



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Psalm xxii. 3; 4: "But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in Thee; they trusted and Thou didst deliver them."

THE Society, on whose behalf the sermon of this evening is preached, is not a distinctively religious organization. Its aim is rather to promote good feeling and kindly intercourse among Scotchmen and the descendants of Scotchmen living abroad, to perpetuate among them the worthier traditions and memories of their native land, and to give relief in cases of destitution or suffering than to promote religious life. And in consistency with these aims, its term of membership is rather national descent, than religious faith or personal character. But while the Society is not

strictly speaking a religious one, its aims are in complete harmony with those of religion ; and its methods either are, or ought to be, such as religion fully sanctions.

One of the aims which I have specified, as coming fairly within the scope of the Society, is the preservation of the worthier memories of our native land ; and among these must ever be counted the memories of its religious life and of the struggles which helped to give it shape and character. It will, therefore, be in accordance both with the design of the St. Andrew's Society and with the spirit of our Sabbath evening worship, to recall some of the more prominent features of the religious life of Scotland. This will be the aim of the present discourse ; namely, to seize as the speaker best can and to present to you the distinguishing characteristics of the piety of the Scottish people, and to com-

mend their perpetuation by us their descendants in the land of our adoption, in so far, and only in so far, as they seem worthy of such perpetuation.

Now it may be freely conceded, or rather, it ought to be emphatically stated, that religion is not a thing dependent on locality or on race. The Gospel expressly repudiates all such distinctions when they seek to establish themselves within the sphere which it covers, declaring that in the new creation which it forms, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female," for all are "one in Christ Jesus." Religion is the sense of dependence on God; it is fellowship with God through Jesus Christ; it is the service of God in acts of worship and in acts of obedience. It is this, wherever and by whomsoever it is attained. It does not change its essential character when it crosses a chan-

nel or a mountain-chain, or when it passes from men of one race to men of another. It is not one thing in a Scotchman and another thing in an Englishman or in a German. The life of God within the soul is in its innermost principle the same, under whatever sky it is cherished and among whatever branch of the human family. The children of God share a common spirit, and speak a common tongue all the world over. "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling : one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all." But while the life of God within the soul is in its essential qualities everywhere the same, it varies in its manifestations. While one Spirit dwells in the children of God, the character which it, or rather He produces, differs as do the features of the human face. While the tongue which

they speak is common, the accents vary as greatly as they are known to do in the use of the same mother-tongue by those dwelling in different localities.

The thing itself is from above ; religion, as a personal attainment, is not a product of nature, a creature of circumstance, a development of education ; it is a divine bestowment, "the gift of God." But while it is not in the power of nature, of circumstance, and of education to create it ; it is in the power of these and other influences to shape its manifestations, to give to it the particular form and colour which it takes before our eyes. Accordingly it has marked diversities, as it has existed in different ages and in different lands. What have been its more prominent features—its characteristics, as it has existed in Scotland and among the Scottish people ?

I mention, first, intelligence. The exer-

cise of religious feeling has in Scotland been very generally accompanied, at least from the Reformation period, by a good degree of acquaintance with religious truth, as exhibited in the Bible and in the Shorter Catechism. With whatever defects the piety of its people has been chargeable, ignorance of the contents of Scripture, and of the meaning which has been attached to these, has not been one of them. Believing men and women in that land have generally known both what they believed and why. Religion has seldom been a matter of mere sentiment, or even of sentiment mainly. It has generally been a matter of rational conviction. If not in all instances, at least in those which would be regarded as most truly representative, piety has been nourished and moulded by doctrine. The mind has been instructed and exercised by the truth to which the heart and the conscience have

bowed. Nay, the intellect of the Scottish nation at many periods in its history has been aroused and trained by the discussions to which religion has given rise, and in which men of all ranks and classes have taken part. One may say, with all confidence, that the pulpit has done quite as much as the parish school, to develop among Scotchmen the intelligence which has made itself felt in so many lands and in so many spheres of honourable exertion.

How far this characteristic of Scottish piety is due to its great Reformer, it would be difficult to say. The great man of an age or of a nation is generally as much the product of the age or of the nation, as he is its moulder. They make him, if he in turn makes them. The fact in any case remains the same. Religious knowledge has gone hand in hand with faith and with pious feeling in our native land. The school has taken its place alongside of the

Church. The Shorter Catechism, probably the fullest and most comprehensive summary of Christian doctrine to be found in any language, has been taught for many generations in every school, and in almost every home in which the Bible, from which it borrows all its authority, is read. You know in how many homes of high and of humble people, this Catechism was repeated in whole or in part every Sabbath evening and by all the members of the family, above the age of childhood; and all can understand how much the familiar use of such a summary of Christian doctrine must have done to give to the piety of Scottish people, the stamp of intelligence which it unquestionably bears.

This, indeed, is not everything. We may have knowledge without faith; a well-informed mind with a coarse heart, and a worldly or wicked life; religious notions made a substi^{tute} for love to God and love

to man. But as far as it goes, and always presupposing the accompaniment of true faith, knowledge of Christian fact and of Christian doctrine is of the utmost moment; for life is fed by truth, the goodness which makes us like God and fits us for fellowship with Him is formed and matured by the views of His character, which the Scriptures furnish.

