

# **The Upper Room: Being a Few Truths for the Times**

by

*J. C. Ryle*

**JOHN CHARLES RYLE**

BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL

[1880-1900]

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## J.C. Ryle

### Biographical Sketch

John Charles Ryle (1816–1900) was the first Anglican bishop of Liverpool. He was a strong supporter of the evangelical school, and a critic of Ritualism. He was a writer, pastor, and evangelical preacher. Among his longer works are *Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century* (1869), *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (7 vols, 1856–69), and *Principles for Churchmen* (1884). Ryle was described as having a commanding presence, and was vigorous in advocating his principles, though with a warm disposition.

He was educated at Eton and the University of Oxford. He was Fell exhibitioner at Christ Church, from which he matriculated in 1834. He was Craven scholar in 1836, graduated B.A. in 1838. Ryle left the university with the intention of standing for parliament at the first opportunity. But his father's bankruptcy made that impossible. He accordingly took holy orders (1841-2), and became curate at Exbury, Hampshire. In 1843, he was preferred to the rectory of St. Thomas, Winchester, which he exchanged in the following year for that of Helmingham, Suffolk.

He married three times, but his first two wives died young. His first marriage in 1845, was to Matilda Plumtre. The second, in 1850, was to Jessy Walker. The third in 1861, was to Henrietta Clowes. He had a daughter by his first wife, and three sons by his second wife. His second son, Herbert Ryle, was also a clergyman.

J.C. Ryle retained the living at Helmingham until 1861, when he resigned it for the vicarage of Stradbroke in the same county. The restoration of Stradbroke church was due to his initiative. In 1869, he was made rural dean of Hoxne.

He proceeded to M.A. in 1871, and in 1872 he was made honorary canon of Norwich. He was select preacher at Cambridge 1873-74, then at Oxford 1874-76, and there again in 1879-80. He was created D.D. in 1880, and designated dean of Salisbury. At once he advanced to the newly created see of Liverpool. He ably administered that office until his death at Lowestoft on 10 June 1900.

Adapted from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J. C. Ryle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._C._Ryle)

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## Preface

The volume now in the reader's hands requires little introductory explanation. It contains a very miscellaneous selection of papers which I have sent forth from time to time, in one shape or another, during a forty-five-year ministry. Some of these papers are not known beyond a small circle of kind friends. Not a few of them are the substance of pulpit addresses delivered on important public occasions, and composed with more than ordinary pains. All of them, I venture humbly to think, will be found to contain some useful truths for the times, and words in season.

I have reached an age when I cannot reasonably expect to write much more. There are many thoughts in this volume which I do not wish to leave behind me in the precarious form of separate single sermons, addresses, lectures, and tracts. I have therefore resolved to gather them together in the volume I now send forth, which I heartily pray God to bless, and to make it a permanent blessing to many souls.

Palace, Liverpool  
1 *December* 1887  
J. C., LIVERPOOL

## CHAPTER 1 – Act 1.13

### “THEY WENT UP INTO AN UPPER ROOM.”<sup>1</sup>

WE are told in these simple words what the Apostles did immediately after the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven. Fresh from the wonderful and touching sight of their beloved Master being taken away from them — with the message brought by angels still ringing in their ears, bidding them to expect His Second Advent — they returned from Mount Olivet to Jerusalem, and went at once “into an upper room.” Simple as the words are, they are full of suggestive thoughts, and deserve the close attention of all into whose hands this volume may fall.

Let us fix our eyes for a few minutes on the first place of meeting of Christians for worship of which we have any record. Let us examine the first congregation which assembled after the great Head of the Church had left the world, and left His people to themselves. Let us see who these first worshippers were, and how they behaved, and what they did. I venture to think that a little quiet contemplation of the subject may do us good.

This “upper room,” we should remember, was the forerunner of every church and cathedral which has been reared in Christendom within the last eighteen centuries. St. Paul’s, and York, and Lincoln, and all the stately ministers of our own land; St. Sophia at Constantinople, St. Isaac at St. Petersburg, St. Stephen’s at Vienna, Notre Dame at Paris, St. Peter’s at Rome, all are descendants from this “upper room.” Not one can trace its pedigree beyond that little chamber. Here it was that professing Christians, when left alone by their Master, first began to pray together, to worship, and to exhort one another. This room was the cradle of the infant Church of Christ, and the beginning of all our services. From this room the waters of the everlasting gospel first began to flow, which have now spread so widely throughout the world — however adulterated and corrupted they may have been in some ages and in some parts of the earth. I invite my readers, then, to come with me and examine this upper room as it appeared on Ascension day.

*I. There are certain points arising naturally out of the text before us, which appear to demand special notice. Let us see what they are.*

Concerning the shape and size and form of this room, we know nothing at all. It was probably like many other “upper rooms” in Jerusalem. But whether it was lofty, or low, or square, or round; whether it stood east and west, or north and south; whether it was ornamented or decorated or perfectly plain, we do not have the slightest information, and the matter signifies very little. But it is a striking and noteworthy fact that in the original Greek it is called *the* upper room, and not *an* upper room, as our Authorized Version calls it. I venture to think that there is much in this.

I believe there is the highest probability that this was the very room in which our Lord first appointed the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, and in which the Apostles first heard those well-known words, “Take, eat; this is My body,” — “Drink you all of this, for this is My blood,” — those famous words which have been the cause of so much unhappy controversy with some, but the source of such mighty comfort for others.

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<sup>1</sup> The substance of this paper was originally delivered as a sermon at the consecration of St. Agnes’ Church, Liverpool.

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I believe it was the same room in which the disciples were “in the habit of abiding” during the fifty days between the Resurrection and Pentecost. Here, again, the original Greek helps us to a conclusion, if literally translated.

I believe it is the same room in which the disciples were assembled with “the doors shut for fear of the Jews,” when the Lord Jesus suddenly appeared in the midst of them after His resurrection, and said, “Peace be to you: as My Father sent Me, so send I you;” and “breathed on them, saying, Receive the Holy Ghost” (Joh 20.21-22).

I believe it is the same room in which, a week afterwards, He appeared again, and rebuked the scepticism of doubting Thomas, saying, “Do not be faithless, but believing.” [Joh 20.27](#)

I believe it is the same room in which our Lord appeared, and ate before His disciples, and said, “Touch Me, and see: a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (Luk 24.39).

On all these points, I freely grant that I have nothing but conjectures to put before my readers. But they are conjectures which appear to me to be founded on the highest possible probability; and as such, I think they demand our reverent consideration. But we may now turn boldly from conjectures, and look at things which are most plainly and unmistakably revealed.

(1) Let us then, first and foremost, look at the *worshippers* who were gathered together in this first place of Christian worship.

*Peter* was there, that warm-hearted, impulsive, but unstable Apostle, who forty days before, denied his Master three times, and then repented with bitter tears; he had been graciously raised by our Lord, and commanded to “feed His sheep” (Joh 21.16-17).

*James* was there, who had been the favoured companion of Peter and John on three important occasions, and was the first of the Apostles to seal his faith with his blood, [Act 12.2](#) and drink of the cup which his Master drank (Mat 20.23).

*John* was there, the other son of Zebedee, the beloved Apostle, whose head lay on our Lord’s breast at the Last Supper — John, when our Lord appeared to the disciples as they were fishing on the lake of Galilee, was the first to cry out with instinctive love, “It is the Lord,” — John at one time wished to call down fire from heaven on a village of the Samaritans, but lived to write three Epistles brimming over with love (Joh 21.7; Luk 9.54).

*Andrew* was there (the first of all the Apostles whose name we know), who followed Jesus after hearing the words, “Behold the Lamb of God;” he then brought his brother Peter to Jesus, saying, “We have found the Messiah” (Joh 1.40-41).

*Philip* of Bethsaida was there, the first Apostle to whom Jesus said, “Follow Me,” — the Apostle who told Nathanael to “come and see” the promised Messiah (Joh 1.43).

*Thomas* was there, who was once so desponding and weak in faith, but afterwards cried out with such grand Athanasian confidence, “My Lord and my God!” (Joh 20.28).

*Bartholomew* was there; by general consent, he is the same as Nathanael who at first said, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Yet this is the one whom our Lord pronounced to be “an Israelite without guile,” and who said, “You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel” (Joh 1.46-49).

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*Matthew* the publican was there, who forsook his worldly calling at the bidding of our Lord, and sought lasting treasure in heaven, and who was afterwards privileged to hold the pen which wrote the first Gospel (Mat 9.9).

*James* the son of Alphaeus was there, who had the honour of being the presiding Apostle at the first Council held in Jerusalem, and of whom St. Paul tells the Galatians that, together with Peter and John, James was a “pillar of the Church” (Gal 2.9).

*Simon Zelotes* was there, of whom we know little certain, except that he was also “called the Canaanite,” and may possibly have lived at Cana of Galilee, and seen the first miracle our Lord worked. His name Zelotes seems to indicate that he was once a member of the famous Zealot party, a fierce advocate of Jewish home-rule, and an enemy of Roman supremacy. He was now zealous only for the kingdom of Christ.

*Jude* was there, the brother of James, also called Lebbaeus or Thaddaeus, the writer of the last Epistle in the New Testament, and the Apostle who asked the remarkable question, “How is it that You manifest Yourself to us and not to the world?” (Joh 14.22).

In short, the whole company of the eleven faithful Apostles was assembled in that “upper room.” On this occasion, there were no absentees; doubting Thomas was among the rest.

But there were others present beside the Apostles. The “women” were there of whom some had long followed our Lord and ministered to His necessities, and been last at the Cross, and first at the tomb. I have little doubt that *Mary Magdalene* and *Salome*, and *Susanna*, and *Joanna* the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, formed part of the company (Luk 8.2-3). And *Mary the mother of Jesus* was there, whom our Lord had committed to the special care of John; and where he was, she was sure to be. Truly the prophecy of old Simeon had been fulfilled in her case. “The sword” of deep and keen sorrow had pierced “through her soul” (Luk 2.35). For she was only flesh and blood, like any other woman. This is the last occasion on which her name appears in the pages of Holy Scripture. From then on she sinks out of sight, and all stories about her after-life are mere baseless traditions.

And finally, our Lord’s “brethren” were there. They were his cousins in all probability, or the sons of Joseph by a former marriage. Never let it be forgotten that at one time they did not believe in Jesus (Joh 7.5); but now their unbelief was gone, and they were true disciples, while Judas Iscariot had fallen away. The mention of them teaches the grand lesson that men may begin poorly and end well, and that many who now seem faithless may one day believe. So true it is that the last are sometimes first, and the first last.

Such was the congregation which assembled in the “upper room” after the Ascension. Never, I suppose, has there been such a pure and spotless gathering of Christians from that day down to this. Never has there been, and probably never will be, such a near approach to the “one Holy Catholic Church,” the “mystical body of the Son of God, which is the blessed company of all faithful people.” Never has there been together so much wheat without tares, and such a singular proportion of grace, and penitence, and faith, and hope, and holiness, and love in one room together. It would be well for the visible Church of Christ, if all her assemblies were as free from unsound members, spots, and blemishes as the congregation which met together in the “upper room.”

(2) We should notice, secondly, the *unity* which characterized this first meeting in the “upper room.”

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We are told expressly, “that they were all there with one accord,” that is, of one mind. There were no divisions among them. They believed the same thing. They loved the same Person, and at present there was no disagreement among them. There was nothing of High, or Low, or Broad in that “upper room.” Heresies, and strifes, and controversies were as yet unknown. There was no contention or agitation either about baptism, or the Lord’s Supper, or vestments, or incense. It would have been happy for Christendom if this blessed state of things had continued! At the end of eighteen centuries we all know, by bitter experience, that the divisions of Christians are the weakness of the Church, and the favourite argument of the world, the infidel, and the devil against revealed religion. We may well pray, when we see this blessed picture of the upper room, that God would heal the many ecclesiastical diseases of the nineteenth century, and make Churchmen especially, become more of one mind.

(3) We should notice, thirdly, the *devotional habits* of this first congregation in the “upper room.”

We are expressly told that they “were continuing in prayer and supplication.” Here, again, we should mark the original Greek. The expression denotes that prayer was a continued and habitual practice at this crisis. What things these holy worshippers prayed for we are not told. Like our Lord’s discourse with the two Apostles journeying to Emmaus, one would like to know what their prayers were (Luk 24.27). We need not doubt that there was much prayer for grace to be faithful and not fall away — for wisdom to do the thing that was right in the new and difficult position which they had to take up — for courage, for patience, for unwearied zeal, for abiding recollection of our Lord’s example, our Lord’s teaching, and our Lord’s promises. But in perfect wisdom, the Holy Ghost has thought fit to keep back these things from us, and we must not doubt that this is right. One thing, at any rate, is quite certain. We are taught clearly that nothing is such a primary duty of a Christian assembly as united prayer and supplication. Let us never forget the first charge which the great Apostle of the Gentiles gave to Timothy when he wrote to him about his duties as a minister of the Church, “I exhort, therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings and all who are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceable life” (1Tim 2.1, etc.). I dare to believe that the names of *Annas*, *Caiaphas*, and *Pontius Pilate* were not forgotten in the supplications and intercessions of the “upper room.”

(4) We should notice, lastly, *the address given* in this upper room by the Apostle Peter, on one of the ten days which elapsed between the Ascension and the day of Pentecost.

It is an interesting fact that this is the first address which is recorded to have been given to any assembly of Christians after the Lord left the world. It is no less interesting that the first speaker was the Apostle Peter — the very Apostle who, after denying his Master, had been mercifully raised again, and commended to prove his love by feeding His sheep — the very Apostle who had received a charge before his fall, “When you are converted ([turned back](#)), strengthen your brethren” (Luk 22.32). There was a peculiar fitness in Peter being the first to stand up and address the little company of “one hundred and twenty names.”

(a) Mark how he begins his address with a reverent *reference to Holy Scripture*. He puts his foot down firmly on the supremacy of God’s written Word as the Church’s rule of faith. He says, “This scripture must have been fulfilled.” He says, “It is written in the

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book of Psalms,” and takes a quotation for his text. Well and wisely does the late Dean Alford remark in his *Homilies on the Acts*: “The first act of the Church by her first superintendent minister, was an appeal to the text of Scripture. Let that never be forgotten. Would that every appeal by every one of her ministers since, had been an appeal that is equally direct, and equally justified!”

(b) Mark next how Peter humbly acknowledges that *the highest and most privileged ministers of the Church are yet liable to fall*. He says of Judas Iscariot, “He was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry,” and then mentions his miserable end. “He fell by transgression,” and then “went to his own place.” Let that also never be forgotten. He lays down the grand principle, which should always be remembered in the Church, that no infallibility belongs to the ministerial office. A chosen Apostle of Christ fell sadly, and so also may any successor of the Apostles. Bishops, priests, and deacons may err, and have erred greatly, like *Hophni*, and *Phinehas*, and *Annas*, and *Caiaphas*, who were in direct succession to *Aaron*. We are never to suppose that ordained and consecrated men can make no mistakes. We are never to follow them blindly, or to believe as a matter of course that all they say is truth. The Bible is the only infallible guide.

(c) Mark next how he calls upon the Church to *fill the place which Judas had left vacant*, and to choose one who might be numbered with the eleven Apostles. He speaks with unfaltering confidence, like one convinced that a work was beginning which the world and the devil could never stop, and that workmen must be appointed to carry it on in regular order. He speaks with a clear foresight of the battles the Church would have to fight, but with an evident conviction that they would not be fought in vain, and that the final issue was sure. He seems to say, “Stand firm, though a standard-bearer has fallen away. Fill the gap. Close up your ranks.”

(d) Mark lastly how he winds up his address with a *plain declaration of what a minister and successor of the Apostles ought to be*. He was to be “a witness of Christ’s resurrection.” He was to be a witness to the fact that the foundation of the Gospel is not a vague idea of God’s mercy, but an actual living Person, a Person who lived for us, died for us, and above all, rose again. Let that also never be forgotten. I affirm, without hesitation, that in these latter days we do not make enough of the resurrection of Christ. We certainly do not make as much of it as the Apostles did, judging from the Acts and the Epistles. When Paul went to Athens, we are told that “he preached Jesus and the resurrection” (Act 27.18). When he went to Corinth, one of the first truths he proclaimed was, that “Christ rose again according to the Scriptures” (1Cor 15.4). When the same Paul was brought before Festus and Agrippa, Festus said that the complaint against him was about “one Jesus who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive” (Act 25.19).

Let no one misunderstand my meaning. I do not say that we dwell too much on the sacrifice and the blood of Christ; but I do contend that we dwell too little on His resurrection. Yet our Lord Himself told the Jews more than once that the resurrection would prove Him to be the Messiah. St. Paul told the Romans, in the beginning of his Epistle, that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1.4). The resurrection completed the work of redemption, which our Lord came into the world to effect. It is written that, “He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification,” and the Corinthians are expressly told, “If Christ is not

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raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins” (Rom 4.25; 1Cor 15.17). In short, Christ’s resurrection is one of the grandest evidences of the truth of Christianity, a foundation proof that the salvation of sinners by the vicarious atonement is a finished work, and a miracle which the cleverest infidels have never been able to explain away. Until it is explained away, we need not be troubled by carping remarks about Balaam’s donkey speaking, and Jonah in the whale’s belly. It would have been well indeed for the Church, if all her ministers had always been such as Peter recommended to be appointed: faithful witnesses to a personal Christ, His death, and His resurrection. [Act 1.21](#)

So much for the upper room at Jerusalem: its congregation, their unity, their prayers, and the first address delivered within its walls. So much for the first prayer meeting, the first sermon, and the first corporate action of the professing Church of which we have any record. We need not doubt for a moment that the well-known promise of our Lord Jesus Christ was fulfilled in that room, “Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them” (Mat 18.20). The little company of worshippers did not see Him; but He was there.

**II.** *Let me now try to draw some practical lessons for ourselves from the whole subject.*

(1) In the first place, let us learn to be more thankful for the liberty of the days in which our lot is cast, and the wise toleration of the Government under which we live in this country. By the mercy of God, “we enjoy great quietness.” We have no need to meet in “upper rooms” with “doors closed for fear of the Jews,” [Joh 20.19](#) and with a constant feeling that there is but a step between us and a violent death. Men may build places of worship now, if they please, as costly and magnificent as the temple of Jerusalem itself, and no one jealously prohibits or interferes with them. We need not fear Roman Emperors, nor medieval autocrats, nor Spanish Inquisitions. The land is before us, and men may build and worship as they please. I would to God that all wealthy laymen in this country would remember from whom riches come, and to whom they are indebted for their freedom and prosperity. I would to God that many more would honour Him with their substance, and come forward more frequently, saying, “Let me build a Church for the service of God.”

(2) In the next place, let us learn the *source of true power in the Church*. This little upper room was the starting-point of a movement which shook the Roman Empire, emptied the heathen temples, stopped gladiatorial combats, raised women to their true position, checked infanticide, created a new standard of morality, confounded the old Greek and Roman philosophers, and turned the world upside down. And what was the secret of this power? The unity, the soundness in the faith, the holiness, and the prayers and intercessions of the first professing Christians. Where these things are wanting, the grandest architecture and the most ornate ceremonial will do nothing to mend the world. It is the presence of Christ and the Holy Ghost which alone gives power.

(3) In the last place, let us *pray for the Church of England*, that she may continue faithful to the old truths which have done so much good for 300 years, truths which are embalmed in our Articles, Prayer Book, and Creeds. It is cheap and easy work to sneer at dogma, to scoff at inspiration and the atonement, to make merry at the controversies of Christians, and to tell us that no one really believes the whole Bible, or all the facts enumerated in the Belief. It is easy, I repeat, to do this. Even children can cast mud, and throw stones, and make a noise. But sneers, and mud, and noise are not arguments. I challenge those who

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sneer at dogma, to show us a more excellent way, to show us anything that does more good in the world than the old, old story of Christ dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification.

The man of science may say, “Come with me, and look through my microscope or telescope, and I will show you things which Moses, David, and St. Paul never dreamed of. Do you expect me to believe what was written by ignorant fellows like them?” But can this man of science show us anything through his microscope or telescope which will minister to a diseased mind, bind up the wounds of a broken heart, satisfy the wants of an aching conscience, supply comfort to the mourner over a lost husband, wife, or child? No, indeed! He can do nothing of the kind! Men and women are fearfully and wonderfully made. We are not made up merely of brains, and head, and intellect, and reason. We are frail, dying creatures, who have hearts, and feelings, and consciences; and we live in a world of sorrow, and disappointment, and sickness, and death. And what can help us in a world like this? Certainly not science alone. Nothing can help us but the doctrine of that volume which some people call an old worn-out Jewish book, the Bible. None can help us but He who was laid in the manger of Bethlehem and died on the cross to pay our debt to God, and is now at God’s right hand. None but He who said, “Come to Me, all you who labour, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11.28). None but He who has thrown light on the grave, and the world beyond it, and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, and made a deeper mark on the world than all the men of science who have ever lived — from the times of Pythagoras, Aristotle, and Archimedes, down to Darwin and Huxley in the present day. Yes! I say again, let us pray that our Church may ever be faithful to her first principles, and never lend an ear to those plausible, eloquent apostles of free thought, who would gladly persuade her to throw overboard her Creeds and Articles as useless lumber. Fine words and rhetorical fireworks will never satisfy humanity, check moral evil, or feed souls. Men would do well to read that striking paper which Miss Frances Power Cobbe wrote in the *Contemporary Review* for December 1884,<sup>2</sup> and see what a ghastly world our world would be if it was a world without a faith or a creed. The age needs nothing new. It only needs the bold and steady proclamation of the old truths which were held in the “upper room” at Jerusalem.

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<sup>2</sup> “A Faithless World,” *Contemporary Review* 46 (Dec 1884); pp. 795-810.

## CHAPTER 2 – Colossians 4.14

### “LUKE, THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN.”<sup>3</sup>

THERE are two things in the title of this paper which I will take for granted and not dwell on. One is that the Luke mentioned here is the same Luke who wrote the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, and was the friend and companion of St. Paul. The other is that Luke really was a physician of the body. On both these points the consent of learned men, who have a right to command our attention, is almost universal. I will rigidly confine myself to two remarks which appear to grow out of the subject. For it is a significant fact, I think, that the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who was ever ministering to men's *souls*, makes honourable mention of one who ministered to men's *bodies*.

**I.** *I remark then, for one thing, that one great feature of the Christian religion is the dignity and importance which it attaches to the human body.*

Many readers of this paper need hardly be reminded that some of the schools of heathen philosophers regarded the body with contempt, as a hindrance and not a help, a clog and a drag and not an aid, to the soul. Even those nations which paid most attention to the burial of the body when dead, like the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, knew nothing of a future existence of the body after death, even at the most distant period. The heroes described by Homer and Virgil, in the Elysian Fields, the supposed place of happiness after death, were only ghosts and airy figures, with nothing material about them. When St. Paul spoke on Mars Hill of the “resurrection of the dead,” we are told that “some mocked” (Act 17.32). Even Pliny, one of the most intelligent Latin writers, says in his Natural History, there were two things which were beyond the power of God — one was to give immortality to mortals, and the other was to give bodily life again to the dead. (See Pearson on The Creed, vol. ii., p. 306, Oxford edition)

Let us turn now to the Christian religion, and mark what a contrast it presents. Whether we look at its leading facts, or doctrines, or practical instructions for the present, or hopes for the future, the human body is continually brought to the front, and its importance is magnified.

(a) To begin with, look at the great mysterious truth which lies at the foundation of our holy faith, the INCARNATION of Christ. When the Eternal Son of God came down into this sin-burdened world to bring redemption and change the whole condition of our fallen race, how did He come? Not as a mighty angel or a glorious spirit, as we might have expected. Nothing of the kind! He took on Him a bodily nature, just like our own, sin only excepted. He was born of a woman as an infant, and had a body that grew and increased in stature as our bodies do — a body that could hunger and thirst, and be weary and need sleep, and feel pain, and groan in agony and suffering, like the body of anyone who reads this paper. He condescended to tabernacle in that body for thirty-three years, its members daily fulfilling the Law of God perfectly, so that Satan could find nothing failing or defective in His “flesh” (Joh 14.30).

(b) In the next place, look at the great cardinal doctrine of Christ's ATONEMENT. That wondrous distinctive verity of our faith, that solution of the problem, “how can sinful

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<sup>3</sup> The substance of this paper was originally delivered as a sermon in Liverpool Cathedral at the opening of the Annual Conference of the British Medical Association in Liverpool, on July 31st, 1883.

## Chap. 2. Luke, the Beloved Physician.

man have peace with God?” — is indissolubly bound up with Christ’s *body*. It was the death of that body on the cross which provided for fallen man a way of reconciliation with God. It was the precious lifeblood which flowed from our Lord’s crucified body on Calvary, which purchased for us redemption from the curse of a broken law. In short, it is the blood of Christ’s body to which true Christians owe all their *comfort* while they live, and their *hope* when they die.

(c) Next, look at the crowning facts of Christ’s RESURRECTION and ASCENSION into heaven. When our Lord came forth from the grave where Joseph and Nicodemus had laid Him, on the third day, He did not come forth as a spirit. To use the words of our Fourth Article, He “took again His *body*, with flesh, bones, and all things pertaining to the perfection of man’s nature.” In that body He was seen and touched by His disciples. In that body He spoke, and ate, and drank like ourselves. And finally, in that body He ascended into heaven, and there He sits till He returns to judge all men at the last day. We have a priest and advocate with the Father, who has a body.

(d) Next, look at the PRACTICAL PRECEPTS and exhortations which the Apostles are continually pressing on us in the New Testament. Mark how frequently they speak of the *body* and of its members as “instruments of righteousness,” as a part of the Christian’s nature requiring his constant care, and as a means of exhibiting his sanctification and holiness.

- “Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost,” (Rom 6.13).
- “Glorify God in body and spirit, which are His,” (1Cor. 6.19-20).
- “I pray to God that your whole spirit, soul, and body may be preserved blameless,” (1Th 5.23).
- “Present your bodies a living sacrifice,” (Rom 12.1).
- Let “Christ be magnified in my body,” (Phi 1.20).
- Let the “life of Jesus be manifest in our mortal flesh,” (2Cor 4.11).
- We will “receive the things done in the body,” (2Cor 5.10).

Where, indeed, and how, could the graces of temperance, soberness, chastity, and self-denial be displayed except in and through the body?

(e) Finally, look at that grand distinctive hope which sustains the Christian amidst the deaths, and funerals, and pains, and partings, and sufferings of this world. That hope is the RESURRECTION of the flesh after death. Our *bodies* will live again. The grave cannot hold them. We part from those who fall asleep in Jesus in the blessed confidence that we will meet and see them again — better, stronger, more beautiful than they ever were on earth. Forever let us thank God that the glorious gospel which we profess to believe, makes provision for our bodies as well as our souls.

But, after all, the importance which Christianity attaches to the body is not one whir greater than that which is continually attached to it by the children of this world. It is easy to sneer at the simple facts and doctrines of Christianity, and to talk great swelling words about “mind,” and “thought,” and “intellect,” and “reason.” But there is no getting over the broad fact that it is the *body* and not the mind, and the *wants* of the body, by which the world is governed.

Statesmen and politicians know this full well, and often to their cost. Their tenure in office depends in great measure on the contentment of the people. And who does not know that

nothing creates popular discontent so much as high prices of corn, and the general expensiveness of food for the body?

Merchants and ship-owners, of all men in the world, ought to know the importance of the body. Corn, and meat, and sugar, and tea, to *feed* the body — cotton and wool to *clothe* the body — what are these but the very articles which create the main portion of commerce, and carrying on trade, and the business of a nation?

It would be waste of time to multiply arguments on this subject. In the face of such facts as these, it is the highest wisdom, both in the Church and the State, never to forget the importance of the body. To promote cleanliness, and temperance, and social purity — to aim at the highest standard of sanitary arrangements, into encourage every movement which can increase the health and longevity of a people — to provide as far as possible good air, good water, good dwellings, and cheap food for every man, woman, and child in the land — these are objects which deserve the best attention both of the Christian and the man of the world.

There is a mine of deep truth in the saying, “*Sanitas sanitatum: omnia sanitas.*”<sup>4</sup> Whatever students and bookworms and philosophers may please to say, there is an indissoluble connection between the *bodies* and *minds* and *souls* of mankind. You cannot separate them. Not one of the three can be safely neglected. The Church, which only cares for saving souls, and the State, which only cares for educating minds, are both making a vast mistake. Happy is that country where body, soul, and mind are all cared for, and a continual effort is made to provide for the health of all three.

**II.** *The other remark which I wish to make is this: Observe the honour which our Lord Jesus Christ has put on the medical profession.*

It is a noteworthy fact, to begin with, that one of the four men whom our Lord chose to write the Gospels was a “physician.” Not only does ecclesiastical history tell us this, with almost entire harmony, but there is strong internal evidence in St. Luke’s writings to confirm it. An ingenious writer has lately published a book which proves that many Greek phrases and expressions used in the third Gospel and the Acts are thoroughly medical; and they are such as a physician of that age would use in describing the symptoms of disease, or of returning health. In short, there is little room for doubt that out of the twenty-seven books which make up the little volume of the New Testament, two of the longest come from the pen of a medical man.

But after all this, there is another fact of even deeper significance which demands attention. I refer to the very large number of the cases of sickness and disease which our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to heal during the period of His earthly ministry. No doubt, if He had thought fit, He could have shown His Divine power and proved His Divine mission by miracles like the plagues of Egypt, by calling fire from heaven like Elijah, by causing the earth to open and swallow up His enemies, as Dathan and Abiram were swallowed up in the wilderness. But He did not do so. The great majority of His wondrous works were works of mercy wrought on the suffering bodies of men and women. To cure the leprous, those with dropsy and palsy, the fevered, the lame, the blind — this was the

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<sup>4</sup> This was the title of Benjamin Disraeli’s speech (Prime Minister of England), given April 3, 1872, on the principles of the Conservative Party. The Latin translates to, “*The health of healing: the health of all things.*”

continual labour of love of Him who was “God manifest in the flesh.” To use the deep and mysterious words quoted from Isaiah by St. Matthew, “He took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses” (Mat 8.17).

Now, why was this? *Why* did our Lord adopt this line of action, and habitually condescend to devote time and attention to the humbling and often loathsome ills to which flesh is heir? Partly, I believe, to remind us that He came to remedy the fall of man; and that of all the consequences of the fall, none cause so much trouble, and affect all ranks and classes of society so thoroughly, as *sickness*. But partly also, I believe, to teach Christians in every age, that to minister to the sick is eminently a work of mercy according to Christ’s mind. He that endeavours to check disease, to alleviate suffering, to lessen pain, to help the self-curative powers of nature, and to lengthen life, may surely take comfort in the thought that, however much he may fail, he is at any rate walking in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth. Next to the office of him who ministers to men’s souls, there is none really more useful and honourable than that of one who ministers to the soul’s frail tabernacle – the body.

Someone who thinks about these things will not wonder that the rise and progress of Christianity in every age has done much for the office of the physician. It would be unfair to say that nothing was known of medicine or surgery before the Christian era. The names of Podalirius and Machaon in Homer, the better-known, less mythical name of Hippocrates (no mean observer of symptoms), are familiar to students. But it is a certain fact that the sick were never so systematically cared for, and the medical profession so honourably esteemed, as they have been since the Church of Christ leavened the world. The builders of the Parthenon and Colosseum built no infirmaries. You will find no ruins of hospitals at Athens or Rome. The infidel, the sceptic, and the agnostic may sneer at Bible religion if they please, but they cannot get over the fact that medical and surgical knowledge have always advanced side by side with the gospel of Christ. Clever and ingenious as the heathen inhabitants of India, China, and Japan are at this day, it is notorious that their acquaintance with anatomy and *materia medica* [medicine], and their treatment of bodily diseases, are beneath contempt. <sup>5</sup>

Few of us, perhaps, realize what an immense debt we owe in Christian England to the medical profession. How much the comfort of our lives depends on it, and how vastly different is the condition of those whose lot is cast in a heathen country, or an uncivilized back settlement of a colony! He that has a good servant in his house, and a good doctor within reach, ought to be a thankful man.

Fewer still, I believe, realize what enormous strides medicine and surgery have made in the last two centuries, and are continually making in the present. Of course, death still reigns, and will reign until Christ returns in glory. Kings and their subjects, rich and poor – all alike die, and will die until death is swallowed up in victory. And no marvel! The human body is a frail and delicate machine. “Strange that a harp of a thousand strings should keep in tune so long.” <sup>6</sup> But that the duration of life in this age is greatly increased

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<sup>5</sup> The ethno-centric bias and condescending attitude which marked that Imperialist Age, have been reconsidered. Herbal medicines, acupuncture, meditation, etc. are now increasingly adopted in western medicine. – WHG

<sup>6</sup> Lyric from Isaac Watts’ Hymn 19, in book 2 of his Hymns. It’s based on a meditation by the chemist Robert Boyle, in *Occasional Reflections Upon Several Subjects* (1665). Boyle reflected on an illness from which he had recovered, noting the great complexity of the human body and the wonder of how it all stays so well for so many years.

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by the advance of medical science, and that many diseases are preventable, manageable, or curable, which were once always thought fatal, are facts entirely beyond dispute. Let anyone read Baxter's semi-medical sermon in the *Morning Exercises*, and observe his receipts for hypochondria and dyspepsia, and then say whether he should not be thankful that he lives in the nineteenth century. The mere fact that our ancestors knew nothing of quinine, chloroform, vaccination, the carbolic spray, the stethoscope, the laryngoscope, the ophthalmoscope, or the right treatment of the lunatic, the idiot, the deaf and dumb, and the blind, is a fact that speaks volumes to any intelligent mind.

None, perhaps, have such constant opportunities of seeing the value of a medical man's services as Christian ministers. We meet them in sick-rooms, and by the side of death-beds, and we know the self-denying labour which their profession entails, and the ungrudging and often unpaid attention which the sick almost invariably receive at their hands.

There should always be the utmost harmony and friendly feeling between the two professions. The sick-room is the common ground on which they meet. On that ground they can greatly help one another. I think the minister of religion can help the medical man by teaching his patients the paramount importance of obedience to orders, of submission to advice, of attention to rules about diet and sanitary matters, and by encouraging patience and quietness of spirit. I am sure the doctor can help the minister by gently and wisely reminding those whose cases are past recovery, that it is their duty to accept the inevitable, that this life is not all, that they have *souls* as well as *bodies*, and that it is wise to look calmly at their latter end, and a world to come, and to prepare to meet God.

There is much in common in the two professions, the one in caring for men's bodies, and the other in caring for men's souls. We ministers cannot command success. Too often we visit in vain, exhort in vain, advise in vain, preach in vain. We find that spiritual life and death are in higher hands than ours. The doctor finds that under the most skilful treatment people will die, and we find that under the most faithful teaching many continue unmoved in conscience, and dead in sins. Like the doctor, we often feel our ignorance, cannot diagnose or discern symptoms, and feel doubtful what to say. Both ministers and medical men have great need to be clothed with humility. But I trust, to use the words which were placed on the tomb of Sir Henry Lawrence, we both "try to do our duty," and persevere. *Duties* are ours, but *events* are God's.

It is my earnest prayer that there may never be lacking in Great Britain a continual supply of able, right-minded, faithful medical men — and that we who minister to the soul, and those who minister to the body, may always work harmoniously together and help one another.

## CHAPTER 3 – Ecc 12.12.

### SIMPLICITY IN PREACHING.<sup>7</sup>

KING SOLOMON says in the book of Ecclesiastes, “Of making many books there is no end” (Ecc 12.12). There are few subjects about which that saying is more true than that of preaching. The volumes which have been written in order to show ministers how to preach are enough to make a small library. In sending forth one more little treatise, I only propose to touch one branch of the subject. I do not pretend to consider what should be the substance and matter of a sermon. I purposely leave alone such points as “gravity, unction, liveliness, warmth,” and the like, or the comparative merits of written or extempore sermons. I wish to confine myself to one point which receives far less attention than it deserves. That point is *simplicity in language and style*.

I ought to be able to tell my readers something about “simplicity,” if experience gives any help. I began preaching forty-five years ago, when I first took orders in a poor rural parish, and a great portion of my ministerial life has been spent in preaching to labourers and farmers. I know the enormous difficulty of preaching to such hearers – of making them understand one’s meaning, and securing their attention. So far as concerns language and composition, I deliberately say that I would rather preach before the University at Oxford or Cambridge, or the Temple, or Lincoln’s Inn, or the Houses of Parliament, than I would address an agricultural congregation on a fine hot afternoon in the month of August. I have heard of a labourer who enjoyed Sunday more than any other day in the week, “Because,” he said, “I sit comfortably in church, put up my legs, have nothing to think about, and just go to sleep.” Some of my younger friends in the ministry may some day be called to preach to such congregations as I have had, and I would be glad if they can profit by my experience.

