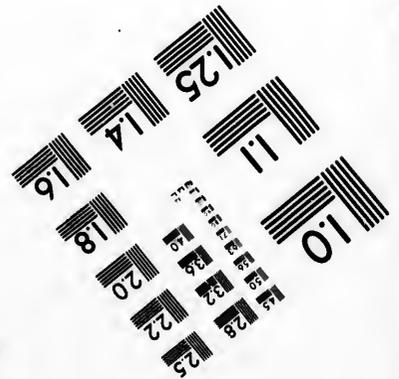
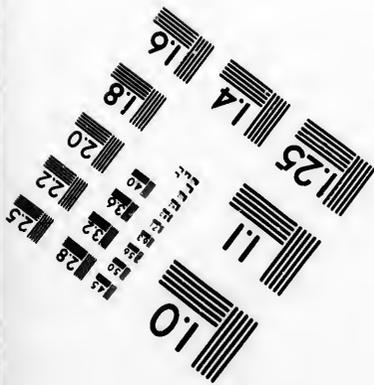
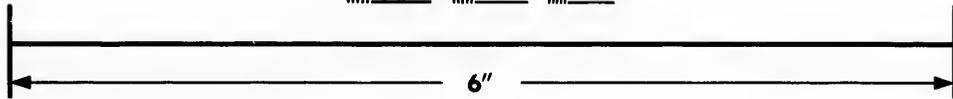
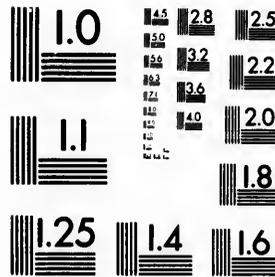
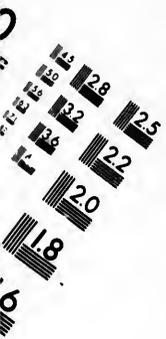


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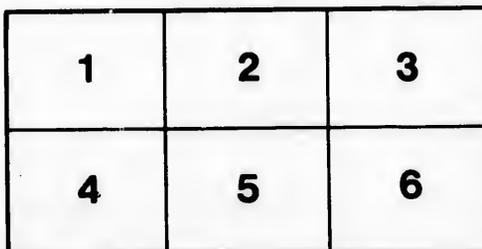
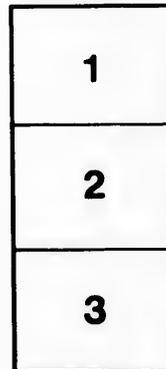
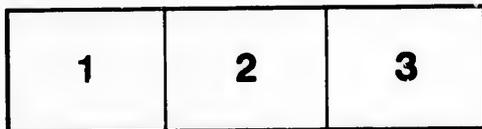
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NOT SELF-SEEKING.

BY THE

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ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE, SHARON.

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God's Worship not Self-seeking.

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AND

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June, 1871.

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GOD'S WORSHIP NOT SELF-SEEKING.

“Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job
fear God for nought?”—JOB i. 9.

I have ever been accustomed to make God's Word, spoken by His Son or His servants, the basis of my sermons; now I take the Devil's words—for none so suitable to express the evil thing of which I am to discourse.

The loving Lord is forward to praise His own: to “the Accuser,” Satan, He says, “Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?”

To “fear God,” I may observe, is the common Old Testament phrase for being a worshipper of God. In reply, the Devil answers with a devilish malice, suggesting the insincerity of God's very best servant in all the earth. “Hast Thou not made an hedge about him, (says he,) and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face.” (vv. 10, 11). The Lord joins issue, so to say, with Satan. He accepts the challenge in behalf of Job: “Behold all that he hath is in *thy* power: only upon himself put not forth thine hand.” How devilishly that power was used, we know, but in vain: “Blessed be the name of the Lord,” is Job's pious conclusion.

Sep't 28 1918



And when Satan's power is extended to Job's person,—his "life" only being reserved,—the malice of hell is again baffled by mortal frailty, and, though Job breaks out into impatient complaints, and "speaks unadvisedly with his lips," yet in spite of so dark and mysterious a dispensation to one entirely conscious of his own integrity, he proves faithful to the end: when family, and estate, and honour are gone, he is still a man "fearing God;" and, while complaining "my skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat," he rises superior to the depression of his own misery, and to all despair of God's justice, and exclaims triumphantly "I know that my Redeemer liveth!"

Thus was the loving Lord justified, and "the Accuser of the brethren cast down."

