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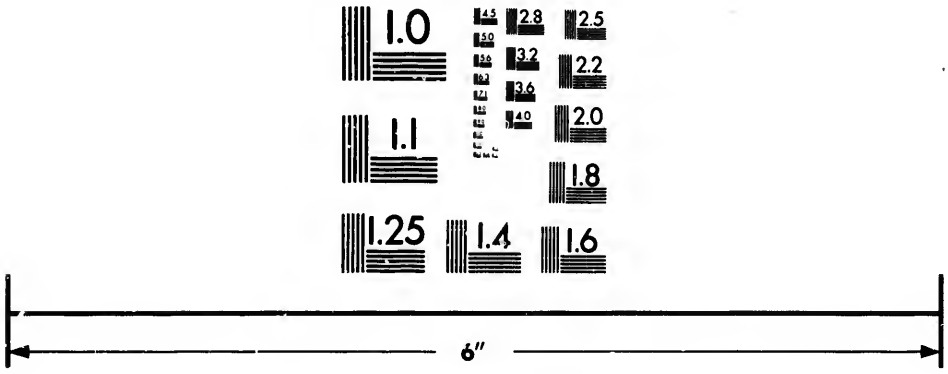

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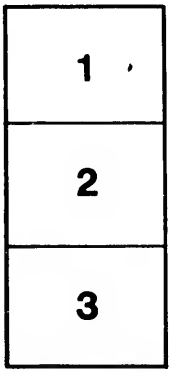

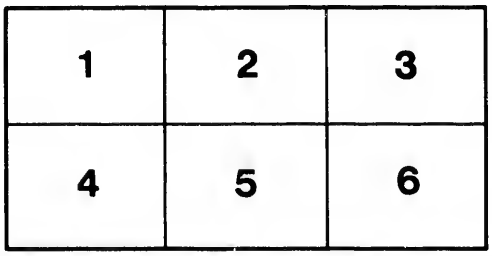

THE HOUSE OF THE LORD GOD.

TWO SERMONS

PREACHED IN FREDERICTON CATHEDRAL:

ONE ON THE EVENING OF THE DAY OF ITS

CONSECRATION,

WEDNESDAY, 31st AUGUST, 1853,

AND THE OTHER

ON THE MORNING OF THE SUNDAY FOLLOWING,

BY

GEORGE J. MOUNTAIN, D.D. & D.C.L.
Third Rector of Fredericton
LORD BISHOP OF QUEBEC.

FREDERICTON:

PRINTED AT THE ROYAL GAZETTE OFFICE BY J. SIMPSON, QUEEN'S PRINTER.

1853.

SERMON I.

1st Chron. xxii. 1.

Then David said, This is the House of the Lord God.

My Brethren,—

I was indulged with an opportunity, some six years ago, of making a few brief and passing remarks, when occupying a pulpit in this City, upon the feelings with which I re-visited the scene of my first pastoral charge and found myself greeted by many old friends and dear members of my early flock. I waive all notice, now, therefore, of matters which are merely personal, and shall simply observe, with reference to my own sentiments upon the present occasion, that I fervently praise God, by whose blessing the great work of erecting this Cathedral has been crowned with success, and marked, at its termination, by the solemnities in which we have borne our part to-day.

There are two points of view in which we may regard the words chosen for our text. We may regard them in their proper and original signification, as they are applied by King David to the literal Temple which he had desired to build, and for which he was about to make extensive preparations, in order to the execution of the task by his son and successor; and we may take the liberty of adapting them, in the way of figurative application, which is agreeable to the language of Scripture, to our own bodies, or persons,—as temples, (if we claim to be christian men,) consecrated to God and sanctified by the presence of the Divine Spirit.

It is under both points of view, my brethren, that I invite you to consider them.

First, then, in the direct and literal sense, let us contemplate the subject presented to us by these words, *This is the House of the Lord God.* This is the place to be for ever separated and solemnly set apart, with all meet appendages and characteristic distinctions which can mark its peculiar designation, for the most sacred of all purposes, the approach of man, in the acts of public and stated homage, to God.

A subject of enquiry is here presented to us, respecting which a great many strange mistakes prevail among men, some in one extreme, some in another. Let us in all humility, and in all sincere desire before God to hit the truth of the matter and to follow it out in our practice, endeavour to trace the general principles which should regulate our estimation of the sanctuary, and our duty in relation to the exterior provisions for public worship.

This is the House of the Lord God. If we go back to the simplicity of patriarchal times and to the individual acts of one in whose single person as well as name, *Israel* was once constituted and contained, we find that, upon a remarkable occasion, he makes use of very similar language: *How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.* It was the place where he had enjoyed communion with his God, *in thoughts from visions of the night when deep sleep falleth upon men,* and where he had been favoured by special manifestations made from above. And he proceeded to set up for a pillar, a stone on which his head had reclined, and to consecrate it by pouring oil upon the top of it, declaring that this stone which he had set for a pillar, should be God's House.