I mention as a second characteristic of the religion of the Scottish people, unemonstrativeness. Speaking generally, the piety which is found in our native land is of the quiet and unobtrusive sort, even in those cases where there is the least reason to doubt either its reality or its depth. In comparison with the piety of some other lands, it is marked by a large measure of reserve and reticence. It shrinks from all unnecessary utterance, from all that is not obviously dutiful. With it, the feelings of the soul towards God, the sense of obliga-

tion to Him, the experience of redemption through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the hope of heaven are to find expression through the life rather than directly through the lips—are to be gathered oftener from what the man does than from what he says.

This reticence on the subject of religion in its experimental aspects is in complete harmony, indeed, with the whole character of the people. It is helped, however, in many cases where the religious feelings are both deep and strong, by the idea or conviction, that feelings of this kind are best spoken to God, being too sacred for exposure to the eyes of men—by the fear of any approach to untruthfulness, the abhorrence of hypocrisy or of ostentation even, in a matter of such high moment—and by the doubt, whether utterances of religious experience, not demanded by some obvious call of duty, are not fraught with elements

of danger and of weakness to those who indulge in them. It could only have been in Scotland that a worthy Christian woman, carrying her statements of personal experience farther than to her minister seemed altogether safe and healthy, received the reply, "Whist, Nannie, thae cracks are no causey."

I am not now expressing any opinion on this feature of Scottish piety. I am simply calling attention to it, as distinguishing it in a marked way from the piety evinced by the Christian people of some other races. It is full of reserve. It is ever more ready to assume the disguise of silence than to disclose itself in speech. Even when it is strong enough to control the life, it is often unable to open the lips. The tendency, salutary on the whole, would appear to be sometimes carried by the sharers of our nationality to an unwarrantable extreme. It is not good, that the

religious life either of an individual or of a community, should be always set to the minor key of the 39th Psalm, "I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good." It is desirable that it should sometimes run in the thankful if not jubilant strain of the 66th, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." But the failing leans to the safe side. It is better, that in this connection the lips should say too little than that they should say too much, that they should be silent altogether on the matter of personal religion, than that they should speak beyond the experience that has been reached. And the witness of the life for God may be only the more effective, that the lips are only seldom and on rare occasions opened to speak about Him. This after all is the main thing. A life, which the fear of God entertained within the heart

has made visibly upright and pure, and unselfish, can well afford to preserve a certain degree of reticence as to the principle by which it is controlled. The man may be forgiven, who does not often or readily speak religion, who can do nothing but live it, on whose life truth, integrity, reverence for things sacred, kindness to the weak and the suffering, are unmistakably stamped.

I mention as a third characteristic of the piety of the Scottish people, strength—a certain robust vigour which very generally belongs to it. I do not admit that it is uniformly or even generally wanting in spirituality, and tenderness and elevation of tone. It would be difficult to find in the Christian men of any country more beautiful exemplifications of these qualities than are found in such men as Samuel Rutherford, and Leighton, the Erskines, Ralph and Ebenezer, McCheyne, and

George Wilson. But gentleness and delicate grace are scarcely the distinguishing features of the religious life which has flourished north of the Tweed and the Solway. It has from the first been rather strong than tender, rather stern than complaisant, more intent on vindicating the truth of God than on conciliating the favour of men. It has known little either of diffidence or of delicacy, in rebuking sin, and in asserting what it deemed the rights of Christ's Church. It has had to bear, indeed, and has still to bear, in many quarters, the reproach of narrowness, austerity and gloom; and those of us who have been born and brought up by the banks of the Tweed, or the Forth, or under the shadow of the Grampians, have been pitted for the dreary Sabbaths we are supposed to have spent and for the innocent pleasures from which we were debarred. We, who have nothing but gratitude to

cherish for the influences which were around our childhood and youth, can only wonder at the commiseration so unnecessarily bestowed. But the religion of Scotland, has at least been of the strong and healthful sort. It has seldom taken the form of weak and sickly sentiment. Its beauty has not been of the hot-house kind. It has been a true child of the mountains, and when least attractive, has had the charms of rude health. It has sustained the graces of truthfulness, and incorruptible integrity and dauntless courage in countless numbers of persons of all ranks. If it has not been so able as some other forms of religion to make courtiers and fashionable men of the world, it has shown its capacity to make martyrs like Wishart and Argyle, and missionaries like Livingstone and Duff, and William Burns, and merchants and mechanics, men in all professions, who could be honest in the

midst of severe temptation—who could do anything but lie.

The subject is very far from having received exhaustive treatment. There are still other features in the religious life of Scotland, which might well claim notice at our hands; but the time at our disposal will admit of only the briefest reference to them; and having hitherto looked almost entirely at the favourable side, we may properly take account of some of those features which are less flattering to our national pride.