My brethren, I desire, with the aid of the Good Spirit, to dissuade you, in this sermon, from *the Devil's principle in worshipping God,—self-seeking*. Yes! *be shocked—shocked as much as you can at my implied charge; you cannot be shocked too much at such a really shocking principle as worshipping God for self, which, to the shame and grief of Christians, has the proofs of its prevalence scattered all around. Remember, the Devil's principle is, that in worshipping God, we are to seek our own good. God's principle, as plainly implied in His answers to Satan, is, that we are to seek His honour.*

Now, which is our settled principle?

Let me endeavour to help your choice of this latter, by shewing you convincingly that it is God's principle. (1). God, the Eternal, Who existed when none else did, *must* be to Himself His own End, from the necessity of His Nature, in all He does. Creation itself is for His praise.

The crowned Elders before the throne say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created," (Rev. iv. 11). "All things were created by Him (Christ), and *for Him*," (Col. i. 16).

So is it in the new creation, likewise. "This people have I formed for Myself, (says God): they shall shew forth My praise," (Isa. xliii. 21). "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.....*to the intent* that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," (Eph. ii. 10 : iii. 9, 10, 11).

This Divine propriety, this eternal fitness, meets us where we should least expect it. In the Parable of the Lost Sheep, where God's love seems bent only on working our good, yet there are we instructively reminded, that God is after all His own End—"Rejoice *with Me*, for I have found My sheep." God's joy in His own is first and chief, and the ground of all other right joy. It would be a violation of the relation between the Creator and the creature to say first, "Rejoice that a *lost sheep* is found"—and, alas, this *is* usually men's first thought,—that man is saved, rather than that God is glorified by recovering His own.

Not only in this parable touching men, but in words spoken specially of Himself, does our Blessed Lord give us the weightiest and most impressive illustration of this principle—that God must be First. "The love of Christ (says St. Paul) passeth knowledge," and the great expression of His love is the Cross. In view of it He says,

“Now is My Soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. *Father, glorify Thy Name,*” (Jno. xii. 27, 28). There, brethren, you see a love to the creature so profound that it passeth knowledge; but yet so Divinely wise as to regard first and chiefly the glory of the Creator. If the greatest acts of the Son are referred to God as their end; how intolerable that the acts of men may be independent of it!

(2.) Plain, then, it is, that the object which God and the Eternal Son have in all Their works, must be ours too—the highest and worthiest, that is, God Himself.

If you are convinced of this, and I trust you are, then you must feel the utter impiety of the Devil's principle—that even in God's service we are to look to our own good first and chiefly, and may use the worlds of nature and grace for this selfish end. God made the universe to be the reflection of His own uncreated beauty, that the rational beholders might glorify Him, as they make permitted use of it; but when such use takes precedence of the original design, and even entirely obscures it, we feel that the order of Nature is reduced to very chaos.

I live in God's world. I enjoy His beautiful creatures. His heavens shall minister to my imagination: His earth and sea, to my bodily needs. His gifts of person and fortune shall all centre in my own happiness and honour; while His honour, if it be recognized at all, shall have but a very secondary place. We should be ashamed to speak so, but we are not ashamed to act so.

I live in God's new creation. He has given me a spiritual life in His Church. He ministers richly the supply of the Spirit of life. His Word displays the glory of eternal life. His Sacraments

supply its vital powers. The Cross, on which His Incarnate Son expired, a voluntary sacrifice which puts away sins forever, is at once the pledge of truth and love, and the unfailing fountain of an inward life, full of grand emotion: it is a sublime motive power which can never be exhausted.

But all these—the drops of the sky and the drops of the sea, the bright Baptismal drops and the red drops of the Chalice, the dew-drops of the Spirit of grace and the Bloody sweat-drops of the Garden and the Cross—all alike will I use just for myself, that I may be comfortable here and may not be miserable in eternity. Horrible! you say. Yes, it is horrible! Ah, brethren, we never see what our sins and our selfish hearts are, till they are brought near to God, placed in “the light of His countenance;” or, till the shadow of the Cross falls upon them. Better so see them now, than at last for the first time in the light of the “Great White Throne.”

It is very true, and it is very blessed, that God has linked together in the constitution of nature His honour and our happiness; so that both may be promoted at the same time—by His acts and by our acts; but as He, by the necessity of His nature, must in His works have regard first to Himself by priority of motive, so must we, by the invincible necessity of duty, have chief regard to Him in all we do, by the same priority of motive, “doing all, whatsoever we do, to the glory of God;” not as if we should not intend our own good, but giving God the first place in our intention.