He alone, as we have said, was Israel then, (although the name had not yet been imposed). Israel his posterity, having become a great people, and having been rescued by the arm of God from Egyptian bondage, received a law from Heaven; and the provisions to be made for conducting divine worship were made the subject of revelation, in precise and minute details. The Tabernacle was to be reared in the wilderness. It was, as its name imports, a shifting sanctuary—in fact a vast tent—but it was, according to the pattern shewed in the Mount, in the utmost degree elaborate and gorgeous. Moses, the man of God, calls upon the people to manifest their zeal for the honor of Jehovah, and their appreciation of the value of their religion above all other objects of solicitude and regard, by their contribution of materials for the work, and their manual industry in preparing them. An immense amount of diversified and costly articles was required. Yet the people responded so well to the call, that their offerings far outwent the demand, and Moses was obliged to restrain their liberality.

This was at an early period of their history, and while they were still a wandering people. In an ulterior stage, and after the seat of their government had been established, under a line of Kings, at Jerusalem, we find David in great trouble

about the establishment of a settled and permanent Temple; vowing before God that he *would not suffer his eyes to sleep nor his eyelids to slumber till he could* fix upon a suitable spot; and expressing his grief to the Prophet Nathan that the Ark of God should still rest under the curtains of a tent, while he was himself lodged substantially in a regal palace. He conceives the idea, therefore, of erecting a magnificent Temple; but this work being reserved, by the will of God, for his son, because he had himself been engaged in many wars with the enemies of Israel and had shed much blood, he is nevertheless indulged in the privilege of putting matters in train for the work, and collecting a vast profusion of costly materials for the purpose. And here again the people of all classes, high and low, are called upon to contribute, and they too, feel it a privilege to be permitted to do so. In the same spirit which had characterized their forefathers in the day of Moses, they offer so largely, so cheerfully, so gladly, that the King makes it a subject of special and fervent thanksgiving, that such a spirit had been shed down upon himself and his subjects as to prompt them, poor earthly worms, to offer to God so willingly after this sort. David also took great pains in distributing the courses of the Priests, and making a variety of arrangements and appointments for the more seemly, regular, and efficient performance of divine worship.

King Solomon accomplished the building of the Temple—one of the greatest works which the world has seen—vast in dimensions, majestical in aspect, surpassing in costliness, varied and exquisite in decoration. The account of the solemn dedication of this edifice is among the most striking Chapters of the Bible; the prayer of the King supplies at once a spiritual view of the nature and omnipresence of God, and a just exhibition of the necessity of fitting provision for the worship of that God, on the part of man; and the overpowering manifestation of the divine glory within the walls, testifies sublimely to the acceptance of the work.

This Temple having been destroyed when the people, in judgment for their transgressions, fell under the yoke of Babylon, was rebuilt after the captivity of seventy years; the undertaking was carried on with great zeal and perseverance, in the face of many obstacles and interruptions, but not in its result—for the resources at command were not such as to make it possible—with a magnificence approaching to that of the original structure, still remembered by some of the aged Jews, who wept when the contrast came before their minds.

The people were comforted by the great and gracious promise, that *the glory* of this *latter house* should exceed that of the former; a promise which, although the building was afterwards further enlarged, enriched and decorated, was never fulfilled in its exterior features, and which manifestly from the context refers to the glorious coming, while that Temple should yet stand, of the long-looked for Messiah.

This greater glory, then, is ours: for although He is not with us in bodily, visible presence, as He was in the Temple at Jerusalem, yet, spiritually, we have His own blessed promise that *wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there will He be in the midst of them.*

But are we, then, to infer that the general principles which, under the earlier dispensation, regulated the manner of providing for the homage paid by man to his Maker, or the sentiments which then actuated the chosen servants of God, in this behalf, are out of place under the Gospel, and not in harmony with evangelical devotion? We know that we are now to *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free:* We are to offer *spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ: the hour* has long ago come in which men were *neither upon Mount Gerizim nor yet at Jerusalem, to worship the Father, but the true worshippers,* such as He seeks Himself, *are to worship Him in spirit and in truth:* We know that the Levitical institutes are long ago and forever at an end—that the shadow is merged in the reality—that the sacrificing priesthood, the laboured, complicated and onerous ritual of the law, the obligation of conformity to one undeviating pattern in all the solemnities of religion, as well as the restriction of those solemnities to a single spot upon the face of the earth, are brought to their final close and the fulfilment of their whole object, in Christ. But, because these things here enumerated, are abolished, is it therefore a necessary feature of spiritual worship that all costliness of garniture, all solemnity of architectural effect, all care for a well-ordered and well-distributed ceremonial of worship, all provision for the frequency of its performance, all preservation of a grave and reverential decorum, if it may be so expressed, in whatever pertains to the work of the service in the House of the Lord,—that all set demonstration of devotional feeling prescribed by authority or passed down by conventional usage among men,—is it a necessary feature of spiritual worship, that all these are to be repudiated or suspected as savouring of superstition, and tending to a relapse into the spirit of bondage? So it has been, and so it is