I do not give a place among these to intolerance or narrowness, for, while this charge has been brought against Scottish piety, it has been so brought as it appears to me, without good ground. The Scottish Church has never, like that of England, called in question the validity of the orders obtaining in sister Churches, seldom closed its pulpits to their ministers; and

neither has it shut from the communion table, as some branches of the Church of Christ on this continent habitually do, avowed and admittedly sincere followers of the Saviour. It has been all along and is to this day catholic in the best sense of that much abused word.

But the religious life of Scotland, as that of the Churches abroad largely composed of members of this nationality, has often been wanting in warmth, in geniality, in sympathetic frankness, and in aggressive zeal. Even when there is no lack of depth of inward conviction, no want of internal heat, it can be cold as marble and as expressionless as stone. As a general thing, it is not enthusiastic and therefore not attractive. It makes comparatively few proselytes, and only rarely does it seek to make them. This is its weakness, if not its unfaithfulness. If it has obeyed with exemplary faithfulness the word of Christ,

addressed to the Church of Sardis, "Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast;" it has not been equally mindful of that other word, addressed to all the Churches, "Let him that heareth say come." One would have to admit also, in all truth, that firmness with it has often degenerated into obstinacy, and unseemly contention for points has been mistaken for honourable defence of principles. The great Protector touched what was, and to this day remains, a conspicuous weakness in the character of Scottish people and people of Scottish extraction, when addressing the General Assembly in Edinburgh and finding it resolutely tenacious of its own views, he said, "I beseech you, brethren, by the bowels of Jesus Christ, that ye think it possible ye may be mistaken." Am I wrong in hinting that a slight degree of diffidence occasionally would make some Scotchmen among our-

selves both more lovable and more useful. But the great blots on the religious character of our native land are the coarseness and the impurity existing among large numbers of the rural and the agricultural population, and the intemperance which still abounds both in city and country. Many zealous efforts have been put forth during the last forty years, to stem the tide of evil; but the results, if we mistake not, have not been encouraging. The streets of Glasgow, of Edinburgh, and of Dundee, still present sights on a Saturday evening, which no Christian Scotchman can contemplate without a feeling of humiliation.

What remains for us the representatives of Scottish nationality in this country but to perpetuate and to transmit, as by the help of divine grace we best can, the worthier qualities which it has been so pleasant to recognize in the piety of our native land,

guarding against the frailties by which it is sometimes disfigured, and especially keeping out of the life the sins and the vices of which in justice I have had to speak. Men of our nationality have had much to do with developing the material resources of this Dominion. Many a fertile acre has been cleared by their iron sinews. Many a prosperous business has been built up by their shrewdness and industry. They have had, and still have, their full share, some may think more than their share, in the legislation and government of the country. Banking, manufacturing, and railway enterprise has been largely indebted to their intelligence and energy. Has religion—has the cause of Christ—been an equal gainer at their hands? Have you, whom I see before me this evening, been equally forward to place your intelligence, your energy, your perseverance, your means and your influence at the service of

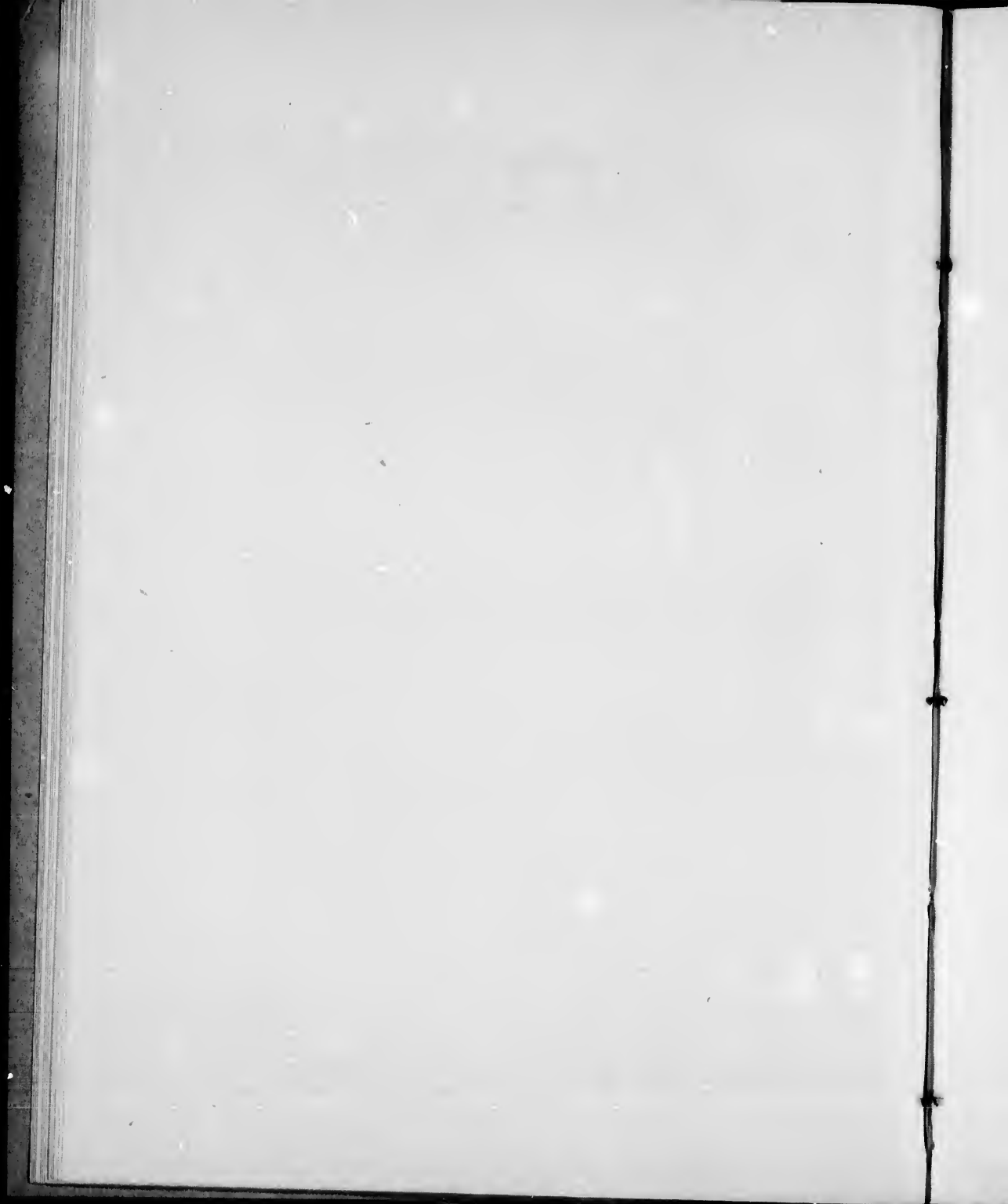
that cause, which in your hearts you know to be incomparably the highest? It is a solemn question, one which it behoves us to ask and to answer. Yea, it has been already answered, it is being now answered. The life has answered it, is answering it before God. Be assured there is no obligation resting on us of a more imperative character than to co-operate with our fellow-Christians of other nationalities, in building up within this large and fair Dominion, a religious life as intelligent and decided, as that which has had its seat for centuries in the smaller but not less fair land beyond the ocean, from which so many of us come. It is not the work of any one church or of the people of any one nationality. Our share in it, as Christians of Scottish lineage, will not be either an un-useful or an inglorious one, if by God's blessing we help to impress on the religious life of our adopted country some of the