The first desire of every right heart must be to honour God; and it is from this principle that the calling of public assemblies for God's worship sprang. This at once appears from the Old Testament. “And the Lord spake unto Moses say-

ing, Speak unto the Children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning *the feasts of the Lord*, which ye shall proclaim to be *holy convocations, even these are My feasts.....* These are the *feasts of the Lord* which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord, a burnt-offering and a meat-offering, a sacrifice, and drink-offering." (Lev. xxiii. 1-3, 37). These were undoubtedly for men's spiritual good, but that is not at all named. God and His claims occupy the whole ground. Surely "the dispensation of the Spirit," that is, the Christian Religion, cannot lower the purity and spirituality of worship? Now especially are our holy convocations "to the Lord"—for Him. The instinct of the Church calls our public religious acts "The Divine Service," "the Service of God." But suppose that, inconsistently with this true instinct, we engage in the several parts of the "Divine Service" with no higher motive than the promotion of *our own good*, or allowing God's glory but a very remote influence; suppose we read, we preach, we pray, we communicate, that we may be helped to grace now, to the formation of a pure and spiritual character, that so we may be fitted for a very glorious and happy state hereafter; suppose that we engage in these acts with no constraining sense of supreme duty to Him, and that when His claims, not our own wants, come distinctly before us in forms of adoration and praise, we find our hearts dull and grovelling, "cleaving to the dust;" can any one believe that this is honorable to us, or pleasing to God? How justly do we judge when our own interest and the claims of God do not conflict. If a friend in appearance were to do us never so many friendly and pleasant services, yet if we were perfectly

well assured that there was nothing spontaneous, nothing really friendly in the motive—that all proceeded from cool calculations of advantage, so much profit being expected in return; who that had the least dignity or integrity would not scorn such friendship, would not disown its obligations, and refuse the returns so unworthily expected? What, then, shall we think of Him Who pierces every disguise, and Whose abhorrence of all meanness and dishonesty is infinite? That is a point we should do well to ponder.

The same thing is seen in those who grudge expense or beauty on the church, or in its services, except in so far as it may minister to the worshippers' comfort. Such have none of the ungrudging, loving spirit of her "who did what she could," and whose deed fills the Church with its sacred odour; rather does that spirit prevail which complained "to what purpose is this waste?" It is seen, too, in members of Choirs, who, should any unpleasantness prevent them from singing there for their own satisfaction, will not sing in the congregation, even "to the glory of God."

This putting God's honour and service last, comes out dreadfully in the habits of Congregations. How little are the Church's Prayers, that is, her homage to God, regarded, unless accompanied with the excitement of preaching! The sanctuary is deserted if there is nothing expected in it but God and His worship; but if a strange face, or an eloquent tongue is in the pulpit, the indevout crowd in.

Again, how frequently do we find persons who have grown partially blind or deaf make such infirmity an excuse for absenting themselves from Divine Service. Too often have I known such

cases. The blind had friends who could guide them safely to God's House, and they could grope their way through their farms or to the market-town on weekdays; but their blindness was deemed a disqualification for worship, as if God were seen with the bodily eye, or as if a worshipper's main work were to see his neighbours! The great excuse of the deaf is, that they "can't hear a word of the sermon,"—thus confessing their indevotion without any disguise. What! is hearing of God to be regarded as worship? a help it is, but such a help as an old Christian ought to be well able to dispense with under the circumstances, when his Bible and Prayer-book are before his eye, guiding him in the common acts of united worship, even where its loudest tones are unheard. Sometimes, too, for the same reason, they think themselves exonerated from all obligations to render pecuniary support to religious ministries—because they cannot comfortably participate in them; thus, again, shewing how indifferent they are, as well to the honour of the great God, for whose sake these acts are chiefly performed, as to the spiritual welfare of their neighbours.