still, by some religionists, conceived. But the question may be answered, in the first place, by another. Where do we find, in the Gospel, our grounds for such an opinion? In what part of the New Testament is it so written? The *absence* of directions like those of the law, cannot prove such an opinion to be correct. The *negative* testimony of the New Testament is as strong upon one side as upon the other; there are no directions furnished respecting the precise form and manner of establishing and conducting the worship of God; there is certainly no prohibition of fitting up Churches, or framing ordinances, or celebrating religious services in a manner evincing feelings of respect on our own part, and calculated to beget them in the minds of others; there is certainly no command to clothe the circumstantials of religion with a character of bare and parsimonious plainness. Reserving for the present the consideration of some positive testimony afforded by the Gospel in favor of a system quite different from this, we have here to observe that the Gospel being in the true and proper sense of the word, *Catholic*, and in this point contrasted with the local and exclusive institutions of the Jewish Church, is left susceptible of adaptation to circumstances in matters of form. Unchangeable in doctrine, inflexible in morals, and strict in the maintenance of its few divinely appointed ordinances, as to their essential constituents, it admits freely of variation in the modes of worship and the regulation of ecclesiastical observances. The harrassed believers of Apostolic times, stripped often of their worldly possessions, and obliged to consult their safety by holding their assemblies in secret, were manifestly not in a condition to erect stately edifices for public worship, nor to invest its performance with dignity of exterior. The Apostles and their followers were glad to worship in an upper chamber. There are some persons of modern times disposed to insist upon being very Apostolic in the frugality of all arrangements for the House of God, who have by no means the same sparing and rigid predilection in the establishment of their own. They are ready to quote the example of primitive Christians in the poverty of their Churches, but have no intention of applying the same precedents to guide their practice in ordinary life. Now it is undeniably true, first, that an over-done, over-laboured ceremonial, a tawdry, excessive, and loaded pageantry; but, above all, an adoption of practices which do involve any well-founded suspicion of corrupt and superstitious views, are things distinctly to be shunned; and secondly, that the word may be

preached, and the ordinances of religion administered as acceptably and as profitably, if necessity so dictate, with the rudest accessories and in the meanest place of meeting which can be conceived, as in those more appropriate temples "where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault, the pealing anthem swells the notes of praise;" and if I might venture to quote my personal experience, I could tell of having myself held service and preached the word of God upon multiplied occasions in private dwellings, in fishermen's huts, in log school houses, upon the decks of ships of war, merchant vessels, steamers, and river craft; once in a mill; once upon the threshing floor of a barn, with half my congregation on the outside; once in the open air, under a tree; and need I disclaim any such idea as that the prayers and praises of believers in Christ, could not as well mount to Heaven from such places, so appropriated for the moment as our sanctuary, or that the word preached could not as effectually be there carried to the heart by the Holy Spirit, as if the scene of our devotions had been the grandest of our English Cathedrals? But because, in cases of necessity and in situations where we are compelled to make a shift, we can conduct our worship as in the instances just described, and can still have the full privilege and enjoyment of spiritual adoration, are we therefore to establish it as a principle that we are always and with whatever ample means at our command for a reverential exterior of worship, to imitate the same homely shift? Do we so reason and so act in other cases? There are very many cases in life, where men can submit to some temporary expedient, some inferior accommodation, some relinquishment of the more dignified appendages or prepared appliances of life, and the essentials of their purpose in hand are answered equally well. But they do not, therefore, like Diogenes with his tub, voluntarily reduce their establishments to the standard of actual need, nor yet confine themselves within the limits of simple convenience and neatness.

What, however, do we gather from the Gospel? We have seen already,—what in the words of our own 34th Article of Religion, framed in opposition to the pretensions of the Church of Rome, is laid down as matter of doctrine, that, in the words of the Article itself, "it is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one or utterly like; for at all times they have been diverse and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word, * * * and

every particular or national Church hath power to ordain, change and abolish ceremonies or rites of the Church, ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying." The reason for the retention in our own Church, of certain ceremonies, and the abolition of others, is also laid down, with great wisdom, in the Preface to our Prayer Book. But with reference to the *general spirit and character* of the *provisions to be made* and the regulations to be appointed for christian worship, what is it that we may gather from the Gospel? Do we really gather that it is unspiritual, that it is superstitious, that it is of dangerous tendency, to manifest any reverence for the sanctuary and its appurtenances, to express our zeal and concern for the honour of God, by the outward homage of the costly offering, the distinctive and appropriate decoration, the symbolical demonstration of pious feeling, or the constant recurrence of the well arranged and orderly service! Is *this* what we *gather* from the Gospel? What was the first homage paid to the incarnate Saviour upon earth? The wise men of the east brought their offerings of *gold and frankincense and myrrh!* What, let it be candidly considered, was the lesson which He left to us when He so highly commended the woman who was severely remarked upon in other quarters for the expensiveness of her tribute of love and honour, in breaking the alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious, and pouring it on His head? Or what do we learn, as an example applicable to our own performance in any occasion of testifying our feelings of affection and veneration for the person of our Saviour, (as when we provide the arrangements for receiving the appointed emblems of His Body and Blood,) what do we learn from all the careful and costly preparations made by some loving followers to do honour to His Body after death? They come, says Dr. Doddridge—a dissenter—with all holy reverence and affection to take down those sacred remains, nor did they think the finest linen or the choicest spices too valuable for such an occasion. What was the estimate which the Lord taught us Himself to form of the reverence and sanctity attaching to His *Father's House*, the house of prayer, when He drove out from it the money-changers, with a vehement impulse of indignation, and swept down their apparatus of traffic, saying, *Take these things hence—make not my Father's House an house of merchandize:* An act to which the evangelists apply the words of the Psalmist, *The zeal of thine house,*—the holy and devotional concern which I feel for the honor of the sanctuary,—*hath eaten me up?* And this, although He has