Before entering on the subject, I wish to clear the way by making four prefatory remarks.

(a) For one thing, I ask all my readers to remember that to attain simplicity in preaching is of the utmost importance to every minister who wishes to be useful to souls. Unless you are simple in your sermons, you will never be understood; and unless you are understood you cannot do good to those who hear you. It was a true saying of Quintilian, “If you do not wish to be understood, you deserve to be neglected.” Of course, the first object of a minister should be to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but “the truth as it is in Jesus.” But the next thing he ought to aim at is that his sermon may be understood; and it will not be understood by most of his hearers if it is not simple.

(b) The next thing I will say, by way of prefatory remark, is that to attain simplicity in preaching is by no means an easy matter. No greater mistake can be made than to suppose this. “To make hard things seem hard,” to use the substance of a saying of Archbishop Usher’s, “is within the reach of all; but to make hard things seem easy and intelligible, is a height attained by very few speakers.” One of the wisest and best of the Puritans said two hundred years ago that, “the greater part of preachers shoot over the heads of the people.” This is also true in 1882! I fear a vast proportion of what we preach

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<sup>7</sup> The substance of this paper was originally addressed, as a lecture, to a clerical audience, at St. Paul’s Cathedral, on behalf of the Homiletical Society. For a certain roughness and abruptness of style I must apologize. But my readers must kindly remember that the lecture was spoken and not written, and is prepared for the press from the notes of a shorthand writer.

is not understood by our hearers any more than if it were Greek. When people hear a simple sermon, or read a simple tract, they are apt to say, “How true! How plain! How easy to understand!” and to suppose that *anyone* can write in that style. Allow me to tell my readers that it is an extremely difficult thing to write simple, clear, perspicuous, and forcible English. Look at the sermons of Charles Bradley, of Clapham. A sermon of his reads most beautifully. It is so simple and natural, that anyone feels at once that the meaning is as clear as the noonday sun. Every word is the right word, and every word is in its right place. Yet the labour those sermons cost Mr. Bradley was very great indeed. Those who have read Goldsmith’s *Vicar of Wakefield* attentively, can hardly fail to have noticed the exquisite naturalness, ease, and simplicity of its language. And yet it is known that the pains and trouble and time bestowed on that work were immense. Let the *Vicar of Wakefield* be compared with Johnson’s *Rasselas*, which it is said was written in a few days, under higher pressure; and the difference is at once apparent. In fact, to use very long words, to seem very learned, to make people go away after a sermon saying, “How fine! How clever! How grand!” — all this is very easy work. But to write what will *strike* and *stick*, to speak or to write that which at once *pleases* and is *understood*, and becomes assimilated with a hearer’s mind and a thing *never forgotten* — that, we may depend on it, is a very difficult thing and a very rare attainment.

(c) Let me observe in the next place, that when I talk of simplicity in preaching, I would not have my readers suppose I mean *childish* preaching. If we suppose the poor *like* that sort of sermon, we are greatly mistaken. If our hearers once imagine that we consider them a parcel of ignorant folks for whom any kind of “infant’s food” is good enough, our chance of doing good is lost altogether. People do not like even the appearance of condescending preaching; they feel we are not treating them as equals, but inferiors. Human nature always dislikes that. They will at once get their backs up, stop their ears, and take offence, and then we might as well preach to the winds.

(d) Finally, let me observe that it is not coarse or vulgar preaching that is needed. It is quite possible to be simple, and yet to speak like a gentleman, and with the demeanour of a courteous and refined person. It is an utter mistake to imagine that uneducated and illiterate men and women prefer to be spoken to in an illiterate way, and by an uneducated person. To suppose that a lay-evangelist or Scripture-reader who knows nothing of Latin or Greek, and is only familiar with his Bible, is more acceptable than an Oxford first-class man, or a Cambridge wrangler (if that first-class man knows how to preach), is a complete error. As a rule, people only tolerate vulgarity and coarseness when they can get nothing else.

Having made these prefatory remarks in order to clear the way, I will now proceed to give my readers *five brief hints* as to what seems to me the best method of attaining simplicity in preaching.

**I.** *My first hint is this: If you want to attain simplicity in preaching, take care that you have a clear view of the subject on which you are going to preach.*

I ask your special attention to this. Of all the five hints I am about to give, *this* is the most important. Mind, then, when your text is chosen, that you understand it and see right through it — that you know precisely what you want to prove, what you want to teach, what you want to establish, and what you want people’s minds to carry away. If you

yourself begin in a fog, you may depend on it that you will leave your people in darkness. Cicero, one of the greatest ancient orators, said long ago, “No one can possibly speak clearly and eloquently about a subject which he does not understand,” — and I am satisfied that he spoke the truth. Archbishop Whately<sup>8</sup> was a very shrewd observer of human nature, and he said rightly of a vast number of preachers, that “they *aimed* at nothing, and they *hit* nothing. Like men landing on an unknown island, and setting out on a journey of exploration, they set out in ignorance, and travelled on in ignorance all day long.”

I ask all young ministers especially, to remember this first hint. I repeat most emphatically, “Take care that you thoroughly understand your subject. Never choose a text of which you do not quite know what it means.” Beware of taking obscure passages such as those which are to be found in unfulfilled and emblematic prophecies. If a man continually preaches to an ordinary congregation about the seals and vials and trumpets in Revelation, or about Ezekiel’s temple, or about predestination, free will, and the eternal purposes of God, it will not be at all surprising to any reasonable mind if he fails to attain simplicity. I do not mean these subjects should not be handled occasionally, at fit times, and before a suitable audience. All I say is that they are very deep subjects, about which wise Christians often disagree, and it is almost impossible to make them very simple. We ought to see our subjects plainly if we wish to make them simple, and there are hundreds of plain subjects to be found in God’s Word.

For the same reason beware of taking up what I call fanciful subjects and accommodated texts, and then dragging out of them meanings which the Holy Ghost never intended to put into them. There is no subject needful for the soul’s health which is not to be found plainly taught and set forth in Scripture. This being the case, I think a preacher should never take a text and extract from it, as a dentist would a tooth from the jaw, something which, however true in itself, is not the plain literal meaning of the inspired words. The sermon may seem very glittering and ingenious, and his people may go away saying, “What a clever parson we have!” But if on examination they can neither find the sermon in the text, nor the text in the sermon, their minds are perplexed and they begin to think the Bible is a deep book which cannot be understood. If you want to attain simplicity, beware of accommodated texts.

When I speak of *accommodated* texts, let me explain what I mean. I remember hearing of a minister in a northern town, who was famous for preaching in this style. Once he gave for his text, “He that is so impoverished that he has no oblation, chooses for himself a tree that will not rot” (Isa 40.20). “Here,” he said, “is man by nature impoverished and undone. He has nothing to offer, in order to make satisfaction for his soul. And what should he do? He should choose a tree which cannot rot, even the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” — On another occasion, being anxious to preach on the doctrine of indwelling sin, he chose his text from the history of Joseph and his brethren, and gave out the words, “The old man of whom you spoke, is he yet alive?” (Gen 43.27). Out of this question he ingeniously twisted a discourse about the infection of nature remaining in the believer — a grand truth, no doubt, but certainly not the truth of the passage. Such instances will, I trust, be a warning to all my younger brethren. If you want to preach about the indwelling

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Whately (1787-1863) — English rhetorician, logician, economist, academic, and theologian. He served as a reforming Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, and was a leading Broad Churchman.

### Chap. 3. Simplicity in Preaching

corruption of human nature, or about Christ crucified, you need not seek such far-fetched texts as those I have named. If you want to be simple, mind that you choose plain simple texts.

Furthermore, if you wish to see through your subjects thoroughly, and thus attain the foundation of simplicity, do not be ashamed of dividing your sermons and stating your divisions. I need hardly say this is a very vexed question. There is a morbid dread of “firstly, secondly, and thirdly” in many quarters. The stream of fashion runs strongly against divisions; and I must frankly confess that a lively undivided sermon is much better than one divided in a dull, stupid, illogical way. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Someone who can preach sermons which strike and stick without divisions, by all means let him hold on his way and persevere. But let him not despise his neighbour who divides. All I say is, if we would be simple, there must be order in a sermon just as there is in an army. What wise general would mix artillery, infantry, and cavalry in one confused mass in the day of battle? What person who gives a banquet or dinner would dream of putting on the table the whole of the viands at once — the soup, the fish, the entrees, the joints, the salads, the game, the sweets, the dessert, in one huge dish? Such a host would hardly be thought to serve his dinner well. I say it is just so with sermons. By all means let there be order — order, whether you bring out your “firstly, secondly, or thirdly,” or not — order, whether your divisions are concealed or expressed — order so carefully arranged that your points and ideas follow one another in beautiful regularity, like regiments marching before the Queen on a review day in Windsor Park.

For my own part, I honestly confess that I do not think I have preached two sermons in my life without divisions. I find it of the utmost importance to make people understand, remember, and carry away what I say; and I am certain that divisions help me to do so. They are, in fact, like hooks and pegs and shelves in the mind. If you study the sermons of men who have been and are successful preachers, you will always find order, and often divisions, in their sermons. I am not a bit ashamed to say that I often read the sermons of Mr. Spurgeon. I like to gather hints about preaching from all quarters.

David did not ask about the sword of Goliath, “Who made it?” “Who polished it?” “What blacksmith forged it?” He said only, “There is nothing like it,” for he had once used it to cut off its owner’s head.

Mr. Spurgeon can preach most ably, and he proves it by keeping his enormous congregation together. We should always examine and analyze sermons which draw people together. Now, when you read Mr. Spurgeon’s sermons, note how clearly and perspicuously he divides a sermon, and fills each division with beautiful and simple ideas. How easily you grasp his meaning! How thoroughly he brings before you certain great truths, that hang like hooks of steel to you, and which, once planted in your memory, you never forget!

My first point, then, if you would be simple in your preaching, is that you must thoroughly understand your subject; and if you want to know whether you understand it, try to divide and arrange it. I can only say for myself; that I have done this ever since I have been a minister. For forty-five years I have kept blank MS. books in which I put down texts and heads of sermons for use when required. Whenever I get hold of a text and see my way through it, I put it down and make a note of it. If I do not see my way through a text, I

cannot preach on it, because I know I cannot be simple; and if I cannot be simple, I know I had better not preach at all.

**II.** *The second hint I would give is this: Try to use simple words in all your sermons, as far as you can.*

In saying this, however, I must explain myself. When I talk of simple words, I do not mean words of only one syllable, or words which are purely Saxon. I cannot agree with Archbishop Whately in this matter. I think he goes too far in his recommendation of Saxon, though there is much truth in what he says about it. I rather prefer the saying of that wise old heathen Cicero, when he said that orators should try to use words which are “in daily common use” among the people. Whether the words are Saxon or not, or of two or three syllables, it does not matter — so long as they are words commonly used and understood by the people. Only, whatever you do, beware of what the poor shrewdly call “dictionary” words — words which are abstract, scientific, pedantic, complicated, vague, or very long. They may seem very fine, and sound very grand, but they are rarely of any use. The most powerful and forcible words, as a rule, are very *short*.

Let me say one word more to confirm what I have stated about that common fallacy of the desirableness of always using Saxon English. I would remind you that a vast number of words of other than Saxon origin are used by writers of notorious simplicity. Take, for instance, the famous work of John Bunyan, and look at the very title of it, *the Pilgrim’s Progress*. Neither of the leading words in that title is Saxon. Would he have improved matters if he had called it “The Wayfarer’s Walk”? In saying this I admit freely that words of French and Latin origin are generally inferior to Saxon; and as a rule, I would say to use strong pure Saxon words if you can. All I mean to say is that you must not think as a matter of course, that words cannot be good and simple if they are not of Saxon origin. In any case, *beware of long words*.

Dr. Gee, in his excellent book, *Our Sermons* (Longman), very ably points out the uselessness of using long words and expressions not in common use. For example, he says, “Talk of *happiness* rather than of felicity, talk of *almighty* rather than omnipotent, *lessen* rather than diminish, *forbidden* rather than proscribed, *hateful* rather than noxious, *seeming* rather than apparent, *afterwards* rather than subsequently, *call out* and *draw out* instead of evoke and educe.” We all need to be pulled up sharply on these points. It is all very good to use fine words at Oxford and Cambridge, before classical hearers, and in preaching before educated audiences. But when you preach to ordinary congregations, depend on it: the sooner you throw overboard this sort of English, and use plain common words, the better. One thing is quite certain at all events — without simple words, you will never attain simplicity in preaching.

**III.** *The third hint I would offer, if you wish to attain simplicity in preaching, is this: Take care to aim at a simple style of composition.*

I will try to illustrate what I mean. If you take up the sermons preached by that great and wonderful man Dr. Chalmers, you can hardly fail to see what an enormous number of lines you meet with, without coming to a full stop. This I can only regard as a great mistake. It may suit Scotland, but it will never do for England. If you would attain a simple style of composition, beware of writing many lines without coming to a pause, thus *allowing the minds of your hearers to take a breath*. Beware of colons and semicolons.

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Stick to commas and full stops, and take care to write as if you were asthmatic or short of breath. Never write or speak very long sentences or long paragraphs. Use stops frequently, and start again; and the more often you do this, the more likely you are to attain a simple style of composition. Enormous sentences full of colons, semicolons, and parentheses, with paragraphs of two or three pages' length, are utterly fatal to simplicity. We should bear in mind that preachers have to deal with *hearers* and not *readers* — and that what will “read” well will not always “speak” well. A *reader* of English can always help himself by looking back a few lines and refreshing his mind. A *hearer* of English hears once for all; and if he loses the thread of your sermon in a long involved sentence, he very likely never finds it again.

Again, simplicity in your style of composition depends very much on the proper use of proverbs and epigrammatic <sup>9</sup> sentences. This is of vast importance. Here, I think, is the value of much that you find in Matthew Henry's commentary, and Bishop Hall's *Contemplations*. <sup>10</sup> There are some good sayings of this sort in a book not known so well as it should be, called *Papers on Preaching* by a Wykehamist. <sup>11</sup> Take a few examples of what I mean: “What we weave in time we wear in eternity.” “Hell is paved with good intentions.” “Sin forsaken is one of the best evidences of sin forgiven.” “It matters little how we die, but it matters much how we live.” “Meddle with no man's person, but spare no man's sin.” “The street is soon clean when everyone sweeps before his own door.” “Lying rides on debt's back: it is hard for an empty bag to stand upright.” “He that begins with prayer will end with praise” “All is not gold that glitters.” “In religion, as in business, there are no gains without pains.” “In the Bible there are willows where a lamb can wade, and depths where an elephant must swim.” “One thief on the cross was saved, that none should despair, and only one, that none should presume.”

Proverbial, epigrammatic, and antithetical sayings of this kind give wonderful perspicuousness and force to a sermon. Labour to store your minds with them. Use them judiciously, and especially at the end of paragraphs, and you will find them an immense help to the attainment of a simple style of composition. But of long, involved, complicated sentences always beware.

#### **IV. *The fourth hint I will give is this: If you wish to preach simply, use a direct style.***

What do I mean by this? I mean the practice and custom of saying “I” and “you.” When a man takes up this style of preaching, he is often told that he is conceited and egotistical. The result is that many preachers are never direct, and always think it very humble and modest and becoming to say “we.” But I remember good Bishop Villiers saying that “we” was a word kings and corporations should use, and they alone, but that parish clergymen should always talk of “I” and “you.” I endorse that saying with all my heart. I declare that I never can understand what the famous pulpit “we” means. Does the preacher who all through his sermon keeps saying “we” mean himself and the bishop? or himself and the Church? or himself and the congregation? or himself and the Early Fathers? or himself

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<sup>9</sup> *Epigrammatic*: terse and witty, like a maxim. For example, “If we don't end war, war will end us.”

<sup>10</sup> Bishop Joseph Hall (1574-1656) – Bishop of Norwich, moral philosopher and satirist.

<sup>11</sup> *Wykehamist*: a student enrolled in (or graduated from) Winchester College, England.

and the Reformers? or himself and all the wise men in the world? or, after all, does he only mean myself, plain “John Smith” or “Thomas Jones”?

If he only means himself, what earthly reason can he give for using the plural number, and not saying simply and plainly “I”? When he visits his parishioners, or sits by a sick-bed, or catechises his school, or orders bread at the baker’s, or meat at the butcher’s, he does not say “we,” but “I.” Why, then, I should like to know, can he not say “I” in the pulpit? What right does he have, as a modest man, to speak for anyone but himself? Why not stand up on Sunday and say, “Reading in the Word of God, I have found a text containing such things as these, and I come to set them before you”?

Many people, I am sure, do not understand what the preacher’s “we” means. The expression leaves them in a kind of fog. If you say, “I, your rector; I, your vicar; I, the curate of the parish,” come here to talk of something that concerns your soul, something you should believe, something you should do — you are at any rate understood. But if you begin to talk in the vague plural number of what “we” ought to do, many of your hearers do not know what you are driving at, and whether you are speaking to yourself or them. I charge and entreat my younger brethren in the ministry not to forget this point. *Do try to be as direct as possible.* Never mind what people say of you. In this particular, do not imitate Chalmers, Melville, or certain other living pulpit celebrities. Never say “we” when you mean “I.” The more you get into the habit of talking plainly to the people, in the first person singular, as old Bishop Latimer did, the simpler your sermon will be, and the more easily understood. The glory of Whitefield’s sermons is their directness. But unhappily they were so badly reported, that we cannot now appreciate them.

**V.** *The fifth and last hint I wish to give you is this: If you would attain simplicity in preaching, you must use plenty of anecdotes and illustrations.*

You must regard illustrations as windows through which light is let in upon your subject. Upon this point a great deal might be said, but the limits of a small treatise oblige me to touch it very briefly. I need hardly remind you of the example of Him who “spoke as never man spoke,” our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Study the four Gospels attentively, and mark what a wealth of illustration His sermons generally contain. How often you find figure upon figure, parable upon parable, in His discourses! There was nothing under His eyes apparently from which He did not draw lessons. The birds of the air, and the fish in the sea, the sheep, the goats, the cornfield, the vineyard, the ploughman, the sower, the reaper, the fisherman, the shepherd, the vinedresser, the woman kneading meal, the flowers, the grass, the bank, the wedding feast, the sepulchre, all were made vehicles for conveying thoughts to the minds of hearers. What are such parables as the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, the ten virgins, the king who made a marriage for his son, the rich man and Lazarus, the labourers of the vineyard, and others — what are all these but stirring stories that our Lord tells in order to convey some great truth to the souls of His hearers? Try to walk in His footsteps and follow His example.

If you pause in your sermon, and say, “Now I will tell you a story,” I engage that all who are not too fast asleep will prick up their ears and listen. People like similes, illustrations, and well-told stories, and will listen to them when they will attend to nothing else. And from what countless sources we can get illustrations! Take all the book of nature around us. Look at the sky above and the world beneath. Look at history. Look at all the branches

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of science, at geology, at botany, at chemistry, at astronomy. What is there in heaven above or earth below from which you may not bring illustrations to throw light on the message of the gospel? Read Bishop Latimer's sermons, the most popular, perhaps, that were ever preached. Read the works of Brooks, and Watson, and Swinnoek, the Puritans. How full they are of illustrations, figures, metaphors, and stories! Look at Mr. Moody's sermons. What is one secret of his popularity? He fills his sermons with pleasing stories. An Arabian proverb says, "He is the best speaker, who can turn the ear into an eye."

For my part, I not only try to tell stories, but in country parishes I have sometimes put before people familiar illustrations which they can see. For instance — Do I want to show them that there must have been a first great cause or Being who made this world? I have sometimes taken out my watch, and said, "Look at this watch. How well it is made! Do any of you suppose for a moment that all the screws, all the wheels, all the pins of that watch came together by accident? Would anyone not say there must have been a watchmaker? And if so, it follows most surely that there must have been a Maker of the world, whose handiwork we see graven on the face of every one of those glorious planets going their yearly rounds and keeping time to a single second. Look at the world in which you live, and the wonderful things which it contains. Will you tell me that there is no God, and that creation is the result of chance?" Or sometimes I have taken out a bunch of keys and shaken them. The whole congregation, when they hear the keys, look up. Then I say, "Would there be need of any keys if all men were perfect and honest? What does this bunch of keys show? Why, they show that the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Illustration, I confidently assert, is one of the best receipts for making a sermon simple, clear, perspicuous, and easily understood. Lay yourselves out for it. Pick up illustrations wherever you can. Keep your eyes open, and use them well. Happy is that preacher who has an eye for similitudes, and a memory stored with well-chosen stories and illustrations. If he is a real man of God, and knows how to deliver a sermon, he will never preach to bare walls and empty benches.

But I must add a word of caution. There is a way of telling stories. If a man cannot tell stories naturally, he had better not tell them at all. Illustration, after all I have said in its favour, may again be carried too far. I remember a notable instance of this in the case of the great Welsh preacher, Christmas Evans. There is in print a sermon of his about the wonderful miracle that took place in Gadara, when devils took possession of the swine, and the whole herd ran down violently into the sea. He paints it so minutely that it really becomes ludicrous because of the words put in the mouth of the swineherds who told their master of the loss he had sustained.

"Oh! sir," says one, "the pigs have all gone!"

"But," says the master, "where have they gone?"

"They have run down into the sea."

"But who drove them down?"

"Oh! sir, that wonderful man."

"Well, what sort of a man was he? What did he do?"

"Why, sir, he came and talked such strange things, and the whole herd ran suddenly down the steep place into the sea."

"What, the old black boar and all?"

"Yes, sir, the old black boar has gone too; for as we looked round, we just saw the end of his tail going over the cliff."

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Now *that* is going to an extreme. So again, Dr. Guthrie's admirable sermons are occasionally so overlaid with illustrations as to remind one of cake made almost entirely of plums and containing hardly any flour. Put plenty of colour and picture into your sermon by all means. Draw sweetness and light from all sources and from all creatures, from the heavens and the earth, from history, from science. But after all, there is a limit. You must be careful how you use colour, lest you do as much harm as good. Do not put on colour by spoonfuls, but with a brush. This caution remembered, you will find colour an immense aid in attaining simplicity and perspicuousness in preaching.

And now bear in mind that my five points are these:

*First:* If you want to attain simplicity in preaching, you must have a clear knowledge of what you are going to preach.

*Secondly:* If you would attain simplicity in preaching, you must use simple words.

*Thirdly:* If you would attain simplicity in preaching, you must seek to acquire a simple style of composition, with short sentences and as few colons and semicolons as possible.

*Fourthly:* If you would attain simplicity in preaching, aim at directness.

*Lastly:* If you would attain simplicity in preaching, make abundant use of illustration and anecdote.

Let me add to all this one plain word of application. You will never attain simplicity in preaching without plenty of trouble. Pains and trouble — I say *emphatically* — pains and trouble. When Turner, the great painter, was asked by someone how it was that he mixed his colours so well, and what it was that made them so different from those of other artists: "Mix them? Mix them? *Mix them?* Why, with brains, sir." I am persuaded that, in preaching, little can be done except by trouble and by pains.

I have heard that a young and careless clergyman once said to Richard Cecil, "I think I want more faith." "No," said the wise old man; "you want more works. You want more pains. You must not think that God will do work *for* you, though He is ready to do it *by* you." I entreat my younger brethren to remember this. I beg them to make time for their composition of sermons, to take trouble and to exercise their brains by reading. Only, mind that you read what is *useful*.

I would not have you spend your time in reading the Fathers in order to help your preaching. They are very useful in their way, but there are many things more useful in modern writers, if you choose them discreetly.

Read good models, and become familiar with good specimens of simplicity in preaching. As your best model, take the English Bible. If you speak the language in which that is written, you will speak well. Read John Bunyan's immortal work, *the Pilgrim's Progress*. Read it again and again if you wish to attain simplicity in preaching. Do not be above reading the Puritans. Some of them, no doubt, are heavy. Goodwin and Owen are very heavy, though excellent artillery in position. Read such books as Baxter, Watson, Traill, Flavel, Charnock, Hall, and Henry. They are, to my mind, models of the best simple English spoken in old times. Remember, however, that language alters with years. They spoke English, and so do we; but their *style* was different from ours. Read beside them the best models of modern English that you can get. I believe the best English writer for the last hundred years was William Cobbett, the political Radical. I think he wrote the

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finest simple Saxon-English the world has ever seen. In the present day I do not know a greater master of tersely spoken Saxon-English than John Bright. Among old political orators, the speeches of Lord Chasam and Patrick Henry, the American, are models of good English. Last but not least, never forget that, next to the Bible, there is nothing in the English language which, for combined simplicity, perspicuousness, eloquence, and power, can be compared with some of the great speeches in Shakespeare. Models of this sort must really be studied — and studied “with brains,” too — if you wish to attain a good style of composition in preaching. On the other hand, do not be above talking to the poor, and visiting your people from house to house. Sit down with your people by the fireside, and exchange thoughts with them on all subjects. Find out how *they* think, and how *they* express themselves, if you want them to understand your sermons. By doing so, you will insensibly learn much. You will continually pick up modes of thought, and get notions as to what you should say in your pulpit.

A humble country clergyman was once asked “whether he studied the fathers.” The worthy man replied that he had little opportunity to study the fathers, as they were generally out in the fields when he called. But he studied the mothers more, because he often found them at home, and he could talk to them. Wittingly or unwittingly, the good man hit a nail right on the head. We must talk to our people when we are *out* of church, if we would understand how to preach to them *in* the church.

(a) I will only say, in conclusion, that whatever we preach, or whatever pulpit we occupy — whether we preach simply or not, whether we preach written or extempore — we ought to aim not merely at letting off fireworks, but at preaching that which will do lasting good to souls. Let us beware of fireworks in our preaching. “Beautiful” sermons, “brilliant” sermons, “clever” sermons, “popular” sermons, are often sermons which have no effect on the congregation, and do not draw men to Jesus Christ. Let us aim to preach in such a way, that what we say may really come home to men’s minds and consciences and hearts, and make them think and consider.

(b) All the simplicity in the world can do no good unless you preach the simple gospel of Jesus Christ so fully and clearly, that *everybody* can understand it. If Christ crucified does not have His rightful place in your sermons, and sin is not exposed as it should be, and your people are not plainly told what they ought to believe, and to be, and to do, then YOUR PREACHING IS OF NO USE.

(c) Again, all the simplicity in the world is useless without a good lively delivery. If you bury your head in your bosom, and mumble over your manuscript in a dull, monotonous, droning way, like a bee in a bottle, so that people cannot understand what you are speaking about, your preaching will be in vain. Depend on it: delivery is not sufficiently attended to in our Church. In this, as in everything else connected with the science of preaching, I consider the Church of England is sadly deficient. I know that I began preaching alone in the New Forest, and nobody ever told me what was right or wrong in the pulpit. The result was that the first year of my preaching was a series of experiments. We get no help in these matters at Oxford and Cambridge. The utter lack of any proper training for the pulpit is one great blot and defect in the system of the Church of England.

(d) Above all, let us never forget that all the simplicity in the world is useless without prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the grant of God’s blessing, and a life

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corresponding in some measure to what we preach. Let us have an earnest desire for the souls of men, while we seek simplicity in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And let us never forget to accompany our sermons with holy living and fervent prayer.

## CHAPTER 4 – 1Cor 15.3-4.

### FOUNDATION TRUTHS. <sup>12</sup>

“I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, how Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” — 1Cor 15.3-4.

THE text which heads this paper is taken from a passage of Scripture with which most Englishmen are only too well acquainted. It is the chapter from which the lesson has been selected, which forms part of the matchless Burial Service of the Church of England. Of all the occasional services of the Prayer Book, none, in my humble judgment, is more beautiful than this. The good old “Book of Common Prayer,” we all know, has no form or loveliness in the eyes of some. We have seen the burial laws of this realm altered, and other “uses” sanctioned and introduced into our churchyards at funerals. But of one thing I am very certain. We will never see the bodies of professing Christians committed to the ground with a wiser and better service, than that of the Anglican Liturgy.

The starting-point of the whole argument of this chapter will be found in the two verses which form the text. The Apostle opens by reminding the Corinthians that “among the first things “which he delivered to them when he commenced his teaching, were two great facts about Christ: one was His *death*, the other was His *resurrection*. The passage seems to me to open up two subjects of deep interest, and to them I invite the attention of all into whose hands this paper may fall.

- I. For one thing, let us mark well the primary *truths* which St. Paul delivered to the Corinthians.
- II. For another thing, let us try to grasp the *reasons* why St. Paul assigns to these truths such a singularly prominent position.

**I. *What, then, were the things which the Apostle preached” first of all,” that is, among the first things, at Corinth?***

Before I answer that question, I ask my readers to pause awhile and realize the whole position which St. Paul occupied when he left Athens and entered Corinth.

Here is a solitary Jew visiting a great heathen city for the first time, to preach an entirely new religion, to begin an aggressive Evangelistic mission. He is a member of a despised people, sneered at alike by Greeks and Romans, isolated and cut off from other nations, in their own little corner of the earth, by their peculiar laws and habits, and unknown to Gentiles either for literature, arms, arts, or science. The “bodily presence” of this bold Jew is “weak,” and his “speech,” compared to that of Greek rhetoricians, “contemptible” (2Cor 10.10). He stands almost alone in a city, famous all over the world — even in the estimate of the heathen — for luxury, immorality, and idolatry. Such was the place, and such was the man! A more remarkable position it is hard to conceive.

And what did this solitary Jew tell the Corinthians?

What did he say about the great Head and Founder of the new faith, which he wanted

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<sup>12</sup> The substance of these pages was originally delivered as a sermon before the University of Oxford, in my turn as Select Preacher at St. Mary’s in the year 1830.

them to receive in place of their ancient religion? Did he begin by cautiously telling them how Christ lived, and taught, and worked miracles, and spoke “as no man ever spoke”? (Joh 7.46) Did he tell them that He had been rich as Solomon, victorious as Joshua, or learned as Moses? Nothing of the kind! The very first fact he proclaimed about Christ was that He died, and died the most ignominious death — the death of a malefactor, the death of the cross.

And why did St. Paul lay so much stress on Christ’s death rather than His life? Because, he tells the Corinthians, “He died for our sins.” That is a deep and wonderful truth, a truth which lay at the very foundation of the whole religion which the Apostle came to preach! For that death of Christ was not the involuntary death of a martyr, or a mere example of self-sacrifice. It was the voluntary death of a Divine Substitute for the guilty children of Adam, by which He made atonement for “the sin of the world.” Joh 1.29 It was a death of such mighty influence on the position of sinful man before God, that it provided complete redemption from the consequences of the fall. In a word, St. Paul told the Corinthians that when Christ died, He died as the Representative of guilty man, to make expiation<sup>13</sup> for us by the sacrifice of Himself, and to endure the penalty which we deserved.

- “He bore our sins in His own body on the tree,” (1Pet 2.24).
- “He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God,” (1Pet 3.18).
- “He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him,” (2Cor 5.21).

This is a great and stupendous mystery, no doubt! But it was a mystery to which every sacrifice from the time of Abel had been continually pointing for 4000 years. Christ died “according to the Scriptures.”

The other great fact about Christ which St. Paul placed in the front part of his teaching, was His resurrection from the dead. He boldly told the Corinthians that the same Jesus who died, and was buried, came forth alive from the grave on the third day after His death, and was seen, touched, handled, and talked to, *in the body*, by many competent witnesses. By this amazing miracle He proved, as He had frequently said He would, that He was the promised and long-expected Saviour foretold in prophecy; that the satisfaction for sin He had made by His death was accepted by God the Father; that the work of our redemption was completed; and that death, as well as sin, was a conquered enemy. In short, the Apostle taught that the greatest of miracles had been wrought; and that with such a Founder of the new faith which he came to proclaim — first dying for our sins, and then rising again for our justification Rom 4.25 — nothing was impossible, and nothing lacking for the salvation of man’s soul.

Such were the two great truths to which St. Paul assigned the first place, when he began his campaign as a Christian teacher at Corinth — Christ’s vicarious death for our sins — Christ’s rising again from the grave. Nothing seems to have preceded them: nothing to have been placed on a level with them. No doubt it was a sore trial of faith and courage to a learned and highly-educated man like St. Paul, to take up such a line. Flesh and blood might well shrink from it. He says, “I was with you in weakness and fear, and in much

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<sup>13</sup> *Expiation: compensation for a wrong; atonement.*

trembling.” But by the grace of God, he did not flinch. He says, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” (1Cor 2.2-3)

Nor did the case of Corinth stand alone. Wherever the great Apostle of the Gentiles went, he preached the same doctrine, and put it in the forefront of his preaching. He addressed very different hearers, and people of very different minds. But he always used the same spiritual medicine, whether at Jerusalem, or Antioch in Pisidia, or Iconium, or Lystra, or Philippi, or Thessalonica, or Berea, or Athens, or Ephesus, or Rome. That medicine was the story of the cross and the resurrection. They crop up in *all* his sermons and Epistles. You never go far without coming across them. Even Festus, the Roman governor, when he tells Agrippa of Paul’s case, describes it as hinging on “One Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive” (Act 25.19).

(a) Now, let us learn for one thing what the leading principles of that religion were, which eighteen centuries ago came forth from Palestine, and turned the world upside down. The truest infidel cannot deny the effect that it produced on mankind. The world before and the world after the introduction of Christianity were as different worlds as light and darkness, night and day. It was Christianity that starved idolatry and emptied the heathen temples — that stopped gladiatorial combats, elevated the position of women, raised the whole tone of morality, and improved the condition of children and the poor. These are facts with which we may safely challenge all the enemies of revealed religion to dispute. They are facts which form one of the gravest difficulties of infidelity. And what did it all? Not, as some dare to say, the mere publication of a higher code of duty, a sort of improved Platonic philosophy, without root or motive. No! it was the simple story of the cross of Calvary, and the empty sepulchre in the garden, the marvellous death of One “numbered with transgressors,” and the astounding miracle of His resurrection (Isa 53.12). It was by telling how the Son of God died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, that Apostles and apostolic men changed the face of the world, gathered mighty churches, and turned countless sinners into saints.

(b) Let us learn, for another thing, what the foundation of our own personal religion must be, if we really want inward, spiritual comfort. It is as plain as the noonday sun that the early Christians possessed such comfort. We read repeatedly in the New Testament of their joy, and peace, and hope, and patience, and cheerfulness, and contentment. We read in ecclesiastical history of their courage and firmness under the fiercest persecution, of their uncomplaining endurance of sufferings, and their triumphant deaths. And what was the mainspring of their peculiar characters — characters which excited the admiration even of their bitterest enemies, and puzzled philosophers like Pliny? There can only be one reply. These men had a firm grasp of the two great facts which St. Paul proclaimed “first” and foremost to the Corinthians: the death and resurrection of their great Head, Jesus Christ the Lord. Let us never be ashamed of walking in their steps. It is cheap and easy work to sneer at “dogmatic theology,” and old-fashioned creeds and modes of faith, as if they were effete and worn-out things, unfit for this enlightened nineteenth century. But after all, what are the fruits of modern philosophy, and the teaching of cold abstractions, compared to the fruits of the despised dogmas of distinctive Christianity? If you want to see peace in life, and hope in death, and consolation felt in sorrow, you will never find such things except among those who rest on the two great facts of our text, and who can say, “I live by faith

in the Son of God,” who died for my sins, and was raised again for my justification (Gal 2.20; Rom 4.25).

Let me turn now to another view of the subject before us. We have seen what the truths were which St. Paul proclaimed “first of all” to the Corinthians, and what the effects were which they produced.

**II.** *Let us now try to grasp and examine the reasons why he was led to assign them such a prominent position.*

The inquiry is a very interesting one. I cannot hold, with some, that St. Paul adopted this course only because he was commissioned and commanded to do so. I think the reasons lie far deeper than this. Those reasons are to be sought in the necessities and condition of fallen human nature. I believe that man’s wants could never have been met and satisfied by any other message than that which St. Paul brought to Corinth; and if he had not brought it, he would have come there in vain.

For there are *three things* about man in every part of the world, which force themselves on our notice whenever we sit down to examine his nature, position, and constitution. Man is a creature with

- (1) a sense of sin and accountableness at the bottom of his heart.
- (2) a creature continually liable to sorrow and trouble from his cradle to his grave.
- (3) a creature who has before him the certainty of death, and a future state at last.

These are three great facts which stare us in the face everywhere — in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. Travel all over the world, and they meet you, both among the most highly educated Christians and the most untutored savages. Go about our own country, and study the family life of the most learned philosophers and the most ignorant peasants. Everywhere, and in every rank and class, you will have to make the same report. Everywhere you will find these three things: *sorrow, death, and the sense of sin*. And the position I boldly take up is this: that nothing can be imagined or conceived more admirably suited to meet the wants of human nature, than the very doctrine which St. Paul began with at Corinth — the doctrine of Christ dying for our sins and rising again for us from the grave.