worthier qualities by which we have seen that of our native land to be characterized.

We can hope to do this only by being ourselves earnestly and consistently Christian ; by being taught by the grace of God "to live soberly, righteously, and godly," "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts." We are under the strongest obligations to such a life. Many of us are the offspring of godly parents. Many of us enjoyed those advantages of early religious instruction and of pious example, of which I have spoken. Let us resolve, by God's help, to act suitably to our parentage and our privileges. Have we hallowed memories to help us in our moments of weakness and of temptation? Let us see to it that our children, when we are gone, have memories not less holy and strengthening. Had we upright, prayerful, pure-living parents? Let us not dare to be dishonest, impure or prayerless sons and daughters of such par-

ents. Let it not be ours to break the line in a godly succession. If we can say, looking up to heaven, "my father's God;" let us so live that our children after us may have it in their power to say the same—may have it in their power to say nothing else.

Men and brethren, suffer the word of exhortation. "Be followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us." "Walk as children of the light and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." "I beseech you by the mercies of God," by memories even more sacred than those of sainted parents, by the memories of Bethlehem and of Calvary, by the recollection of Christ's cross and by the anticipation of His second coming,—His coming to judge us all,—"that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."





Psalm xlvi. 12-14: "Walk about Zion and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces: that ye may tell it to the generations following. For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death."

THE true Christian is the best patriot. The interests of the commonwealth are most secure when they are in the hands of those who fear God and who work righteousness. The heritage of material and moral good which has descended from the past is most safely transmitted from one generation to another, when it is regarded as a sacred trust from God. Zion is best protected, when they who "walk about" her, and "tell the towers thereof," and "mark well her bulwarks," do so in the spirit which finds

expression in the closing words of this Psalm, "This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death."

Three years ago, on an occasion similar to the present, I ventured to direct attention to some of the more prominent features of the religious life of Scotland and of Scottish people in other lands; mentioning these three as characterizing it, in the persons of those who would be accepted as representatives of Scottish piety—intelligence, strength, and undemonstrativeness; taking care, in the interest of truth, to add in effect, that the intellectual sometimes overshadowed the emotional and the spiritual, that the strength was capable of degenerating into obstinacy and self-assertion, and that the reticence was occasionally not easily distinguishable from indifference and coldness.

Proceeding this evening on the assump-

tion that these are the prevailing features of Scottish piety, how are we to account for them? What are the influences which, under God, have combined to give to the religious life of the Scottish people the well-marked character, which as a whole it possesses and exhibits on Scottish soil, and which it retains in a good measure when transplanted to other lands; by which we expect to find it characterized in the sheep-walks and gold mines of Australia, in the diamond-fields of the Cape, in the tea and coffee-plantations of Hindostan and Ceylon, or in the broad and fertile wheat-lands of Canada, and in great mercantile establishments in all parts of the world? This is the question to which I now invite your attention. It is a legitimate subject of enquiry for the evening of the Lord's day; and even the brief and imperfect consideration of it, which is all that the limits of this discourse will allow, may be useful and

instructive ; furnishing lessons for future guidance, and leading us to see and to adore the wisdom and the grace of His government, "of whom and through whom and to whom are all things." The subject, moreover, while possessing a special interest for the members of the Society before me, is not undeserving of the attention of any body of Christian people, and may well engage that of those of the Presbyterian faith and order.