indicated His own sacred Body, being the residence of the Godhead, as in a higher point of view, the temple of God. What is the most natural and obvious interpretation of the words of Saint Paul, reproving the profane irreverence of the Corinthians in the celebration of the holy supper, *What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in, or despise ye the Church of God*? but the establishment of a principle of distinction between the place of assembly for public worship, however humble it might then be, and the ordinary dwellings of men? How did the Lord Jesus receive the demonstration of religious homage which was made by the garments and the foliage strewed in His path, and the branches of palm trees carried in the hands of the people, shouting their hosannahs, who formed the procession for His entry into Jerusalem? Did He treat it as puerile, or unmeaning, or superstitious, or in any way improper? And what, I would ask, is the difference, in the nature and character of the act,—between *this* demonstration and the practice received all over the world in the Episcopal Churches of England and America, but in some instances misconceived, of decking our Churches with evergreens during a certain portion of the ecclesiastical year?

Finally, what was the example of Christ and of His Apostles, in the observance of ordinance and rule, whether of divine or ecclesiastical authority, and in attendance upon the House of God? Christ, as we well know, punctiliously fulfilled the laws of the Mosaic ritual: He also attended the winter feast of dedication in the Temple, in which it is pointed out, again by Dr. Doddridge, as worthy of remark, that we here see our Lord Jesus at a festival appointed only by human authority in commemoration of a national deliverance. While the Temple stood and its observances remained, we find that the Apostles when at Jerusalem, *continued daily with one accord in the Temple*, and again, *were continually in the Temple blessing and praising God*: and we hear Saint Paul declaring that he *must by all means keep the feast which was then coming at Jerusalem*.

My brethren, I reserve for another occasion upon which I expect to have the privilege of addressing you, that branch of our subject which relates to the application of our text to the person of the believer, and I might here, perhaps, not unreasonably close. But there are one or two further remarks which I desire to offer to your attention before we now part.

I would observe, then, that where the noblest provisions exist, and are fully carried out in their exterior performance,

for the maintenance of Divine worship, and where the most regular conformity is practised to the liturgical observances of the Church,—it may all, through the degeneracy of our fallen nature, become a lifeless exhibition of formalities, and may be coupled with the most dangerous self-deceit. But not necessarily, nor by proper consequence, so. These things, if rightly used—always supposing them to be connected with a pure and scriptural system of faith,—are helps, not hindrances, to devout feeling and spiritual religion. There is no greater mistake in the world than to imagine that a care for the decency of externals in the House of God, a study of solemn or touching effect of a grave and chastened kind, in the celebration of divine service, a desire in our sacred music, as in all else, to do our very best when we are doing it for God,—a sense of the obligation and privilege of attending with all practicable frequency upon the services of the sanctuary, and a disposition of dutiful conformity to the rules and directions of the Church,—there is, I say, no greater mistake in the world than to suppose that all this must naturally be regarded as coming in substitution for spiritual religion, and leading men to be satisfied with low and worldly views of the service of God. The *reverse* of this imagination is the truth. It is when men are stagnant in faith and love, lax in principle, loose in practice, negligent of their souls, indifferent to the cause of Christ, inert in the propagation of the Gospel, insensible to the spiritual wants of their fellow-sinners,—it is *then* that Churches are left in meanness and neglect, or fitted up in a style of secular and unchurchlike arrangement, that ordinances are deserted, that rules are broken through or bent and accommodated to the taste and fashion of the world. If we would enquire why it is seen, in many places, that men do not make the responses in Church, without which the service of the Church of England cannot properly be said to be performed,—why they refuse to kneel before their God,—why they want to have Baptism and Marriage performed snugly in their own houses, and sometimes will break communion, will violate every idea of Church-membership, by having recourse to other quarters, if the Church declines to gratify them in this particular,—why the rule cannot be enforced of having three sponsors who are communicants, at every Baptism,—why there are so few persons who intimate their purpose to their Pastor before presenting themselves, even for the first time, at the Lord's Table,—why there are so few, proportioned to the whole number of professed worshippers of God in Christ, who come there at all,—why there are