It is not their outward ear only that is deaf. A worse deafness afflicts the inward ear, that cannot hear all the voices of the spirit-world calling on them to worship "the Father of spirits," Who speaks to the ear of the soul, and Who can be devoutly worshipped no less in the sacred solitude of silence than in the thunder of the Church's loudest Alleluias. O! when shall we learn that God, Who fills the universe, must also fill the Christian's soul, and that His worship is the first and grandest of claims on His creatures. If we should be at once deaf, dumb, blind, and lame, and could only be carried to Church, who is so spiritu-

ally stupid as not to know that such an one can still be reckoned among the worshippers of God, while his inner man consecrates itself to the thought and the Presence of the Invisible? Nay! who does not feel that the very sight of such a helpless being, Sunday after Sunday in the Lord's House, is a more touching and impressive homage to the blessed God than the most earnest of ordinary worshippers can render? For we know that he is alone with God, that the sights and sounds of the world do not rudely interpose between his spirit and God, that the vision of "the King in His beauty" is more likely to be revealed to him, and, at any rate, that it is a sincere homage that is paid, inasmuch as nothing but the invisible Object of worship can attract him thither.

From all this we may see that the worship of such is not only just as true, but is therefore just as obligatory, as that of others; and, for their encouragement, I will add, just as *fruitful* to their own souls. For it is in proportion to the degree of our intention to honour God that He blesses us. The negligent, self-seeking worshipper departs unblest; but he, who amid infirmities desires mainly to honour God, and manifests that desire in the face of the world, has fulfilled to him the rule of Christ's kingdom, "according to thy faith be it unto thee."

The Devil's principle of interested worship is no where more visible and no where blacker than in regard to the Holy Communion; as blotches are fouler the purer the ground on which they appear. This is præeminently to be called "the Divine Service," as the Church has ever called it, and in one sense it is the *only* Divine Service, because it is the only *distinctively* Christian and Divinely-ordained Rite of worship in the Chris-

tian Church. Other devotions, such as our Morning and Evening Prayers, are good, and for God's honour; but they are not like Holy Communion, of Christ's special appointment—they are man-devised. The Church calls Holy Communion "our Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving"—the Sacrifice which is offered as the expression of our praise: it is the Eucharist—the great thanksgiving; and it is comprehensively the "Christian Sacrifice;" yet by the great bulk of Christians it is withheld from God! In other words, God is defrauded of His due! Why? Because we choose to consult our *feelings*; and, as they are indifferent, God must (so to say) suffer for it! Or, we consult our *interests*, forsooth: either we think it *injurious* to us to offer that worship, or we think it *better for us* to defer it; and all this is coolly settled without a thought of God's claims to worship and service, assuredly no thought of His *paramount* claims.

Brethren, are we so far sunk and blinded as not to see how *hateful* this is? Do we not see that it is Satan's principle of selfishness? Has God no claims upon us for homage, despite His eternal Nature and His uncreated excellency—His preserving Providence and His Divinest Love? Remember how little is in our power to give to Christ. Of outward things we can give nothing which was not first His gift to us. The only thing that is really ours to give is the *voluntariness* of our service—nay, not even that, for "it is He that worketh in us *to will!*" Of all our little, then, shall Christ get nothing from us but what is wrung from us by self-interest? O my God, what "fools and blind!" to think that this is religion—that this is a preparation for heaven, where Thou art worshipped for Thy own sake, and the thought of self is impossible!

My dear brethren, contrast with the Devil's sentiment the saying of the apostle of love, St. John : " We love Him because He first loved us." Compare the penetrating words of St. Paul : " God commendeth His love towards us." Shall the love of God wake no responsive echoes in our hearts? Shall the free and generous spirit of Christ's love, as expressed in these two Apostles, be a stranger to our breasts ; or shall we not invite it this day to enter, and expel with indignant horror that spirit of self which pollutes the temple of God with its unhallowed presence ?

Let the young " sing praises lustily, and with a good courage." Let the old, the feeble, the deaf, the blind, the speechless, praise Him with no less ardency. " Silence" can be " expressive," too. St. John, in one of his visions, says there was " silence in heaven for half-an-hour ; but it was not without the worship of God ; for the same Apostle tells us that the heavenly spirits " serve Him day and night in His temple"—" resting not." If there was silence, there was silent adoration, too ; and so must there always be, even in our earthly temples, when the Presence of God is once realized.

How much may we learn from the conduct of loyal subjects. Their attendance does not fail at the Courts or solemn Assemblies made by the Sovereign, though they may time and again miss of any word or look of royal recognition. Enough for them to be *seen* among loyal men—to have made their homage unselfishly. But more still, and more influentially may we learn of disinterested service from God's famous servants, St. Paul and Moses. St. Paul says, " I could wish myself accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." What an ecstasy of zeal

for God as well as charity to man is expressed in that wish of one who had such exalted convictions and experience of the blessedness of being "in Christ!" The Psalmist reminds us how "Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breach to turn away His wrath, when He would destroy His rebellious people." (Ps. cvi. 23.) And what is the plea he urges to avert God's anger? It is the honour of God's great Name among the heathen, lest they should say, "Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which He swore unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness." (Num. xiv. 16.) And this from one who had such love to his people that he could refuse God's offer of "making him a great nation in their stead," and who could pray that God would rather "wipe him out of His book" than let him see their ruin! Lovely as are such examples of disinterested devotion to the Majesty of God, so hateful is selfishness in His service.