To prevent misapprehension, two points must be clearly stated, even at the risk of repeating what may have been advanced on the previous occasion. First, the distinctive features of Scottish piety, as of the piety of every other race, rest on a common basis found in true piety wherever it exists. It is the same life, the life of which Jesus Christ is the inspiring and sustaining principle, which animates believers of every nationality, producing

peace, kindling joy, awakening activity, shaping character, and foreshadowing destiny. That life does not change its character when it crosses a river or an ocean, or when it passes from men of one nationality to men of another. In the new state, to which regeneration introduces men, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." If there are some respects in which Christian people of different races and denominations differ, those in which they agree are far more numerous and far more important than those in which they differ. As in the realm of natural life, the man is more and deeper than the nationality—the "one blood" of which God hath made all nations of men, than the many varying hues which they have come to acquire; so in the realm of spiritual life, the Christian is more and deeper than the race or the branch of the

Church ; the "one spirit" than the many tongues in which it offers its worship.

Second, religious life is in every case the work of God. It is not, even under the most favouring circumstances, a natural growth of the human mind, a product of mere human intelligence ; it is, in all cases, a supernatural bestowment. Parentage has much to do with its communication. The promise is "to thee and to thy seed after thee;" but it is not simply a transmitted quality. They are "sons of God" who are "born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Education can mould and shape it, but education cannot implant it. The influences of race, of climate, and of history may determine its varying hues, but all these together cannot create it. Here the great word of the apostle, deserving to be graven over the door which leads into the temple of Christian truth, has its full force ;

“All things are of God.” “Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, that according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

But just as the inspiration of the Bible is found to be compatible with great varieties of style, the result of the unimpaired personality of the writers, so the fact that religion is the work of God—“eternal life,” His “gift,” does not prevent it exhibiting great diversities of form in different persons and in different races. As the Holy Scriptures, through which God speaks to His creatures, are coloured by the age and the country in which they were composed, and by the natural characters, and the intellectual peculiarities of their writers—the pen of Isaiah being easily distinguishable from that of Ezekiel, the epistle of Paul from that of John ; so the life, which it is the

one aim of these Scriptures to sustain and mould, is coloured by the natural characters and even by the outward circumstances of those in whom it has been implanted. We have seen that in the Scottish people—in those of them, I mean, who have by divine grace become its possessors—it exhibits a well-marked character. How can we account for it? What are the more powerful influences which have tended to give shape and form, tone and hue, to Scottish piety?

First, something is due to *race*. The Scottish people, like the English, as both have existed for many centuries, are a mixed race, but the component elements are not exactly the same in the two cases. In the southern part of the island, the additions to the original population were largely Saxon, Danish and Norman; in the northern, they were largely Celtic and Norwegian. At an early period large masses of people came from Ireland, already a popu-

lous and flourishing land, overran the whole west and even north, and settling down among the Picts, the original inhabitants, gave to the country their own name of Scots. At a period considerably later, there was a smaller invasion and settlement, or rather several in succession, from Scandinavia, by way of the Shetland and the Orkney Islands, which occupied parts of Caithness, Sutherland and Ross. When these various elements were fused, there resulted a race broadly distinguished in its intellectual qualities from its southern neighbour, marked by a certain rude energy and intensity peculiar to itself, certainly not possessed in the same measure by the calmer and more cultured English people. These characteristics were too general and too striking not to attract attention; and especially this susceptibility of a nature outwardly cold and undemonstrative to be easily kindled into a fierce glow, which has

found felicitous expression in the familiar phrase, "perfervidum ingenium Scotorum." By the possession of this and other closely related qualities, the Scottish people as a whole are marked off, not only from the people of England, with whom they have been long, and happily, politically one; but also and even more from the gay and volatile nation with which they had for a long period so close and perilous a connection, and from the far more witty and in many respects more brilliant race still inhabiting the island from which so many of their ancestors came.

The religious life of the people could not fail to be affected by these traits. They account to some extent for the thoroughness with which the work of the Reformation was accomplished in Scotland. Such a people, when a change of this kind has to be effected, will be apt to go to the roots of things, and to be not very sparing of

the soil in which the noxious plant has grown. They explain also the intensity which has been so striking a feature in the piety of its best and most truly representative men : an intense spirituality in a Rutherford, an Erskine and a McCheyne ; an intense vehemence of speech and of action in a Knox, a Chalmers, and an Edward Irving ; an intensity, sometimes associated with narrow and mistaken views, but always disdaining insincerity, and often as liberal as it was glowing. This quality has not been confined to any one class in the community, nor to any single phase of its religious life. It is peculiarly observable in the style of its pulpit oratory. Compare Wilberforce and Henry Melville, both dead, Liddon and Spurgeon, still living and active—perhaps the most outstanding names in the English pulpit during the present generation—with Chalmers, Guthrie, Candlish, Duff, Caird and Cairns, and who is not

struck with the difference? The one calm, full, majestic, sweeping along with noiseless but irresistible force, like the flow of mighty rivers or the tides of ocean; the other loud, vehement, passionate, almost furious, bearing all before it like Scotland's own mountain torrents, when flooded they leap and foam from point to point in their progress to the sea.