so few who attend upon the week-day services of the Church,—will any among them undertake to say that all this is to be resolved into their great and eminent spirituality? O will they not be rather compelled to confess that the whole secret is commonly found in their *want* of spirituality, their want of concern about religion, their want of religious courage to surmount the false shame of this carnal world,—in fact, the alienation of their hearts from God? Nor is the case always much mended if their disposition to depreciate the forms and rules of the Church, and to exclaim against all solicitude respecting the externals of religion, is coupled with a high profession of piety, and a familiar command of religious language. There are indeed sincere and exemplary christians who have imbibed some prejudiced views upon this subject, or who have conceived an alarm on account of certain instances of unhappy defection to the standard of a corrupted system of faith, or of ill-judged and censurable adoption of usages properly characteristic of that system, which alarm prompts them most erroneously to suppose that there is a Romish tendency in all attachment to rule, and in all desire to promote seemliness of worship. Whereas, in fact, it is in those loose and low views of Church authority, unity and order, and in that practical disregard of the reverential usages and wisely framed regulations of the Anglican Church, which at one time extensively prevailed, that we are to look for the very cause which has estranged from our own system some peculiarly constituted or insufficiently disciplined minds, and has contributed to swell the list of proselytes to Rome. But although,—to come back to our point, there are sincere and exemplary christians—men much to be honored by all true followers of Christ—who contract impressions, in their contact with certain other believers, exceedingly unfavorable to the correct appreciation of the Church and her observances, and who too readily lend themselves to the plausible untruth, that to uphold the Church is to disparage the Bible; there are also shallow and frothy religionists who dangerously—dangerously to their own souls—arrogate to themselves a superiority of illumination, and soothe themselves in the self-attribution of an exemption from the shackles of bigotry and formality, in connection with the subjects which have been here treated, while in reality they *understand neither what they say nor whereof they affirm.* This remark may be illustrated by one familiar example, with which we will conclude.

A man comes and tells you that he has no popish notions about the holiness of places; that a Church is not a bit better than a barn or a store; that religion does not consist in stone walls, with steeples and arched windows; nor yet in surplices and organs; and in saying all this, he is persuaded that he is very wise, and very spiritual, and very enlightened, and that you, whom he supposes to have a besotted kind of attachment to these accessories and circumstantials of religion, are very sadly in the dark, and he is very sorry for you. But possibly he is a little in the dark himself, both with reference personally to your views of religion, and to the point itself upon which he is speaking. Perhaps you know as well as he does, that there is no inherent holiness or sanctifying charm in the walls or furniture of a Church; but perhaps you also know that it is neither wise and safe in itself, nor consonant to the word of God, in passages which have been here considered, to destroy all the reverential associations connected with the place where the NAME OF GOD is set, which is GREAT, WONDERFUL, AND HOLY, and where, among other acts of solemn worship, the awful and affecting memorial is made of the blood-shedding of Jesus Christ. It is a rash hand,—whether it be the hand of utilitarian philosophy, or of ill-understood spirituality, which would break down the bars of our hallowed associations; it is a rash step which would rudely invade the sacredness of the sanctuary. Even in matters of mere human sentiment, while we know very well that there is no real difference between the earth which covers the remains of our friends, and the earth which we mix with manure in our fields, or turn to any other common purpose, who is there that would therefore think it a proof of good sense or good feeling to build a dog-kennel, or to stand and play at foot-ball upon his father's grave?

Let us then, my brethren, remember, when we come here, that THIS IS THE HOUSE OF THE LORD GOD. Let us keep our foot when we come to the House of God, and set before our eyes the charge, *Ye shall keep My Sabbaths, and* REVERENCE MY SANCTUARY: *I am the Lord.*

SERMON II.

1st Chron. xxii. 1.

Then David said, This is the House of the Lord God.

It will, as I presume, be remembered, my Brethren, that in treating this text when I addressed you here on Wednesday evening last, it was proposed to regard it, *first* in its literal acceptation, as denoting the place prepared for the public worship of God, and *next* in its figurative application to the body or person of the believer. The *former* division of our subject cannot be said to have been then exhausted—for it might very well have led us to a consideration, in detail, of the Liturgy and Offices of the Church, and other points connected with our public homage rendered to God. But it may suffice, according to the opportunities which I am permitted to enjoy with you, to have established (or endeavored to establish) upon that occasion, certain *general principles* which should regulate our *estimation of the sanctuary*, and guide us in framing the services of the Church, and to pass now to that metaphorical aspect of which the text has been stated to be susceptible. An aspect, let it be admitted, not so conformable as the other, to the original meaning of the passage itself, nor having the same degree of congruity either with the particular circumstances which prompted the words in the mouth of David, or with the solemnity of consecrating this Church, still present, in all its freshness of interest, to our minds. Well indeed might we be tempted to prolong that happy contemplation: and, for myself, however dear to me are all the associations connected with the humbler edifice to which this stately and beautiful Cathedral, with all its appropriate decorations and legitimate appendages, now succeeds, I am, for the very reason which endears those associations to my memory, more thankful than words can well express, to witness the new advantages enjoyed in a Parish which constituted my earliest pastoral charge,—made as it now is the head of a Diocese and the See of a resident Bishop:—One whose presence forbids me to say what is due to him,—but this, my brethren, I must and will say, that his labours and sacrifices in the single object of erecting your Cathedral Church,

have entitled him to the warmest gratitude of yourselves and your posterity. O may it be the gate of heaven to multitudes of poor human sinners saved in Christ, and may the blessing of Almighty God still rest upon it from generation to generation!