It fits the needs of man, just as the right key fits the lock.

Let me glance for a few minutes at the three things which I have just named, and try to show the strong light which they throw on St. Paul’s choice of subjects when he began his ministry at Corinth.

- (a) Consider first and foremost, the INWARD SENSE OF SIN and imperfection which exists in every member of the human family, more or less. I grant freely that it differs widely in different persons. In thousands of people it seems completely gone, effaced, and dead. Early lack of education, customary sin, constant neglect of all religion, habitual indulgence in fleshly lusts — all these things have a surprising power to blind the eye and sear the conscience. But where will you ever find a man, except among high-caste Brahmins, or half-crazy Christian fanatics, who will boldly tell you that he is perfect and faultless, and who will not confess (if you drive him into a corner) that he is not exactly what he ought to be, and that he knows better than he does? Oh, no! The vast majority of mankind have a conscience of sin, which every now and then makes them miserable.

The self-imposed austerities of Hindus, the trembling of rulers like Herod and Felix, are proofs of what I mean. Wherever there is a child of Adam, there is a creature that has in his heart of hearts, a consciousness of guilt, defectiveness, and need. And when this sense of sin is really awakened, and stirs within us, what can cure it? *That* is the grand question.

Some talk vaguely of God's "mercy" and "goodness," though utterly unable to explain their meaning, and to show what title man has to them. Others flatter themselves that their own repentance, tears, prayers, and active and diligent use of the ceremonials of religion, will bring them peace. But what child of Adam ever found relief in this way? What is more certain than the recorded experience of thousands, that medicines like these never healed inward misgivings and mental fears? Nothing has ever been found to do good to a sin-stricken soul but the sight of a Divine Mediator between God and man — a real living Person of almighty power and almighty mercy, bearing our sins, suffering in our stead, and taking on Himself the whole burden of our redemption. So long as man only looks *within*, and thinks to efface his sense of sin by vain attempts to scour and purify his own character — that is how long he feels only more wretched every day. Let him once look for peace *without*, to "the Man Christ Jesus" dying for his sins, and rest his soul on Him, and he will find, as millions have found in the last eighteen centuries, that he has the very thing that a wounded conscience needs. In short, a believing view of Christ dying for our sins is God's appointed remedy for man's spiritual need. It is the Divine specific <sup>14</sup> for that deadly plague which infects the whole family of Adam, and which, once seen and felt, makes men and women miserable. If Paul had not proclaimed this grand specific at Corinth, he would have shown great ignorance of human nature, and been a physician of no value. And if we ministers do not proclaim it, it is because our eyes are dim, and there is little light in us.

(b) Let us consider, in the next place, the universal liability of man to SORROW. The testimony of Scripture, "that man is born to trouble," is continually echoed by thousands who know nothing of the Scriptures, but simply speak the language of their own experience. The world, nearly all men agree, is full of trouble. It is a true saying that we come into life *crying*, and pass through it *complaining*, and leave it *disappointed*. Of all God's creatures, none is so vulnerable as man. Body, and mind, and affections, and family, and property, are all liable in their turn to become sources and avenues of sorrow. And no rank or class possesses any immunity from this. There are sorrows for the rich as well as the poor, for the learned as well as the unlearned, for the young as well as the old, for the castle as well as the cottage. And neither wealth, nor science, nor high position can prevent their forcing their way into our homes, and breaking in upon us sometimes like an armed man. These are ancient things, I know. The poets and philosophers of old Greece and Rome knew them as well as we do. But it is well to be put in remembrance.

For what will best help man to meet and bear sorrow? *That* is the question. If our condition since the Fall is such that we cannot escape sorrow, what is the surest recipe for making it tolerable? The cold lessons of Stoicism have no power in them. Resignation and submission to the will of God are excellent things to talk about in fine weather. But when the storm strikes us, and hearts ache, and tears flow, and gaps are made in our

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<sup>14</sup> *Specific: a medicine that has a mitigating effect on a specific disease.*

## Chap. 4. Foundation Truths

family circle, and friends fail us, and money makes itself wings, and sickness lays us low, we want something more than abstract principles and general lessons. We want a living, personal Friend, a Friend to whom we can turn with firm confidence that he can help and feel.

Now, it is just here, I maintain, that St. Paul's doctrine of a risen Christ comes in with a marvellous power, and exactly meets our necessities. We have One sitting at the right hand of God, as our sympathizing Friend, who has all power to help us, and can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities — even Jesus, the Son of God. He knows the heart of a man and all his condition, for He Himself was born of a woman, and partook of flesh and blood. He knows what sorrow is, for He Himself in the days of His flesh wept, and groaned, and grieved. He has proved His love towards us by “bearing our manners” for thirty-three years in this world, by a thousand acts of kindness, and ten thousand words of consolation, and by finally dying for us on the cross. And He took care before He left the world to say such golden sayings as these,

- “Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.” (Joh 14.1)
- “I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.” (Joh 14.18)
- “Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” (Joh 16.24)

I can imagine no truth more suited to man's wants than this. Rules, and principles, and prescriptions, and instructions in times of sorrow are all very good in their way; but what the human heart craves is a personal friend to go to, to talk to, to lean back upon, and commune with. The risen Christ, living and interceding for us at God's right hand, is precisely the Person that we need. If St. Paul had not proclaimed Him to the Corinthians, he would have left one of man's greatest wants unsatisfied. No religion will ever satisfy man which does not meet the legitimate wants of his nature. Teachers who give no place to a living risen Christ in their system, must never be surprised if their weary hearers seek rest at the feet of human priests in the Romish Confessional.

(c) Let us consider, lastly, the certainty of DEATH and its consequences, which every child of Adam must make up his mind to face one day.

To say that death is a serious thing, is to utter a very bald and commonplace truism. Yet it is a strange fact that the familiarity of 6000 years does not abate one jot of its seriousness. The end of each individual is still a very momentous circumstance in his history, and most men honestly confess it. To leave the world and shut our eyes on all among whom we have played our part — to surrender our bodies, whether we like it or not, to the humiliation of disease, decay, and the grave — is to be obliged to drop all our schemes and plans and intentions; and this is serious enough. But when you add to this the overwhelming thought that there is something beyond the grave, an undiscovered and unknown world, and an account of some sort to be rendered of our life on earth, the death of any man or woman becomes a tremendously serious event. Well may our great poet Shakespeare speak of “the dread of something after death.” It is a dread which many feel far more than they would like to confess. Few are ever satisfied with Mohammedan fatalism. Not one in a thousand will ever be found to believe the doctrine of annihilation.

Now, at no point do the uninspired religions of the ancients, or the systems of modern philosophy, break down so completely as in the article of death. To dwell forever in

Elysian fields, amidst shadowy, immaterial ghosts, was a consummation little valued even by Homeric heroes. The vague, rootless theory of some undefined state of rest after death, where somehow and in some way, the souls of the good and the just, separate from their bodies, are to spend an objectless, endless existence is a miserable comforter. Homer, and Plato, and Bolingbroke, and Voltaire, and Paine are all alike cheerless and silent when they look down into an open grave.

But just at the point where all man-made systems are weakest, and fail to satisfy the wants of human nature, there the gospel which St. Paul proclaimed at Corinth is strongest. For it shows us an Almighty Saviour who not only died for our sins, and went down to the grave, but also rose again from the grave with His body, and proved that He had gained a victory over death.

- “Now Christ has risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of those who slept.” (1Cor 15.20)
- “He has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light.” (2Tim 1.10)
- “Through death He has destroyed death, and delivered those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb 2.15).

And thanks be to God, this blessed victory over death and the grave has not been won by Christ for Himself alone. For eighteen centuries He has enabled thousands of Christian men and women, believing and trusting themselves to Him, to face the king of terrors without fear, and to go down the valley of the shadow of death in the sure and certain hope that they will yet come forth victorious, and in the flesh see God. Read the story of the deaths of the early Christians under heathen persecutions. Mark the dying experience of those who suffered for Protestantism at Oxford and Smithfield,<sup>15</sup> under Queen Mary. Find if you can, in the whole range of biography any death-beds of non-Christians which bear comparison with the death-beds of Christians in the matter of peace, and hope, and strong consolation. You may search forever and not find them. You will find yourself shut up to the conclusion that the old Scriptural truth of Christ dying and rising again is exactly the truth that fits human nature, and must have come down from God. This, and this only, will enable natural man to meet the last enemy without fear, and to say, “O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?” (1Cor 15.55).

What will we say to these things? I know well that the human heart and its necessities are a deep and intricate subject. But after studying men’s hearts attentively for many years, I have come to one decided conviction. That conviction is, that the true reason why St. Paul preached first and foremost what he preached at Corinth, is to be found in his right knowledge of the nature, moral condition, and position of man. He was taught by God the Holy Ghost, that it was the only medicine that was suited to the disease. What human nature requires is a religion for dying sinners, a mighty remedial system and a personal Redeemer; and the work of Christ is marvellously fitted to meet its requirements. We are sick of a deadly sickness, and our first want is a living physician.

It would have been worse than useless if St. Paul had begun his work at Corinth by telling men to be virtuous and moral, while he kept back Christ. It is just as useless now. It even does positive harm. To awaken human nature, and then not show it God’s spiritual prescription, may lead to most mischievous consequences. I know no case so pitiable as

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<sup>15</sup> [The places of their infamous executions.](#)

that of the man who clearly sees sin, sorrow, and death on one side, and does not clearly see Christ dying for sins, and rising again for sinners, on the other. Such a man is just the person to sink into flat despair, or to take refuge in the delusive theology of the Church of Rome. No doubt we may sleep the sleep of unconversion for many years, and feel nothing of spiritual doubts and fears. But let a man's conscience once become uneasy, and crave peace, and I know no medicine which can cure him, and keep him from soul-ruining error, except the "first things" which St. Paul delivered at Corinth — I mean the two doctrines of Christ's atoning death and resurrection.

*And now let me wind up this paper with some words of advice to all who read it. It is advice which the times appear to me to demand. Who can tell but to some one it may be a word in season?*

(a) Let me, then, advise you most strongly not to be ashamed of holding decided views about the first things, the foundation truths of religion. Your lot is cast in a day of free thought, free handling, and free inquiry. There is a widespread dislike for doctrinal decision and what is called *dogmatism*; and none perhaps are so exposed to its influence as the young. The natural generosity, unsuspectingness, and love of fair play, of a young man's heart, make him shrink from taking up very positive theological views, and holding opinions which may even seem to be narrow, party-spirited, or illiberal. The temptation of the present day is to be content with a vague earnestness, to abstain from all sharply cut and distinct views, to be an honorary member of all schools of thought, and to maintain that no man can be unsound in the faith if he exhibits zeal and works hard.

(b) But, after all, your religion must have roots if it is to live and bear fruit in this cold world. "Earnestness," and "zeal," and "work" are brave words; but like cut flowers stuck in a garden, they have no power of continuance if they have no hidden roots below. Admitting to the full that there are secondary things in religion, about which those who are young may fairly suspend their judgment and wait for light, I charge you to remember that there are first things about which you must be decided and make up your minds. You *must*, I say, if you want peace within, and if you want desire to be useful. And among these first things, the two great truths which are laid down in the text which heads this paper, stand forth like mountains in a plain — Christ's DEATH for our sins, and Christ's miraculous RESURRECTION. Grasp tightly these two great truths. Plant your feet firmly on them. Feed your own soul on them. Live on them. Die on them. Never let them go. Strive to be able to say, "I know whom I believe," <sup>2Tim 1.12</sup> — not *what*, but *whom*. I live by faith in One who died for me, and rose again. Be decided about this at any cost, and in due time all other truths will be added to you.

(c) Some, it may be, into whose hands this paper may have fallen, are going forth from the quiet haven of a happy home into the battle and conflict of busy life. But wherever your lot may be cast, whether in town or in country, whether among rich or poor, I hope you will try to do good. And remember one chief problem you will have to be continually solving, is how to help souls who are labouring under the burden of sin, crushed down with sorrow, or oppressed with the fear of death. And when that time comes, remember the word that I speak to you this day. — The only way to do good is to walk in St. Paul's steps, and to tell men first, foremost, continually, repeatedly, publicly, and from house to house, that Jesus Christ died for their sins, rose again for their justification, lives at

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the right hand of God to receive, to pardon, and to preserve, and will soon come again to give them a glorious resurrection. These are the truths which the Holy Ghost has *always* blessed, *is* blessing, and *will* bless until the Lord comes. These were St. Paul's "first things." Resolve and determine that by God's grace they will be yours in this generation. I knew a man of God who made a great mark in his day, who said to me thirty-five years ago that Jeremiah was pre-eminently a book for the latter days of England. I entirely subscribe to that opinion. Holding that opinion, I ask my readers to hear a few words about the text which I have chosen. I commend it to you as a text for the times.

## CHAPTER 5 – Jer 6.16.

### THE GOOD WAY. <sup>16</sup>

“Thus says the Lord, Stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.” Jer 6.16.

THE book of the prophet Jeremiah receives from most Christians far less attention than it deserves. It is a noteworthy fact that hardly any portion of Holy Scripture is the subject of so few exhaustive commentaries and expositions.

I fail to see the reason for this comparative neglect. The book was written under God’s inspiration, by a Jewish priest at a peculiar crisis in the last days of the kingdom of Judah. Jeremiah was God’s messenger to a wicked king — a worldly aristocracy — a corrupt people in a rotten Church, with a dead formal priesthood. He warned his countrymen faithfully but, like Cassandra of old, he was not believed. He lived to see the complete ruin of Church and State, the city burnt, the temple of Solomon destroyed, and the people carried into captivity. And finally, it is a Christian tradition that, after being dragged into Egypt by the Jewish refugees who fled there, he died the death of a martyr.

I repeat that the writings of such a prophet as this, deserve more attention than they have previously received.

*I. First of all, you have in this text excellent general advice.*

Jeremiah says to you, “Stand, and see, and ask.” I take these words to be a call to thought and consideration. They are as though the prophet said, “Stop and think. Stand still, pause, and reflect. Look within, behind, and before. Do nothing rashly. What are you doing? Where are you going? What will be the end and consequence of your present line of action? Stop and think.”

Now, to set men thinking is one great object which every teacher of religion should always keep before him. Serious thought, in short, is one of the first steps toward heaven. “I thought on my ways,” says the Psalmist, “and turned my feet to Your testimonies” (Psa 119.59). The prodigal son in the parable “came to *himself*” before he came to his *father*. He began to consider quietly the folly and uselessness of his conduct, and then, and not till then, he returned home, saying, “Father, I have sinned” (Luk 15.18). In truth, lack of thought is the simple cause why many make shipwreck forever. There are but few, I suspect, who deliberately and calmly choose evil, refuse good, turn their back on God, and resolve to serve sin as sin. Most are what they are because they began their present course without thought. They would not take the trouble to look forward and consider the consequence of their conduct. By thoughtless actions they created habits which have become second nature to them. They have got into a groove now, and nothing but a special miracle of grace will stop them. That is a solemn charge which Isaiah brings against Israel: “My people do not consider” (Isa 1.3). “I never gave it a thought,” is the sad excuse which I have heard many a man or woman in the lower classes make for sin. The words of Hosea are strictly true of thousands: “They do not consider in their hearts” (Hos 7.2).

There are none, we must all be aware, who bring themselves into so much trouble by lack

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<sup>16</sup> The substance of this paper was originally preached in a sermon in the Chapel Royal, Whitehall, in the year 1883.

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of thinking as the young. From natural high spirits and ignorance of the world, they are always tempted to look only at the present and forget the future. Too often they marry in haste and repent at leisure, and lay up misery for life by wedding an uncongenial partner. Too often they choose in haste a wrong profession or business, and find, after two or three years, that they have made an irretrievable mistake, and if I may borrow a railway phrase, they have got on the wrong line of rails. Esau thought only of present gratification, and sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Dinah must go “to see the daughters of the land,” thinking no harm, and ends by losing her own character, and bringing trouble on her father’s house (Gen 34.1-31). Lot thought only of the present advantage of settling in the well-watered valley around Sodom, and forgot the consequence of being mingled with a people who were “exceedingly sinners before God” (Gen 13.13). All these found to their cost the folly of not considering, looking forward, and thinking. They sowed to the flesh and they reaped a harvest of sorrow and disappointment, because they did not “stand and see.”

These, no doubt, are ancient things. Every middle-aged person can shake his head over the foolishness of young people, and tell us mournfully that you “cannot put old heads on young shoulders.” But the young are not the only persons who need the exhortation of the text in this day. It is pre-eminently advice for the times. Hurry is the characteristic of the age in which we live. Railways, and electric telegraphs, and general competition, appear to oblige modern Englishmen to live in a constant breathless whirl. On every side you see the many “driving furiously,” like Jehu, after business or politics. They seem unable to find time for calm, quiet, serious reflection about their souls and a world to come. They have no abstract objection to the doctrines of Christianity, or to the use of means of grace, the Bible, or private prayer. But, alas, they cannot make leisure for them! They live in a perpetual hurry, and they too often die in a hurry. If ever there was an age in England when Jeremiah’s advice was needed, it is now. If the prophet could rise from the dead, I believe he would cry aloud to the men of the nineteenth century, “Stop, and think — look forward — stand, and see.”

Let me, as Christ’s minister, impress on all into whose hands these pages may fall, the absolute necessity of resisting the current of the age — the absolute necessity of making time for your souls. The restless, high-pressure hurry in which men live endangers the very foundations of personal religion. Daily private prayer and daily Bible-reading are too often jostled into a corner, and hastily slurred over. Body and mind are wearied out when Sunday arrives, by the intense struggle of week-day life. Church services are listlessly attended, and sometimes neglected altogether. The temptation to idle away God’s day, or to spend it in visiting or dining out, becomes almost irresistible. Little by little the soul gets into a languid and relaxed condition, and the fine edge of conscience becomes blunt and dull. And why? Simply because in the incessant hurry of business and politics men never find time to *think*. They are not irreligious wilfully and on purpose; but they give themselves no leisure to stand still and take stock of the state of their souls. Even at the end of the last century, William Wilberforce made this sorrowful remark about Mr. Pitt, “He was so absorbed in politics, that he had never given himself time for reflection on religion” (*Life of Wilberforce*, p. 41. Edition, 1872).

I ask every reader of this paper to consider his ways. Beware of the infection of the times. Remember the old Spanish proverb, “Hurry comes from the devil.” Resolve by the grace of God, if you love life, that you will have regular seasons for examining yourself, and

looking over the accounts of your soul. “Stand, and see” where you are going, and how matters stand between you and God. Beware of perpetual hurried prayers, hurried Bible-reading, hurried church-going, hurried communions. Commune at least once a week with your own heart, and be still. Cotton, and coal, and iron, and corn, and ships, and stocks, and land, and gold, and Liberalism, and Conservatism, are not the only things for which we were sent into the world. Death, and judgment, and eternity are not fancies, but stern realities. Make time to think about them. Stand still, and look them in the face. You will be obliged one day to make time to die, whether you are prepared or not. The last enemy, when he knocks at your door, will brook no delay, and will not wait for a “convenient season.” He must be admitted, and you will have to go. Happy is he who, when the roar of business and politics is dying away on his ear, and the unseen world is looming large, can say, “I know whom I have believed: I have often stood and communed with Him by faith; and now I go to see as I have been seen.”

From the general advice which Jeremiah gives in our text, I will now pass on to the particular direction which the Lord commands him to address to the men of his generation.

**II.** *If they were really willing to listen to his counsel to “stand, and see,” and consider their ways, then he bids them “ask for the old paths.”*

Now, what did Jeremiah mean when he spoke of the “old paths”? I find no difficulty in answering that question. I feel no doubt that the phrase meant the old paths of faith in which the fathers of Israel had walked for 1300 years — the paths of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — the paths of Moses, and Joshua, and Samuel — the paths of David, and Solomon, and Hezekiah, and Jehoshaphat — the paths in which the rule of life was the Decalogue, and the rule of worship was that elaborate, typical, sacrificial system of which the essence was faith in the coming Redeemer. I will never hesitate to maintain that this was the standard around which the men of Jeremiah’s day were summoned to rally. Fallen and low as the spiritual condition of Israel often was, between the first of the Judges and the last of the Kings, I fail to see any proof that the Ten Commandments and the law of sacrifice were ever dethroned and repealed. On the contrary, I believe they were honoured and revered by every Jew who was “an Israelite indeed.” In the darkest days of the Kings, I believe there were always a few who mourned secretly over the corrupt state of the nation, and, like Simeon and Anna, kept the faith and longed for better times. Jeremiah declared that the only prospect of hope for the future of his countrymen was in a general return to the “old paths,” and nothing short of the “old paths.”

But is the principle laid down by Jeremiah a principle which applied to his times alone? Nothing of the kind! I am firmly persuaded that one chief medicine for the spiritual diseases of the nineteenth century is a bold and unhesitating inquiry for “old paths,” — old doctrines, and the faith of the days that are past. No doubt error is *often* very ancient; yet truth is *always* old. Men’s hearts are just what they were 6000 years ago, and need the same remedy. God in that long period has used several dispensations, and each succeeding age has enjoyed more light. But the foundation truths have always been the same, and the way by which sinners have reached heaven has always been one and the same. I say boldly that the age wants nothing new. What it wants is plain, distinct, unflinching teaching about “the old paths.” Give me no modern road of man’s invention. Show me where patriarchs, and prophets, and Apostles, and Fathers, and Reformers set

down their feet, obtained a good report, and made a mark on the world. “The old path is the good way.”

We want throughout Christendom a return to the old paths of the early Christians. The first followers of the Apostles, no doubt, were like their teachers: “unlearned and ignorant men.” They had no printed books. They had short creeds, and very simple forms of worship. I doubt much if they could have stood an examination in the Thirty-nine Articles, or the Creed of Athanasius, or even in the Church Catechism. But what they knew they knew thoroughly, believed intensely, and propagated unhesitatingly, with a burning enthusiasm. They grasped with both hands, and not with finger and thumb, the Personality, Deity, offices, mediation, atoning work, and the free and full grace of our Lord Jesus Christ — and the *inseparable* necessity of repentance, faith, and a Christlike life of holiness, self-denial, and charity. They lived on these truths, and they were ready to die for them. Armed with these truths, without gold to bribe or the sword to compel assent, they turned the world upside down, confounded the Greek and Roman philosophers, and altered in two or three centuries the whole face of Society. Can we mend these “old paths”? Can we improve them after eighteen centuries? Does human nature require any different medicine? I believe the bones of the oldest human skeleton that ever was unearthed are just like the bones of men in these days, and I believe the moral nature and hearts of men, after the lapse of ages, are just the same. We had better ask for the “old paths.”

We want throughout the Church of England a return to the old paths of our Protestant Reformers. I grant they were rough workmen, and made some mistakes. They worked under immense difficulties, and deserve tender judgment and fair consideration. But out of the dust they revived grand foundation truths which had been long buried and forgotten. They brought into just prominence such cardinal verities as the sufficiency and supremacy of Scripture, the right and duty of private judgment, and free justification by faith without the deeds of the law, and without any ordained man or any ceremony interposing between the soul and the Saviour. By embalming those truths in our Articles and Liturgy, by incessantly pressing them on the attention of our forefathers, they changed the whole character of this nation, and raised a standard of true doctrine and practice which, after three centuries, is a power in the land, and has an insensible influence on English character to this very day. Can we mend these “old paths”? Will we improve them either by going back behind the Reformation and increasing the ceremonials of religion on the one hand, or by adopting lower views of inspiration and the atonement on the other? I doubt it entirely. I believe the men of 300 years ago understood the real wants of human nature better than many do in 1882.

Of course, I am well aware that the “old paths” for which I have been pleading are not popular in some quarters at this day. In fact, the views I have just propounded are in direct antagonism to much of the so-called wisdom of these times. “Effete systems,” “old-world creeds,” “fossil theology,” “exploded theories,” “worn-out doctrines,” “old-fashioned divinity,” and like phrases — who does not know the heavy fire of such language which is continually poured on the “old paths” of faith in some organs of public opinion, and from some pulpits and platforms? Novelty is the idol of the day. Free handling, enlightened views, rational interpretation, science (so called) before the Bible, these are the guiding principles of many in this age. Tell them that any religious idea is old, and they seem to think it is probably false! Tell them that it is new, and it is probably true!

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But I have yet to learn that all new views of religion are necessarily better than the old. It is not so in the work of men's hands. I doubt if this nineteenth century can produce an architect who could design better buildings than the Parthenon or Coliseum, or a mason who could rear fabrics which will last so long. It certainly is not so in the work of men's minds. Thucydides is not superseded by Macaulay, nor Homer by Milton. Why, then, are we to suppose that old theology is necessarily inferior to new?

For after all, when modern scoffers at "old paths" and worn-out creeds have had their say, there remain some stern facts which can never be explained away, and some questions which can only receive one answer. I ask boldly, What extensive good has ever been done in the world, except by the theology of the "old paths"? And I confidently challenge a reply, because I know that none can be given. I unhesitatingly affirm that there has never been any spread of the gospel, any conversion of nations or countries, any successful evangelistic work, except by the old-fashioned distinct doctrines of the early Christians and the Reformers. I invite any opponent of dogmatic theology to name a single instance of a country, town, or people, which has ever been Christianized by merely telling men that "Christ was a great moral Teacher — that they must love one another, that they must be true, just, unselfish, generous, brotherly, high-souled," and the like. No! no! no! Not one single victory can such teaching show us: not one trophy can such teaching exhibit. It has wrought no deliverance on the earth.

The victories of Christianity, wherever they have been won, have been won by distinct doctrinal theology; by telling men of Christ's vicarious death and sacrifice; by showing them Christ's substitution on the cross, and His precious blood; by teaching them justification by faith, and bidding them believe in a crucified Saviour; by preaching ruin by sin, redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Spirit; by lifting up the brazen serpent; by telling men to look and live — to believe, repent, and be converted. These are the "old paths." This, this is the only teaching which for eighteen centuries God has honoured with success, and is honouring at the present day both at home and abroad. Let the teachers of a broad and undogmatic theology; or the preachers of the gospel of earnestness, sincerity, and cold morality; or the advocates of a ceremonial, sensuous, histrionic, Sacramentarian Christianity — let them, I say, show us at this day any English village, parish, city, or district, which has been evangelized, without the distinct doctrinal teaching of the "old paths." They cannot do it, and they never will. There is no getting over facts. The good that is done in the earth may be comparatively small. Evil may abound, and ignorant impatience may murmur and cry out that Christianity has failed. But, we may depend on it, if we want to do good and shake the world, we must fight with the old apostolic weapons, and stick to the "old paths."

Does any reader doubt the truth of what I am saying, and think I am going too far? I ask him to listen for a moment to the two following arguments, and overthrow them if he can.

For one thing, I bid him turn to the lives of all the most eminent saints who have adorned the Church of Christ since its great Head left the world, and summon them as witnesses. I will not weary my readers with long lists of names, for happily they are legion. Let us examine the holiest Fathers, Schoolmen, Reformers, Puritans, Anglicans, Dissenters, and Churchmen of every school, and Christians generally of every name, and nation, and people, and tongue. Let us search their diaries, analyze their biographies, and study their letters. Let us just see what manner of men they have been in every age, who by the

consent of all their contemporaries, have been really holy, and saintly, and good. Where will you find one of them who did not cling to the “old paths” of simple faith in the atonement and sacrificial work of Christ? Who did not hold certain great distinct doctrinal views, and live in the belief of them? I am satisfied that you will not find one! In their clearness of perception and degree of spiritual light, in the proportion they have assigned to particular articles of faith, they may have differed widely. In their mode of expressing their theological opinions they may not have agreed. But they have always had one common stamp and mark. They have not been content with vague ideas of “earnestness, goodness, sincerity, and charity.” They have had certain systematic, sharply-cut, and positive views of truth. They have known *whom* they believed, and *what* they believed, and *why* they believed. And so it will always be. You will never have Christian fruits without Christian roots, whatever novel-writers may say; you will never have eminent holiness without the “old paths” of dogmatic theology.

For another thing, I bid him turn to the death-beds of all who die with solid comfort and good hope, and appeal to them. There are few of us who are not called on occasionally, as we travel through life, to see people passing through the valley of the shadow of death, and drawing near to their latter end, and those “things unseen which are eternal.” All of us know what a vast difference there is in the manner in which such people leave the world, and the amount of comfort and hope which they seem to feel. Can any of us say that he ever saw a person die in peace who did not know distinctly what he was resting on for acceptance with God, and could only say in reply to inquiries, that he was “earnest and sincere”? I can only give my own experience: *I never saw one*. Oh, no! The story of Christ’s moral teaching, self-sacrifice, and example — and the need of being earnest, sincere, and like Him — will never smooth down a dying pillow. Christ the Teacher, Christ the great Pattern, Christ the Prophet, will not suffice. We want something more than this!

We want the old, old story of Christ dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification. We want Christ the Mediator, Christ the Substitute, Christ the Intercessor, Christ the Redeemer, in order to meet with confidence the King of Terrors, and to say, “Oh death, where is your sting? Oh grave, where is your victory?” Not a few, I believe, who have gloried all their lives in rejecting dogmatic religion, have discovered at last that their “broad theology” is a miserable comforter — and the gospel of mere “earnestness” is no good news at all. I firmly believe that not a few could be named who at the eleventh hour have cast aside their favourite, new-fashioned views, fled for refuge to the “old paths” and the precious blood, and left the world with no other hope than the old-fashioned Evangelical doctrine of faith in a crucified Jesus. Nothing in their life’s religion has given them such peace as the simple truth grasped at the eleventh hour,

“Just as I am: without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bid’st me come to Thee —  
O Lamb of God, I come.”

Surely, when this is the case, we have no need to be ashamed of the “old paths,” and of walking in them.

I ask every reader of this paper to respect the logic of facts. Give the direction of Jeremiah the attention it deserves. If you once begin to think seriously about your soul, never be ashamed of asking for “the old paths,” and walking in them. Yes! do not merely look at

them and talk of them, but actually walk in them. Let no scorn of the world, let no ridicule of smart writers, let no sneer of liberal critics, shake your confidence in those paths. Only try them, and you will find they are the good way, “a way of pleasantness and peace.”

**III.** *From Jeremiah’s general advice and special directions let me now turn to the precious promise with which our text concludes. “Walk in the old paths,” says the Lord, “and you will find rest for your souls.”*

I cannot doubt that our Lord Jesus Christ had these words of the prophet in His mind when He proclaimed that glorious invitation which is so wisely quoted in our Communion Service: “Come to Me, all you that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11.28). One thing, at any rate, is quite certain. Whether under the Old Testament or the New, nothing could be held out to man more suitable to his spiritual wants than “rest.” Walk in the “old paths,” is the promise, and you will have “rest.”

Let it never, never be forgotten that rest of conscience is the secret want of a vast portion of mankind. Sin and the sense of guilt are the root of all the heart-weariness in the world. Men are not at ease, because they are not at peace with God. Men often feel their sinfulness, though they do not know what the feeling really means. They only know there is something wrong within, but they do not understand the cause. “Who will show us any good?” is the universal cry. But there is universal ignorance of the disease from which the cry springs. The “labouring and heavy-laden” are everywhere: they are a multitude that man can scarcely number; they are to be found in every climate, and in every country under the sun.

To what class do the labouring and heavy-laden belong? They belong to every class: there is no exception. They are to be found among masters as well as among servants, among rich as well as among poor, among kings as well as among subjects — among learned as well as among ignorant people. In every class you will find trouble, care, sorrow, anxiety, murmuring, discontent, and unrest. What does it mean? What does it all come to? Men are “labouring and heavy-laden,” and want rest.

Now, rest for the labouring and heavy-laden is one of the chief promises which the Word of God offers to man, both in the Old Testament and the New. “Come to me,” says the world, “and I will give you riches and pleasure.” “Come with me,” says the devil, “and I will give you greatness, power, and wisdom.” “Come to Me,” says the Lord Jesus Christ, “and I will give you rest.” “Walk in the old paths,” says the prophet Jeremiah, “and you will find rest for your souls.”

But what is the nature of that rest which the Lord Jesus promises to give? It is no mere repose of body. A man may have that, and yet be miserable. You may place him in a palace, and surround him with every possible comfort; you may give him money in abundance, and everything that money can buy; you may free him from all care about tomorrow’s bodily wants, and take away the need of labouring for a single hour: all this you may do to a man, and yet not give him true rest. Thousands know this only too well by bitter experience. Their hearts are starving in the midst of worldly plenty; their inward man is sick and weary, while their outward man is clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day! Yes, a man may have houses, and lands, and money, and horses, and carriages, and soft beds, and good fare, and attentive servants, and yet not have true “rest.”

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The rest that Christ gives in the “old paths” is an inward thing. It is rest of *heart*, rest of *conscience*, rest of *mind*, rest of *affection*, rest of *will*. It is rest from a comfortable sense of sins being all forgiven, and guilt all put away. It is rest from a solid hope of good things to come, laid up beyond the reach of disease, and death, and the grave. It is rest from the well-grounded feeling that the great business of life is settled, its great end is provided for, that in time all is well done, and in eternity, heaven will be our home.

Rest such as this the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him in the “old paths,” by showing them His own finished work on the cross, by clothing them in His own perfect righteousness, and washing them in His own precious blood. When a man begins to see that the Son of God actually died for his sins, his soul begins to taste something of inward quiet and peace.

Rest such as this the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him in the “old paths,” by revealing Himself as their ever-living High Priest in heaven, and God reconciled to them through Him. When a man begins to see that the Son of God actually lives at the right hand of the Father to intercede for him, he will begin to feel something of inward quiet and peace.

Rest such as this the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him in the “old paths,” by implanting His Spirit in their hearts, witnessing with their spirits that they are God’s children, and that old things have passed away, and all things have become new. When a man begins to feel an inward drawing towards God as a Father, and a sense of being an adopted and forgiven child, his soul begins to feel something of quiet and peace.

Rest such as this the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him in the “old paths,” by dwelling in their hearts as King, by putting all things in order, and giving to each faculty its place and work. When a man begins to find order in his heart in place of rebellion and confusion, his soul begins to understand something of quiet and peace. There is no true inward happiness until the true King is on the throne.

Rest such as this is the privilege of all believers in Christ. Some know more of it, and some less; some feel it only at distant intervals, and some feel it almost always. Few enjoy the sense of it without many a battle with unbelief, and many a conflict with fear: but all who truly come to Christ know something of this rest. Ask them, with all their complaints and doubts, whether they would give up Christ and go back to the world. You will get only one answer. Weak as their sense of rest may be, they have gotten hold of something which does them good, and they cannot let that something go.

Rest such as this is within reach of all who are willing to seek it and receive it. The poor man is not so poor that he may not have it; the ignorant man is not so ignorant that he may not know it; the sick man is not so weak and helpless that he may not get hold of it. Faith, simple faith, is the one thing needful in order to possess Christ’s rest. Faith in Christ is the grand secret of happiness. Neither poverty, nor ignorance, nor tribulation, nor distress can prevent men and women feeling rest of soul, if they will only come to Christ and believe.

Rest such as this is the possession which makes men independent. Banks may break, and money make itself wings and fly away. War, pestilence, and famine may break in on a land, and the foundations of the earth be out of course. Health and vigour may depart, and the body be crushed down by loathsome disease. Death may cut down wife, and

children, and friends, until he who once enjoyed them stands entirely alone. But the man who has come to Christ by faith will still possess something which can never be taken from him. Like Paul and Silas, he will sing in prison; like Job, bereaved of children and property, he will bless the name of the Lord. He is the truly independent man who possesses that which nothing can take away.

Rest such as this is the possession which makes men truly rich. It lasts; it wears; it endures; it lightens the solitary home; it smoothes down the dying pillow; it goes with men when they are placed in their coffins; it abides with them when they are laid in their graves. When friends can no longer help us, and money is no longer of use — when doctors can no longer relieve our pain, and nurses can no longer minister to our wants, when sense begins to fail, and eye and ear can no longer do their duty, then, even then, the “rest” which Christ gives in the “old paths” will be shed abroad in the heart of the believer. The words “rich” and “poor” will change their meaning entirely one day. He alone is the rich man who has come to Christ by faith, and from Christ has received rest.

This is the rest which Jeremiah was commissioned to proclaim. This is the rest which Christ offers to give to all who are labouring and heavy-laden; this is the rest for which He invites them to come to Him; this is the rest which I want all who read this paper to enjoy, and to which I bring an invitation this day. May God grant that the invitation may not be brought in vain!

(a) And now, before we part, let me ask if there is any reader who is inwardly desiring rest of soul, and yet does not know where to turn for it? Remember this day, that there is only one place where rest can be found. Governments cannot give it; education will not impart it; worldly amusements cannot supply it; money will not purchase it. It can only be found in the hand of Jesus Christ; and to His hand you must turn if you would find peace within.