I mention, second, without, however, dwelling upon it at any length, the *country* itself which the Scottish people inhabit, the physical conditions of life which it supplies. It is a country whose soil is in large part hard and unproductive, compelling patient labour, and even then yielding to the tiller a scanty subsistence, seldom the material for wealth. Its sky is cloudy, its climate severe, its seas stormy, its means of communication, especially at the formative period of the nation's history, few and difficult. It is a land of mountain and dale,

pierced with deep, shadowy glens, and intersected with long and narrow lochs, sometimes gleaming in the sunlight and reflecting on their calm breasts the green of the overshadowing hill and the blue of the overarching sky, oftener dark and melancholy; a land on whose mountain summits the thick mists often sit, or descending creep along their sides in weird and mysterious forms; a land whose far-stretching hills and deep ravines have their silence broken only by the footfall of the deer or the rustle of the partridge's wing, and from whose harbours the fishing-boat often sails, bearing faithful husbands and manly sons and brothers, never to return to long-expectant and at last despairing wives and brothers and sisters. Features like these in the physical condition of the country could not and cannot fail to affect the religious life of its people, and may well have helped to impress on it those qualities of

depth, of reverence, of solemn pathos and of strong endurance, with the accompaniment sometimes of austerity and narrowness by which it has been thought to be characterized. The attainment itself is from God. Its origin, as has been already said, is divine ; but it takes its colour largely from the soil in which it grows, even as the partridge from the heath in which it builds its nest and rears its young: and it were as unreasonable to expect religious life to wear in Scotland the bright and lively character which it seems natural for it to possess in France and in Italy, as to expect the foliage under its so often sunless skies to show the deep scarlet and purple of our autumn woods.

I mention next as an important, perhaps the most important, factor in moulding the religious life of the Scottish people, the *system* of Christian doctrine which at the time of the Reformation they were led to adopt,

usually designated Calvinism, but, with more justice, Augustinianism. It is far from my purpose to attempt to give on this occasion either an exposition or a defence of the system. It does not lie in the line of my present subject to do so. Viewed as an exhibition of the relation of human beings and of human life to the Creator and Governor of all things, it has its difficulties to the reason, its perplexities to the moral nature; as what system has not? There is no doubt as to its general character and tendency. Taken as a whole, it is a system which exalts God to the throne, and puts man in the dust; which throws the sinner absolutely on the mercy of God and on the merits of the Saviour's sacrifice, and which at the same time asserts in the strongest way the imperative and unalterable claims of truth and righteousness on all men and in all spheres of life. It asserts, indeed, so strongly the sovereignty

of God in arranging for and in dispensing the blessings of redemption, and the weakness and the depravity of the nature of man, that one cannot wonder to find the mere logician distrusting it as inimical alike to goodness and to happiness. But that is of small moment, either the one way or the other. The divine plan of redemption is not to be judged by mere logic, however skilful. It may be worth your while to listen to the testimony of a great preacher, the best known, perhaps, on this side of the Atlantic, and all the more remarkable that he had long previously rejected the system which he thus characterizes: "There is no system which equals Calvinism in intensifying to the last degree ideas of moral excellence and purity of character. There never was a system since the world stood which puts upon man such motives to holiness, or which builds batteries that sweep the whole ground of

sin with such horrible artillery." (Beecher.) And then listen to the testimony of a great historian, on the other side of the Atlantic, himself no Calvinist: "When all else has failed—when patriotism has covered its face and human courage has broken down; when intellect has yielded, as Gibbon says, 'with a smile or a sigh,' content to philosophize in the closet, and abroad worship with the vulgar; when emotion and sentiment and tender imaginative piety have become the handmaids of superstition, and have dreamt themselves into forgetfulness that there is any difference between lies and truth, the slavish form of belief called Calvinism, in one or other of its many forms, has borne ever an inflexible front to illusion and mendacity, and has preferred rather to be ground to powder like flint than to bend before violence or melt under enervating temptation." (Froude.) It was this system of divine truth which

the people of Scotland were led to adopt in Reformation times, which they embodied in their Confession of Faith, and in their Catechisms, and which has been for three centuries expounded and enforced in their pulpits. One need not hesitate to claim that, as studied and accepted by them, it has done very much among men of all ranks to educate intellect, to exalt sentiment, to fortify conscience, to mould character, to make the heart at once reverent and tender, humble and fearless, and to make the life upright and brave and strong. One would be glad to believe that in these days of wider and more pretentious, though not necessarily deeper culture, Scotland is holding fast, and will continue to hold fast, to the view of truth which has moulded to such good effect the character of her people for successive generations.