But I forbear—and invite you, without further delay, to consider the text with me in that *adaptation* which will be found perfectly to harmonize with the language of Scripture in other places, and which is a more important point of view in which to regard it, than the other. For whatever just importance we may attach to the dignity of the literal house of God, and the maintenance of a seemly and reverential exterior in all the provisions established for the celebration of Divine worship,—these things are not necessarily, we all know, nor inseparably, the accompaniments of true religion—they may exist in the fullest amplitude of their exhibition, where true religion is obscured or lost—and true religion may exist and develope itself in its most effective and flourishing vitality, where, from unpropitious circumstances, these mere accessories are totally wanting. The Temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, as we had occasion to notice in pursuing our subject before, was stamped to the eye with a character of solemnity and grandeur, and fitted by the happiest arrangements for its sacred purpose,—and the Lord manifested His gracious approval of the zeal of His servants in the preparation of such a sanctuary for the honor of His name on earth. Yet what does the Prophet say, when the people, who gloried in the externals of their religion, had declined from the standard of pure devotion and practical holiness? Trust ye not in lying words, saying *The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord are these,*—but *thoroughly amend your ways and your doings.* The primary and essential constituent of the genuine service of God is that we ourselves, the company of worshippers, are, in our own persons, *as lively stones, built up a spiritual house, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

Yes—we, my brethren, in our own persons, as true believers, are the temples of the Holy Ghost. In the infancy of Christianity, the Holy Ghost descended upon the persons of the disciples in visible display and conspicuous communication of the word with power. The Holy Ghost does not so descend upon us. We receive no miraculous gifts. We neither experience nor witness any miraculous operations. But does the Holy Ghost, therefore, not descend upon us at all? Have we *not so much as heard whether*, in the standing and ordinary process of divine agency with reference to the human subject,

there be any Holy Ghost? As Christians, as baptized believers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as professed disciples of the Bible, as partakers of the privileges of the Christian Church, do we fail to recognise that agency, do we neither trace the effect, nor even feel the want of a divine energy, which acts upon the soul and possesses the man? Do we remember no obligation laid upon us, to prepare within ourselves the sanctuary of God and to preserve the place in a meet condition for its exalted purpose, and there to keep up the standing oblation, the daily sacrifice of duty? How does the Scripture speak? Let us confine ourselves to examples taken from the writings of Saint Paul: *Know ye not*, he says to the Corinthians, *that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the Temple of God is holy, which Temple ye are.* And again in another part of the same Epistle, *What, know ye not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost?* And so, to the company of believers collectively in the Ephesian Church, *Ye * * * are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy Temple, in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded up for an habitation of God, through the Spirit.* And to the Romans, in a metaphor of affinity with this, filling up the idea of the Temple and its service, *I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

My brethren, many among us are now coming forward,—too few, too few indeed, in comparison with the number who *ought* to come—but many among us are now coming forward to hold high communion with our God in the ordained commemoration of the death of His Son. Let us carry this act of our religion in mind while we consider the habits and practices which concern our own bodies or persons. And let us apply, in connection with this holy ordinance, the reflections which are here to follow in two different ways:—*First*, to the case of confessed unfitness and disqualification, in these points, for participation in the holy sacrament, which must involve a confession also of forgetting that we are the temples of God: And, *secondly*, to the care which those who are participants ought to exercise when they present their bodies for the reception of the emblems figuring to us the Lord's flesh and blood, to present them, in all earnest reality of purpose, as *dwelling places of the Holy Ghost.*

Let us begin by considering, generally, the body of man. The body is a combination of marvellous contrivances, in the contemplation of which the Psalmist is prompted to exclaim that we are *fearfully and wonderfully made*, for it is a contemplation which inspires awe and astonishment when we think of the power which called us into existence. The corporeal frame and system, with all the parts of its minute and intricate machinery, put together and working together for the purposes of life; the provision made for the separate function of every part, and for the combined operation of the whole; the engines of respiration, the power of motion from place to place, the circulation of the blood, the processes of manducation and digestion; the exquisite contrivance of the organs of sight, hearing, and the other senses; the infinitely diversified action of the organs of speech, producing that variety of intelligible articulate sounds, by means of which, in the correspondence of operation between the power of uttering these sounds and the recipient power of the ear in another human subject, ideas are mutually communicated from mind to mind; the capacity for labour and for handicraft operations, and for all the familiar doings of every hour, which is found in the human arm and hand; the amazing mutual adaptation which subsists in every one of these instances, between these several parts of the living machine on the one hand, and, on the other, the elements and constituted agencies of nature as well as all the surrounding objects of creation; the mysterious obedience of this elaborate machine, by an unperceived operation, to the will of the man and to the thinking mind infused from above, which has its seat and location in the body of the individual,—all this, my brethren, and much more of the same kind, which might be particularised, little as many of us are in the habit of noticing it, addresses powerful and solemn lessons to our hearts. It powerfully and solemnly admonishes us that we are a most wonderful piece of workmanship, proceeding from a far more wonderful power, the unsearchable, unfathomable power of God,—and it enables us to appreciate at once, with prostrate awe, and fervent, grateful devotion, the full import of the scriptural declaration, that in *Him we live, and move, and have our being*.