There is no royal road to rest of soul. Let that never be forgotten. There is only,

- One way to the Father — Jesus Christ;
- One door into heaven — Jesus Christ;
- One path to heart-peace and rest — Jesus Christ.

By that way, all labouring and heavy-laden ones must go, whatever their rank or condition may be. Kings in their palaces, and paupers in the workhouse, are all on the same level in this matter. All alike must walk in the “old paths,” and come to Christ, if they feel soul-weary and thirsty. All must drink from the same fountain, if they would have their thirst relieved.

You may not believe what I am now saying. Time will show who is right and who is wrong. Go on, if you will, imagining that true happiness is to be found in the good things of this world.

- Seek it, if you will, in revelling and banqueting, in dancing and merry-making, in races and theatres, in field sports and cams.
- Seek it, if you will, in reading and scientific pursuits, in music and painting, in politics and business.
- Seek it in a round of religious formalities — in a perfunctory obedience to the requirements of a ceremonial Christianity.

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Seek it; but you will never overtake it, unless you change your plan. Real heart-rest is never to be found except in the “old paths,” in heart-union with Jesus Christ.

The Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I, lies buried in Newport Church, in the Isle of Wight. A marble monument, erected by our gracious Queen Victoria, records in a touching way the manner of her death. She languished in Carisbrook Castle during the unhappy Commonwealth wars — a prisoner, alone, and separate from all the companions of her youth, until death set her free. She was found dead one day with her head leaning on her Bible, and the Bible open at the words, “Come to Me, all you that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” The monument in Newport Church records this fact. It consists of a female figure reclining her head on a marble book, with the text already quoted engraven on the book. Think what a sermon in stone that monument preaches! Think what a standing memorial it affords of the utter inability of rank and high birth to confer certain happiness! Think what a testimony it bears to the lesson before you this day — the mighty lesson that there is no true “rest” for any one excepting in Christ! Happy it will be for your soul if that lesson is never forgotten!

(b) But who is there among the readers of this paper that has walked in the “old paths,” and found the rest which Christ gives? Who is there that has tasted true peace by coming to Him, and casting his soul on Him? Let me entreat you never to leave the “old paths,” and never to be tempted to think there is a better way. Stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made you free. Do not turn aside to right or left. Go on to the end of your days as you have begun, looking to Jesus and living on Him. Go on drawing daily full supplies of rest, peace, mercy, and grace from the great fountain of rest and peace. Remember, that if you live to the age of Methuselah, you will never be anything but a poor empty sinner, owing all you have and hope for to Christ alone.

Never be ashamed of living the life of faith in Christ. The “old paths” will bear thinking of to all eternity. The way of the world is a way which will not bear calm reflection now, and of which the end is shame and remorse. Men may ridicule and mock you, and even silence you in argument; but they can never take from you the feelings which faith in Christ gives. They can never prevent you feeling, “I was weary till I found Christ, but now I have rest of conscience. I was blind, but now I see. I was dead, but I am alive again. I was lost, but I am found.”

(c) Last, but not least, look forward with confidence to a better rest in a world to come. Yet a little while, and He that will come will come, and will not tarry. He will gather together all who have believed in Him, and take His people to a home where the wicked will cease from troubling, and the weary will be at perfect rest. He will give them a glorious body, in which they will serve Him without distraction, and praise Him without weariness. He will wipe away tears from all faces, and make all things new (Isa 25.8).

There is a good time coming for all who have come to Christ in the “old paths,” and committed their souls into His keeping. They will remember all the way by which they have been led, and see the wisdom of every step in the way. They will wonder that they ever doubted the kindness and love of their Shepherd. Above all, they will wonder that they could live so long without Him, and that when they heard of Him, they could hesitate about coming to Him.

There is a pass in Scotland called Glencroe, which supplies a beautiful illustration of what

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heaven will be to the man who comes to Christ. The road through Glencroe carries the traveller up a long and steep ascent, with many a little winding and many a little turn in its course. But when the top of the pass is reached, a stone is seen by the wayside, with these simple words engraven on it, "Rest, and be thankful." Those words describe the feelings with which everyone who comes to Christ will at length enter heaven. The summit of the narrow way will be won: we will cease from our weary journeying, and sit down in the kingdom of God. We will look back over all the way of life with thankfulness, and see the perfect wisdom of every little winding and turn in the steep ascent by which we were led. We will forget the toils of the upward journey in the glorious rest. Here in this world our sense of rest in Christ at best is feeble and partial; but "when that which is perfect has come, that which is in part will be done away." Thanks be to God, a day is coming when the end of the "old path" will be reached, and believers will rest perfectly, and be thankful!

## CHAPTER 6 – Act 17.26.

### “ONE BLOOD.”<sup>17</sup>

THIS is a very short and simple text, and even a child knows the meaning of its words. But simple as it is, it supplies food for much thought, and it forms part of a speech delivered by a great man on a great occasion.

The speaker is the Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul. The hearers are the cultivated men of Athens, and specially the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. The place is Mars’ Hill at Athens, in full view of religious buildings and statues, of which even the shattered remains are a marvel of art at this day. Never perhaps were such a place, such a man, and such an audience brought together! It was a strange scene. And how did St. Paul use the occasion? What did this Jewish stranger, this member of a despised nation, coming from an obscure corner of Asia, this little man whose “bodily presence was weak,” and very unlike the ideal figure in one of Raphael’s cartoons,<sup>18</sup> what does he say to these intellectual Greeks?

He tells them boldly the unity of the true God. There is only one God, the maker of heaven and earth — not many deities as his hearers seem to think — a God who needed no temples made with hands, and was not to be represented by images made of wood or metal or stone.

Standing in front of the stately Parthenon and the splendid statue of Minerva, he sets before his refined hearers the ignorance with which they worshipped, the folly of idolatry, the coming judgment of all mankind, the certainty of a resurrection, and the absolute need of repentance. And not least, he tells the proud men of Athens that they must not flatter themselves that they were superior beings, as they vainly supposed, made of finer clay, and needing less than other races of men. No! He declares that “God has made all nations of one blood.” There is no difference. The nature, the needs, the obligation to God of all human beings on the globe, are one and the same.

I will stick to that expression “one blood,” and confine myself entirely to it. I see in it three great points —

- I. A point of *fact*;
- II. A point of *doctrine*;
- III. A point of *duty*.

Let me try to unfold them.

#### **I. In the first place comes the point of *FACT*.**

We are all made “of one blood.” Then the Bible account of the origin of man is true. The Book of Genesis is right. The whole family of mankind, with all its thousand millions, has descended from one pair — from Adam and Eve.

This is a humbling fact, no doubt; but it is true. Kings and their subjects, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, prince and pauper, the educated Englishman and the untutored

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<sup>17</sup> The substance of this paper was preached as a sermon at the Chapel Royal, St. James’s, London, on March 2, 1884.

<sup>18</sup> *Cartoon*: an artist’s preliminary sketch. The Raphael Cartoons are seven large cartoons for tapestries, designed by Raphael in 1515–16, showing scenes from the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. They are the only surviving members of a set of ten cartoons commissioned by Pope Leo X for tapestries for the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican Palace.

negro, the fashionable lady at the West End of London and the North American squaw — all, all might trace their pedigree, if they could trace it through sixty centuries, to one man and one woman. No doubt in the vast period of six thousand years, immense varieties of races have gradually been developed. Hot climates and cold climates have affected the colour and physical peculiarities of nations. Civilization and culture have produced their effect on the habits, demeanour, and mental attainments of the inhabitants of different parts of the globe. Some of Adam's children in the lapse of time have been greatly degraded, and some have been raised and improved. But the great fact remains the same. The story written by Moses is *true*. All the dwellers in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America originally sprang from Adam and Eve. We were all “made of one blood.”

Now, why do I dwell on all this? I do it because I wish to impress on the minds of my readers the plenary inspiration and divine authority of the Book of Genesis. I want you to hold fast the old teaching about the origin of man, and to steadily refuse to let it go.

I need hardly remind you that you live in a day of abounding scepticism and unbelief. Clever writers and lecturers are continually pouring contempt on the Old Testament Scriptures, and especially on the Book of Genesis. The contents of that venerable document, we are frequently told, are not to be read as real historical facts, but as fictions and fables. We are not to suppose that Adam and Eve were the only man and woman originally created, and that all mankind sprang from one pair. We are rather to believe that different races of human beings have been called into existence in different parts of the globe, at different times, without any relationship to one another. In short, we are coolly informed that the narratives in the first half of Genesis are only pleasing Oriental romances, and are not realities at all! Now, when you hear such talk as this, I charge you not to be moved or shaken for a moment. Stand fast in the old paths of the faith, and especially about the origin of man. There is abundant evidence that Moses is right, and those who impugn his veracity and credibility are wrong. We are all descended from one fallen father. We are “all of one blood.”

It would be easy to show, if the limits of this paper permitted, that the oldest traditions of nations all over the globe confirm the account given by Moses in the most striking manner. Cunningham Geikie, in his *Hours with the Bible* (1880), has briefly shown that the story of the first pair, the serpent, the fall, the flood, and the ark are found cropping up in one form or another in almost every part of the habitable world. But the strongest proof of our common origin is to be found in the painful uniformity of man's moral nature, whatever may be the colour of his skin. Go where you will on the globe, and observe what men and women are everywhere. Go to the heart of Africa or China, or to the remotest island of the Pacific Ocean, and mark the result of your investigations. I boldly assert that everywhere, and in every climate, you will find the moral nature of the human race exactly the same. Everywhere you will find men and women are naturally wicked, corrupt, selfish, proud, lazy, deceitful, godless servants of lusts and passions. And I contend that nothing can reasonably account for this but the first three chapters of Genesis. We are what we are *morally*, because we have sprung from one parent, and partake of his *nature*. We are all descendants of one fallen Adam, and in Adam we all died. Moses is right. We are all of “one blood.”

After all, if doubt remains in any man's mind, and he cannot quite believe the narratives of Genesis, I ask him to remember what a deadly blow his unbelief strikes at the authority

of the New Testament. It is easy work to point out difficulties in the first book of the Bible; but it is not easy to explain away the repeated endorsement which Genesis receives from Christ and the Apostles. There is no getting over the broad fact that creation, the serpent, the fall, Cain and Abel, Enoch, Noah, the flood, the ark, Abraham, Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, are all mentioned in the New Testament as historical things or historical persons. What do we say to this fact? Were Christ and the Apostles deceived and ignorant? The idea is absurd. Did they dishonestly accommodate themselves to the popular views of their hearers, in order to procure favour with them, knowing all the time that the things and persons they spoke of were fictitious, and not historical at all? The very idea is wicked and profane. We are confined to one conclusion, and I see no alternative. If you give up the Old Testament, you must give up the New also. There is no standing-ground between disbelief of the supernatural narratives of Genesis, and disbelief of the gospel. If you cannot believe Moses, then you should not trust Christ and the Apostles, who certainly believed him. Are you really wiser than the Lord Jesus Christ or St. Paul? Do you know better than they? Toss such notions behind your back. Stand firm on the old foundation, and do not be carried away by modern theories. And as a great cornerstone, place beneath your feet the fact of our text, the common origin of all mankind. "We are all made of one blood."

**II.** *From the point of fact in our text I now pass on to the point of DOCTRINE.*

Are we all of "one blood"? Then we all need one and the same remedy for the great family disease of our souls. The disease I speak of is sin. We inherit it from our parents, and it is a part of our nature. We are born with it, whether gentle or simple, learned or unlearned, rich or poor, as children of fallen Adam, with his blood in our veins. It is a disease which grows with our growth and strengthens with our strength, and unless it is cured before we die, it will be the death of our souls.

Now, what is the only remedy for this terrible spiritual disease? What will cleanse us from the guilt of sin? What will bring health and peace to our poor dead hearts, and enable us to walk with God while we live, and dwell with God when we die? To these questions I give a short but unhesitating reply. There is only one remedy for the one universal soul-disease of all Adam's children. That remedy is "the precious blood of Christ." We owe the beginning of our deadly spiritual ailment to the blood of Adam. We must all look to the blood of Christ alone for a cure.

When I speak of the "blood of Christ," my readers must distinctly understand that I do not mean the literal material blood which flowed from His hands and feet and side as He hung on the cross. That blood, I have no doubt, stained the fingers of the soldiers who nailed our Lord to the tree; but there is not the slightest proof that it did any good to their souls. If that blood were really in the Communion cup at the Lord's Supper, as some profanely tell us, and we touched it with our lips, such a mere corporeal touch would avail us nothing. Oh no! When I speak of the "blood" of Christ as the cure for the deadly ailment which we all inherit from the blood of Adam, I mean the life-blood which Christ shed, and the redemption which Christ obtained for sinners when He died for them on Calvary — the salvation which He procured for us by His vicarious sacrifice — the deliverance from the guilt and power and consequences of sin, which He purchased when He suffered as our Substitute. This and only this is what I mean when I speak of "Christ's blood" as the one medicine needed by all Adam's children. The thing that we all need to save us from

eternal death is not merely Christ's *incarnation* and *life*, but Christ's *death*. The atoning "blood" which Christ shed when He died, is the grand secret of salvation. It is the blood of the second Adam suffering in our stead, which alone can give life or health and peace to all who have the first Adam's blood in their veins.

I can find no words to express my deep sense of the importance of maintaining in our Church the true doctrine of the blood of Christ. One plague of our age is the widespread dislike of what men are pleased to call *dogmatic theology*. In place of it, the idol of the day is a kind of jelly-fish Christianity — a Christianity without bone, or muscle, or sinew — without any distinct teaching about the atonement or the work of the Spirit, or justification, or the way of peace with God — a vague, foggy, misty Christianity of which the only watchwords seem to be, "You must be earnest, and real, and true, and brave, and zealous, and liberal, and kind. You must condemn no man's doctrinal views. You must consider that everybody is right, and nobody is wrong." And this Creedless kind of religion, we are actually told, is to give us peace of conscience! And not to be satisfied with it in a sorrowful, dying world, is proof that you are very narrow-minded! Satisfied, indeed! Such a religion might possibly do for unfallen angels. But to tell sinful, dying men and women, with the blood of our father Adam in their veins, to be satisfied with it, is an insult to common sense, and a mockery of our distress. We need something far better than this. We need the blood of Christ.

What does the Scripture say about "that blood"? Let me try to put my readers in remembrance. Do we want to be clean and guiltless *now*, in the sight of God? It is written,

- that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin;" (1Joh 1.7)
- that "it justifies;" (Col 1.20)
- that "it makes us near to God;" (Heb 10.19)
- that "through it there is redemption, even the forgiveness of sin;" (Eph 1.7)
- that it "purges the conscience;" (Heb 9.14)
- that "it makes peace between God and man;" (Eph 2.13)
- that it gives "boldness to enter into the holiest." (Rom 5.9)

Yes! It is expressly written of the saints in glory, that "they had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," and that they had "overcome their souls' enemies by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7.14).

Why, in the name of common sense, if the Bible is our guide to heaven, *why* are we to refuse the teaching of the Bible about Christ's blood, and turn to other remedies for the great common soul-disease of mankind? If besides this, the sacrifices of the Old Testament did not point to the sacrifice of Christ's death on the cross, they were useless, unmeaning forms, and the outer courts of tabernacle and temple were little better than shambles. But if (as I firmly believe) they were meant to lead the minds of Jews to the better sacrifice of the true Lamb of God, they afford unanswerable confirmation of the position which I maintain this day. That position is that the one "blood of *Christ*" is the spiritual medicine for all who have the "one blood of *Adam*" in their veins.

Does any reader of this paper want to do good in the world? I hope many do. He is a poor style of Christian who does not wish to leave the world better when he leaves it, than it was when he entered it. Take the advice I give you this day: beware of being content with half-measures and inadequate remedies for the great spiritual disease of mankind. You

will only labour in vain if you do not show men the blood of the Lamb. Like the fabled Sisyphus,<sup>19</sup> however much you strive, you will find the stone ever rolling back upon you. Education, teetotalism, cleaner dwellings, popular concerts, blue ribbon leagues, white cross armies, penny readings, museums — all are very good in their way; but they only touch the surface of man's disease: they do not go to the root. They cast out the devil for a short season; but they do not fill his place, and prevent him coming back again. Nothing will do that but the story of the cross applied to the conscience by the Holy Ghost, and received and accepted by faith. Yes! it is the blood of Christ — not His example only, or His beautiful moral teaching, but His vicarious sacrifice — that meets the wants of the soul. No wonder that St. Peter calls it “precious.” It has been found precious by the heathen abroad, and by the peer and the peasant at home. It was found Precious on a death-bed by the mighty theologian Johann Bengel (1687-1752), by the unwearied labourer John Wesley, by the late Archbishop Charles Longley (1794-1868), and Bishop Walter Hamilton (1808-1869) in our own days. May it ever be precious in our eyes! If we want to do good, we must make much of the blood of Christ. There is only one fountain that can cleanse anyone's sin. That fountain is the blood of the Lamb.

**III.** *The third and last point which arises out of our text is a point of DUTY.*

Are we all of “one blood”? Then we ought to live as if we were. We ought to behave as members of one great family. We ought to “love as brethren.” We ought to put away from us anger, wrath, malice, quarrelling, as specially hateful in the sight of God. We ought to cultivate kindness and charity towards all men. The dark-skinned African negro, the dirtiest dweller in some vile slum of London, has a claim on our attention. He is a relative and a brother, whether we like to believe it or not. Like ourselves, he is a descendant of Adam and Eve, and inherits a fallen nature and a never-dying soul.

Now, what are we Christians doing to prove that we believe and realize all this? What are we doing for our brethren? I trust we do not forget that it was wicked Cain who asked that awful question, “Am I my brother's keeper?” (Gen 4.9).

What are we doing for the heathen abroad? That is a grave question, and one which I have no room to consider fully. I only remark that we do far less than we ought to do. The nation whose proud boast is that her flag is to be seen in every port on the globe, gives less to the cause of foreign missions than the cost of a single first-class ironclad man-of-war.

But what are we doing for the masses at home? That is a far graver question, and one which imperiously demands a reply. The heathen are out of sight and out of mind. The English masses are nearby our own doors, and their condition is a problem which politicians and philanthropists are anxiously trying to solve, and which cannot be evaded. What are we doing to lessen the growing sense of inequality between rich and poor, and to fill up the yawning gulf of discontent? Socialism, and communism, and confiscation of property are looming large in the distance, and occupying much attention in the press. Atheism and secularism are spreading fast in some quarters, and especially in overgrown and neglected parishes. Now, what is the path of duty?

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<sup>19</sup> *Sisyphus* – Greek Mythology: a king who offended Zeus and whose punishment was to roll a huge boulder to the top of a steep hill; each time the boulder neared the top it rolled back down, and Sisyphus was forced to start again.

## Chap. 6. One Blood

I answer without hesitation, that we want a larger growth of brotherly love in the land. We want men and women to grasp the great principle that we are all of “one blood,” and to lay themselves out to do good. We want the rich to care more for the poor, and the employer for the employed, and wealthy congregations for the working-class congregations in the great cities, and the West End of London to care more for the East and the South. And, let us remember, it is not merely temporal relief that is wanted. The Roman emperors tried to keep the proletarians and the lower classes quiet by the games of the circus and largesses of corn. And some ignorant modern Britons seem to think that money, cheap food, good dwellings, and recreation are healing medicines for the evils of our day in the lowest stratum of society. It is a complete mistake. What the masses want is more sympathy, more kindness, more brotherly love, more treatment as if they were really of “one blood” with ourselves. Give them that, and you will fill up half the gulf of discontent.

It is a common saying in this day, that the working classes have no religion, that they are alienated from the Church of England, that they cannot be brought to church, and that it is hopeless and useless to try to do them good. I believe nothing of the kind. I believe the working classes are not one jot more opposed to religion than the “upper ten thousand;” and that they are just as open to good influences, and even more likely to be saved, if they are approached in the right way. But what they do like is to be treated as “one blood;” and what is wanted is a great increase of sympathy and personal friendly dealing with them.

I confess that I have immense faith in the power of sympathy and kindness. I believe the late Judge Thomas Talfourd (1795-1854) hit the nail on the head when he said, in almost his last charge to a Grand Jury at Stafford Assizes, “Gentlemen, the great want of the age is more sympathy between classes.” I entirely agree with him; I think an increase of sympathy and fellow-feeling between high and low, rich and poor, employer and employed, parson and people, is one healing medicine which the age demands. Sympathy, exhibited in its perfection, was one secondary cause of the acceptance which Christ’s gospel met with on its first appearance in the heathen world. Well says Lord Thomas Macaulay (1800-1859), “It was before Deity taking a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the synagogue, and the doubts of the academy, and the fasces of the lictor,<sup>20</sup> and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust.” And sympathy, I firmly believe, can do as much in the nineteenth century as it did in the first. If anything will melt down the cold isolation of classes in these latter days, and make our social body consist of solid cubes compacted together, instead of spheres only touching each other at one point, it will be a large growth of Christlike sympathy.

Now, I assert confidently that the English working man is peculiarly open to sympathy. The working man may live in a poor dwelling; and after toiling all day in a coal pit, or cotton mill, or iron foundry, or dock, or chemical works, he may often look very rough and dirty. But after all, he is flesh and blood like ourselves. Beneath his outward roughness he has a heart and a conscience, a keen sense of justice, and a jealous recollection of his rights as a man and a Briton. He does not want to be patronized and flattered, any more than to be trampled on, scolded, or neglected; but he does like to be

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<sup>20</sup> Bundle of rods containing an ax with protruding blade; a Roman symbol of a magistrate’s power.

dealt with as a brother, in a friendly, kind, and sympathizing way. He will not be driven; he will do nothing for a cold, hard man, however clever he may be. But give him a Christian visitor to his home who really understands that it is the heart and not the coat which makes the man, and that the guinea's worth is in the gold, and not in the stamp upon it. Give him a visitor who will not only talk about Christ, but sit down in his house, and take him by the hand in a Christlike, familiar way. Give him a visitor, and specially a clergyman, who realizes that in Christ's holy religion there is no respect of persons, that rich and poor are "made of one blood," and need one and the same atoning blood, and that there is only one Saviour, and one Fountain for sin, and one heaven, both for employers and employed. Give him a clergyman who can weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice, and feel a tender interest in the cares, and troubles, and births, and marriages, and deaths of the humblest dweller in his parish. Give the working man, I say, a clergyman of that kind, and as a general rule, the working man will come to his church, and not be a communist or an infidel. Such a clergyman will not preach to empty benches.

How little, after all, do most people seem to realize the supreme importance of brotherly love — and the absolute necessity of imitating that blessed Saviour who "went about doing good" to all, if we would prove ourselves His disciples! If ever there was a time when conduct like that of the good Samaritan in the parable was rare, it is the time in which we live. Selfish indifference to the wants of others is a painful characteristic of the age. Search the land in which we live, from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland, and name if you can a single county or town in which the givers to good works are not a small minority — and in which philanthropic and religious agencies are not kept going only and entirely by painful begging and constant importunity. Go where you will, the report is always the same. Hospitals, missions at home and abroad, evangelistic and educational agencies, churches, chapels, and mission halls — all are incessantly checked and hindered by lack of support.

- Where are the Samaritans, we may well ask, in this land of Bibles and Testaments?
- Where are the Christians who live as if we are "all of one blood"?
- Where are the men who love their neighbours, and will help to provide for dying bodies and souls?
- Where are the people always ready and willing to give unasked, and without asking how much others have given?

Millions are annually spent on deer forests, moors, hunting, yachting, racing, gambling, balls, theatres, dressing, pictures, furniture, and recreation. Comparatively little — ridiculously little — is given or done for the cause of Christ. A miserable guinea subscription too often is the whole sum bestowed by some Croesus<sup>21</sup> on the bodies and souls of his fellow-men. The first principles of giving seem lost and forgotten in many quarters. People must be bribed and tempted to contribute by bazaars, as children in badly-managed families are bribed and tempted to be good by sugar-plums! They must not be expected to give unless they get something in return! And all this goes on in a country where people call themselves Christians, and go to church, and glory in ornate ceremonials, and histrionic rituals, and what are called "hearty services," and profess to

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<sup>21</sup> *Croesus: a very wealthy man, alluding to the last king of Lydia (d. 546 BC).*

believe the parable of the Good Samaritan. I fear there will be a sad awakening at the last day.

Where, after all — to come to the root of the matter — where is that brotherly love which used to be the distinguishing mark of the primitive Christians? Where, amidst the din of controversy and furious strife of parties, *where* is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the primary mark of spiritual regeneration? Where is that charity, without which we are no better than “sounding brass and tinkling cymbals”? <sup>1Cor 13.1</sup> Where is the charity which is the “bond of perfectness”? <sup>Col 3.14</sup> Where is that love by which our Lord declared all men should know His disciples, <sup>Joh 13.35</sup> and which St. John said was the distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil? <sup>1Joh 3.10</sup> Where is it, indeed? Read in the newspapers the frightfully violent language of opposing politicians. Mark the hideous bitterness of controversial theologians, both in the press and on the platform. Observe the fiendish delight with which anonymous letter-writers endeavour to wound the feelings of opponents, and then to pour vitriol into the wound. Look at all this ghastly spectacle which any observing eye may see any day in England. And then remember that this is the country in which men are reading the New Testament and professing to follow Christ, and to believe that they are all of “one blood.” Can anything be conceived that is more grossly inconsistent? Can anything be imagined that is more offensive to God? Truly, it is astonishing that such myriads should be so keen about Christian profession and external worship, and yet be so utterly careless about the simplest elements of Christian practice. *Where there is no love, there is no spiritual life.* Without brotherly love — though baptized and communicants — men are dead in trespasses and sins.

I will wind up all I have to say on the point of duty, by reminding my readers of the solemn words which, St. Matthew records in the twenty-fifth chapter of his Gospel, were spoken by our Lord. In the great and dreadful day of judgment, when the Son of man will sit on the throne of His glory, there are some to whom He will say,

“Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and His angels: for I was hungry, and you gave Me no food: I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and you did not take Me in: naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.

Then they will also answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to You? Then He will answer them, saying, Truly I say to you, Inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me” (Mat 25.41-46).

I declare that I know very few passages of Scripture more solemn and heart-searching than this. It is not charged against these unhappy lost souls, that they had committed murder, adultery, or theft; or that they had not been church-goers or communicants. Oh, no! Nothing of the kind. *They had simply done nothing at all.* They had neglected love toward others. They had not tried to lessen the misery, or increase the happiness, of this sin-burdened world. They had selfishly sat still, done no good, and had no eyes to see, or hearts to feel, for their brethren the members of Adam’s great family. And so their end is everlasting punishment! If these words cannot set some people thinking, when they look at the state of the masses in some of our large towns, nothing will.

## Chap. 6. One Blood

And now I will close this paper with three words of friendly advice, which I commend to the attention of all who read it. They are words in season for the days in which we live, and I am sure they are worth remembering.

(a) First and foremost, I charge you never to give up the old doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the whole Bible. Hold it fast, and never let it go. Let nothing tempt you to think that any part of the grand old volume is not inspired, or that any of its narratives, and especially in Genesis, are not to be believed. Once you take up that ground, you will find yourself on an inclined plane. You would do well not to slip into utter infidelity! Faith's difficulties no doubt are great; but the difficulties of scepticism are far greater.

(b) In the next place, I charge you never to give up the old doctrine of the blood of Christ; the complete satisfaction which that atoning blood made for sin; and the impossibility of being saved except by that blood. Let nothing tempt you to believe that it is enough to look at the example of Christ, or to receive the sacrament which Christ commanded to be received — which many nowadays worship like an idol. When you come to your deathbed, you will want something more than an example and a sacrament. Take heed that you are found resting all your weight on Christ's substitution for you on the cross, and His atoning blood, or it would be better if you had never been born.

(c) Last but not least, I charge you never to neglect the duty of brotherly love, and practical, active, sympathetic kindness towards everyone around you, whether high or low, rich or poor. Try daily to do some good on earth, and to leave the world a better world than it was when you were born. If you are really a child of God, strive to be like your Father and your great elder Brother in heaven. For Christ's sake, do not be content to have religion for yourself alone. Love, charity, kindness, and sympathy are the truest proofs that we are real members of Christ, genuine children of God, and rightful heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Of "one blood" we were all born. In "one blood" we all need to be washed. To all partakers of Adam's "one blood" we are bound — if we love life — to be charitable, sympathizing, loving, and kind. The time is short. We are going, going, and will soon be gone to a world where there is no evil to remedy, and no scope for works of mercy. Then for Christ's sake, let us all try to do some good before we die, and to lessen the sorrows of this sin-burdened world.

## CHAPTER 7 – Joh 7.37-38.

### “LET ANY MAN COME.”<sup>22</sup>

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirsts, let him come to Me, and drink. He that believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water.” — Joh 7.37-38.

THE text which heads this paper contains one of those mighty sayings of Christ which deserve to be printed in letters of gold. All the stars in heaven are bright and beautiful; yet even a child can see that “one star differs from another in glory” (1Cor 15.41). All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; but that heart must indeed be cold and dull which does not feel that some verses are peculiarly rich and full. Of such verses, this text is one.

In order to see the whole force and beauty of the text, we must remember the *place*, the *time*, and the *occasion* when it comes in.

- The *place*, then, was Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judaism, and the stronghold of priests and scribes, of Pharisees and Sadducees.
- The *occasion* was the feast of tabernacles, one of those great annual feasts when every Jew, if he could, went up to the temple, according to the law.
- The *time* was “the last day of the feast,” when all the ceremonies were drawing to a close, when the water drawn from the fountain of Siloam had been solemnly poured on the altar, and nothing remained for worshippers but to return home.

At this critical moment, our Lord Jesus Christ “stood” forward on a prominent place, and spoke to the assembled crowds. I do not doubt that He read their hearts. He saw them going away with aching consciences and unsatisfied minds, having gotten nothing from their blind teachers, the Pharisees and Sadducees, and carrying away nothing but a barren recollection of pompous forms. He saw and pitied them, and cried aloud like a herald, “If any man thirsts, let him come to Me, and drink.” — I take leave to doubt that this was all our Lord said on this memorable occasion. I suspect it is only the keynote of His address. But this, I believe, was the first sentence that fell from His lips: “If any man thirsts, let him come to Me.” If anyone wants living, satisfying water, let him come to ME.

Let me remind my readers, in passing, that no prophet or Apostle ever took on himself to use such language as this.

- “Come with us,” said Moses to Hobab (Num 10.29);
- “Come to the waters,” says Isaiah (Isa 45.1);
- “Behold the Lamb,” says John the Baptist (Joh 1.29);
- “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,” says St. Paul (Act 16.31).

But no one except Jesus of Nazareth ever said, “Come to ME.” That fact is very significant. The one who said, “Come to Me,” knew and felt when He said it, that He was the Eternal Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

There are three points in this great saying of our Lord’s to which I now propose to direct your attention.

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<sup>22</sup> The substance of a great part of this paper was preached, as a sermon, under the dome of St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, and in the nave of Chester Cathedral, in the year 1878. It is titled “17. Thirst Relieved” in Ryle’s *Holiness*.

## Chap. 7. Let Any Man Come

- I. You have a *case supposed*: “If any man thirsts.”
- II. You have a *remedy proposed*: “Let him come to Me, and drink.”
- III. You have a *promise held out*: “He that believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water.”

Each of these points concerns all into whose hands this paper may fall. On each of them I have somewhat to say.

**I.** *In the first place, then, you have a case supposed. Our Lord says, “If any man thirsts.”*

Bodily thirst is notoriously the most painful sensation to which the frame of mortal man is liable.

- Read the story of the miserable sufferers in the Black Hole at Calcutta.
- Ask anyone who has travelled over desert plains under a tropical sun.
- Hear what any old soldier will tell you is the chief want of the wounded on a battlefield.
- Remember what the survivors of the crews of ships lost in mid-ocean go through, like the *Cospatrick*.<sup>23</sup>
- Mark the awful words of the rich man in the parable: “Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame,” (Luk 16.24).

The testimony is unvarying. There is nothing so terrible and hard to bear as thirst.

But if bodily thirst is so painful, how much more painful is the thirst of soul! Physical suffering is not the worst part of eternal punishment. It is a light thing, even in this world, compared to the suffering of the mind and inward man.

- To see the value of our souls, and find out they are in danger of eternal ruin;
  - to feel the burden of unforgiven sin, and not to know where to turn for relief;
  - to have a conscience sick and ill at ease, and to be ignorant of the remedy;
  - to discover that we are dying, dying *daily*, and yet are unprepared to meet God;
  - to have some clear view of our own guilt and wickedness, yet to be in utter darkness about absolution;
- *this* is the highest degree of pain — the pain which drinks up soul and spirit, and pierces joints and marrow! And, no doubt, this is the thirst of which our Lord is speaking. It is thirst after pardon, forgiveness, absolution, and peace with God. It is the craving of a really awakened conscience, wanting satisfaction and not knowing where to find it, walking through dry places and unable to get rest.

This is the thirst which the Jews felt, when Peter preached to them on the day of Pentecost. It is written that they were “pricked in their heart, and said, Men and brethren, what will we do?” (Act 2.37).

This is the thirst which the Philippian jailor felt, when he awoke to consciousness of his spiritual danger, and felt the earthquake making the prison reel under his feet. It is written that he “came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, saying, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Act 16.30).

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<sup>23</sup> The *Cospatrick* was a wooden three-masted sailing ship that caught fire 400 miles southwest of the Cape of Good Hope, Nov 1874. Passengers included 125 women and 126 children. Only three of the 472 persons on board survived.

## Chap. 7. Let Any Man Come

This is the thirst which many of the greatest servants of God seem to have felt, when light first broke in on their minds.

- Augustine seeking rest among the Manichean heretics and finding none;
- Luther groping after truth among monks in Erfurt monastery;
- John Bunyan agonizing amidst doubts and conflicts in his Elstow cottage;
- George Whitefield groaning under self-imposed austerities, for lack of clear teaching when he was an undergraduate at Oxford;
- all have left their experience on record. I believe they all knew what our Lord meant when He spoke of “thirst.”

And surely, reader, it is not too much to say that all of us ought to know SOMETHING of this thirst, even if not as much as Augustine, Luther, Bunyan, or Whitefield. *Living* as we do in a dying world — *knowing* as we must, if we confess it, that there is a world beyond the grave, and that after death comes the judgment — *feeling*, as we must in our better moments, what poor, weak, unstable, defective creatures we all are, and how unfit to meet God — *conscious* as we must be in our inmost heart of hearts, that our place in eternity depends on our use of time — we ought to feel and realize something like “thirst” for a sense of peace with the living God. But alas, nothing proves so conclusively the fallen nature of man as the general, common lack of spiritual appetite!

For money, for power, for pleasure, for rank, for honour, for distinction — the vast majority are now intensely thirsting for all these.

To lead forlorn hopes — to dig for gold, to storm a breach, to try to hew a way through thick-ribbed ice to the North Pole — for all these objects there is no lack of adventurers and volunteers. Fierce and unceasing is the competition for these corruptible crowns! But few indeed, by comparison, are those who thirst after eternal life. No wonder that the natural man is called in Scripture “dead,” and “sleeping,” and blind, and deaf. No wonder that he is said to need a second birth and a new creation. There is no surer symptom of mortification in the body than insensibility. There is no more painful sign of an unhealthy state of soul than an utter absence of spiritual thirst. Woe to that man of whom the Saviour can say, “You do not know that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev 3.17).

But who is there among the readers of this paper that feels the burden of sin, and longs for peace with God? Who is there that really feels the words of our Prayer Book Confession: “I have erred and strayed like a lost sheep — there is no health in me — I am a miserable offender”? Who is there that enters into the fulness of our Communion service, and can say with truth, “The remembrance of my sins is grievous, and the burden of them is intolerable”? You are the man who ought to thank God. A sense of sin, guilt, and poverty of soul, is the first stone laid by the Holy Ghost when He builds a spiritual temple. He convinces of sin. Light was the first thing called into being in the material creation. (Gen 1.3). Light about our own state is the first work in the new creation. Thirsting soul, I say again, *you* are the person that ought to thank God. The kingdom of God is near you. It is not when we begin to feel *good*, but when we feel *bad*, that we take the first step towards heaven. Who taught you that you were naked? Where did this inward light come from? Who opened your eyes and made you see and feel? Know this day that flesh and blood has not revealed these things to you, but our Father who is in

heaven. Universities may confer degrees, and schools may impart knowledge of all the sciences, but they cannot make men feel sin. To realize our spiritual need, and feel true spiritual thirst, is the A B C in saving Christianity. It is a great saying of Elihu, in the book of Job, "God looks upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it did not profit me; He will deliver his soul from death, and his life will see the light" (Job 33.27-28). Let him who knows anything of spiritual "thirst" not be ashamed. Rather, let him lift up his head, and begin to hope. Let him pray that God would carry on the work He has begun, and make him feel more.