In estimating the causes at work to give to Scottish piety the character which it has

long borne, we may not overlook *the history* of the people at what may be called the formative period of their religious life; the struggle through which they had to pass, and the martyrdoms which they had to endure. I refer here not so much to the short but sharp and decisive conflict with Rome, which Scotland shared in common with all northern Europe at the Reformation era; as to the long, bitter and bloody resistance which she had to offer to English prelacy and to the attempt to force upon her forms of worship and of Church government opposed to the religious convictions and alien to the feelings of the great mass of her people. It does not belong to the plan of this discourse to enter into details as to the character and objects of this struggle. We have to do here simply with its results, and with these only so far as they may be supposed to have affected the religious development of

the people engaged in it. These results were of a twofold character.

On the one hand the struggle united the masses of the nation, ministers and people, in the closest way; it deepened greatly the attachment of both to the views of religious truth and to the forms of worship, in the maintenance of which they had to suffer so long and so severely; and it at once strengthened the moral fibre of the nation and ennobled its aims. It gave more or less of a heroic character to the religious life of the nation. The piety of a people which can count by the score or by the hundred men who could go to the stake, saying, as James Renwick, a youth of twenty-six years of age, said, in the Grassmarket of Edinburgh, on a cloudy February day: "I shall soon be above these clouds, and then I shall enjoy Thee and glorify Thee without interruption and intermission forever;" and women who could accept loss

for Christ in the spirit of the noble Ayrshire wife, who, as her husband lay a bleeding corpse at her feet, to the question of the man who had taken his life, "What do you think of your husband now?" replied, "I aye thocht muckle o' him, sir, but never sae muckle as I do this day,"—the piety, I say, which was kindled or quickened by such spectacles as these, or is now fed by their memories, could not and cannot be without its heroic and tender elements.

On the other hand, the long and painful struggle through which the nation conquered the right to worship God and to order religion according to its own convictions, probably helped to give to its religious character those qualities of self-assertion and extreme pugnacity, in some cases even of hardness and acerbity, which it is easier to account for than to admire and love. We inherit as in part at least the result of these early contendings, the disposition to which

I have previously referred, to exalt mere points up to the level of principles, and the habit too frequently exemplified of wasting in our zeal for the former, the strength which were better reserved for the maintenance of the latter. Then we must admit, if not an absolute onesidedness, yet a certain want of rounded completeness and grace in much of Scottish religious life. This is, indeed, just what we might expect in the circumstances. We do not wonder to find the tree, which has taken shape and reached its full growth, under the winds of a tempestuous coast, of unshapely form, with limbs twisted and gnarled, even while hard and healthful. We do not look in it for the symmetry of one planted in a fertile and sheltered spot. To the same cause I attribute in no small degree the non-aggressive character of Scottish Christianity. The Presbyterian Church is probably less aggressive as a whole in its operations than

either the Methodist or the Baptist Church; less aggressive, I do not mean, in relation to the views or to the membership of other religious bodies, but in relation to the indifferent and the worldly and the vicious who are around all the Churches. It has known how to care for its own children, as well as, a partial mind would claim better than, most others; but it has been too ready to regard its duty as then fully discharged. Compelled to fight so long for its own existence, it has become so accustomed to the attitude of defence that it does not easily exchange it for that of aggression. And if, notwithstanding, its principles have obtained wide acceptance, and as a consequence strong and vigorous Churches of the Presbyterian order have arisen in lands remote from Scotland and Geneva, the result must be ascribed rather to the soundness of the principles and the far-travelled ways of those who hold them, than to any sys-

tematic and well-sustained effort for their propagation.

The theme which I have ventured to discuss with you is very far from being exhausted, but I may not draw much longer on your time and patience. In any at all adequate treatment of the question before us—the causes of the distinctive character of Scottish piety—a place would have to be given to the Parish School with its religious as well as secular teaching, and bringing not only a fair English but the rudiments at least of a classical education within the reach of the humblest in the land; to the Scottish Sabbath, not, as remembered by us, gloomy and forbidding, but restful and holy; to the Shorter Catechism with its in many cases unsurpassed and in some unrivalled definitions of doctrine, repeated in pious homes every Sabbath evening; and to the Psalms of Scripture, sometimes plaintive, sometimes

jubilant, sometimes majestic like Scotland's hills, sometimes sweetly musical like the murmur of its brooks, never either weak or irreverent—to these Psalms sung in the house and in the church.

If on the present occasion I merely allude in this general way to these particulars, it is not because they are deemed unimportant, but because the time does not admit of more than this passing reference ; and there is the less reason to regret the necessity which forbids a fuller statement regarding them, that attention has been often called to them on occasions like the present, to the exclusion of considerations at least equally important.

The question remains, how can we turn the considerations which have been presented to the best practical account? Obviously we cannot transfer to our adopted country all the influences of which I have spoken as affecting the piety of our fathers.