And yet there is more than one view of the case in which it is with too sad a significance and truth, that the Apostle St. Paul calls this wonderful body a *vile* body—with too evident a justice and appropriateness that the humiliating epithet is applied. The weak, helpless thing which comes wailing into

the world, to be in time a man—even if it live through all the risks which occur in all the stages of the way—through how many changes must it pass before it can reach the natural term of human existence, in its most favored lot! How long will it last at any point of its progress, if it cannot find food to devour? How long will it wear a seemly and attractive, or otherwise than an offensive appearance, if it is not operated upon by appliances and implements for cleansing, and trimming, and refreshing it? Look at it in the height of its activity, in the fulness of its bloom, in the utmost exuberance of its animal enjoyment, sparkling in every feature and springing with elasticity in every limb;—how far off is the hour of its change? Sickness may come, or casualties may happen to-morrow; languor, pain, perhaps distorting convulsions of agony; perhaps foul and disfiguring disease; blindness, deafness, impotency of limbs, mutilation, are things to which it is liable; but *age* at least is coming on; the process of decay is advancing; a gradually withering power is visibly at work; infirmities increase; decrepitude arrives; death closes all; and, stiff in death, this wonderful body of the lords of creation is consigned to the grave, to be the prey of the worm, and to crumble back to dust. What a strange history is here! What does it mean, this perishable character stamped upon the body, this principle of death which we carry about, this sure and unfailing energy of corruption which pervades all the living, breathing, moving, busy family of man upon the face of the earth? My brethren, it is SIN which *worketh death*. The whole secret of the matter lies in the moral corruption of our nature. It is sin which has breathed death upon us, which has conveyed it into our system of body and soul;—temporal death in the one case, eternal in the other. The principle of *death* is the principle of *sin*. The principle of life is the principle of grace made operative in the human subject, which extinguishes the power of sin; and although the change of natural death must still pass over us, yet wherever the graft of spiritual life has taken effect upon the man, made up of body and soul, and abides in its vitality and vigour, there the plant is not killed by the winter of death: He who is the Lord and giver of life will, in the spring-time of the Resurrection, reanimate the mouldered frame, and *our vile body shall be fashioned like unto Christ's own glorious body*. Wherever, on the other hand, this blessed effect has *not* taken place, and all the holy stamp of our early dedication to God in baptism has been obliterated in our contact with an evil world, there the original sentence upon sin

remains in its full and terrible force, and all which is enveloped in the term *everlasting death*, becomes the portion of the sinner.

These remarks apply to sin *generally*. But they have a peculiar pertinency with reference to that class of sins in which (according to a classification suggested by St. Paul, who speaks of a particular sin committed *against our own bodies*, as distinguished from those *without the body*,) the body, in its several parts, is an immediate agent. And it is in this way, more than in any of those merely physical characteristics of vileness which are common to all men alike, that our body is indeed a vile body.

The same Apostle Paul, pressing upon the Romans their obligations as persons baptised into the faith of Christ, and shewing how those obligations were enhanced instead of being dissolved by the fact of their being no longer under the law, but under grace, charges them thus: *Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

Where, then, is the member in all that wonderful structure and mechanism of the body which we have been engaged in considering, which may not, through the lapse of nature, and which *is* not, every day and every hour and every moment, made the instrument of sin? The eye is ensnared by the glitter and attraction of worldly things, and becomes the inlet to the soul, of pride, vanity, envy and covetousness; or it rests upon an object which inflames the grosser appetites of nature, defiles the inner man, and suggests the act of wickedness which, according to the judgment of God declared by the Saviour, is thus already committed in the heart. The ear receives communication of a dangerous flattery, or a sophistical disguise of good and evil, or an artful address to the fiercer and more hateful passions, stirring up perhaps extensive strife and mischief, or a coaxing persuasion to some departure from the nice line of duty, or a tickling touch of unsanctified merriment, or a glowing description of scenes and doings of which the image unnerves the virtue of the mind. The tongue, in the mean time, with all the organs of speech, is, of course, in *another* quarter, the engine of *conveying* all this mischief,—the tongue, that *unruly member*, which, as St. James tells us, *no man can tame*, and the range and character of whose dangerous operation he

describes by saying that it *sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell*,—nor can we, if we have any concern for the honor of God and the good of men, think without shuddering, of all the profane oaths and vociferous execrations, the irreverent or impure allusions, the coarse effusions of obscene ribaldry, the atrocious falsehoods, the biting taunts, the irritating expressions of malignant feeling, which proceed from the tongue. The hand,—how often, as the deputy of the tongue, is it guilty of writing and making ready for the press the mischief which that member would less extensively effect?—How often is it employed in the dishonest abstraction of the property of others, or the more refined but not less wicked dishonesty of adulteration in articles prepared for sale?—How often is it lifted in ungodly, unreasonable passion, and, where there is power, as of the master over the slave, in demon-like cruelty against a fellow creature?—How often, in every country,—(and men forget that in doing this, they may certainly be said to *smite with the fist of wickedness*,)—in wanton violence against the dumb animals, whom their maker as well as ours, has submitted to our use?—The foot, even if not *swift to shed blood*, to what evil haunts and on what evil errands will it not run!—The engines and channels, active and passive, by which nutriment is conveyed into the system—think of these—look at the rational being with an immortal soul, and see how in *this* point he is the slave of the flesh and its debased appetites!—See some men living, to their own hurt, in pampered voluptuousness, and studying, actually as an important business of life, the refinements and varieties of what is called gastronomic indulgence reduced to a science:—others,—let us take the extreme case exhibiting the condition to which those are hastening who begin to love the stimulant of drink,—others abandoned to sottish and bestial intemperance, bloated, stupefied, enfeebled, tottering wretches,—brought perhaps, with their families, to rags and starvation—drowning the cries of conscience by fresh potations, and cutting short their little day of trial, which they have filled up with *drunkenness* as their preparation to APPEAR BEFORE GOD!