**II. Pass from the case supposed, to the remedy proposed. "If any man thirsts," says our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, "let him come to Me, and drink."**

There is a grand simplicity about this little sentence which cannot be admired too much. There is not a word in it of which the literal meaning is not plain to a child. Yet, simple as it appears, it is rich in spiritual meaning. Like the Kohinoor diamond, which you may carry between finger and thumb, it is of unspeakable value. It solves that mighty problem which all the philosophers of Greece and Rome could never solve — "How can man have peace with God?" Place it in your memory side by side with six other golden sayings of your Lord:

- "I am the bread of life: he that comes to ME will never hunger; and he that believes in ME will never thirst." (Joh 6.35)
- "I am the Light of the world: he that follows ME will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (Joh 8.12)
- "I am the Door: if any man enters by ME, he will be saved." (Joh 10.9)
- "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man comes to the Father but by ME." (Joh 14.6)
- "Come to ME, all you who labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Mat 11.28)
- "Whoever comes to ME, I will by no means cast out." (Joh 6.37)

Add to these six texts the one before you today. Get the whole seven by heart. Rivet them down in your mind, and never let them go. When your feet touch the cold river, on the bed of sickness and in the hour of death, you will find these seven texts above all price.

For what is the sum and substance of these simple words? It is this: Christ is that Fountain of living water which God has graciously provided for thirsting souls. From Him, as out of the rock struck by Moses, there flows an abundant stream for all who travel through the wilderness of this world. In Him, as our Redeemer and Substitute, crucified for our sins and raised again for our justification, there is an endless supply of all that men can need: *pardon, absolution, mercy, grace, peace, rest, relief, comfort, and hope.*

This rich provision Christ has bought for us at the price of His own precious blood. To open this wondrous fountain, He suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, and bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (1Pet 2.24, 3.18; 2Cor 5.21). And now He is sealed and appointed to be the Reliever of all who are labouring and heavy-laden, and the Giver of living water to all who thirst. It is His office to receive sinners. It is His pleasure to give them pardon, life, and peace. And the words of the text are a proclamation that He makes to all mankind — "If any man thirsts, let him come to Me, and drink."

Let every reader of this paper remember that the efficacy of a medicine depends in great measure on the manner in which it is used. The best prescription of the best physician is useless if we refuse to follow the directions which accompany it. Suffer the word of exhortation, while I offer some caution and advice about the fountain of living water.

(a) He that thirsts and wants relief must *come to Christ Himself*. He must not be content with coming to His Church and His ordinances, or to the assemblies of His people for prayer and praise. He must not stop short even at His holy table, or rest satisfied with privately opening his heart to His ordained ministers. Oh, no! He that is content with only drinking these waters “will thirst again” (Joh 4.13). He must go higher, further, much further than this. He must have personal dealings with Christ Himself: all else in religion is worthless without Him. The King’s palace, the attendant servants, the richly furnished banqueting house, the very banquet itself — all are nothing unless we speak with the King. His hand alone can take the burden off our backs and make us feel free. The hand of man may take the stone from the grave and show the dead; none but Jesus can say to the dead, “Come forth, and live” (Joh 11.41-43). We must deal directly with Christ.

(b) Again: he that thirsts and wants relief from Christ must *actually come to Him*. It is not enough to wish, and talk, and mean, and intend, and resolve, and hope. Hell, that awful reality, is truly said to be paved with good intentions. Thousands are yearly lost in this fashion, and perish miserably just outside the harbour. They live, meaning and intending; and they die, meaning and intending. Oh, no! We must “arise and come!” If the prodigal son had been content with saying, “How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I hope some day to return home,” he might have remained forever among the swine. It was when he AROSE AND CAME to his father that his father ran to meet him, and said, “Bring out the best robe and put it on him... Let us eat and be merry.” (Luk 15.20-23) Like him, we must not only “come to ourselves,” and *think*, but we must *actually come* to the High Priest, to Christ. We must come to the Physician.

(c) Once again: he that thirsts and wants to come to Christ must remember that SIMPLE FAITH IS THE ONE THING REQUIRED. By all means let him come with a penitent, broken, and contrite heart; but let him not dream of resting on that for acceptance. *Faith* is the only hand that can carry the living water to our lips. *Faith* is the hinge on which everything turns in the matter of our justification. It is written again and again, that “whoever believes will not perish, but have eternal life” (Joh 3.15-16). “To him that does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom 4.5). Happy is he that can lay hold on the principle laid down in that matchless hymn,

“Just as I am: without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bid’st me come to Thee —  
O Lamb of God, I come.”

How simple this remedy for thirst appears! But oh, how hard it is to persuade some persons to receive it! Tell them to do some great thing, to mortify their bodies, to go on a pilgrimage, to give all their goods to feed the poor, and thus to merit salvation, and they will try to do as they are bid. Tell them to throw overboard any idea of merit, working, or

doing, and to come to Christ as empty sinners, with nothing in their hands, and like Naaman, they are ready to turn away in disdain (2Kng 5.12). Human nature is always the same in every age. There are still some people just like the Jews, and some like the Greeks. To the Jews Christ crucified is still a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Their succession, at any rate, has never ceased! Never did our Lord say a truer word than that which He spoke to the proud scribes in the Sanhedrin, "You WILL NOT come to Me that you might have life" (Joh 5.40).

But, simple as this remedy for thirst appears, it is the only cure for man's spiritual disease, and the only bridge from earth to heaven. Kings and their subjects, preachers and hearers, masters and servants, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, all must alike drink of this water of life, and drink in the same way. For eighteen centuries men have laboured to find some other medicine for weary consciences; but they have laboured in vain. Thousands, after blistering their hands, and growing grey in hewing out "broken cisterns, which can hold no water" (Jer 2.13), have been obliged to come back at last to the old Fountain, and have confessed in their latest moment that here, in Christ alone, is true peace.

And simple as the old remedy for thirst may appear, it is the root of the inward life of all God's greatest servants in all ages. What have the saints and martyrs been in every era of Church history, but men who came to Christ daily by faith, and found His flesh food indeed and His blood drink indeed? (Joh 6.55). What have they all been but men who lived the life of faith in the Son of God, and drank daily out of the fulness that there is in Him? (Gal 2.20). Here, at all events, the truest and best Christians, who have made a mark on the world, have been of one mind. Holy Fathers and Reformers, holy Anglican divines and Puritans, holy Episcopalians and Nonconformists, have *all* in their best moments borne uniform testimony to the value of the Fountain of life. Separated and contentious as they may sometimes have been in their lives, they have not been divided in their deaths. In their last struggle with the King of Terrors they have simply clung to the cross of Christ, and gloried in nothing but the "precious blood," and the Fountain open for all sin and uncleanness.

How thankful we ought to be that we live in a land where the great remedy for spiritual thirst is known — in a land of open Bibles, preached gospel, and abundant means of grace — in a land where the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is still proclaimed, with more or less fulness, in 20,000 pulpits every Sunday. We do not realize the value of our privileges. The very familiarity of the manna makes us think little of it, just as Israel loathed "the light bread" in the wilderness (Num 21.5). But turn to the pages of a heathen philosopher like the incomparable Plato, and see how he moped after light like one blindfold, and wearied himself to find the door. The humblest peasant who grasps the four "comfortable words" of our beautiful Communion service, in the Prayer Book, knows more of the way of peace with God than the Athenian sage. — Turn to the accounts which trustworthy travellers and missionaries give of the state of the heathen who have never heard the gospel. Read of the human sacrifices in Africa, and the ghastly self-imposed tortures of the devotees of Hindustan, and remember they are all the result of an unquenched "thirst" and a blind and unsatisfied desire to get near to God. And then learn to be thankful that your lot is cast in a land like your own. Alas, I fear God has a controversy with us for our unthankfulness! Cold indeed, and dead, must that heart be which can study the condition of Africa, China, and Hindustan, and not thank God that he lives in Christian England.

**III.** *I turn, in the last place, to the promise held out to all who come to Christ. "He that believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water."*

The subject of Scripture *promises* is a vast and most interesting one. I doubt it receives the attention which it deserves in the present day. "Clarke's Scripture Promises" I suspect, is an old book, which is far less studied than it was in the days of our fathers. Few Christians realize the number, and length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and variety of the precious "wills" and "wills" laid up in the Bible for the special benefit and encouragement of all who will use them.

Yet *promise* lies at the bottom of nearly all the transactions of man with man in the affairs of this life. The vast majority of Adam's children in every civilized country are acting every day on the faith of promises. The labourer on the land works hard from Monday morning to Saturday night, because he believes that at the end of the week he will receive his promised wages. The soldier enlists in the army, and the sailor enters his name on the ship's books in the navy, in the full confidence that those under whom they serve will at some future time give them their promised pay. The humblest maid-servant in a family works on from day to day at her appointed duties, in the belief that her mistress will give her the promised wages. In the business of great cities, among merchants, and bankers, and tradesmen, nothing could be done without incessant faith in promises. Every man of sense knows that cheques, and bills, and promissory notes, are the only means by which the immense majority of mercantile affairs can possibly be carried on. Men of business are compelled to act by faith and not by sight. They believe promises, and expect to be believed themselves. In short, promises, and faith in promises, and actions springing from faith in promises, are the backbone of nine-tenths of all the dealings of man with his fellow-creatures throughout Christendom.

Now, in like manner, promises in the religion of the Bible, are one grand means by which God is pleased to approach the soul of man. The careful student of Scripture cannot fail to observe that God is continually holding out inducements to man to listen to Him, obey Him, and serve Him — and undertaking to do great things, if man will only attend and believe. In short, as St. Peter says, "There are given to us exceedingly great and precious promises" (2Pet 1.4). He who has mercifully caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning, has shown His perfect knowledge of human nature by spreading over the Book a perfect wealth of promises, suitable to every kind of experience and every condition of life. He seems to say, "Would you know what I undertake to do for you? Do you want to hear my terms? Take up the Bible and read."

But there is one grand difference between the promises of Adam's children and the promises of God, which should never be forgotten. The promises of man are not sure to be fulfilled. With the best wishes and intentions, he cannot always keep his word. Disease and death may step in like an armed man, and take away from this world him that promises. War, or pestilence, or famine, or failure of crops, or hurricanes, may strip him of his property, and make it impossible for him to fulfil his engagements.

The promises of *God*, on the contrary, are *certain* to be kept. He is Almighty: nothing can prevent His doing what He has said. He never changes: He is always "of one mind;" and with Him there is "no variableness or shadow of turning" (Job 23.13; Jas. 1.17). He will always keep His word. There is one thing which God cannot do, as a little girl once told her teacher (to her surprise): "It is impossible for God to lie" (Heb 6.18). The most unlikely

and improbable things, once God has said He will do them, have always come to pass. The destruction of the old world by a flood, and the preservation of Noah in the Ark, the birth of Isaac, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the raising of David to the throne of Saul, the miraculous birth of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the scattering of the Jews all over the earth, and their continued preservation as a distinct people — who could imagine events more *unlikely* and *improbable* than these? Yet God said they should be, and in due time they all came to pass. In short, with God it is just as easy to do a thing as to say it. Whatever He promises, He is certain to perform.

Concerning the *variety* and *riches* of Scripture promises, far more might be said than it is possible to say in a short paper like this. Their name is legion. The subject is almost inexhaustible. There is hardly a step in man's life, from childhood to old age — hardly any position in which man can be placed — for which the Bible has not held out encouragement to everyone who desires to do right in the sight of God. There are “wills” and “wills” in God's treasury *for every condition*.

About God's infinite mercy and compassion — about His readiness to receive all who repent and believe — about His willingness to *forgive*, *pardon*, and *absolve* the chief of sinners — about His power to change hearts and alter our corrupt nature — about the encouragements to pray, and hear the gospel, and draw near to the throne of grace — about *strength* for duty,

- *comfort* in trouble,
- *guidance* in perplexity,
- *help* in sickness,
- *consolation* in death,
- *support* under bereavement,
- *happiness* beyond the grave,
- *reward* in glory

— about all these things, there is an abundant supply of promises in the Word. No one can form an idea of its abundance unless he carefully searches the Scriptures, keeping the subject steadily in view.

If anyone doubts it, I can only say, “Come and see.” Like the Queen of Sheba at Solomon's court, you will soon say, “The half was not told me” (1Kgs 10.7).

The promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, which heads this paper, is somewhat peculiar. It is singularly rich in encouragement to all who feel spiritual thirst, and come to Him for relief, and therefore it deserves peculiar attention. Most of our Lord's promises refer specially to the benefit of the person to whom they are addressed. The promise before us takes a far wider range: it seems to refer to many others beside those to whom He spoke. For what does He say? “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said” (and everywhere teaches), “out of his belly will flow rivers of living water. But this spoke He of the Spirit, which they that believe in Him should receive.” These words are undoubtedly *figurative* — figurative like the earlier words of the sentence — figurative like “thirst” and “drinking.” But all the figures of Scripture contain great truths; and I will now try to show what the figure before us was meant to convey.

(1) For one thing, then, I believe our Lord meant that he who comes to Him by faith will receive an abundant supply of everything that he can desire for the relief of his own soul's

wants. The Spirit will convey to him such an abiding sense of pardon, peace, and hope, that in his inward man it will be like a well-spring, never dry. He will feel so satisfied with “the things of Christ,” which the Spirit will show him (Joh 16.15), that he will rest from spiritual anxiety about death, judgment, and eternity. He may have his seasons of darkness and doubt, through his own infirmities or the temptations of the devil. But, speaking generally, once he has come to Christ by faith, he will find in his heart of hearts an unfailing fountain of consolation. Let us understand, this is the first thing which the promise before us contains. “Only come to Me, poor anxious soul,” our Lord seems to say — “Only come to Me, and your spiritual anxiety will be relieved. I will place in your heart, by the power of the Holy Spirit, such a sense of pardon and peace, through my atonement and intercession, that you will never completely thirst again. You may have your doubts, and fears, and conflicts, while you are in the body. But once you have come to Me, and taken Me for your Saviour, you will never feel yourself entirely hopeless. The condition of your inward man will be so thoroughly changed, that you will feel as if there were within you an ever-flowing spring of water.”

What will we say to these things? I declare my own belief, that whenever a man or woman really comes to Christ by faith, he finds this promise fulfilled. He may possibly be weak in grace, and have many misgivings about his own condition. He may possibly not dare to say that he is converted, justified, sanctified, and fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. But for all that, I am bold to say, the humblest and feeblest believer in Christ has something within him which he would not part with, though he may not yet fully understand it. And what is that “*something*”? It is just that “river of living water” which begins to run in the heart of every child of Adam as soon as he comes to Christ and drinks. In this sense, I believe this wonderful promise of Christ is always fulfilled.

(2) But is this all that is contained in the promise which heads this paper? By no means. There yet remains much behind; there is more to follow. I believe our Lord meant us to understand that whoever who comes to Him by faith will not only have an abundant supply of everything which he needs for his own soul, but will also become a source of blessing to the souls of others. The Spirit who dwells in him will make him a fountain of good to his fellow-men, so that at the last day it will be found that “rivers of living water” have flowed from him.

This is a most important part of our Lord’s promise, and it opens up a subject which is seldom realized and grasped by many Christians. But it is one of deep interest, and deserves far more attention than it receives. I believe it to be a truth of God. I believe that just as “no man lives to himself” (Rom 14.7), so also no man is converted only for himself; and that in God’s wonderful providence, the conversion of one man or woman always leads on to the conversion of others. I do not say for a moment that all believers know it. I think it far more likely that many live and die in the faith, who are not aware that they have done good to any soul. But I believe the resurrection morning and the judgment day, when the secret history of all Christians is revealed, will prove that the full meaning of the promise before us has never failed. I doubt if there will be a believer who will not have been “river of living water” to someone or other — a channel through whom the Spirit has conveyed saving grace. Even the penitent thief, short as his time was after he repented, has been a source of blessing to thousands of souls!

(a) Some believers are “rivers of living water” while they live. Their words, their lifestyle,

their preaching, their teaching, are all means by which the water of life has flowed into the hearts of their fellow-men. Such, for example, were the Apostles, who wrote no Epistles and only preached the word. Such were Luther, Whitefield, Wesley, Berridge, Rowlands, and thousands of others of whom I cannot particularly speak just now.

(b) Some believers are “rivers of living water” when they die. Their courage in facing the King of Terrors, their boldness in the most painful sufferings, their unswerving faithfulness to Christ’s truth even at the stake, their manifest peace on the edge of the grave — all this has set thousands thinking, and led hundreds to repent and believe. Such, for example, were the primitive martyrs whom the Roman emperors persecuted. Such were John Huss, and Jerome of Prague. Such were Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, and the noble army of Marian martyrs. The work that they did at their deaths, like Samson, was far greater than the work done in their lives.

(c) Some believers are “rivers of living water” long after they die. They do good by their books and writings in every part of the world, long after the hands which held the pen are mouldering in the dust. Such men were Bunyan, Baxter, Owen, George Herbert, and Robert McCheyne. These blessed servants of God probably do more good by their books at this moment, than they did by their tongues when they were alive. “Being dead, they yet speak” (Heb 11.4).

(d) Finally, there are some believers who are “rivers of living water” by the beauty of their daily conduct and behaviour. There are many quiet, gentle, consistent Christians, who make no show and no noise in the world, and yet insensibly exercise a deep influence for good on all around them. They “win without the Word” (1Pet 3.1). Their love, their kindness, their sweet temper, their patience, their unselfishness, speak silently on a wide circle, and sow seeds of thought and self-inquiry in many minds. Here was a fine testimony by an old lady who died in great peace, saying that under God she owed her salvation to Mr. Whitefield: “It was not any sermon that he preached; it was not anything that he ever said to me. It was the beautiful consistency and kindness of his daily life in the house where he was staying when I was a little girl. I said to myself, if I ever have any religion, Mr. Whitefield’s God will be *my* God.”

I charge every reader of this paper to lay hold on this view of our Lord’s promise, and never forget it. Do not think not for a moment that your own soul is the only soul that will be saved if you come to Christ by faith, and *follow* Him. Think of the blessedness of being a “river of living water” to others. Who can tell if you may not be the means of bringing many others to Christ? Live, act, speak, pray, and work, keeping this continually in view. I knew a family consisting of a father, mother, and ten children, in which true religion began with one of the daughters; and when it began, she stood alone — all the rest of the family were in the world. And yet, before she died, she saw both her parents and all her brothers and sisters converted to God, and all this, humanly speaking, began from her influence! Surely in the face of this, we need not doubt that a believer may be to others a “river of living water.” Conversions may not be in your time, and you may die without seeing them. But never doubt that *conversion* generally leads to *conversions*, and that few go to heaven alone. When Grimshaw of Haworth died, the apostle of the north, he left his son graceless and godless. Afterwards, the son was converted, never having forgotten his father’s advice and example. And his last words were, “What will my old father say when he sees me in heaven?” Let us take courage, and *hope on*, believing Christ’s promise.

(1) And now, before we part, let me ask everyone who reads this paper a plain question. Do you know anything of spiritual thirst? Have you ever felt anything of genuine deep concern about your soul? — I fear that many know nothing about it. I have learned, by the painful experience over a third of a century, that people may go on for years attending God's house, and yet never feel their sins, or desire to be saved. The cares of this world, the love of pleasure, the "lust of other things," choke the good seed every Sunday, and make it unfruitful. They come to church with hearts as cold as the stone pavement on which they walk. They go away as thoughtless and unmoved as the old marble busts which look down on them from the monuments on the walls. Well, it may be so; yet I do not despair of anyone, so long as he is alive.

That grand old bell in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, which has struck the hours for so many years, is seldom heard by many citizens during the business hours of the day. The roar and din of traffic in the streets have a strange power to deaden its sound, and prevent men hearing it. But when the daily work is over, and desks are locked, and doors are closed, and books are put away, and quiet reigns in the great city, the case is altered. As the old bell strikes eleven, and twelve, and one, and two, and three at night, thousands hear it who never heard it during the day.

And so I hope it will be with many, in the matter of their souls. Now in the plenitude of health and strength, in the hurry and whirl of business, I fear the voice of your conscience is often stifled, and you cannot hear it. But the day may come when the great bell of conscience will make itself heard, whether you like it or not. The time may come when, laid aside in quietness, and obliged by illness to sit still, you may be forced to look within, and consider your soul's concerns. And then, when the great bell of awakened conscience is sounding in your ears, I trust that many a man who reads this paper may hear the voice of God and repent, may learn to thirst, and learn to come to Christ for relief. Yes! I pray God that you may yet be taught to feel, before it is too late!

(2) But do you feel anything at this very moment? Is your conscience awake and working? Are you sensible of spiritual thirst, and longing for relief? Then hear the invitation which I bring you in my Master's name this day: "If any man," no matter who he may be — if any man, high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned — "if any man thirsts, let him come to Christ and drink." Hear and accept that invitation without delay. Wait for nothing. Wait for nobody. Who can tell, if you wait for "a convenient season," that it may not be too late! The hand of a living Redeemer is now held out from heaven; but it may be withdrawn. The Fountain is open now; but it may soon be closed forever. "If any man thirsts, let him come and drink" *without delay*. Though you have been a great sinner, and have resisted warnings, counsel, and sermons — *yet come*. Though you have sinned against light and knowledge, against a father's advice, and a mother's tears, though you have lived for years without a Sabbath, and without prayer — *yet come*. Do not say that you do not know how to come, that you do not understand what it means to believe, that you must wait for more light. Will a tired man say that he is too tired to lie down? Or a drowning man that he does not know how to lay hold on the hand stretched out to help him? Or the shipwrecked sailor, with a life-boat alongside the stranded hulk, that he does not know how to jump in? Oh, cast away these vain excuses! Arise, and come! The door is not shut. The fountain is not yet closed. The Lord Jesus invites you. It is enough that you feel thirst, and desire to be saved. *Come* — come to Christ without delay. Who ever came to the fountain for sin, and found it dry? Who ever went away unsatisfied?

(3) But have you come to Christ already and found relief? Then *come nearer, nearer still*. The closer your communion with Christ, the more comfort you will feel. The more you daily live by the side of the Fountain, the more you will feel in yourself “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (Joh 4.14) You will not only be blessed yourself, but you will be a source of blessing to others.

In this evil world, you may not perhaps feel all the sensible comfort you could desire. But remember that you cannot have two heavens. Perfect happiness is yet to come. The devil is not yet bound. There is “a good time coming” for all who feel their sins and come to Christ, and commit their thirsting souls to His keeping. When He comes again, they will be completely satisfied.

**NOTE**

THERE is a passage in an old writer which throws so much light on some points mentioned in this paper, that I make no excuse for giving it to the reader in its entirety. It comes from a work which is little known and less read. It has done me good, and I think it may do good to others.

“When a man is awakened, and brought to what all must be brought to (or to worse) — ‘What must I do to be saved?’ (Act 16.30, 31), we have the apostolic answer to it: ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, and your house.’ This answer is so old that, with many, it seems out of date. But it is still and will ever be fresh, and new, and savoury; and it is the only resolution of this grand case of conscience, as long as conscience and the world lasts. No wit or art of man will ever find a crack or flaw in it, or devise another or better answer; nor can anything but this alone rightly heal the wound of an awakened conscience.

“Let us set this man to seek resolution and relief in this case, from some masters in our Israel. According to their principles, they must say to him, ‘Repent, and mourn for your known sins, and leave them and loath them; and God will have mercy on you.’ ‘Alas!’ (says the poor man), ‘my heart is hard, and I cannot repent rightly: indeed I find my heart more hard and vile than when I was secure in sin.’ If you speak to this man of qualifications for Christ, he knows nothing of them; if you speak of sincere obedience, his answer is native and ready: ‘Obedience is the work of a living man, and sincerity is only in a renewed soul.’ Therefore, *sincere* obedience is as impossible to a dead unrenewed sinner as *perfect* obedience is. Why should the right answer not be given to the awakened sinner: ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved?’ Tell him who Christ is, what He has done and suffered to obtain eternal redemption for sinners, and that it is according to the will of God His Father. Give him a plain downright narrative of the Gospel salvation wrought by the Son of God; tell him the history and mystery of the Gospel plainly. It may be that the Holy Ghost will work faith thereby, as He did in those first fruits of the Gentiles. (Act 10.44)

“If he asks what warrant he has to believe in Jesus Christ, tell him that he has an utter and indispensable necessity for it — for *without* believing on Him, he must perish eternally. Tell him that he has God’s gracious offer of Christ and all His redemption, with a promise that upon accepting the offer by faith, Christ and salvation with Him is his. Tell him that he has God’s express commandment to believe in Christ’s name (1Joh 3.23); and that he should be conscientious to obey *that* command, as well as *any* in the moral law. Tell him of Christ’s ability and good-will to save; that no man was ever rejected by Him who cast himself upon Him; that desperate cases are the glorious triumphs of His art of saving. Tell him that there is no midst (or medium) between faith and unbelief; that there is no excuse for neglecting the one and continuing in the other; that believing on the Lord Jesus for salvation is more pleasing to God than all obedience to His law; and that, of all sins, unbelief is the most provoking to God, and

## Chap. 7. Let Any Man Come

the most damning to man. Against the greatness of his sins, the curse of the law, and the severity of God as Judge, there is no relief to be held out to him except the free and boundless grace of God in the merit of Christ's satisfaction, by the sacrifice of Himself.

"If he asks, What does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ? I find no such question in the Word. Rather, everyone in some way understood the notion of it: the Jews who did not believe in Him (Joh 6.28-30), nor the chief priests and Pharisees (Joh 7.48). The blind man (Joh 9.35), when Christ asked him, Do you believe in the Son of God? answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" Immediately, when Christ told him (verse 37), he does not ask, "What does it mean to believe in Him?" Rather, "Lord, I believe;" and he worshipped Him: and so he both professed and exercised faith in Him. So too the father of the lunatic (Mar 9.23, 24), and the eunuch (Act 8.37). They all, both Christ's enemies and His disciples, knew that faith in Him was believing that the Man, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Son of God, the Messiah, and Saviour of the world, so as to receive and look for salvation in His name. (Act 4.12) This was the common report published by Christ, and His apostles, and His disciples, and known by all who heard it.

"If he still asks what he is to believe, tell him that he is not called to believe that he is in Christ, that his sins are pardoned, and that he is a justified man; but that he is to believe God's record concerning Christ. (1Joh 5.10-12) And this record is that God gives (that is, He offers) us eternal Life in His Son Jesus Christ; and that all who believe this report with their heart, and rest their souls on these glad tidings, will be saved. (Rom 10.9-11) And thus he is to *believe*, that he may be *justified*. (Gal 2.16)

"If he still says that believing this is hard, this is a good doubt, but easily resolved. It tells of a man deeply humbled. Anybody may see his own impotence to *obey* the law of God fully; but few find the difficulty of *believing*. For his relief and resolution, ask him what he finds that makes believing so difficult for him? Is it unwillingness to be justified and saved? Is it unwillingness to be saved by Jesus Christ, to the praise of God's grace in Christ — thus voiding all boasting in himself? This he will surely deny. Is it a distrust of the truth of the Gospel record? This he dares not admit. Is it doubt of Christ's ability or good-will to save? This would contradict the testimony of God in the Gospel. Is it because he doubts having an interest in Christ and His redemption? Tell him that believing on Christ *makes* the interest in Him.

"If he says that he cannot believe in Jesus Christ because of the difficulty of exercising this faith, and that a Divine power is needed to draw it out, which he does not find, then you must tell him that believing in Jesus Christ is not *work*, but *resting* on Jesus Christ. You must tell him that this pretence is as unreasonable as if a man, wearied with a journey and not able to go one step further, should argue, 'I am so tired, that I am not able to lie down,' when indeed he can neither stand nor go. The poor wearied sinner can never believe in Jesus Christ till he finds that he can do nothing for himself; and in his first believing, he applies to Christ always for salvation, as a man hopeless and helpless in himself. And by such reasonings with him from the Gospel, the Lord will (as He has often done) convey faith, and joy, and peace by believing."

— *Robert Traill's Works*, 1696. Vol. I, 266-269.

## CHAPTER 8 – 1Joh 5.4-5.

### VICTORY <sup>24</sup>

“For whoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” 1Joh 5.4-5.

It ought to be our practice, if we have any religion, to examine the state of our souls from time to time, and to find out whether we are “right in the sight of God” (Act 8.21).

Are we true Christians? Are we likely to go to heaven when we die? Are we born again — born of the Spirit — born of God? These are searching questions, which imperatively demand an answer; and the text which heads this paper will help us to give that answer. If we are born of God, we will have one great mark of character, we will “overcome the world.”

In opening up this subject, there are three points to which I propose to invite attention in this paper.

- I. In the first place, let us consider the name by which St. John describes a true Christian. He calls him six times over, in his First Epistle, a man “born of God,” and once, “begotten of God.”
- II. In the second place, let us consider the special mark which St. John supplies of a man born of God. He says that he “overcomes the world.”
- III. In the last place, let us consider the secret of the true Christian’s victory over the world. He says, “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”

Let me clear the way by expressing an earnest hope that no reader will turn away from the subject before us, under the idea that it is a controversial one. I doubt whether any doctrine of the Bible has suffered so much from impatient dislike of controversy as that which is contained in the phrase, “Born of God.” Yet that phrase contains a great foundation verity of Christianity, which can never be neglected without damage. Deep down, below strifes and contentions about the effect of baptism, and the meaning of liturgical services, there lies in those three words one of the primary rocks of the everlasting gospel — even the inward work of the Holy Ghost on the soul of man. The atoning work of Christ FOR us, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost WITHIN US, are the two cornerstones of saving religion. Surely a truth which the last writer of the New Testament brings forward no less than seven times in the five chapters of one Epistle — a truth which he binds up seven times with some of the distinguishing characteristics of the Christian man — such a truth should not be disliked or timidly passed by. Surely it may be handled profitably without entering on debatable ground. I will attempt to so handle it in this paper.

**I.** *First and foremost, I ask my readers to notice the name by which St. John describes a true Christian. Here, and in five other places, he speaks of him as one “born of God.”*

Let us briefly analyze this rich and wonderful expression. The natural birth of any child of man, in the humblest rank of life, is an important event. It is the bringing into being of

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<sup>24</sup> The substance of this paper was originally preached as a sermon in St. Mary’s Church, Cambridge, when I was select preacher, in 1879.

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a creature who will outlive sun, moon, stars, and earth, and may one day develop a character which will shake the world. How much more important must spiritual birth be! How much must lie beneath that figurative phrase, “Born of God!”

(a) To be “born of God” is to be the SUBJECT OF AN INWARD CHANGE of heart, so complete, that it is like passing into a new existence. It is the introduction into the human soul of a seed from heaven, a *new principle*, a Divine nature, a new will. Certainly it is no outward bodily alteration; but it is no less certain that it is an entire alteration of the inward man. It adds no new faculties to our minds; but it gives an entirely new bent and bias to our old ones. The tastes and opinions of one “born of God,” his views of sin, of the world, of the Bible, of God, and of Christ, are so thoroughly new, that he is to all intents and purposes what St. Paul calls “a new creature.” In fact, as the Church Catechism truly says, it is “a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness.”

(b) To be “born of God” is a change which is THE PECULIAR GIFT OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST to all His believing people. It is He who plants in their hearts the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba Father, and makes them members of His mystical body, and sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty (Rom 8.15). It is written: “He quickens whom He will.” “As the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself” (Joh 5.21-26). In short, as the first chapter of St. John teaches, so it will be as long as the world stands: “To as many as received Him He gave power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe in His name; who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (Joh 1.12-13).

(c) To be “born of God” is a change which unquestionably is VERY MYSTERIOUS. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself tells us that in well-known words: “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from, and where it goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (Joh 3.8). But we must all confess that there are a thousand things in the natural world around us which we cannot explain, and yet believe. We cannot explain how our wills act daily on our members, and make them move or rest at our discretion; yet no one ever thinks of disputing the fact. The wisest philosopher cannot tell us the origin of physical life. What right, then, do we have to complain because we cannot comprehend the beginning of spiritual life in someone who is “born of God”?

(d) But to be “born of God” is a change which WILL ALWAYS BE SEEN AND FELT. I do not say that the one who is the subject of it will invariably understand his own feelings. On the contrary, those feelings are often a cause of much anxiety, conflict, and inward strife. Nor do I say that a person “born of God” will always become at once an established Christian, a Christian in whose life and ways nothing weak and defective can be observed by others. But I do say this: the Holy Ghost never works in a person’s soul without producing some perceptible results in character and conduct. The true grace of God is like light and fire: it cannot be hidden; it is never idle; it never sleeps. I can find no such thing as “dormant” grace in Scripture. It is written, “Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1Joh 3.9).

(e) To crown all this, to be born of God is a thing which is of ABSOLUTE NECESSITY to our salvation. Without it, we can neither know God rightly and serve Him acceptably in the life that now is, nor dwell with God comfortably in the life that is to come. There are two

things which are indispensably needful before any child of Adam can be saved. One is the forgiveness of his sins through the blood of Christ; the other is the renewal of his heart by the Spirit of Christ. Without the forgiveness, we have no title to heaven; without the renewed heart, we could not enjoy heaven. These two things are never separate. Every forgiven man is also a renewed man, and every renewed man is also a forgiven man. There are two standing maxims of the gospel which should never be forgotten: one is, "He that does not believe the Son will not see life," (Joh 3.36); the other is, "If any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His," (Rom 8.9). Quaint, but most true, is the old saying: "Once born, die twice, and die forever; twice born, never die, and live forever." Without a natural birth, we would never have lived and moved on earth: without a spiritual birth we will never live and dwell in heaven. It is written, "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Joh 3.3).

And now, before I pass away from the name which St. John gives in this text to the true Christian, let us not forget to ask ourselves what we know experientially about being "born of God." Let us search and try our hearts with honest self-examination, and seek to find out whether there is any real work of the Holy Ghost in our inward man. Far be it from me to encourage the slightest approach to hypocrisy, self-conceit, and fanaticism. Nor do I want anyone to look for that angelic perfection in himself on earth, which will only be found in heaven. All I say is, let us never be content with the "outward and visible signs" of Christianity, unless we also know something of "inward and spiritual grace." All I ask, and I think I have a right to ask, is that we should often take this First Epistle of St. John in our hands, and try to find out by its light whether we are "born of God."

Let me add one more thing which I dare not leave unsaid. Let us never be ashamed, in a day of abounding heresy, to contend earnestly for the Godhead and personality of the Holy Ghost, and the reality of His work on souls. Just as we clasp to our hearts the doctrine of the Trinity, and the proper Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, as great foundation verities of the gospel, so let us grasp tightly the truth about God the Holy Ghost. Let us ever give Him the place and dignity in our religion, which Scripture assigns to Him. Wherever in the providence of God we may be called to worship, let our first inquiry be, "Where is the Lamb?" and our second, "Where is the Holy Ghost?" We know there have been many martyrs for Jesus Christ and the true doctrine of justification. "A day may come," said a remarkable saint, "when there will need to be martyrs for the Holy Ghost, and His work within the soul." Happy is the one who can say with heart as well as lips, the familiar words of our venerable Church Catechism — "I believe in God the Father, who has made me and all the world: I believe in God the Son, who has redeemed me and all mankind: I believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies me, and all the elect people of God."

**II.** *The second thing I will now ask my readers to notice in my text, is the special mark which St. John supplies about the man who is a true Christian. He says, "Whoever is born of God, overcomes the world."*

In short, to use the words of that holy man Bishop Thomas Wilson (1663-1755), of Sodor and Man, the Apostle teaches that "the only certain proof of regeneration is victory."

We are all apt to flatter ourselves, that if we are duly enrolled members of that great ecclesiastical corporation, the Church of England, our souls cannot be in much danger.

We secretly stifle the voice of conscience with the comfortable thought, “I am a Churchman; why should I be afraid?”

Yet common sense and a little reflection might remind us that there are no privileges without corresponding responsibilities. Before we repose in self-satisfied confidence on our Church membership, we would do well to ask ourselves whether we bear in our characters the marks of living membership of Christ’s mystical body. Do we know anything of renouncing the devil and all his works, and crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts? And to bring this matter to a point, as it is set before us in our text, do we know anything of “overcoming the world”?

Of the three great spiritual enemies of man ([the world, the flesh, and the devil](#)), it is hard to say which does most harm to the soul. The last day alone will settle that point. But I venture boldly to say that at no former period has “the world” been so dangerous, and so successful in injuring Christ’s Church, as it is just now. Every age is said to have its own peculiar epidemic disease. I suspect that “worldliness” is the peculiar plague of Christendom in our own era. That same love of the world’s good things and good opinion — that same dread of the world’s opposition and blame which proved so fatal to Judas Iscariot, Demas, and many more in the beginning of the gospel — each is just as powerful in the nineteenth century as it was in the first, and a hundred times more. Even in days of persecution under heathen emperors, these spiritual enemies slew their thousands; and in days of ease, and luxury, and free thought, like our own, they slay their tens of thousands. The subtle influence of the world, nowadays, seems to infect the very air we breathe. It creeps into families like an angel of light, and leads myriads captive, who never know that they are slaves. The enormous increase of English wealth, and consequent power of self-indulgence, and the immense growth of a passionate taste for recreations and amusements of all kinds; the startling rise and progress of a so-called liberality of opinion which refuses to say anybody is wrong whatever he does, and loudly asserts that, as in the days of the Judges, everyone should think and do what is right in his own eyes and never be checked — all these strange phenomena of our age give the world an amazing additional power, and make it doubly needful for Christ’s ministers to cry aloud, “Beware of the world!”