Those even who remain in Scotland cannot retain them to the full. The lines of railway which pierce the Cheviots and the Grampians, the net-work of telegraphs which cover the land from the Pentland Frith to the Solway, are rapidly obliterating old landmarks even there; and the same process is at work among ourselves. Then we cannot have here the majesty of the Scottish hills, nor the mystery of its deep glens, nor the terror of its tempestuous seas. We cannot incorporate in our school system the Scriptural and doctrinal teaching which still obtains not only in the denominational but for the most part also in the national schools of Scotland. Our mixed population forbids it; though the doubt will sometimes arise whether, in the exclusion of definite religious teaching, unavoidable in the circumstances, the Christian people of Canada are not paying too great a price for their common schools.

But be this as it may, we can see, and we ought to see, that the Shorter Catechism is efficiently taught in our Sabbath Schools and in our homes, and that thus the system of Scripture doctrine, of which it is so admirable a summary, is made familiar to all our Presbyterian youth. Again, we can cooperate with the members of other Christian bodies in protecting the Sabbath against the encroachments of the worldly and pleasure-loving spirit of the day. If we are true to our ancestry, we shall be found in the foremost ranks of its defenders. There should be no Scotchman among us aiding in the movement to open places of amusement, or to run steamboats for pleasure excursions, or to despatch trains whether for travel or for traffic on the Lord's day. If in disregard of considerations of public good as well as of religious obligation, a movement of this kind is to be made, let us leave it to men of other nation-

alities who know less well than we the unspeakable value of the day of rest. Then let us keep our Psalms with all their roughness and perhaps uncouthness to ears unaccustomed to their rhythm, in the place of prominence in our public worship, which they have so long and so deservedly held. I do not say, let us sing them exclusively, for I believe the New Testament Church may well desire to celebrate the great facts of redemption ; the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection, the exaltation of the Saviour in more plain and direct language than it would be reasonable to expect in compositions of a date so long prior to the occurrence of these events. I hold, therefore, that the Church or the congregation which refuses to its members the use of such hymns as "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," "When I survey the wondrous Cross," "Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts," does them, no doubt unwittingly, a real in-

justice. But I maintain still more strongly the unequalled majesty and strength and depth of the Psalms. They embody, and in the form of worship, views of God in His justice and holiness, in His displeasure with sin and delight in righteousness, which are seldom found in hymns either ancient or modern. They differ from the best of these, or all but the best, not so much in degree of excellence as in kind. They seem to me to constitute a different and a higher order of composition. I have no hesitation, therefore, in saying that if ever they are displaced in family and in public worship by any merely human compositions, however excellent, it must be to the injury or loss of some of the best elements in the piety of our Presbyterian people.

In conclusion, and coming to interests more directly personal, let us see to it, men and brethren, that we are ourselves the possessors of that life of whose heaven-

ly origin and gracious qualities I have spoken. It is surely unnecessary to remind you, or to do more than remind you, that we may be Scotchmen and the children of Scotchmen, and yet not Christians; that we may boast connection with the land of Knox, the fearless preacher of righteousness, and yet be ourselves the veriest slaves of sin; strange in our own persons to all that has made our country great and honoured; that we may even carry in our veins the blood of martyrs, and yet, by our worldliness, our profanity, or our cowardice, be ourselves nothing better than traitors to the cause in which that blood was shed. Let me cherish the hope that it is otherwise with you whom I am permitted to address this evening; if so, you will all the more readily forgive the freedom which I use in warning you of such a possibility. Let us one and all resolve to have, by the help of God, in ever larger measure in our lives,

the Christian graces which we honour in a Knox and a Melville, in a Murray and an Argyle, in a Leighton and a Rutherford, in a Chalmers and a McCheyne.

There are those who are Scotchmen first and Christians second, if Christians at all. I ask you, men of Toronto, to act a different and a worthier part. However high you place your nationality, place your religion above it. The thistle must not stand alongside of the cross, far less over the cross. He is no more the truest Scotchman than he is the best Christian, who is more at home in the songs of Burns than in the Psalms of David; who revels in the pages of Scott, but who is ignorant of the letters of Rutherford and of the sonnets of Erskine. If the accents which are fragrant of the Tweed or the Dee attract you, the accents which speak of acquaintance with Bethlehem and Calvary, whether coming

from French, English or Scottish lips, ought to attract you still more powerfully. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;" because our hearts find their truest home below the skies, in that brotherhood in which there is neither Scotchman nor Englishman, any more than there is Jew or Greek, but "Christ is all and in all." By Him, by the memories of His cross and of His resurrection, even more than by those of godly ancestors, I entreat you to be humble, devout, earnest Christians, pure in thought, kindly in feeling, upright in conduct. Be ever on your guard against those sins of worldliness, profanity, intemperance and impurity, against which the most privileged nationality affords no protection. "Be ye sober, therefore, and watch unto prayer."

Brethren, "the time is short." I miss

from these pews the faces of not a few, who occupied them on the corresponding occasion three years ago. They have fallen asleep. You have carried them one after another to their last resting-place. The time for others to follow cannot be distant. One honoured member of your Society, and held in even higher and wider esteem as a Christian than as a Scotchman, will be this year absent through severe sickness from your annual gathering. But to him as to us, if we are followers of Christ, it is "the night" which "is far spent." It is "the day" which "is at hand." "Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." And "now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every

good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever." Amen.