It is needless to particularise any farther. These illustrations may suffice to remind and to warn us of the proclivity of nature to sin in the abuse of the members of the body, and of the necessity which lies upon us, by God's grace, to preserve a guard over the animal man. We are bound to use our organs of sight, hearing and speech to the edification of our own souls, the honor of God, and the benefit of men. We are

bound to survey the works of God in creation, with devout thankfulness and awe, to read with humility His own holy book; to seek improvement of the mind by the stores of learning in the same way; to call off the eye, though with an effort like that of plucking it out, from any forbidden and hurtful gaze. We are bound to shut the ear in like manner, against all irreligious or demoralizing language, and to open it to all communications of good; to all the pleadings of want; to all the warnings of heavenly truth, remembering that *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* We are bound to use the tongue which the Psalmist describes as *the best member that he has*, in praise and prayer addressed to God, and in giving comfort and counsel to man, and in maintaining, according to our ability and station, the interests of truth and order in the world. We are bound to use the hand in honest industry or in some useful or at least innocent employment of its powers—but why should we go into detail? We are charged, *whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God*, to act as under His eye, to consult the honor and credit of His religion in our daily demeanour, our ordinary habits, and our enjoyment of any earthly comforts or refreshments which may fall to our portion. We are taught that, as Christians, *every one of us should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor*, to guard and preserve his person in the strictest purity, temperance and moderation in all things, as *holy to the Lord.* The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other. There is a law in the members warring against the law of the mind. And here is a conflict to be carried on. We must *keep under the body and bring it into subjection*, as Saint Paul tells us that he was watchful to do, being well aware of the weakness of nature, whose infection doth remain, according to the declaration of our own Articles, even in them that are regenerate, and of the consequent peril of remissness in this point. It is not that we are to disfigure our faces and to make an exhibition of stiffness and constraint in the character of our religion. It is not a forced vow of celibacy: it is not a round of rigorous and formal austerities that is demanded. It is not a compliance with the predicted exactions of those who would *forbid to marry* and command to *abstain from meats* which God hath given to be used *with thanksgiving*, and to be received with a sense and conviction that under the freedom of the Gospel, (without prejudice, however, to the stated or occasional exercise of religious fasting, for which there is clear

sanction in the Gospel itself,) *every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused.* It is not a pledge given to an Association of men, however good may be their meaning, of total abstinence from beverages of which the *abuse* is *denounced*, but of which the *use* is *permitted* in the word of God;—it is not anything technical, anything precise, but it is the general subjugation of the animal and carnal man to the control of religion and the dominion of grace. It is the habitual and reverent remembrance of the residence of God Himself by the communication of a divine influence, and of a present, operative power, in the breast of the believer, and a careful, earnest, vigilant application, in this point as in others, of the lesson in which we must learn practically that no contradiction is enveloped, that we are to *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.*

Under these solemn and abiding impressions, we shall keep the thought before our eyes *what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness;* how the *motions of sin* which work by nature in our *members*, in opposition to the law, *bringing forth fruit unto death*, should be mortified within us, now that we serve God in *newness of spirit:* how anxiously we should watch, how promptly we should check in ourselves the very approaches to all irregular desire; to all defiling imaginations; to all luxurious sensuality; to all slothful and heavy self-indulgence; to all disturbance and tumult of passion in our system; to all festering and corrosive rancour of feeling; to all unseemly violence of language and deportment; to all impatient fretfulness of temper. We shall endeavour to come before God, in the language of the Church used in the form for the consecration of our literal temples, we shall endeavour, although we come before Him still as sinners, to come before God "with clean thoughts and pure hearts, with bodies undefiled and minds sanctified," and shall be prompted to say in the language of our same holy mother, more generally familiar to her people, and now about to be used in the celebration of the Eucharist: "And here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto Thee," . . . . . unworthy "through our manifold sins, to offer unto Thee any sacrifice; yet beseeching Thee to accept this our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences through Jesus Christ our Lord." Remembering the nature of that claim which God has upon us, as stated by an Apostle in

connection with words already cited, *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? for ye are* BOUGHT WITH A PRICE, THEREFORE *glorify God in your* BODY *and in your Spirit, which are God's*,—we shall recognize the claim no less with affectionate gratitude than with a reverential sense of duty, and shall so keep watch over this frail tenement of clay which we carry about, as habitually applying to it the words which have formed the foundation of our present reflections, THIS IS THE HOUSE OF THE LORD GOD.

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