In the face of this aggravated danger, we must never forget that the word of the living God does not change.

- “Do not love the world,” (1Joh 2.15).
- “Do not be conformed to this world,” (Rom 12.2).
- “The friendship of the world is enmity with God,” (Jas 4.4).

These mighty sayings of God’s statute-book remain still unrepealed. The true Christian strives daily to obey them, and proves the vitality of his religion by his obedience. It is as true now as it was eighteen hundred years ago, that the man “born of God” will be a man who, more or less, resists and overcomes the world. Such a man does not “overcome” by retiring into a corner, and becoming a monk or a hermit, but by boldly meeting his foes and conquering them. He does not refuse to fill his place in society, and do his duty in that position to which God has called him. But though “in” the world, he is not “of” the world. He uses it, but does not abuse it. He knows when to say No, when to refuse compliance, when to halt, when to say, “I have gone up to here, but I go no further.” He is not wholly absorbed either in the business or the pleasures of life, as if they were the sum total of

existence. Even in innocent things, he keeps the rein on his tastes and inclinations, and does not let them run away with him. He does not live as if life was made up of recreation, or money-getting, or politics, or scientific pursuits, and as if there were no life to come. Everywhere, and in every condition, in public and in private, in business or in amusements, he carries himself like a “citizen of a better country,” and as one who is not entirely dependent on temporal things. Like the noble Roman ambassador before Pyrrhus, he is equally unmoved by the elephant or by the gold.<sup>25</sup> You will neither bribe him, nor frighten him, nor allure him into neglecting his soul. This is one way in which the true Christian proves the reality of his Christianity. This is the way in which the man “born of God” overcomes the world.

I am fully aware that, at first sight, the things I have just said may appear “hard sayings.” The standard of true Christianity which I have just raised may seem extravagant, and extreme, and unattainable in this life. I grant most freely that to “overcome” in the fashion I have described, needs a constant fight and struggle, and that all such fighting is naturally unpleasant to flesh and blood. It is disagreeable to find ourselves standing alone every now and then, and running counter to the opinions of all around us. We do not like to appear narrow-minded, and exclusive, and uncharitable, and ungenial, and ill-natured, and out of harmony with our fellows. We naturally love ease and popularity, and hate collisions in religion. And if we hear that we cannot be true Christians without all this fighting and warring, we are tempted to say to ourselves, “I will give it up in despair.” I speak from bitter experience. I have known and felt all this myself.

To all who are tempted in this way — and none, I believe, are so tempted as the young — to all who are disposed to shrink back from any effort to overcome the world, as an impossible thing, I offer a few words of friendly exhortation. Before you turn your back on the enemy, and openly confess that he is too strong for you — before you bow down to the strong man, and let him place his foot on your neck — let me put you in remembrance of some things which you are perhaps forgetting.

Is not the world, then, one of the three great foes which you were solemnly bound at baptism to resist? Was it for nothing that these words were read, “We sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that from now on he will not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and to manfully fight under His banner against sin, THE WORLD, and the devil, and to continue as Christ’s soldier and servant to his life’s end”? And has it really come to this, that you mean to renounce your obligations, and retire from your Master’s service, to desert your colours, to slink away to the rear, and refuse to fight?

Again, is it not true that myriads of men and women, no stronger than yourself, have fought this battle with the world, and won it? Think of the mighty hosts of Christian soldiers who have walked in the narrow way in the last eighteen centuries, and proved more than conquerors. The same Divine Captain, the same armour, the same helps and aids by which they overcame, are ready for you. Surely if they got the victory, you may hope to do the same.

Again, is it not true that this fight with the world is a thing of absolute necessity? Does our

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<sup>25</sup> Referring to Plutarch’s *Lives*, “*Life of Pyrrhus*.” A Roman ambassador, Fabricius, came to negotiate with king Pyrrhus about the prisoners he had taken. Pyrrhus tried to induce him to accept gold, but Fabricius rejected it. The next day he tried to frighten him with an elephant. But Fabricius calmly turned and said with a smile to Pyrrhus: “Your gold made no impression on me yesterday, neither does your beast today.”

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Master not say, “Whoever does not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple”? (Luk 14.27). “I have not come to send peace on earth, but a sword” (Mat 10.34). Here, at any rate, we cannot remain neutral and sit still. Such a line of conduct may be possible in the strife of nations, but it is utterly impossible in that conflict which concerns the soul. The boasted policy of non-interference, the masterly inactivity which pleases so many statesmen, the plan of keeping quiet and letting things alone — all this will never do in the Christian warfare. To be at peace with the world, the flesh, and the devil, is to be at enmity with God, and in the broad way that leads to destruction. We have no choice or option. The promises to the Seven Churches in Revelation are only “to him who overcomes.” We must fight or be lost. We must conquer or die eternally. We must put on the whole armour of God. “He who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one” (Eph 6.11; Luk 22.36).

Surely, in the face of such considerations as these, I may well charge and entreat all who are inclined to make peace with the world and not resist it, to awake to a sense of their danger. Awake and cast aside the chains which indolence or love of popularity are gradually weaving around you. Awake before it is too late — before repeated worldly acts have formed habits, and habits have crystallized into character, and you have become a helpless slave. When men on every side are volunteering for war, and ready to go forth to battle for a *corruptible* crown — stand up and resolve to do it for one that is *incorruptible*. The world is not so strong an enemy as you think, if you will only meet it boldly, and use the right weapons. The fancied difficulties will vanish, or melt away like snow as you approach them. The lions you now dread will prove chained. Hundreds could tell you that they served the world for years, and found at last that its rewards were hollow and unreal, and its so-called good things could neither satisfy nor save. Cardinal Wolsey’s dying words are the only language of ten thousand hearts at this minute —

“Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye:  
I feel my heart is opened.  
Had I but serv’d my God with half the zeal  
I serv’d my king, He would not, in mine age,  
Have left me naked to mine enemies.”

But who, on the other hand, ever fought God’s battle manfully against the world, and failed to find a rich reward? No doubt the experience of Christian pilgrims is varied. Not all have “an abundant entrance” into the kingdom (2Pet 1.11), and some are “saved so as by fire” (1Cor 3.15). But none, I am persuaded, have such joy and peace in believing, and travel to the celestial city with such light hearts, as those who come out boldly, and overcome the love and fear of the world. The King of kings delights to honour such men while they live; and when they die, their testimony is that of old Bunyan’s hero, Valiant — “I am going to my Father’s house; and though I have gotten here with great difficulty, yet now I do not repent of all the troubles I have been at to arrive where I am.”

**III.** *The third and last thing which I will ask you to notice in this text is the secret of the true Christian’s victory over the world.*

St. John reveals that secret to us twice over, as if he would emphasize his meaning, and make it unmistakable: “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our FAITH. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he who BELIEVES that Jesus is the Son of God?” [1Joh 5.5](#)

Simplicity is a distinguishing characteristic of many of God's handiworks. "How beautifully simple!" has often been the philosopher's cry, on finding out some great secret of nature. Simplicity is the striking feature of the principle by which the man "born of God" overcomes the world. Perhaps he hardly understands it himself. But he is what he is, and does what he does, acts as he acts, behaves as he behaves, for one simple reason: he BELIEVES. He realizes the existence of unseen objects, compared to which the frowns or smiles, the favour or blame of the world, are trifles light as air. God, and heaven, and judgment, and eternity, are not "words and names" with him, but vast and substantial realities; and faith makes everything else look shadowy and unreal.

But towering far above all other objects, he sees by faith an unseen Saviour, who loved him, gave Himself for him, paid his debt to God with His own precious blood, went to the grave for him, rose again, and appears in heaven for him as his Advocate with the Father. SEEING HIM, he feels constrained to love Him first and foremost, to set his chief affection on things above, not on things on the earth, and to live not for himself, but for Him who died for him. SEEING HIM, he does not fear to face the world's displeasure, and fights on with a firm confidence that he will be "more than a conqueror." In short, it is the expulsive power of a new principle — a living faith in an unseen God and an unseen Jesus — that minimizes the difficulties of a true Christian, drives away the fear of man, and overcomes the world.

This is the principle that made the Apostles what they were after the day of Pentecost. When Peter and John stood before the Council, and spoke in such a fashion that all men marvelled at their boldness, their vivid faith saw One higher than Annas and Caiaphas and their companions — One who would never forsake them. When Saul, converted and renewed, gave up all his brilliant prospects among his own nation, to become a preacher of the gospel he had once despised, he saw far away, by faith, One who was invisible, who could give him a hundredfold more *in this present life* — and *in the world to come*, life everlasting. These all overcame by FAITH.

This is the principle which made the primitive Christians hold fast their religion even to death, unshaken by the fiercest persecution of heathen emperors. They were often unlearned and ignorant men, and saw many things through a glass darkly. But their so-called "obstinacy" astonished even philosophers like Pliny.

For centuries there were never lacking men like Polycarp and Ignatius, who were ready to die rather than deny Christ. Fines, prisons, torture, fire, and sword failed to crush the spirit of the noble army of martyrs. The whole power of imperial Rome, with her legions, proved unable to stamp out the religion which began with a few fishermen and publicans in Palestine. They overcame by FAITH.

This is the principle that made our own Reformers in the sixteenth century endure hardships even unto death, rather than withdraw their protest against the Church of Rome. Many of them, no doubt, like Rogers, Philpot, and Bradford, might have enjoyed rich preferments and died quietly in their beds, if they had only recanted. But they chose rather to suffer affliction; and strong in faith, they died at the stake. This was the principle that made the rank and file of our English martyrs in the same age yield their bodies to be burned — labourers, artisans, and apprentices. Poor and uneducated as they were, they were rich in faith; and if they could not *speak* for Christ, they could *die* for Him. These all overcame by BELIEVING.

But time would fail me if I brought forward all the evidence that might be adduced on this subject. Let us look at our own age. Let us consider the men who have made the greatest mark on the world for Christ's cause in the last hundred years. Let us remember how clergymen like Whitefield, Wesley, Romaine,<sup>26</sup> and Venn stood alone in their day and generation, and revived English religion in the face of opposition, slander, ridicule, and real persecution from nine-tenths of the professing Christians in our land. Let us remember how men like William Wilberforce, Havelock,<sup>27</sup> Henry Lawrence,<sup>28</sup> Hedley Vicars,<sup>29</sup> and George Moore,<sup>30</sup> the Christian merchant, have witnessed for Christ in the most difficult positions, and displayed Christ's banner even in the House of Commons, in the camp, at the regimental mess table, or in the counting-house in the city. Let us remember how these noble servants of God were neither frightened nor laughed out of their religion, and won the respect even of their adversaries. These all had one principle. "Give me," said that strange dictator who rode rough-shod over England's Church and Crown in the seventeenth century, "Give me men who have a principle." These Christian soldiers of our own day had a principle, and that ruling principle was faith in an unseen God and Saviour. By this faith they lived, and walked, and fought the good fight, and overcame.

Does anyone who reads this paper desire to live the life of a true Christian, and overcome the world? Let him begin by seeking to have the principle of victory within. Without this, all outward show of spirituality is utterly worthless. There is many a worldly heart under a monk's cowl. Faith, inward faith, is the one thing needful. Let him begin by praying for FAITH. It is the gift of God, and a gift which those who ask will never ask in vain. The fountain of faith is not yet dry. The mine is not exhausted. He who is called the "Author of faith" is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and waits to be entreated (Heb 12.2). Without faith you will never war a good warfare, never set your foot down firmly, never make progress on the ice of this slippery world. You must *believe* if you would *do*. If men do nothing in religion, and sit still like uninterested spectators of a show, it is simply because *they do not believe*. Faith is the first step towards heaven.

Would any one who reads this paper fight the Christian battle with constantly increasing success and prosperity? Then let him pray daily for a continual growth of faith. Let him abide in Christ, get closer to Christ, tighten his hold on Christ every day that he lives. Let him never forget the prayer of the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith." [Luk 17.5](#) Let him watch jealously over his faith, and never let its fire burn low. According to the degree of his FAITH will be the measure of his *peace*, his *strength*, and his *victory* over the world.

(a) And now let us leave the whole subject with the solemn self-inquiry, "What do we

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<sup>26</sup> William Romaine (1714–1795) — author of the trilogy, *The Life*, *the Walk*, and *the Triumph of Faith*.

<sup>27</sup> Sir Henry Havelock KCB (1795-1857) — British general is particularly associated with his recapture of Cawnpore from rebels during the Indian Mutiny of 1857.

<sup>28</sup> Sir Henry Lawrence (1806-1857) - Brigadier-General KCB, best known for leading a group of skilled administrators in the Punjab (India), affectionately known as Henry Lawrence's "Young Men", as the founder of the Lawrence Military Asylums, and for his death at the Siege of Lucknow during the Indian Rebellion.

<sup>29</sup> Captain Hedley Vicars (1826–1855) — British Army officer and evangelical who was killed in action during the Crimean War. He associated with Dr. Twining, the garrison chaplain at Halifax, became a Sunday-school teacher, visited the sick, and took every opportunity of reading the scriptures and praying with the men of his company.

<sup>30</sup> George Moore (1806–1876) — an English lace merchant and philanthropist. He was born in Mealsgate, Cumberland. Moore accumulated great wealth and built a mansion in Kensington Palace Gardens.

know of that great test of religion which this text supplies? What do we know of overcoming the world? Where are we? What are we doing? Whose are we, and whom do we serve? Are we overcoming, or being overcome?" Alas, it is a sorrowful fact that many do not know whether they are Christ's freemen or the world's slaves! The fetters of the world are often invisible. We are dragged downward insensibly, and are like one who sleeps in a boat, and does not know that he is drifting, gently drifting, towards the falls. There is no slavery so bad as that which is unfelt. There are no chains so really heavy as those which are unseen. Wise is that petition in our matchless Litany: "From all the deceits of the world, good Lord, deliver us."

I press this inquiry in all affection on my younger readers. You are just at that generous and unsuspecting age when the world seems least dangerous and most inviting, and it stands to reason that you are most likely to be ensnared and overcome. Experience alone can make you see the enemy in his true colours. When you have as many grey hairs on your heads as I have, you will place a very different estimate on the good things, or the praise or the hatred of this world. But even now, remember my caution: "If you love your souls, hold the world at arm's length. *Beware of the world.*"

(b) Reader, you and I meet over this paper for once in our lives, and are parting in all probability to meet no more. You are perhaps launching forth on the waves of this troublesome world. My heart's desire and prayer to God is that you may have a prosperous voyage, and be found at length in the safe haven of eternal life. But oh, take heed that you are well equipped for the stormy waters you have to cross, and see that you have a compass to steer by, that you can depend on, and a pilot who will not fail! Beware of making shipwreck by conformity to the world. Alas, how many put to sea in gallant trim, with colours flying and brilliant prospects, and are lost at last with all on board! They seem at first to begin with Moses, and Daniel, and the saints in Nero's household; [Phi 4.21-22](#) but they end at last with Balaam, and Demas, and Lot's wife! Oh, remember the pilot and the compass! — No compass like the Bible. — No pilot like Christ!

Take the advice I give you as a friend this day. Ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come and dwell in your heart by faith, and to "deliver you from this present evil world" (Gal 1.4). Ask Him to pour out His promised Spirit on you, and to make you willing to bear His easy yoke without further delay, and to resist the world. Strive in the strength of Christ to get the victory over the world, whatever it may cost you. Be ashamed of being a slave, however gilded the chains may be. Be ashamed of the mark of the collar. Resolve to play the man and be free. Liberty is the greatest of blessings, and it deserves the greatest struggles. Well did the Jewish rabbis in ancient days say, "If the sea were ink, and the earth parchment, it would never serve to describe the praises of liberty." For freedom's sake, Greeks, Romans, Germans, Poles, Swiss, Scotchmen, and Englishmen, have often cheerfully fought to the bitter end, and laid down their lives. Surely, if men have made such sacrifices for the freedom of their bodies, it is a disgrace to professing Christians if they will not fight for the liberty of their souls. This day, I repeat, resolve in the strength of Christ, that you will fight the good fight against the world; and not only fight, but overcome. "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (Joh 8.36).

(c) Finally, let us all remember that the Christian soldier's best time is yet to come. Here,

## Chap. 8. Victory

in this world, we are often “sore let and hindered” in our warfare.<sup>31</sup> There are many hard things to be done and borne. There are wounds and bruises; there are watchings and fatigues; there are reverses and disappointments. But the end of all things is at hand. For those who “overcome” there will be a conqueror’s crown.

In the warfare of this world, the muster on the morning after a victory is often a sorrowful sight. I pity the man who could look at Miss Thompson’s famous picture of *The Roll-call* without deep emotion. <sup>32</sup> Even when peace is proclaimed, the return of victorious regiments is an occasion of very mingled feelings. That man must have had a cold heart who could see the Guards march back into London after the Crimean war without a sigh or a tear.

Thanks be to God, the review day of Christ’s victorious army will be a very different thing. There will be none missing in that day. It will be a meeting without regret. It will be “a morning without clouds” and tears. It will make rich amends for all we have suffered in resisting and overcoming the world.

Someone who saw our gracious Queen distributing the Victoria Cross at the Horse Guards during the Russian war, might well be stirred and moved at the sight. But the one who saw her come down from her seat to meet a wounded officer who could not walk, and with her own royal hands, pin his decoration on his breast, will probably remember it as long as he lives.

But after all, it was nothing compared to the transactions of that Great Day, when the Captain of our salvation and His victorious soldiers will at length meet face to face. What tongue can tell the happiness of that time when we will lay aside our armour and “say to the sword, Rest and be still!” What mind can conceive the blessedness of that hour when we will see the King in His beauty, and hear these words, “Well done, good and faithful servant and soldier, enter into the joy of your Lord”? Let us wait patiently for that glorious day, for it cannot be far off. In the hope of it, let us work, and watch, and pray, and fight on, and resist the world. And let us never forget our Captain’s words: “In the world you will have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (Joh 16.33).

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<sup>31</sup> From the Book of Common Prayer, ‘The Collect’ - a prayer on the fourth Sunday in Advent. *O LORD, raise up (we pray thee) thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are **sore let and hindered** in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through the satisfaction of thy Son our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.*

<sup>32</sup> *The Roll Call* is an 1874 painting by Elizabeth Thompson, one of the most celebrated paintings of the 19th century.

## CHAPTER 9 – Act 17.16-17.

### ATHENS. 33

“Now, while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.” Therefore he disputed in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with those who met with him.” — Act 17.16-17.

PERHAPS the reader of this paper lives in a town or city, and sees more of bricks and mortar than of green fields. Perhaps you have some relative or friend living in a town, about whom you naturally feel a deep interest. In either case, the verses of Scripture which head this page demand your best attention. Give me that attention for a few short minutes while I try to show you the lessons which the passage contains.

You see face to face in the verses before you, no common city and no common man.

The city is the famous city Athens — Athens, renowned to this very day for its statesmen, philosophers, historians, poets, painters, and architects — Athens, the eye of ancient Greece, as ancient Greece was the eye of the heathen world.

The man is the great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul — St. Paul, the most laborious and successful minister and missionary the world has ever seen — St. Paul, who by pen and tongue has left a deeper mark on mankind than any born of woman, except his Divine Master.

Athens and St. Paul — the great stronghold of old heathenism, and the great servant of Christ — are brought before us face to face. The result is told to us: the interview is carefully described. The subject, I venture to think, is eminently suited to the times in which we live, and to the circumstances of many a dweller in London, Liverpool, Manchester, and other great English towns in the present day.

Without further preface, I ask you to observe three things in this passage:

- I. What St. Paul *saw* at Athens.
- II. What St. Paul *felt* at Athens.
- III. What St. Paul *did* at Athens.

#### **I. First, then, What did St. Paul SEE at Athens?**

The answer of the text is clear and unmistakable. He saw a “city wholly given to idolatry.” Idols met his eyes in every street. The temples of idol gods and goddesses occupied every prominent position. The magnificent statue of Minerva, at least forty feet high according to Pliny, towered above the Acropolis, and caught the eye from every point. A vast system of idol-worship overspread the whole place, and thrust itself everywhere on his notice. The ancient writer Pausanias expressly says that “the Athenians surpassed all states in the attention which they paid to the worship of the gods.” In short, the city (as the marginal reading says) was “full of idols.”

And yet this city, I would have you remember, was probably the most favourable specimen of a heathen city which St. Paul could have seen. In proportion to its size, it very likely contained the most learned, civilized, philosophical, highly educated, artistic, intellectual

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<sup>33</sup> This paper contains the substance of a sermon preached at St. Mary’s, Oxford, before the University, in 1880.

population on the face of the globe. But what was it in a religious point of view? The city of wise men like Socrates and Plato — the city of Solon, Pericles, and Demosthenes — the city of AEschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Thucydides — the city of mind, and intellect, and art, and taste — this city was “wholly given to idolatry.” If the true God was unknown at Athens, what must He have been in the darker places of the earth? If the eye of Greece was so spiritually dim, what must have been the condition of such places as Babylon, Ephesus, Tyre, Alexandria, Corinth, and even of Rome? If men were so far gone from the light in a green tree, what must they have been in the dry tree?

What will we say to these things? What are the conclusions to which we are irresistibly drawn by them?

Should we not learn, for one thing, the absolute need of a Divine revelation, and of teaching from heaven? Leave man without a Bible, and he will have a religion of some kind — for human nature, corrupt as it is, must have a God. But it will be a religion without light, or peace, or hope.

“The world by wisdom did not know God” (1Cor 1.21). Old Athens is a standing lesson which we would do well to observe. It is vain to suppose that nature, unaided by revelation, will ever lead fallen man to nature’s God. Without a Bible, the Athenian bowed down to stocks<sup>34</sup> and stones, and worshipped the work of his own hands. Place a heathen philosopher, a Stoic or an Epicurean — by the side of an open grave, and ask him about a world to come, and he could have told you nothing certain, satisfactory, or peace-giving.

Should we not learn, for another thing, that the highest intellectual training is no security against utter darkness in religion? We cannot doubt that mind and reason were highly educated at Athens, if anywhere in the heathen world. The students of Greek philosophy were not unlearned and ignorant men. They were well-versed in logic, ethics, rhetoric, history, and poetry. But all this mental discipline did not prevent their city being a “city wholly given to idolatry.” And are we to be told in the nineteenth century, that reading, writing, arithmetic, mathematics, history, languages, and physical science, without a knowledge of the Scriptures, are sufficient to constitute education? God forbid! We have not so learned Christ. [Eph 4.20](#) It may please some men to idolize intellectual power, and to speak highly of the debt which the world owes to the Greek mind. One thing, at any rate, is abundantly clear. Without the knowledge which the Holy Ghost revealed to the Hebrew nation, old Greece would have left the world buried in dark idolatry. A follower of Socrates or Plato might have talked well and eloquently on many subjects, but he could have never answered the jailor’s question, “What must I do to be saved?” (Act 16.30). He could never have said in his last hour, “O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?”

Should we not learn, for another thing, that the highest excellence in the material arts is no preservative against the grossest superstition? The perfection of Athenian architecture and sculpture is a great and undeniable fact. The eyes of St. Paul at Athens beheld many a “thing of beauty” which is still “a joy forever” to artistic minds. And yet, the men who conceived and executed the splendid buildings of Athens were utterly ignorant of the one true God. The world nowadays is well-nigh drunk with self conceit about our so-called progress in arts and sciences. Men talk and write of machinery and manufactures, as if nothing were impossible. But let it never be forgotten that the highest art or mechanical

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<sup>34</sup> *Stocks (livestock) refers to their worship of animal deities, or gods represented in animal form.*

skill is consistent with a state of spiritual death in religion. Athens, the city of Phidias, was a "city wholly given to idolatry." An Athenian sculptor might have designed a matchless tomb, but he could not have wiped a single tear from a mourner's eye.

These things should not be forgotten. They should be carefully pondered. They suit the times in which we live. We have fallen on a sceptical and an unbelieving age. We meet on every side with doubts and questionings about the truth and value of revelation. "Is reason alone not sufficient?" "Is the Bible really needful to make men wise unto salvation?" "Does man not have a light within, a verifying power, able to guide him to truth and God?" Such are the inquiries which fall thick as hail around us. Such are the speculations which disquiet many unstable minds.

One plain answer is an appeal to *facts*. The remains of heathen Egypt, Greece, and Rome will speak for us. They are preserved by God's providence to this very day as monuments of what intellect and reason can do without revelation. The minds which designed the temples of Luxor and Karnak, or the Parthenon or Coliseum, were not the minds of fools. The builders who executed their designs did better and more lasting work than any contractor can do in modern times. The men who conceived the sculptured friezes, which we know as the Elgin Marbles, were trained and intellectual to the highest degree. And yet, in religion these men were darkness itself (Eph 5.8). The sight which St. Paul saw at Athens is an unanswerable proof that man knows nothing which can do his soul good without a Divine revelation.

**II.** *I ask you to notice, in the second place, what St. Paul FELT at Athens. He saw a "city wholly given to idolatry." How did the sight affect him? What did he feel?*

It is instructive to observe how the same sight affects different people. Place two men on the same spot; let them stand side by side; let the same objects be presented to their eyes. The emotions called forth in the one man will often be wholly different from those called forth in the other. The thoughts which will be wakened and brought to birth will often be as far apart as the poles.

A mere artist visiting Athens for the first time would doubtless have been absorbed in the beauty of its buildings. A statesman or orator would have called up the memory of Pericles or Demosthenes. A literary man would have thought of Thucydides and Sophocles and Plato. A merchant would have gazed on the Piraeus, its harbour, and the sea. But an Apostle of Christ had far higher thoughts. One thing, above all others, swallowed his attention and made all else look small. That one thing was the spiritual condition of the Athenian people, the state of their souls. The great Apostle of the Gentiles was eminently a man of one thing. Like his Divine Master, he was always thinking of his "Father's business" (Luk 2.49). He stood at Athens, and thought of nothing so much as Athenian souls. Like Moses, Phinehas, and Elijah, "his spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry."

Of all sights on earth, I know none so impressive, none so calculated to arouse thought in a reflecting mind, as the sight of a great city. The daily intercourse of man with man, which a city naturally produces, seems to sharpen intellect, and stimulate mental activity to an extent which dwellers in rural parishes or other solitary places cannot realize. Rightly or wrongly, the inhabitant of a city thinks twice as much, and twice as quickly, as the inhabitant of a rural village. It is the city "where Satan's seat is" (Rev 2.13).

## Chap. 9. Athens

- It is the city where evil of every kind is most rapidly conceived, sown, ripened, and brought to maturity.
- It is the city where the young man, leaving home and launching into life, becomes soonest hardened and conscience-seared by daily familiarity with the sight of sin.
- It is the city where sensuality, intemperance, and worldly amusements of the vilest kind flourish most rankly, and find a congenial atmosphere.
- It is the city where ungodliness and irreligion meet with the greatest encouragement, and the unhappy Sabbath-breaker or neglecter of all means of grace, can fortify himself behind the example of others, and enjoy the miserable comfort of feeling that “he does not stand alone!”
- It is the city which is the chosen home of every form of superstition, ceremonialism, enthusiasm, and fanaticism in religion.
- It is the city which is the hotbed of every kind of false philosophy, of Stoicism, Epicureanism, Agnosticism, Secularism, Scepticism, Positivism, Infidelity, and Atheism.
- It is the city where that greatest of modern inventions, the printing-press, that mighty power for good and evil, is ever working with unsleeping activity, and pouring forth new matter for thought.
- It is the city where the daffy newspapers are continually supplying food for minds, and moulding and guiding public opinion.
- It is the city which is the centre of all national business. The banks, the law-courts, the Stock Exchange, the Parliament or Assembly, are all bound up with the city.
- It is the city which, by magnetic influence, draws together the rank and fashion of the land, and gives the tone to the tastes and ways of society.
- It is the city which practically controls the destiny of a nation.

Scattered millions, in rural districts, without habitual concert or contact, are powerless before the thousands who dwell side by side and exchange thought every day. It is the towns which govern a land. I pity the man who could stand on the top of St. Paul's Cathedral, and look down on London without some emotion, and not reflect that he sees the heart whose pulsations are felt over the whole civilized globe. And should I wonder for a moment that the sight of Athens “stirred the spirit” of such a man as the great Apostle of the Gentiles? I cannot wonder at all. It was just the sight which was likely to move the heart of the converted man of Tarsus, the man who wrote the Epistle to the Romans, and had seen Jesus Christ face to face.

He was stirred with holy compassion. It moved his heart to see so many myriads perishing for lack of knowledge, without God, without Christ, having no hope, travelling in the broad road which leads to destruction.

He was stirred with holy sorrow. It moved his heart to see so much talent misapplied. Here were hands capable of excellent works, and minds capable of noble conceptions. And yet, the God who gave life and breath and power was not glorified.

He was stirred with holy indignation against sin and the devil. He saw the god of this world blinding the eyes of multitudes of his fellow-men, and leading them captive at his will. He saw the natural corruption of man infecting the population of a vast city like one common disease, and an utter absence of any spiritual medicine, antidote, or remedy.

He was stirred with holy zeal for His Master's glory. He saw the "strong man armed" keeping a house which was not lawfully his, and shutting out the rightful possessor. He saw his Divine Master unknown and unrecognised by His own creatures, and idols receiving the homage due to the King of kings.

Reader, these feelings which stirred the Apostle are a leading characteristic of a man born of the Spirit. Do you know anything of them? Where there is true grace, there will always be tender concern for the souls of others. Where there is true sonship to God, there will always be zeal for the Father's glory. It is written of the ungodly, that they not only commit things worthy of death, but "have pleasure in those who do them" (Rom 1.32). It may be said with equal truth of the godly, that they not only mourn over sin in their own hearts, but mourn over sin in others.

- Hear what is written of Lot in Sodom: "He vexed his soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds" (2Pet 2.8).
- Hear what is written of David: "Rivers of water run down my eyes, because they do not keep Your law" (Psa 119.136).
- Hear what is written of the godly in Ezekiel's time: "They sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of the land" (Eze 9.4).
- Hear what is written of our Lord and Saviour Himself: "He beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luk 19.41).

Surely it may be laid down as one of the first principles of Scriptural religion, that he who can behold sin without sorrowful feelings, does not have the mind of the Spirit. This is one of those things in which the children of God are manifest, and are distinguished from the children of the devil.

I call the special attention of my readers to this point. The times demand that we look it fully in the face. The feelings with which we regard sin, heathenism, and irreligion are a subject of vast importance in the present day.

I ask you, first, to look outside our own country, and consider the state of the heathen world. At least six hundred million immortal beings are at this moment sunk in ignorance, superstition, and idolatry. They live and die without God, without Christ, and without hope. In sickness and sorrow they have no comfort. In old age and death they have no life beyond the grave. They have no knowledge of the true way of peace through a Redeemer, of God's love in Christ, of free grace, of complete absolution from guilt, of a resurrection to life eternal. For long weary centuries, they have been waiting for the tardy movements of the Church of Christ — while Christians have been asleep, or wasting their energies on useless controversies, and squabbling and wrangling about forms and ceremonies. Is this not a sight which should "stir the spirit?"

I ask you, next, to turn back to our own land, and consider the state of our great cities. There are districts in our great metropolis, in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, or in the Black Country, where Christianity seems practically unknown. Examine the religious condition of East London, Southwark, or Lambeth. Walk through the north end of Liverpool on Saturday evening, or Sunday, or on a Bank Holiday, and see how Sabbath-breaking, intemperance, and general ungodliness appear to rule and reign uncontrolled. "When the strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace" (Luk 11.21). And then remember that this state of things exists in a professedly Christian country, in a land

where there is an Established Church, and within a few hours of Oxford and Cambridge! Once more I ask, should these things not “stir” our hearts?

It is a sorrowful fact that around us in the present day, there is a generation of men who regard heathenism, infidelity, and irreligion with apathy, coolness, and indifference! They care nothing for Christian missions either at home or abroad. They see no necessity for them. They take no interest in the Evangelistic work of any Church or society. They treat all alike with undisguised contempt. They despise Exeter Hall. They never give subscriptions. They never attend meetings. They never read a missionary report. They seem to think that every man will be saved by his own law or sect, if only he is sincere; and that one religion is as good as another, if those who profess it are only in earnest. They are fond of decrying and running down all spiritual machinery or missionary operations. They are constantly asserting that modern missions at home or abroad do nothing, and that those who support them are little better than weak enthusiasts. Judging by their language, they appear to think that the world receives no benefit from missions and aggressive Christian movements, and that it would be better to leave the world alone. What will we say to these men? They meet us on every side. They are to be heard in every society. To sit by, and sneer, and criticise, and do nothing — this is apparently their delight and vocation. What will we say to them?

Let us tell them plainly, if they would only hear us, that they are utterly opposed to the Apostle St. Paul. Let us show them that mighty model of a Christian missionary walking the streets of Athens, and “stirred” in spirit at the sight of a “city wholly given to idolatry.” Let us ask them why they do not feel as he felt, about the idolatry of China and Hindustan, of Africa and the South Seas, or about the semi-heathen districts of London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and the Black Country. Let us ask them whether 1800 years have made any difference in the nature of God, the necessities of fallen man, the sinfulness of idol-worship, and the duty of Christians. We will ask in vain for a reasonable answer: we will get none. Sneers at our weakness are no argument against our principles. Jests at our infirmities and failures are no proof that our aims are wrong. Yes; they may have the wit and wisdom of this world on their side; but the eternal principles of the New Testament are written clearly, plainly, and unmistakably. So long as the Bible is the Bible, charity to souls is one of the first of Christian graces; and it is a solemn duty to feel for the souls of the heathen, and of all unconverted people. He who knows nothing of this feeling has yet to become a learner in Christ’s school. He who despises this feeling is not a successor of St. Paul, but a follower of the one who asked, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” — even of Cain.

**III.** *I ask my readers to observe, in the last place, what St. Paul DID at Athens. What he saw you have heard; what he felt you have been told; but how did he act?*

He *did* something. He was not the man to stand still, and “confer with flesh and blood” in the face of a city full of idols. He might have reasoned with himself that he stood alone, that he was a Jew by birth, that he was a stranger in a strange land — that he had to oppose the rooted prejudices and old associations of learned men, that to attack the old religion of a whole city was to beard a lion in his den, that the doctrines of the gospel were little likely to be effective on minds steeped in Greek philosophy. But none of these thoughts seem to have crossed the mind of St. Paul. He saw souls perishing; he felt that life was short, and time was passing away; he had confidence in the power of his Master’s message

to meet every man's soul; he had received mercy himself, and did not know how to hold his peace. He acted at once; and what his hand found to do, he did with all his might. Oh that we had more men of action in these days!

And he did what he did with holy wisdom as well as holy boldness. He commenced aggressive measures alone, and did not wait for companions and helpers. But he commenced them with consummate skill, and in a manner most likely to obtain a footing for the gospel. First, we are told, he disputed "with the Jews" in the synagogue, and the "devout persons" or proselytes who attended the Jewish worship. Afterwards he went on to "dispute," or hold discussions, "in the market daily with those who met with him." He advanced step by step like an experienced general. Here, as elsewhere, St. Paul is a model to us: he combined fiery zeal and boldness, with judicious tact and sanctified common sense. Oh that we had more men of wisdom in these days!

But what did the Apostle teach? What was the grand subject which he argued, and reasoned out, and discussed, both with Jew and Greek, in synagogue and street?

- He exposed the folly of idolatry to the ignorant multitudes.
- He showed the true nature of God to the worshippers of images made with hands.
- He asserted the nearness of God to us all, and the certainty of a solemn reckoning with God at the judgment day, to Epicureans and Stoics.

These are facts which we have recorded fully in his address on Mars' Hill.

But is there nothing more than this to be learnt about the Apostle's dealings with the idolatrous city? Is there nothing more distinctive and peculiar to Christianity which St. Paul brought forward at Athens? There is indeed more. There is a sentence in the 18th verse of the chapter we are looking at, which ought to be written in letters of gold — a sentence which ought to silence forever the impudent assertion which some have dared to make, that the great Apostle of the Gentiles was sometimes content to be a mere teacher of deism or natural theology! We are told in the 18th verse that the one thing which arrested the attention of the Athenians, was the fact that St. Paul "preached Jesus and the resurrection."