But it is quite as *hurtful* as it is hateful, and perhaps this consideration itself will weigh the more with some to rid themselves of it.

1. *It corrupts Religion fatally.* Selfishness is the great enemy that Religion is to dispossess from our nature. Open war is proclaimed—the opposing lines are well and distinctly marked; and so long as no confusion is allowed, the ranks of Religion, thanks be to God, have an encouraging prospect of success. The Blood of Sprinkling, the Spirit of Grace, and Angelic Ministries, give all the confidence that the Christian Soldier can need. But let Selfishness once crawl meanly into the camp of Religion; let its poisonous principles infect the army of Christ; let its suggestions prevail to regulate the mode and operations of

Christian warfare, and to control the activity of the Church ;—and there can be no chance of success—Religion must perish. Its outward organization may survive for a time, but it becomes more than an ally of Selfishness—even more selfish than Selfishness itself. If the proverb be true, “The corruption of the best becomes ever the worst,” what must we think of a selfish Religion? “When the Light that is in us becomes darkness, how great is that darkness!” When Religion, the enemy of Selfishness, becomes selfish, where is the remedy?

2. But selfishness in religious worship is hurtful to us on a second ground, viz., *by the just judgment of God*. I before pointed out how loathsome among men are interested, selfish services, under the guise of friendship, and how certainly the all-knowing God must scorn them. I would dwell a moment longer on this point. Of old, by the prophet Isaiah (xxix. 13), did God complain of His people that “they draw nigh to Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me (*i. e.*, their worship of Me) is taught by the precept of men.” This last point our Lord pressed home against the Pharisees who reduced selfishness to a rule of religion, teaching their deluded followers that they might in one breath be unmerciful to their parents, honour God by an insolent cheat, and gratify their own selfishness; that by an unreal consecration of their property to God—simply by saying “it is Corban,” a gift to the Sanctuary—they were exonerated from doing ought for their parents, were not bound to give over actually the Corban, but might use it for themselves, “Thus” (is our Saviour’s comment) “have ye

made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." If ever word of just and holy indignation were spoken on this earth, it was His one word of condensed disgust—*ὑποκριταί*, "Ye hypocrites!" With what severity of righteous disdain does God, by the prophet Malachi (i. 10), say to the corrupt priesthood of the time—"Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on Mine altar for nought," (*i. e.*, perform disinterestedly any of the Temple services, high or low). "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hands." A priest of very different spirit was Phinehas. "Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned My wrath away from the children of Israel while he was *zealous for My sake* among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him My covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, *because he was zealous for his God.*" (Nu.n. xxv. 11, 12, 13). So is it ever in the Church—much is given and forgiven where there is much love, for love is not self-seeking. But God will not bestow His spiritual treasures, the riches of the heart, where they would only turn to poison, where they would but minister to self, and would not all go back again to the Majesty on High in the incense of devotion, and be ceaselessly offered as whole burnt-offerings.

Let me entreat you all, brethren, to fling aside, for a few moments, every selfish feeling—to shut out this intrusive world—to place yourselves as naked spirits in the presence of God—to regard yourselves as the objects of His pure, disinterested,



Divine Love; and, as the consciousness of the Invisible Presence breaks and grows upon you, is it possible that any thought of self, even of your own ineffable felicity in that Presence, can exist within you? No, no more than in the Seraphim, whose only thought is God—"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God!" The feeling of pure and simple adoration must possess you—and that adoration is the sense of Divine Glory filling the soul and the universe, and the feeling of—nay, no *feeling* of, but—*self-annihilation*. God is all—the creature is nought.

Brethren beloved, try and bring such feelings into your daily worship. In such spirit let your service to God be maintained; let the thought of God be foremost in your minds; let His claims be supreme; let not the selfish sentiment of the fallen spirit be your rule, but the self-annihilating adoration of unfallen spirits. If the infinite bounty of our Redeemer could permit such a thing to be possible—

Let us serve God even
"for nought!"



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