*Jesus and the resurrection!* What a mine of matter *that* sentence contained! What a complete summary of the Christian faith might be drawn from *those* words! I have no doubt that they are only meant to be a summary. I pity those who would cramp and pare down their meaning, and interpret them as nothing more than Christ's prophetic office and example. I think it incredible that the very Apostle who a few days later went to Corinth, "determined to know nothing but Christ crucified," or the doctrine of the cross, would keep back the *cross* from Athenian ears. I believe that "Jesus and the resurrection" is a sentence which stands for the whole gospel. The Founder's name, and one of the foundation facts of the gospel, stand before us for the whole of Christianity.

What, then, does this sentence mean? What are we to understand that St. Paul preached?

- (a) St. Paul at Athens preached the PERSON of the Lord Jesus — His divinity, His incarnation, His mission into the world to save sinners, His life, and death, and ascension up to heaven, His character, His teaching, His amazing love toward the souls of men.

(b) St. Paul at Athens preached the *WORK* of the Lord Jesus — His sacrifice upon the cross, His vicarious satisfaction for sin, His substitution as the just for the unjust, the full redemption He has procured for all, and specially effected for all who believe, the complete victory He has obtained for lost man over sin, death, and hell.

(c) St. Paul at Athens preached the *OFFICES* of the Lord Jesus, as the one Mediator between God and all mankind, as the great Physician for all sin-sick souls, as the Rest-giver and Peace-maker for all heavy-laden hearts, as the Friend of the friendless, the High Priest and Advocate of all who commit their souls into His hands, the Ransom-payer of captives, the Light and Guide of all wandering from God.

(d) St. Paul at Athens preached the *TERMS* which the Lord Jesus had commanded His servants to proclaim to all the world — His readiness and willingness to receive at once the chief of sinners — His ability to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him — the full, present, and immediate forgiveness which He offers to all who believe — the complete cleansing in His blood from all manner of sin — faith, or simple trust of heart, the one thing required of all who feel their sins and desire to be saved — entire justification without works, or doing, or deeds of law for all who believe.

(e) Last, but not least, St. Paul preached at Athens the *RESURRECTION* of the Lord Jesus. He preached it as the miraculous fact on which Jesus Himself staked the whole credibility of His mission, and as a fact proved by such abounding evidence that no caviller at miracles has ever yet honestly dared to meet. — He preached it as a *fact*, which was the very top-stone of the whole work of redemption, *proving* that what Christ undertook, He fully accomplished, that the ransom was accepted, the atonement completed, and the prison doors thrown open for ever. — He preached it as a *fact*, proving beyond doubt the possibility and certainty of our own resurrection in the flesh, and settling forever the great question, “*Can God raise the dead?*”

I cannot doubt that St. Paul preached these things and many like them at Athens. I cannot for one moment suppose that he taught one thing at one place, and one at another. The Holy Ghost supplies the substance of his preaching in that rich sentence, “Jesus and the resurrection.” The same Holy Ghost has told us fully how he handled these subjects at Antioch in Pisidia, at Philippi, at Corinth, and Ephesus. The Acts and the Epistles speak out on this point with no uncertain sound. I believe that “Jesus and the resurrection” means — Jesus and the redemption He effected by His death and rising from the grave, His atoning blood, His cross, His substitution, His mediation, His triumphant entrance into heaven, and the consequent full and complete salvation of all sinners who believe in Him. *This* is the doctrine that St. Paul preached. *This* is the work St. Paul did when he was at Athens.

Now, have we nothing to learn from these doings of the great Apostle of the Gentiles? There are lessons of deep importance to which I venture briefly to invite the attention of all who read this paper. I say *briefly*. I only throw them out, as seeds for private thought.

(a) Learn, for one thing, a doctrinal lesson from St. Paul’s doings at Athens. The grand subject of our teaching, in every place, ought to be Jesus Christ. However learned or however unlearned, however high-born or however humble our audience, Christ crucified — Christ — Christ — *Christ* — crucified, rising, interceding, redeeming, pardoning, receiving, saving — Christ must be the grand theme of our teaching. We will

never mend this gospel. We will never find any other subject which will do so much good. We must *sow* as St. Paul sowed, if we would *reap* as St. Paul reaped.

(b) Learn, for another thing, a practical lesson from St. Paul's doings at Athens. We must never be afraid to stand alone and be solitary witnesses for Christ, if need be, alone in a vast ungodly parish, in our own land — alone in East London, in Liverpool, in Manchester — alone in Delhi, or Benares, or Peking — it does not matter. We need not hold our peace if God's truth is on our side. One Paul at Athens, one Athanasius against the world, one Wycliffe against a host of Romish prelates, one Luther at Worms — these, *these*, are lighthouses before our eyes. God does not see as man sees. We must not stand still to count heads and number the people. One man, with Christ in his heart and the Bible in his hands, is stronger than a myriad of idolaters.

(c) Learn for another thing, the importance, let me rather say the *necessity*, of asserting boldly the supernatural element as an essential part of the Christian religion. I need not tell many who read these pages that unbelievers and sceptics abound in these days, who are dead set against the miracles of the Bible, and are incessantly trying to throw them overboard as useless lumber, or to prove by ingenious explanations that they are fables and no miracles at all. Let us never be afraid to resist such teaching steadily, and to take our stand by the side of St. Paul. Like him, let us point to the resurrection of Christ, and confidently challenge all fair and reasonable men to refute the evidence by which it is supported. The enemies of supernatural religion have never refuted that evidence, and they never will. If Christ was not raised from the dead, the conduct and teaching of the Apostles after He left the world is an unsolved problem and a perfect mystery, which no man in his senses can account for. But if, as we believe, the resurrection of Christ is an undeniable fact which cannot be disproved, the whole fabric of sceptical arguments against supernatural religion is undermined, and must fall to the ground. Once the stupendous miracle of the resurrection of Christ is admitted, it is sheer nonsense to tell us that any other smaller miracle in the Bible is incredible or impossible.

(d) Learn for one thing more, a lesson of encouragement to faith from St. Paul's doings at Athens. If we preach the gospel, we may preach with perfect confidence that it will do good. That solitary Jew of Tarsus who stood up alone on Mars' Hill appeared at the time to do little or nothing. He passed on his way, and seemed to have made a failure. The Stoics and Epicureans probably laughed and sneered as if the day was their own. But that solitary Jew was lighting a candle that has never since been put out. The Word that he proclaimed in Athens grew and multiplied, and became a great tree. That little leaven ultimately leavened the whole of Greece. The gospel that Paul preached triumphed over idolatry. The empty Parthenon stands, to this day, a proof that Athenian theology is dead and gone. Yes; if we sow good seed, we may sow it in tears, but we will yet "come again with joy, bringing our sheaves with us" (Psa 126.6).

I draw towards a conclusion. I pass from the consideration of what St. Paul *saw*, and *felt*, and *did* at Athens, to points of practical importance. I ask every reader of this paper, what should we *see*, and *feel*, and *do*?

(1) What should we *see*? It is an age of sightseeing and excitement. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing" (Ecc 1.8). The world is mad for running to and fro, and the increase of knowledge. The wealth, the arts, the inventions of man are continually gathering myriads

into great Exhibitions. Thousands and tens of thousands are annually rushing about and gazing at the work of men's hands.

But should the Christian not look at the map of the world? Should the man who believes the Bible not gaze with solemn thoughts at the vast spaces on that map which are yet spiritually black, dead, and without the gospel? Should our eyes not look at the fact that half the population of the earth is yet ignorant of God and Christ, and yet sitting still in sin and idolatry — and that myriads of our own fellow-countrymen in our great cities are practically little better than heathen, because Christians do so little for souls?

The *eyes of God* see these things, and *our eyes* ought to see them too.

(2) What should we *feel*? Our hearts, if they are right in the sight of God, ought to be affected by the sight of irreligion and heathenism. Many indeed are the feelings which the aspect of the world ought to call up in our hearts.

We ought to feel THANKFULNESS for our own countless privileges. Little indeed do the bulk of English people know the amount of their own daily unpaid debt to Christianity. It would be well for some, if they were compelled to dwell for a few weeks every year in a heathen land.

We ought to feel SHAME and HUMILIATION when we reflect how little the Church of England has done for the spread of Christianity up to now. God has indeed done great things for us since the days when Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer went to the stake. He has preserved us through many trials, enriched us with many blessings. But how little return we have made Him! How few of our 15,000 parishes do anything worthy of the cause of missions at home or abroad! How little zeal some congregations show for the salvation of souls! These things should not be so!

We ought to feel COMPASSION when we think of the wretched state of unconverted souls, and the misery of all men and women who live and die without Christ. There is no poverty like this poverty! No disease like this disease! No slavery like this slavery! No death like this death — in idolatry, irreligion, and sin! We may well ask ourselves, Where is the mind of Christ, if we do not feel for the lost? I lay it down boldly, as a great principle, that the Christianity which does not make a man feel for the state of unconverted people, is not the Christianity which came down from heaven 1800 years ago, and is embalmed in the New Testament. It is a mere empty name. It is not the Christianity of St. Paul.

(3) Finally, what should we *do*? This, after all, is the point to which I want to bring your mind. Seeing and feeling are good; but *doing* is the life of religion. Passive impressions which do not lead to action have a tendency to harden the conscience, and do us positive harm. What should we *do*? We ought to do much more than we have ever done yet. We might all probably do more. The honour of the gospel, the state of the missionary field abroad, the condition of our overgrown cities at home, *all* call upon us to do more.

Need we stand still, and be ashamed of the weapons of our warfare? Is the gospel, the old Evangelical creed, unequal to the needs of our day? I assert boldly that we have no cause to be ashamed of the gospel at all. It is not worn out. It is not effete. It is not behind the times. We want nothing new, nothing added to the gospel, nothing taken away. We want nothing but “the old paths,” the old truths, fully, boldly, affectionately proclaimed. Only preach the gospel fully, the same gospel which St. Paul preached, and it is still “the power

of God unto salvation for everyone who believes;” and nothing else called religion has any real power at all. (Rom 1.16)

Need we stand still and be ashamed of the results of preaching the gospel? Will we hang down our heads, and complain that “the faith once delivered to the saints” has lost its power, and does no good? We have no cause to be ashamed at all. I am bold to say that no religious teaching on earth can point to any results worth mentioning, except that which is called doctrinal, dogmatic theology. What deliverance on earth have all the modern schools — which scorn dogmatic teaching — what deliverance have they wrought? What overgrown and semi-heathen parishes in the metropolis, in our great seaports, our manufacturing towns, our colliery districts, have they evangelized and civilized? What can New Zealand, Red River, Sierra-Leone, Tinnevelly — the high-sounding systems of this latter day — point to as a fruit of their system? No! If the question, “What is truth?” is to be solved by reference to results and fruits, the religion of the New Testament — the religion whose principles are summarized, condensed, and embalmed in our Articles, Creeds, and Prayer Book — has no cause to be ashamed.

What can we do now but humble ourselves for the past, and endeavour by God’s help to do more for the time to come? Let us open our eyes more, and *see*. Let us open our hearts more, and *feel*. Let us stir up ourselves to *do* more work by self-denying gifts, by zealous co-operation, by bold advocacy, by fervent prayer. Let us do something worthy of our cause. The cause for which Jesus left heaven and came down to earth deserves the best that we can do.

And now, let me close this paper by returning to the thought with which it began. Perhaps your lot is cast in a city or town. The population of our rural districts is annually decreasing. The dwellers in towns are rapidly outnumbering the dwellers in country parishes. If you are a dweller in a town, accept the parting words of advice which I am about to offer. Give me your best attention while I speak to you about your soul.

(1) Remember, for one thing, that you are placed in a position of peculiar spiritual danger. From the days of Babel downwards, wherever Adam’s children have been assembled in large numbers, they have always drawn one another to the utmost extremities of sin and wickedness. The great towns have always been Satan’s seat. It is the town where the young man sees abounding examples of ungodliness; and if he is determined to live in sin, he will always find plenty of companions. It is the town where the theatre and the casino, the dancing room and the drinking bar, are continually crowded. It is the town where the love of money, or the love of amusement, or the love of sensual indulgence, lead captive myriads of slaves. It is the town where a man will always find hundreds to encourage him in breaking the Sabbath, despising the means of grace, neglecting the Bible, leaving off the habit of prayer. Reader, consider these things. If you live in a town, *take care*. Know your *danger*. Feel your *weakness* and *sinfulness*. Flee to Christ, and commit your soul to His keeping. Ask Him to hold you up, and you will be safe. Stand on your guard. Resist the devil. Watch and pray.

(2) Remember, on the other hand, if you live in a town, that you will probably have some special helps which you cannot always find in the country. There are few English towns in which you will not find a few faithful servants of Christ, who will gladly assist you and aid you in your journey towards heaven. Few indeed are the English towns in which you will not find some minister who preaches the gospel, and some pilgrims in the narrow way

## Chap. 9. Athens

who are ready to welcome any addition to their number.

Reader, be of good courage, and never give way to the despairing thought that it is impossible to serve Christ in a town. Think rather that with God, nothing is impossible. Think of the long list of witnesses who have carried the cross, and been faithful unto death in the midst of the greatest temptations. Think of Daniel and the three children in Babylon. Think of the saints in Nero's household at Rome. Think of the multitudes of believers at Corinth and Ephesus and Antioch in the days of the Apostles. It is not *place*, but *grace*, that makes the Christian. The holiest and most useful servants of God who have ever lived, were not hermits in the wilderness, but dwellers in towns.

Remember these things, and be of good cheer. Your lot may be cast in a city like Athens, "wholly given to idolatry." You may have to stand alone in the bank, the counting-house, the place of business, or the shop.

But you are not really alone, if Christ is with you. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Be bold, thorough, decided, and patient. The day will come when you will find that even in a great city, a man may be a happy, useful Christian, respected while he lives, and honoured when he dies.

## CHAPTER 10 – Act 26.24-29.

### PORTRAITS. <sup>35</sup>

“And as he thus spoke for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you are beside yourself; much learning makes you mad.

“But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak the words of truth and soberness.

“For the king knows of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

“King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.

“Then Agrippa said to Paul, You almost persuade me to be a Christian.

“And Paul said, I would to God, that not only you, but also all who hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these bonds.” — Act 26.24-29.

THERE is a collection of pictures in London called the *National Portrait Gallery*. It contains the likenesses of nearly all the great men who have made a mark in English history. It is well worth seeing. But I doubt whether it contains three portraits which deserve a more attentive study than the three which I am going to show you in this paper.

One striking feature of the Bible is the rich variety of its contents. That grand old Book, which for eighteen centuries has baffled the attacks of unfriendly critics, is not only a storehouse of doctrine, precept, history, poetry, and prophecy. The Holy Ghost has also given us a series of lifelike portraits of human nature, in all its various aspects, which deserve our attentive study. Who does not know that we often learn more from patterns and examples than from abstract statements?

The well-known piece of Scripture which heads this paper supplies an admirable illustration of my meaning. It forms the conclusion of the chapter in which the Apostle St. Paul makes a defence of himself before the Roman governor Festus and the Jewish king Agrippa. Three pictures of three very different men hang before us. They are types of three classes of men who are to be seen among us at this very day. Their succession has never ceased. In spite of changing fashions, scientific discoveries, and political reforms, the inward heart of man in every age is always the same. Come and let us stand before these three pictures, as we would stand before the painting of a Gainsborough, a Reynolds, or a Romney, and see what we may learn.

#### **I. Let us look, first, at Festus, the Roman governor.**

This is the man who abruptly broke in on St. Paul's address, exclaiming, “Paul, you are beside yourself; much learning makes you mad.”

Festus, no doubt, was a heathen, ignorant of any religion except the idolatrous temple-worship, which in the time of the Apostles overspread the civilized world. From the language in which he addressed Agrippa in a preceding chapter, he seems to have been profoundly ignorant both of Judaism and Christianity. He spoke of “questions of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive” (Act 25.19). Most probably, like many a proud Roman in the declining age of the Roman

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<sup>35</sup> This paper contains the substance of a sermon, preached in April 1881, at St. Mary's, Oxford, before the University, and at the Chapel Royal, St. James's, London.

Empire, he regarded all religions with secret contempt, as all equally false, or equally true, and all alike unworthy of the notice of a great man. As for a Jew talking of showing “light to the Gentiles,” the very idea was ridiculous! To keep in with the world, to have the favour of man, to care nothing for anything but the things seen, to please “my lord” Augustus — this was probably the whole religion of Porcius Festus.

Now, are there many among us like Festus? Yes! I fear there are tens of thousands. They are to be found in every rank and class of society. They walk in our streets. They travel with us in railway carriages. They meet us in the daily intercourse of the world. They fill the various relations of life respectably. They are often good men of business, and eminent in the professions they have chosen. They discharge the various duties of their positions with credit, and leave a good name behind them when their place is empty. But, like Festus, they have no religion!

These are the ones who seem to live as if they had no souls. From January to December, they appear neither to think, nor feel, nor see, nor know anything about a life to come. It forms no part of their schemes, and plans, and calculations. They live as if they had nothing to attend to but the body — nothing to do but eat, drink, sleep, dress, get money and spend money — and no world to provide for, except the world which we see with our eyes.

These are the ones who seldom, if ever, use any means of grace, whether public or private. Praying and Bible-reading, and secret communion with God, are things which they despise and let alone. They may be very good for the aged, sick, and dying; for the clergy, monk, and nun; but not for them! If ever they attend a place of worship, it is only as a matter of form, to appear respectable; and too often, they never attend except on the occasion of some great public ceremony, or at a wedding, or a funeral.

These are the ones who profess their inability to understand anything like zeal or earnestness about religion. They regard the Societies, the Institutions, the literature, the Evangelistic efforts of Christians at home or abroad, with sublime contempt. Their maxim is to let everybody alone. The comparative claims of Church and Dissent, the strife of parties within our pale, the debates of Convocations, Congresses, and Diocesan Conferences, are all alike — matters of indifference to them. They look coldly at them from a distance, like the philosopher described by the Latin poet Lucretius; and they regard them as the childish struggles of weak folks, unworthy of the notice of a cultivated mind. And if such subjects are ever brought up in their company, they brush them away with some satirical remark, or some oft-repeated old smart saying of scepticism.

Will anyone deny that there are multitudes of people around us such as I have tried to describe — kind people, perhaps, moral people, good-natured people, easy to get on with, unless you get on the subject of religion? It is impossible to deny it. Their name is “legion,” for they are many. The tendency of these latter days to make an idol of intellect — the desire to be independent and to think for yourself — the disposition to worship private judgment, to exalt your own isolated opinion, and to deem it finer and cleverer to go wrong with a few, than right with a crowd — all this helps to swell the ranks of the followers of Festus. I fear he is the *type* of a large class.

Such people are a melancholy sight. They often remind me of some grand old ruin, like Melrose or Bolton Abbey, where enough remains of beauteous arches, and columns, and

towers, and traceried windows to show what the building once was, and what it might have been now if God had not left it. But now all is cold, and silent, and gloomy, and suggestive of decay, because the Master of the house, the Lord of life, is not there. It is just so with many of the followers of Festus. You often feel, when you observe their intellectual power, their gifts of speech, their taste, their energy of character, “what men these might be if God had His rightful place in their souls!” But without God, all is wrong. Alas, for the crushing power of unbelief and pride, when they get complete mastery of a man, and reign over him uncontrolled! No wonder that Scripture describes unconverted man as “blind — sleeping, beside himself — and dead.”

Is Festus reading this paper today? I am afraid not! Religious tracts and books, like Sunday services and sermons, are not in his line. On Sundays, Festus probably reads the newspaper, or looks over his worldly accounts, or visits his friends, or goes on a journey, and secretly wishes an English Sunday was more like a Continental one, and the theatres and museums were open. On week-days, Festus is constantly employed in business, or politics, or recreations, or killing time in the trifling pursuits of modern society; and he lives like a butterfly, as thoughtless as if there were no such thing as death, or judgment, or eternity. Oh, no: Festus is not the man to read this paper!

But is a man like Festus in a hopeless condition, and beyond the reach of mercy? No, indeed! I thank God he is not. He has yet got a conscience at the bottom of his character, which however much seared, is not quite dead — a conscience which, like the great bell of St. Paul’s at midnight, when the roar of city business is over, will sometimes make itself heard. Like Felix, and Herod, and Ahab, and Pharaoh, the followers of Festus have their times of visitation; and unlike them, they sometimes awake before it is too late, and become different men. There are seasons in their lives when they are driven in upon themselves, and feel “the powers of the world to come,” and find that mortal man cannot get on without God. Sickness, and solitude, and disappointments, and losses of money, and deaths of loved ones, can sometimes make the proudest hearts bow down, and confess that the “grasshopper is a burden.” Manasseh is not the only one who “in time of affliction” turned to God, and began to pray. Yes! I have long felt that we must never despair of anyone. The age of spiritual miracles is not past. With Christ and the Holy Ghost nothing is impossible. The last day will show that there were some who began with Festus and were like him, but at last turned round, repented, and ended with St. Paul. While there is life we must hope and pray for others.

**II.** *Let us now turn to a very different picture. Let us look at King Agrippa.*

This is the man who was so much struck by St. Paul’s address that he said, “You almost persuade me to be a Christian.”

“Almost.” Let me dwell for a moment on that expression. I am well aware that many think our Authorized English Version of the Bible is in fault here, and fails to give the true meaning of the original Greek. They assert that the phrase would be more correctly rendered, “In a short time,” or “with weak and feeble argument you are persuading me.” I am bold to say that I cannot accept the view of these critics, though I admit that the phrase is rather obscure. But in questions like these I dare not call any man master. I hold

with several excellent commentators, both ancient and modern,<sup>36</sup> that the translation given in our Authorized Version is right and correct. I am fortified in my belief by the fact that this is the view of one who thought, and spoke, and wrote in the language of the New Testament — I mean the famous Greek Father Chrysostom. And last, but not least, no other view appears to me to harmonize with the exclamation of the Apostle St. Paul in the verse which follows. “Almost!” he seems to say, taking up Agrippa’s words. “I want you to not be *almost*, but *altogether* a Christian.” On these grounds I stand by our Old Version.

Agrippa, whose picture now demands our attention, was in many respects very unlike Festus. Of Jewish extraction, and brought up among Jews, if not of pure Jewish blood, he was thoroughly familiar with many things of which the Roman governor was utterly ignorant. He knew and “believed the prophets.” He must have understood many things in St. Paul’s address, which were mere “words and names” and raving fancies to his companion, in place of “hearing.” He had a secret inward conviction that the man before him had truth on his side. He saw, and felt, and was moved and affected, and conscience-stricken, and had inward wishes and longing desires. But he could get no further. He saw, but had no courage to act. He felt, but had no will to move. He was not far from the kingdom of God, but halted outside. He neither condemned nor ridiculed Christianity; but like a man who is paralyzed, he could only look at it and examine it, and did not have the strength of mind to lay hold on it and receive it into his heart.

Now, are there many professing Christians like Agrippa? I fear there is only one answer to that question. They are an exceeding great army, a multitude which it is difficult to number. They are to be found in our churches, and are pretty regular attendants on all means of grace. They have no doubt of the truth of the Bible. They have not the slightest objection to the doctrines of the gospel. They know the difference between sound and unsound teaching. They admire the lives of holy people. They read good books, and give money to good objects. But unhappily, they never seem to get beyond a certain point in their religion. They never come out boldly on Christ’s side, never take up the cross, never confess Christ before men, never give up petty inconsistencies. They often tell you that they “mean, and intend, and hope, and purpose” some day to be more decided Christians. They know they are not quite what they ought to be at present, and they hope one day to be different. But the “convenient season” never seems to come. They *go on* meaning and intending, and they *go off* the stage, meaning and intending. They *live* meaning and intending, and too often they *die* meaning and intending. They are kind, good-natured, respectable people. They are not enemies, but friends to St. Paul. But like Agrippa, they are “almost Christians.”

How is it, you may well ask, that men can go so far in religion, and yet go no further? How is it that they can see so much, and know so much, and yet not follow the light they have to the “perfect day”? How is it that intellect and reason and conscience can make such progress towards Christianity, and yet heart and will can lag behind? The answers to these questions are soon given.

The fear of man keeps back some. They have a cowardly dread of being laughed at, mocked, and despised, if they become *decided* Christians. They dare not risk the loss of man’s good opinion. Like many of the Jewish rulers in our Lord’s time, they “love the

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<sup>36</sup> Luther, Beza, Grotius, Poole, Bengel, Stier, and Dean Howson.

praise of men more than the praise of God” (Joh 12.43).

The love of the world keeps back others. They know that decided religion entails separation from some of the fashionable amusements and modes of spending time, which are common in the world. They cannot make up their minds to this separation. They shrink from their baptismal vow to “renounce the pomps and vanities of this world.” Like Lot’s wife, they would like to be delivered from the wrath of God; but like her, they must “look back” (Gen 19.26).

A certain subtle form of self-righteousness keeps back many. They take comfort in the secret thought that, at any rate, they are not so bad as Festus. They are not like some people they know: they do not despise religion. They go to church. They admire earnest men like St. Paul. Surely they will not be lost on account of a few inconsistencies!

The morbid dread of being party-spirited keeps back many, and especially young men. They are oppressed with the idea that they cannot take a decided line in religion without committing themselves to some particular “school of thought.” This is what they do not want to do. They forget that the case of Agrippa is not one of *doctrine*, but of *conduct*, and that decided action about duty is the surest way to obtain light about doctrinal truth. “If any man would do God’s will, he will know of the doctrine” (Joh 7.17).

Some secret sin, I fear, keeps back not a few. They know in their own hearts that they are clinging to something which is wrong in God’s sight. There is a Herodias, or a Drusilla, or a Bernice, or an Achan’s wedge of gold somewhere in their private history, which will not bear the light of day. They cannot part with this darling. They cannot cut off the right hand, or pluck out the right eye, and so they cannot become disciples.

Alas! for these excuses. Weighed in the balance, they are worthless and vain. Alas! for those who rest in them. Unless they awake and cast off their chains, they will make shipwreck forever.

Is Agrippa reading this paper today? Are there any like him whose eyes are on this page? Take a kindly warning from a minister of Christ, and try to realize that you are in a very dangerous position. Wishing, and feeling, and meaning, and intending, do not make up saving religion. They are but painted corks, which may enable you to float on the surface for a time, and keep your head above water, but they will not prevent you from being carried down the stream, and being at last swept over a worse fall than that of Niagara. And, after all, you are not happy. You know too much of religion to be happy in the world: you are too mixed up with the world to get any comfort from your religion. In short, you are neither happy *in* the world, nor *out* of the world. Awake to a sense of your danger and your folly. Resolve by God’s help to become decided. Draw the sword, and cast away the scabbard. “If you have no sword, sell your garment and buy one” (Luk 22.36). Burn your ships, and march straight forward. Do not merely *look* at the ark, and admire it; but *enter in*, before the door is shut and the flood begins. [Gen 7.16](#)

One thing, at any rate, may be laid down as an axiom in the elements of religion: an “almost” Christian is neither a safe nor a happy man.

**III.** *Let us turn now to the last picture of the three. Let us look at the man whom Festus thought “beside himself,” and by whom Agrippa was “almost persuaded to be a Christian.” Let us look at St. Paul.*

This is the man who boldly said, "I would to God, that not only you, but all who hear me this day, were both *almost* and *altogether* such as I am, except for these bonds." He wished his hearers no chains or imprisonment, such as he was suffering when he spoke. But he did wish them to be of one mind with him about the one thing needful; and to share his peace, his hope, his solid comfort, his expectations.

"Altogether such as I am." A weighty and memorable saying! It is the language of one who is thoroughly convinced and persuaded that he is in the right. He has cast overboard all doubts and hesitations. He holds the truth with the firm grasp of both hands, and not with finger and thumb. It is the language of the man who wrote in one place, "I know whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." (2Tim 1.12) And in another place, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 8.38-39).

(a) St. Paul was altogether convinced of the truth of the *facts* of Christianity:

- that the Lord Jesus Christ was actually "God manifest in the flesh;"
- that He had proved His divinity by doing miracles which could not be denied;
- that He had finally risen from the grave and ascended up into heaven, and was sitting at God's right hand as man's Saviour;
- on all these points he had thoroughly made up his mind, and had not the slightest doubt of their credibility. He was willing to die on behalf of them.

(b) St. Paul was altogether convinced of the truth of the *doctrines* of Christianity:

- that we are all guilty sinners and in danger of eternal ruin,;
- that the grand object of Christ coming into the world was to make atonement for our sins, and to purchase redemption by suffering in our stead on the cross;
- that all who repent and believe in Christ crucified are completely forgiven all sins;
- that there is no other way to peace with God and heaven after death, except by faith in Christ;
- all this he most stedfastly believed. To teach these doctrines was his one object from his conversion till his martyrdom.

(c) St. Paul was altogether convinced that he himself had been *changed by the power of the Holy Spirit*, and taught to live a new life:

- that a holy life, devoted and consecrated to Christ, was the wisest, happiest life a man could live;
- that the favour of God was a thousand times better than the favour of man;
- that nothing was too much to do for Him who had loved him, and given Himself for him;

He ran his race ever "looking to Jesus" — spending and being spent for Him (Heb 12.2; 2Cor 5.15, 12.15).

(d) Last, but not least, St. Paul was altogether convinced of *the reality of a world to come*:

- the praise or favour of man, the rewards or punishments of this present world, were all as dross to him;
- he had continually before his eyes an incorruptible inheritance, and a crown of glory that would never fade away (Phi 3.8; 2Tim 4.8);
- he knew that nothing could deprive him of that crown.

Festus might despise him, and think him “mad.” The Roman emperor, to whom he was going, might order him to be beheaded or thrown to the lions. What did it matter? He was firmly persuaded that he had treasure laid up in heaven which neither Festus nor Caesar could touch, and which would be his to all eternity.

This is what St. Paul meant when he said “altogether such as I am.” About the *facts*, *doctrines*, *practice*, and *rewards* to come of Christianity, he had a rooted, settled, firm conviction — a conviction which he longed to see all men sharing. He was confident: he wanted others to enjoy the same confidence. He had no doubt or fear about the future state of his soul. He would gladly have seen Festus, Agrippa, Bernice, and all around them, in the same happy condition.

Now, are there many in our present day like St. Paul? I do not of course mean, are there many inspired Apostles? But I do mean, is it common to meet Christians who are as thorough, as unhesitating, as full of assurance as he was? I fear there can only be one answer to this question. “Not many are called,” whether rich or poor, high or low. “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads unto life, and few are there who find it” (1Cor 1.26; Mat 7.14). Look where you please, search where you like in town or in country, there are few “altogether” Christians. Festus and Agrippa are everywhere: they meet us at every turn. But there are few thorough, wholehearted followers of St. Paul. Yet one thing is very certain. These few are the “salt of the earth,” and the “light of the world” (Mat 5.13-14). These few are the glory of the Church, and serve to keep it alive. Without them, the Church would be little better than a decaying carcass, a white-washed sepulchre, a lighthouse without light, a steam-engine without fire, a golden candlestick without a candle, a joy to the devil, and an offence to God.

These are the kind of men who shake the world, and leave an indelible mark behind them. Martin Luther, and John Wesley, and William Wilberforce, were hated and lightly esteemed while they lived; but the work they did for Christ will never be forgotten. They were “altogether” Christians.

These are the kind of men who enjoy true happiness in their religion. Like Paul and Silas, they can sing in prison, and like Peter, they can sleep quietly on the very edge of the grave (Act 12.6, 16.25). Strong faith gives them an inward peace which makes them independent of earthly troubles, and compels even their enemies to wonder. Your lukewarm Laodicean Christians have little comfort in their religion. It is the “thorough” men who have great peace. The first Marian martyr, John Rogers, when he was going to be burned alive for Protestantism, is said to have walked to the stake in Smithfield as cheerfully as if he were going to his wedding. The outspoken, courageous words of old Latimer in the day of his martyrdom in Broad Street, Oxford, before the kindling was lighted, are not forgotten to this very day: “Courage! Brother Ridley,” he cried to his fellow-sufferer; “we will light a candle in England today, by God’s grace, which will never be put out.” These men were “altogether” Christians.

## Chap. 10. Portraits

- He that would be safe and prepared to meet his God at a moment's notice, at evening, at cock-crowing, or in the morning;
- he that would enjoy felt peace in his religion, peace unaffected by sicknesses, bereavements, bankruptcies, revolutions, and the last trumpet's sound;
- he that would do good in his day and generation, and be a fountain of Christian influence to all around him — influence known and recognised long after he has been laid in his grave;

— let that man remember what I tell him today, and never forget it. You must not be content to be an “almost” Christian, like Agrippa. You must strive, and labour, and agonize, and pray to be an “altogether” Christian, like St. Paul.

And now, let us leave these three pictures with self-inquiry and self-examination. The time is short. Our years are quickly passing away. The world is growing old. The great assize [court-trial] will soon begin. The Judge will soon appear. What are we? To whom are we like? Whose is this image and superscription upon us? Is it that of Festus, or of Agrippa, or of St. Paul?

Where are Festus and Agrippa now? We do not know. A veil is drawn over their subsequent history. Whether they died as they lived, we cannot tell. But where is St. Paul, the “altogether” Christian? *That* question we can answer. He is “with Christ, which is far better” (Phi 1.23). He is waiting for the resurrection of the just, in that paradise of rest where sin and Satan and sorrow can trouble him no more. He has fought the good fight. He has finished his course, he has kept the faith. A crown is laid up for him which he will receive in the great review day of the Lord's appearing (2Tim 4.7-8).

And let us thank God: though St. Paul is dead and gone, the Saviour who made St. Paul what he was, and kept him to the end, still lives and never changes — always able to save, always willing to receive. Let the time past suffice us, if we have trifled with our souls up to now. Let us turn over a new leaf. Let us arise and begin with Christ, if we never began before. Let us go on with Christ to the end, if we have begun with Him already. With the grace of God, nothing is impossible. Who would have thought that Saul the Pharisee, the persecutor of Christians, would ever become the “altogether Christian” himself, would become the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and would turn the world upside down? While there is life, there is hope. The follower of Festus and Agrippa may yet be converted, and live for years, and lie down in the grave at last an “altogether” Christian, like St. Paul.

## CHAPTER 11 – Joh 6.68.

### “TO WHOM?”<sup>37</sup>

“Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life.” — Joh 6.68.

THE chapter containing the text which heads this page, is singularly rich in matter.

It begins, we must remember, with that well-known miracle, the feeding of five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes — a miracle which some early writers call the greatest which Christ ever worked — the only miracle which all the four Evangelists alike record — a miracle which exhibited creative power.

It goes on to show us another miracle of hardly less striking character, Christ walking on the waters of the sea of Galilee — a miracle which exhibited our Lord’s power when He thought fit to suspend the so-called laws of nature. It was as easy for Him to walk on the water as it had been to create land and sea at the beginning.

The chapter then carries us on to that wonderful discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum, which St. John alone, of all four Gospel writers, was inspired to give to the world. Christ, the true bread of life — the privileges of all who come to Him and believe — the deep mystery of eating Christ’s flesh and drinking Christ’s blood, and the life which that flesh and blood convey — what a wealth of precious truth lies here! How great the debt which the Church owes to the fourth Gospel!

And finally, as the chapter draws to a close, we have the noble outburst of the warm-hearted Apostle St. Peter, “Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life.” In this remarkable verse, there are three points to which I now propose to invite the attention of all into whose hands this paper may fall.

- I. The *occasion* of these words being spoken.
- II. The *question* which Peter asked in reply to his Master’s appeal.
- III. The *noble declaration* which Simon Peter makes.

**I.** *In the first place, I ask you to observe the OCCASION of these words being spoken.*

What made this fiery, impulsive disciple cry out, “To whom will we go?” The verses which precede our text supply an answer. “From that time *many went back*, and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve — Will you also go away?”

There you have recorded a melancholy and most instructive fact. Even from Christ Himself, who “spoke as never man spoke,” and did works of matchless power, and lived as no one ever lived — holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners — even from Christ, many went away after following Him for a time. Yes! *many*, not a few — many in the noontide blaze of miracles and sermons, such as earth had never seen or heard before — many turned away from Christ. They left Him, deserted Him, gave up His blessed service, and went back — some to Judaism, some to the world, and some, we may fear, to their sins. “If they did these things in a green tree, what may we expect in a dry?” [Luk 23.31](#)

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<sup>37</sup> The substance of these pages was originally preached as a sermon before the University of Oxford, in my turn as Select Preacher at St. Mary’s, in the year 1880. It is now published with some omissions and alterations.

If men could forsake Christ, we have no right to be surprised if His erring, weak ministers are also forsaken in these last days.

But why did these men go back? Some of them, probably, went back because they had not counted the cost; and “when tribulation or persecution arose because of the word,” they were offended. Some of them went back because they had totally misunderstood the nature of our Lord’s kingdom, and dreamed only of temporal advantages and rewards. Most of them, however, it is very clear, went back because they could not receive the deep doctrine which had just been proclaimed — I mean the doctrine that “eating Christ’s flesh and drinking Christ’s blood” are absolutely necessary to salvation. It is the old story. As it was in the beginning, so it will be to the end. There is nothing which the dark, natural heart of man dislikes so much as the so-called “blood theology.” Cain turned away in his proud ignorance from the idea of vicarious sacrifice; and the Jews who fell away from our Lord, “went back” when they heard that they must “eat the flesh and drink the blood” of the Son of man.

But there is no denying the fact that these Jews who “went back” have never been without followers and imitators. Their succession, at any rate, has never ceased. Millions in every age have been admitted into the Church by baptism, and begun life as professing Christians; and then, upon coming to *man’s estate*, they have turned their back altogether on Christ and Christianity. Instead of “continuing Christ’s faithful soldiers and servants,” they have become servants of sin, the world, and unbelief. The defection is continually going on: it is an old disease, and must not surprise us.

- The heart is always deceitful and desperately wicked;
- the devil is always busy, and seeking whom he may devour;
- the world is always ensnaring;
- the way of life is narrow, the enemies many, the friends few, the difficulties great, the cross heavy, the doctrine of the gospel offensive to the natural man. What thoughtful person should wonder that multitudes in every age go back from Christ? They are brought within the outward fold of the Church in childhood; and then, on coming to adulthood, they throw off all religion, and perish miserably in the wilderness.

Yet I am bold to say that the disposition to go back from Christ was never so strong as it is in these days. Never were the objections to vital Christianity so many, so plausible, and so specious. For it is,

- an age of free thought and liberty of action;
- an age of scientific inquiry, and a determination to question and cross-examine ancient opinions;
- an age of greedy pursuit of pleasure and impatience with restraint;
- an age of idolatry of intellect and extravagant admiration of so-called cleverness;
- an age of Athenian craving for novelty and constant love of change;
- an age when we see on all sides a bold but ever shifting scepticism, which at one time tells us that man is little better than an ape, and at another, that he is little less than a god;
- an age when there is a morbid readiness to accept the flimsiest arguments in favour of unbelief, and a simultaneous lazy unwillingness to investigate the great and fundamental evidences of Divine revelation.

And, worst of all, it is

- an age of spurious liberality, when under high-sounding phrases like, “No party spirit! No bigotry!” men live and die without having any distinct opinions at all.

In an age like this, can any thinking Christian wonder that departure from Christ is common? Let him cease to wonder and not waste his time in complaints. Let him rather gird up his loins like a man, and do what he can to stop the plague. Let him set his feet down firmly in “the old paths,” and remember that the defection he sees is only an old complaint in an aggravated form. Let him stand between the dead and living, and try to stop the mischief. Let him “cry aloud, and not spare.” [Isa 58.1](#) Let him say, “Stand by your colours! The battle of Christianity is not lost: will you also go away?”

I dare believe that many young persons into whose hands this paper may fall are often sorely tempted to go back from Christ. You launch out into the world, perhaps, from quiet homes, where the primary truths of Christianity were never called into question for a moment, to hear all sorts of strange theories broached, and strange opinions advanced, which contradict the old principles which you have been taught to believe. You find to your astonishment that free thought and free handling of sacred subjects have reached such a pitch that the very foundations of faith seem shaken. You discover to your amazement that cleverness and religion do not always go together, and that it is possible for the highest intellect to be ready to thrust God out of His own world. Who can wonder if this state of things is a rude shock to the tender faith of many young persons, and that, reeling under it, they are tempted to go back from Christ, and throw away Christianity altogether?

Now, if anyone who reads this paper is tempted in this fashion, I entreat him for Christ’s sake to be firm, to play the man, and resist the temptation. Try to realize that there is nothing new in the state of things which now perplexes you. It is nothing but the old disease which has always plagued and tried the Church in every age, even from the day when Satan said to Eve, “You will not surely die.” It is only the sifting process which God permits, in order to separate the wheat from the chaff, through which we all must pass. The world after all — with its pitfalls and snares for the soul, with its competitions and struggles, its failures and successes, its disappointments and perplexities, its perpetual crop of crude theories and extreme views, its mental conflicts and anxieties, its extravagant free thought, and its equally extravagant superstition — the world is a fiery furnace and ordeal, through which all believers must make up their minds to pass. The temptation to cast off your first faith and go back from Christ is sure to meet you sooner or later, as it has met millions before in one form or another. To realize that, in resisting it, you are only resisting an old and often beaten enemy of the soul, is one half the battle.

And just as I ask you not to be surprised at the temptation to leave Christ, I also entreat you not to be shaken by it. What, even though scores of men you know, give way under the assault, and cast off their Christian armour, neglect their Bibles, misuse their Sundays, and live practically without God in the world? What, even though clever men, promising men, the sons of parents who never dreamed of such things, forsake the banner under which they were enrolled, and become mere nothingarians, or believers in nothing? *Let none of these things move you!* Set your face as a flint towards Jerusalem. [Isa 50.7](#) Set your foot down firmly in the old paths, the good and tried way to the celestial city.

What fruit do the deserters have to show, compared to the followers of Peter, James, and John? What increase of inward peace and outward usefulness? What rest of conscience? What comfort in trial? No! While many go away from Christ, *you* cling to Him with purpose of heart. Cling to your old habits of daily prayer and daily Bible reading, and regular attendance on the means of grace. It is a thousand times better to be on Christ's side with a few, and to be laughed at and despised for a season, than to have the praise of the many for a few short years, and then awake too late, to find that without Christ you are without peace, or hope, or heaven.

**II.** *In the second place, let us consider the QUESTION which Peter asked in reply to his Master's appeal, "Will you also go away?" "Lord," cries the warm-hearted and impulsive Apostle. "Lord, to whom will we go?"*

That question, no doubt, like hundreds in the Bible, was equivalent to a strong affirmation. "There is none beside You to whom we can go." It is like the saying of David, "Whom do I have in heaven but You? And there is none on earth that I desire beside You," (Psa 73.25).

When we think of the age when Peter lived, we cannot help feeling that he had abundant cause to ask that question. In his days, at the end of 4000 years, "the world by wisdom did not know God" (1Cor 1.21). Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome — the very nations which attained the highest excellence in secular things — were sunk in gross darkness in religious things. The fellow-countrymen of matchless historians, tragedians, poets, orators, and architects — worshipped idols, and bowed down to the work of their own hands. The ablest philosophers of Greece and Rome groped after truth like blind men, and wearied themselves in vain to find the door. The whole earth was defiled with spiritual ignorance and immorality. And the wisest men could only confess their need of light — like the Greek philosopher Plato — and groan and sigh for a deliverer. Peter might well cry, "Lord, if we leave You, to whom will we go?"

Where, indeed, could the Apostle have turned for peace of heart, for satisfaction of conscience, for hope in a world to come, if he had gone away from the synagogue of Capernaum with the deserters, and left Christ 1854 years ago! Would he have found what he wanted among the formal Pharisees, or the sceptical Sadducees, or the worldly Herodians, or the ascetic Essenes, or the philosophical schools of Athens, Alexandria, or Rome? Would Gamaliel, or Caiaphas, or Stoics, or Epicureans, or Platonists, have quenched his spiritual thirst, or fed his soul? It is waste of time to ask such questions. All these pretended fountains of knowledge had long been proved to be man-made cisterns, broken cisterns which could hold no water. <sup>Jer 2.13</sup> They satisfied no anxious mind. Whoever drank of these waters soon thirsted again.

But the question which Peter asked is one which true Christians may always ask boldly, when they are tempted to go away from Christ. At this very day, when men tell us that Christianity is an effete and worn-out thing, we may safely challenge them to show us anything better. They may ply us, if they will, with objections to revealed religion, and say many things to which we can offer no reply. But after all, we may confidently defy them to show us "a more excellent way," <sup>1Cor 12.31</sup> and a more solid ground, than that which is occupied by the man who simply believes the entire Bible, and follows Christ.

## Chap. 11. To Whom?

Grant for a moment, that in an hour of weakness we listen to the temptation to go away from Christ. Grant that we close our Bibles, reject all dogmas, and with a sublime contempt for the fossilized theology of our forefathers, content ourselves with a polished nothingarianism,<sup>38</sup> or a few scraps of cold formality. In what respect will we find that we have increased our happiness or usefulness? What solid thing will we get to replace that which we have left? Once you turn your back on Christ, where will you find peace for your conscience, strength for duty, power against temptation, comfort in trouble, support in the hour of death, hope in looking forward to the grave? You may well ask. Nothingarianism can give no answer. These things are only found by those who live the life of faith in a crucified and risen Christ.

To whom, indeed, will we go for help, strength, and comfort, if we turn our backs on Christ? We live in a world of troubles, whether we like it or not. You can no more stave off and prevent them than king Canute could prevent the tide from rising and rudely swelling round the royal chair.<sup>39</sup> Our bodies are liable to a thousand ailments, and our hearts to a thousand sorrows. No creature on earth is so vulnerable, and so capable of intense physical and mental suffering, as man. Sickness, death, funerals, partings, separations, losses, failures, disappointments, and private family trials which no mortal eye sees, will break in upon us from time to time — and human nature imperatively demands help, help, *help* to meet them! Alas, where will thirsty, wailing human nature find such help if we leave Christ?

The plain truth is that nothing but an almighty personal Friend will ever meet the legitimate wants of man's soul. Metaphysical notions, philosophical theories, abstract ideas, vague speculations about "the unseen, the infinite, the inner light," and so forth, may satisfy a select few for a time. But the vast majority of mankind, if they have any religion at all, will never be content with a religion which does not supply them with a Person to whom they may look and trust. It is just this craving after a person which gives the Mariolatry of Rome its curious power. And once this principle is admitted, where will you find one so perfectly fitted to satisfy man as the Christ of the Bible? Look round the world and point out, if you can, any object of faith that is fit to be compared with this blessed Son of God set forth before our eyes in the Gospels. In the face of a dying world, we want positives and not negatives. "To whom will we go, if we go away from Christ?"

Men may tell us, if they please, that our old fountain of living waters is drying up, and that the nineteenth century needs a new theology. But I fail to see evidence to confirm this assertion. I see multitudes of men and women all over the world, after 1800 years, continuing to drink at this fountain; and none of those who honestly stoop to drink, complain that their thirst is not relieved. And all this time, those who profess to despise the good old fountain can show us nothing whatever to take its place. The mental freedom and higher light they promise are as deceptive as the mirage of the African desert, and as unreal as a dream. A substitute for the old fountain exists nowhere but in man's imagination. Whoever leaves it will find that he must return, or perish of thirst.

Perhaps some of my younger readers may secretly think that the difficulties of revealed religion are inexplicable, and they are trying to persuade themselves that they do not

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<sup>38</sup> *Nothingarian*: a person of no beliefs, creed, or particular sect.

<sup>39</sup> Canute the Great (c. 995-1035) – He was proving to his fawning courtiers, that he had no power to stop the rising tide — explaining to them that secular power is vain compared to the supreme power of God.

know “where to go “in these dark and cloudy days. I entreat them to consider that the difficulties of *unbelief* are far greater than the difficulties of *faith*. When men have said all they can to depreciate the old paths of the Bible, and draw you away from Christ — when they have piled up the ancient, stale objections of various readings, doubtful authorship, inconsistent statements, and supposed incredible miracles, they can still offer no substitute for the Scripture, nor answer the question, “To whom will we go?” There still remains the great, broad fact that the leading evidences of revelation have never been overthrown — that we are weak creatures in a sorrowful world, and we need a helping hand, which Christ alone holds out, and which millions for eighteen centuries *have* found, and *are* finding, sufficient. The great argument of probability is entirely on our side. Surely it is wiser to cling to Christ and Christianity, with all its alleged difficulties, than to launch into an ocean of uncertainties, and travel towards the grave hopeless, comfortless, and professing to know nothing at all about the unseen world.

After all, departure from Christ on account of the supposed hardness of certain doctrines, will secure no immunity from mental conflicts. The problems of Christianity may seem great and deep; but the problems of unbelief are greater and deeper still. And not the least problem is the impossibility of answering the question, “Will I find elsewhere any real peace or rest for my soul, if I leave Christ? To whom will I go? Where in all the world will I find a more excellent way than that of faith in Jesus? Where is the personal friend who will supply His place?” Give me a thousand times, the old Evangelical Christianity with all its difficult facts and doctrines — the incarnation, atonement, resurrection, ascension — rather than the cold, barren creed of the Socinian or the Deist; or the cheerless negations of modern unbelief. Give me the religion of texts and hymns and simple faith, which satisfies thousands, rather than the dreary void of speculative philosophy, which thoroughly satisfies none.

**III.** *Let us consider, lastly, the noble DECLARATION which Simon Peter makes in our text. “You have the words of eternal life.”*

I do not for a moment suppose that the Apostle fully grasped the meaning of the words which he used here. It would be inconsistent with all that we read of his knowledge before our Lord’s resurrection, to suppose that he did. It may well be doubted whether he meant more than this: “You are the true Messiah; You are the promised Prophet like Moses, of whom it is written, I will put My words in His mouth, and He will speak to them all that I command Him” (Deut. 18.18). I believe that well-known text was in Peter’s mind, though he did not yet realize its wealth of meaning.

But we may be very sure of one thing. That expression “eternal life” must have been very familiar to him and all the twelve, while Jesus went in and out among them. I suspect that there were few days when they did not hear it fall from His lips, and they caught it if they did not fully understand it. In the brief record of our Lord’s teaching contained in the four Gospels, you have it twenty-five times. In St. John’s Gospel alone, it occurs seventeen times. In this same sixth chapter, we read it five times over. No doubt it was ringing in Peter’s ears when he spoke.

But though Peter “did not know what he said” that day, there came a day when his understanding was opened *after* his Lord’s resurrection, and he saw heights and depths in the “words of eternal life,” which *before* the crucifixion he only saw “through a glass

darkly.” And in the full light of the Acts and Epistles, we need feel no doubt whatever as to the things which this mighty phrase included, which our Lord so often used.

Christ’s words of eternal life were words about the nature of that life which He came into the world to proclaim — a life begun in the soul by faith while we live, and perfected in glory when we die.

- They were words about the *way* in which this eternal life is provided for sinful man: even the way of His atoning death as our Substitute on the cross.
- They were words about the *terms* on which this eternal life is made our own, if we feel our need of it: even the terms of simple faith. As Latimer said, it is but “*believe and have.*”
- They were words about the *training* and discipline on the way to eternal life, which are so much needed by man and so richly provided: even the renewing and sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost.
- They were words about the *comforts* and *encouragements* by the way, laid up for all who believe to life everlasting: even Christ’s daily help, sympathy, and watchful care.

All this and much more, which I cannot speak particularly about now, is contained in that little phrase, “Words of eternal life.” No wonder that our Lord says in a certain place, “I have come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly;” (Joh 10.10). “I have given them the words that You gave Me” (Joh 17.8).

Let us consider for a moment what vast numbers of men and women, in these last eighteen centuries, have found these “words of eternal life” not merely “words,” but solid *realities*. They have been persuaded of them, and embraced them, and found them food and drink to their souls. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who in the faith of these words, have lived happy and useful lives, and died glorious deaths. Where is the one who dares to deny this? Where will we find such lives and deaths *without* Christ?

It was faith in Christ’s “words of eternal life” which made Peter and John stand up boldly before the Jewish council, and confess their Master without fear of consequences, saying, “There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved” (Act 4.12).

It was faith in Christ’s “words of eternal life” which made Paul come out from Judaism, spend his life in preaching the gospel, and say on the brink of the grave, “I know whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day” (2Tim 1.12).

It was faith in Christ’s “words of eternal life” which made Bishop Hooper <sup>40</sup> go boldly to the stake at Gloucester, after saying, “Life is sweet, and death is bitter; but eternal life is more sweet, and eternal death more bitter.”

It was faith in Christ’s “words of eternal life” which made Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer endure a fiery death in Broad Street, Oxford, rather than deny the principles of the Reformation.

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<sup>40</sup> John Hooper (1495-1555) Bishop of Gloucester and Worcester, and a Protestant martyr. He was executed for heresy (by burning at the stake) during the reign of Queen Mary I (“Bloody Mary”).

It was faith in Christ's "words of eternal life" which made Henry Martyn <sup>41</sup> turn his back on ease and distinction at Cambridge, go out to a tropical climate, and die a solitary death as a missionary.

It was faith in Christ's "words of eternal life" which made that honourable woman, Catherine Tait, as recorded in a most touching biography, resign five children in five weeks to the grave, in the full assurance that Christ would keep His word — to take care of them both in body and soul, and bring them with Him to meet her at the last day.

What a fearful contrast to such facts as these, appears in the lives and deaths of those who turn their backs on Christ, and seek other masters! What fruits can the advocates of non-Christian theories, and ideas, and principles, point to with all their cleverness? What holy, loving, peaceful quietness of spirit have they exhibited? What victories have they won over darkness, immorality, superstition, and sin? What successful missions have they carried on? What seas have they crossed? What countries have they civilized or moralized? What neglected home populations have they improved? What self-denying labours have they gone through? What deliverance have they wrought in the earth? You may well ask; but you will get no answer. No wonder our Lord said of false prophets, "By their fruits you will know them" (Mat 7.15-16). It is only those who can say with Peter, "You have the words of eternal life," who make a mark on mankind while they live; and who say, "O death, where is your sting?" when they die.

(a) In conclusion, I entreat everyone who reads this paper to ask himself whether he is going away from Christ, like the Jews, or clinging boldly to Christ, like Peter. You live in dangerous days. There was a time when irreligion was scarcely respectable; but that time has long since ceased to be. But even now Christ continues to knock at the door of your hearts, and asks you to ponder your ways and take heed what you do. "Will you go away?" Dare to set up an assize [court-trial] in your heart of hearts, and look within. Resist the lazy Epicurean feeling which bids you never scrutinize your inward character. Depend on it, an hour will come when you will feel the need of a great Friend in heaven. Without Him you may live tolerably: without Him you will never die comfortably.

You may tell me, perhaps, that you do not really mean to forsake Christ, although you are not at present all that you ought to be. But there are some things in religion about which you cannot make up your mind, and are waiting for "more light." Or you are working hard for some special object, and have not time just now, and hope like Felix, for "a convenient season." But, oh waiting and lingering soul — what is neglect of Christ's word, and ordinances, and day, but "going away from Christ"? Awake to see that you are on an inclined plane, and you are gradually going downward. You are drifting, *drifting daily*, further and further away from God. Awake and resolve, by God's help, to drift no more.

(b) But, next to having no religion at all, I entreat every reader of this paper to beware of a religion in which Christ does not have His rightful place. Let us never try to satisfy ourselves with a little cheap, formal Christianity, that is taken up carelessly on Sunday morning, and laid aside at night — but is not influencing us during the week. Such

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<sup>41</sup> Henry Martyn (1781-1812) – A chance encounter with Charles Simeon led him to become a missionary. He arrived in India in April 1806, where he preached and studied linguistics. He translated the whole of the New Testament into Urdu, Persian, and Judaeo-Persic. He also translated the Psalms into Persian, and the Book of Common Prayer into Urdu. From India, he set out for Persia where he suffered a fever and died at age 31.

## Chap. 11. To Whom?

Christianity will neither give us peace in life, nor hope in death, nor power to resist temptation, nor comfort in trouble. Christ alone has “the words of eternal life,” and His words must be *received, believed, embraced*, and made the *food* and *drink* of our souls. A Christianity without a living, *felt* communion with Him, without a grasp of the benefits of His blood and intercession — a Christianity without Christ’s sacrifice and Christ’s Priesthood — is a powerless, wearisome *form*.

(c) Let us, finally, “hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,” [Heb 10.23](#) if we have reason to hope we are Christ’s true servants. Let men laugh at us, and try to turn us away as much as they please. Let us calmly and humbly say to ourselves at such times:

“After all, to whom can I go if I leave Christ? I feel within, that He has ‘words of eternal life.’ I see that thousands find them food and drink for their souls. Where He goes, I will go; and where He lodges, I will lodge. In a dying world, I can see nothing better. I will cling to Christ and His words. They never failed anyone who trusted them, and I believe they will not fail me.”

## CHAPTER 12 – Heb 4.14.

### OUR PROFESSION

“Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.” — Heb 4.14.

A CAREFUL reader of the Epistle to the Hebrews can hardly fail to observe that the words “let us” are found no less than four times in the fourth chapter. In the first verse you will read, “let us fear,” — in the eleventh verse, “let us labour,” — in the fourteenth verse, “let us hold fast,” — and in the sixteenth verse, “let us come boldly to the throne of grace.” We should take note of this.

Now, why did the Apostle St. Paul write in this way? He did it because the Hebrew Christians to whom he wrote were a peculiar people, and occupied a peculiar position. They were not like Gentile converts, who had been brought up to worship idols, and had never received any revelation from God. The Jews were a people who had enjoyed the special favour of God for fifteen hundred years. All through that long period they had possessed the law of Moses, and an immense amount of spiritual light, which had not been given to any other nation on earth. These privileges had made them very sensitive and jealous at the idea of any change. They needed to be approached very gently and delicately, and to be addressed in a peculiar style. All this St. Paul <sup>42</sup> remembered well, who was himself born a Jew. He puts himself on a level with them, and says, “Let us — I speak to myself as well as to you, lest I offend you.”

But this is not all. I might add that the Jewish Christians had very peculiar trials to undergo. I suspect they were far more persecuted and ill-used after their conversion than the Gentile Christians were. No doubt it was a hard thing for a Gentile to turn from idols. But it was a much harder thing for a Jew to profess that he was not content with the ceremonial law of Moses, and that he had found a better priest, and a better sacrifice — even Jesus of Nazareth, and the blood of the cross. St. Paul also remembered this well, and he cheers and encourages them by placing himself by their side, and saying, “Let us fear,” — “let us labour,” — “let us hold fast,” — “let us come boldly,” — “I am as you are; we are all in the same boat.”

I will confine myself in this paper to the text which heads it, and I will try to answer three questions.

- I. What is this profession of which St. Paul speaks?
- II. Why does St. Paul say, “Let us hold fast”?
- III. What is the grand encouragement which St. Paul gives us to “hold fast”?

Before I go any further, I ask my readers to remember that the things we are about to consider were written by inspiration of the Holy Ghost for the benefit of the whole Church of Christ in every age down to the end of the world. They were meant to be used by all true Christians in England, and by all classes, whether high or low, rich or poor, in London or Liverpool, or in any part of the earth. The Epistle to the Hebrews is not an old worn-out letter which only suits the Jews of eighteen centuries ago. It is meant for you and me.

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<sup>42</sup> In the 20th century, higher criticism led many scholars to conclude that Paul was not the author of Hebrews, because the style is so radically different from his other letters. We now refer to the author as “the writer of Hebrews.” — WHG

We all need to be exhorted to “hold fast our profession.”

**I. Let us begin by considering *WHAT* is meant by “our profession.”**

When St. Paul uses this expression, there can be little doubt about his meaning. He meant that public “profession” of faith in Christ and obedience to Him, which every person made when he became a member of the Christian Church. In the days of the Apostle, when a man or woman left Judaism or heathenism, and received Christ as a Saviour, he declared himself a Christian by certain acts. He did it by being publicly baptized, by joining the company of those who had been baptized already, by publicly promising to give up idolatry and wickedness of all kinds, and by habitually taking part with the followers of Jesus of Nazareth in all their religious assemblies, their ways, and their practices. This is what St. Paul had in view when he wrote the words, “Let us hold fast our profession.”

Profession in those days was a very serious matter, and it entailed very serious consequences. It often brought on a man persecution, loss of property, imprisonment, and even death. The consequence was that few persons ever made a Christian profession in the early Church unless they were thoroughly in earnest, truly converted, and really believers. No doubt there were some exceptions. People like Ananias and Sapphira, and Simon Magus, and Demas, crept in and joined themselves to the disciples. But these were exceptional cases. As a general rule, it was not worthwhile for a man to profess Christianity if his heart was not entirely in his profession. It cost much. It brought on a man the risk of a vast amount of trouble, and brought in very little gain. The whole result was that the proportion of sincere, right-hearted, and converted persons in the Church of the Apostle’s days was far greater than it has ever been at any other period in the last eighteen centuries. There was a very deep meaning in St. Paul’s words when he said, “Let us hold fast our profession.”

In the days in which we live, “profession” is a very different thing. Millions of people profess and call themselves Christians, whom the Apostle would not have called Christians at all. Millions are annually baptized, and added to the rolls and registers of churches, who have little or no religion. Many of them live and die without ever attending a place of worship, and live very ungodly lives. Many more only go to a church or chapel occasionally, or once on Sunday at most. Many others pass through life without ever becoming communicants, and live and die in the habitual neglect of that Holy Sacrament which the Lord commanded to be received. Most of these people are reckoned Christians while they live, and are buried with a Christian burial when they die. But what would St. Paul have said of them? I fear there can be no doubt about the answer. He would have said they did not deserve to be reckoned members of any Church at all! He would not have addressed them as “saints and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus.” He would not have called on them to “hold fast their profession.” He would have told them they had no profession to hold fast, and that they were “yet dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2.1). All this is sorrowful and painful, but it is only too true. Let those deny it who dare.

Let us, however, thank God that there are not a few to be found in every part of Christendom who really are what they profess to be — true, sincere, earnest-minded, hearty, converted, believing Christians. Some of them, no doubt, belong to churches in which their souls get little help. Some of them have very imperfect knowledge, and they hold the truth in solution, with a mixture of many defective views. But they all have certain

common marks about them. They see the value of their souls, and really want to be saved. They feel the sinfulness of sin, and hate it, and fight with it, and long to be free from it. They see that Jesus Christ alone can save them, and that they ought to trust only in Him. They see that they ought to live holy and godly lives — and in their poor way, they try to do it. They love their Bibles, and they pray, though both their reading and their praying are very defective.

In short, some believers are in the highest standard of Christ's school, and are strong in knowledge, faith, and love. Others are only in the infants' room, and are weak and poor in everything. But in one point, they are all one. Their hearts are right in the sight of God; they love Christ; their faces are set towards heaven, and they want to go there. These are those in the present day to whom I wish in this paper to apply St. Paul's exhortation, "Let us hold fast our profession." Let us cling to it, and not let it go.

Now, I cannot forget that we meet thousands of persons in daily life who are always saying, "I make *no profession* of religion." They not only say it, but they rather glory in saying it, as if it was a right, wise, and proper thing to say. They seem even to despise those who *do* make a profession, and regard them as hypocrites and impostors, or at any rate, as weak and foolish people. If this paper happens to fall into the hands of any person of this kind, I have something to say to him, and I invite his best attention.

I do not deny that there are many hypocrites in religion. There always were, and there always will be, as long as the world stands. For so long as there is good gold and silver coin in the realm, there will be forging, coining, and counterfeit money. The very existence of bad coins is an indirect proof that there is something which it is worthwhile to imitate, and that there is such a thing as good current money in circulation. It is just the same with Christianity! The very fact that there are many false professors in the churches is an indirect proof that there are those who are true-hearted and sound believers. It is one of Satan's favourite devices, in order to bring discredit on Christianity, to persuade some unhappy people to profess what they do not really believe. He tries to damage the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world by sending out wolves in sheep's clothing, and by raising up men and women who talk the language of Canaan, and wear the coat of God's children, while they are inwardly rotten at heart. But these things do not justify a man in condemning *all* religious profession.

I tell those who boast that they make no profession, that they are only exhibiting their own sorrowful ignorance of Holy Scripture. The hypocrisy of some unhappy people must never prevent us doing our own duty, without caring what men may say or think of us. We must never be ashamed of showing ourselves boldly on Christ's side, by honouring His word, His day, and His ordinances, by speaking up for Christ's cause on all proper occasions, and by firmly refusing to conform to the sins and the follies of the children of this world. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ should never be forgotten: "Whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words, the Son of man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luk 9.26). If we will not confess Christ on earth, and openly profess that we are His servants, we must not expect that Christ will confess us in heaven at the last day.

In short, the very last thing that a man should be ashamed of is the "profession" of religion. There are many things unhappily of which most people seem not ashamed at all. Ill-temper, selfishness, lack of charity, laziness, malice, backbiting, lying, slandering,

intemperance, impurity, gambling, Sabbath-breaking — all these are terribly common things among men, and most people do not seem a bit ashamed of them, though they ought to be! Those who habitually “do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5.21). But no one ever need be ashamed of Bible-reading, praying, holy living, and working for the good of bodies and souls. These may be things which many laugh at, dislike, despise, and have no taste for — but they are the very things with which God is well pleased. Once more, I repeat, whatever men may say, the very last thing which we ought to be ashamed of, is our “profession” of faith in Christ, and obedience to Christ.

**II.** *Let us, in the second place, consider WHY St. Paul says, “Let us hold fast our profession.”*

The answer to this question is threefold, and it demands the serious attention of all who hope that they are really sincere in their Christian profession.

(a) For one thing, OUR HEARTS are always weak and foolish, even after conversion. We may have passed from death to life, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds. We may see the value of our souls, as we once did not. We may have become new creatures; old things may have passed away, and all things may have become new. But believers must never forget that until they die, they carry about with them a weak, foolish, and treacherous heart. The roots of all manner of evil are still within us, although cut down to the ground by the grace of the Holy Ghost. Whether we like to acknowledge it or not, at our very best, *these* are latent within us:

- dislike of trouble,
- secret desire to please man and fit in with the world,
- carelessness about our private Bible-reading and our prayers,
- envy and jealousy of others,
- laziness about doing good,
- selfishness and desire to have our own way,
- forgetfulness of the wishes of others,
- lack of watchfulness over our own besetting sins.

All these things often lie hidden within us, below the surface of our hearts. The holiest saint may find to his cost some day, that they are all there *alive*, and ready to show themselves. No wonder that our Lord Jesus said to the three Apostles in the garden, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak” (Mar 14.38). I have no doubt that St. Paul had the *heart* in view, when he wrote those words, “Hold fast.” “Let us therefore hold fast our profession”

(b) For another thing, the world is a source of immense danger to the Christian soul. From the day we are converted, we are living in a most unhealthy atmosphere for religion. We live and move and have our being in the midst of a vast multitude of people who are utterly without vital Christianity. In every rank of life we meet with hundreds who, however moral and respectable, seem to care for nothing but things such as these:

- What will I eat?
- What will I drink?
- What can I get?
- What can I spend?

- How will I employ my time?
- What profit can I make?
- What amusement can I have?
- What pleasant company can I enjoy!

As for God, and Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and the Bible, and prayer, and repentance, and faith, and holy living, and doing good in the world, and death, and resurrection, and judgment, and heaven and hell — these are subjects which never appear to come across them except in sickness, or at a funeral. Now, to live constantly in the midst of such people, as a Christian must do, is sure to be a great trial to him, and it requires constant watchfulness to prevent his getting harm. We are incessantly tempted to give way about little things, and to make compromises and concessions. We naturally dislike giving offence to others, and having frictions and collisions with relatives, friends, and neighbours. We do not like to be laughed at and ridiculed by the majority, and to feel that we are always in a minority in every company into which we go. I fear that too many are laughed out of heaven, and laughed into hell. It is a true saying of Solomon, “The fear of man brings a snare” (Pro 29.25). I once knew a brave sergeant of a cavalry regiment, who after living to the age of fifty without any religion, became a decided Christian for the last few years of his life. He told me that when he first began to think about his soul, and to pray, some months passed before he dared to tell his wife that he said his prayers. He used to creep upstairs without his boots in the evening, so that his wife might not hear him, and find out what he was doing!

The plain truth is that “the whole world lies in wickedness” (1Joh 5.19), and it is vain to ignore the danger that the world causes to the believer’s soul. The spirit of the world, and the tone of the world, and the tastes of the world, and the air of the world, and the breath of the world, are continually about him every day that he lives, drawing him down and pulling him back. If he does not keep his faith in lively exercise, he is sure to catch and infection, and take damage, like the travellers through the Campagna at Rome, who take a fever without being aware of it at the time. The most mischievous and unsanitary gas is that which our bodily senses do not detect. We have reason to pray continually for an increase of that faith of which St. John says, “that it gives us the victory over the world” (1Joh 5.4). Happy, indeed, is that Christian who can be in the world and yet not about the world, who can do his duty in it, and yet not be conformed to it, who can pass through it unmoved by its smiles or its frowns, its flattery or its enmity, its open opposition or its playful ridicule, its sweets or its bitters, its gold or its sword! When I think what the world is, and see what harm it *has* done and *is* doing to souls, I do not wonder that St. Paul says, “Hold fast.” “Let us hold fast our profession.”

(c) For one thing more, the devil is a constant enemy to the Christian’s soul. That great, sleepless, and unwearied foe, is always labouring to do us harm. It is his constant object to wound, hurt, vex, injure, or weaken, if he cannot kill and destroy. He is an unseen enemy who is always near us, “about our path, and about our bed,” and spying out all our ways, prepared to suit his temptations to the special weak points of every man. He knows us far better than we know ourselves. He has been studying one book for 6000 years, the book of fallen human nature, and he is a spirit of almost boundless subtlety and cunning, and of boundless malice. The best of saints has little idea how many vile suggestions in his heart come from the devil, and what a restless adversary stands at his

right hand.

- This is the one who tempted Eve at the beginning, and persuaded her that she might disobey God, eat the forbidden fruit, and not die.
- This is the one who tempted David to number the people, and to cause the death of 70,000 of his subjects by pestilence in three days.
- This is the one who tried to tempt our Lord in the wilderness immediately after His baptism, and even quoted Scripture to gain his end.
- This is the one who opposed our Lord all throughout His three years' ministry, sometimes by possessing the bodies of unhappy men and women in a most mysterious manner, and at the end, by putting it into the heart of one of His Apostles to betray Him.
- This is the one who constantly opposed the Apostles after our Lord's ascension, and tried to stop the progress of the gospel.
- This is the one of whom St. Paul testifies that even "Satan is transformed into an angel of light," and that false teachers are his agents (2Cor 11.14).

Does any reader of this paper foolishly suppose that the devil is asleep, or dead, or less mischievous now than in olden times? Nothing of the kind! He is still "walking about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1Pet 5.8) He is still "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it" (Job 1.7).

- It is he who goes among heathen nations and persuades them to shed oceans of blood in the worship of idols, or in murderous wars.
- It is he who goes to and fro among fallen Churches, persuading them to throw aside the Bible, and satisfies people with formal worship or grovelling superstitions.
- It is he who walks up and down in Protestant countries, and stirs up party spirit, and bitter political strife, setting class against class, and subjects against rulers, in order to distract men's minds from better things.
- It is he who is continually going to the ears of intellectual and highly educated men, persuading them that the old Bible is not true, and advising them to be content with Atheism, Theism, Agnosticism, Secularism, and a general contempt for the world to come.
- It is he, above all, who persuades foolish people that there is no such person as a devil, and no future judgment after death, and no hell.

In all this fearful list of things, I firmly believe that the devil lies at the bottom of it, and is the true root, reason, and cause. Can we suppose for a moment that he will let true Christians go quietly to heaven, and not tempt them by the way?

Away with the silly thought! We need to pray against the DEVIL, as well as against the WORLD and the FLESH. In the great trinity of enemies which the believer should daily remember, the devil is perhaps the greatest, because he is the least seen. Nothing delights him so much (if indeed he can be delighted at all) as to injure a true Christian, and make him bring discredit on his religion. When I think of the devil, I do not wonder that St. Paul said, "Hold fast." "Let us hold fast our profession."

Now, I suspect that some reader of this paper may be secretly thinking that I am an alarmist, and that there is no need for such watchfulness, carefulness, and "holding fast." I ask such a person to turn with me to the Bible for a few moments, and to consider

seriously what that blessed book teaches.

I ask him to remember that Judas Iscariot and Demas both began well, and made a good profession. One was a chosen Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ, and a constant companion of our blessed Saviour for three years. He walked with Him, talked with Him, heard His teaching, saw His miracles, and up to the very night before our Lord was crucified, he was never thought a worse man than Peter, James, or John. Yet this unhappy man at last let go of his profession, betrayed his Master, came to a miserable end, and went to his own place. — The other man I named, Demas, was a chosen companion of the Apostle St. Paul, and professed to be of like mind with that eminent man of God. There can be little doubt that for some years he journeyed with him, helped him, and took part in his evangelistic labours. But how did it all end? He gave up his profession; and the last Epistle St. Paul wrote contains this melancholy record: “Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2Tim 4.10). We never hear of him again.

To everyone who thinks I have dwelt too much on the Christian’s dangers, I say this day, Remember Demas; remember Judas Iscariot; tighten your grasp, “hold fast your profession,” and beware. We may appear to men to be very good Christians for a season, and yet at last prove to be stony-ground hearers, destitute of a wedding garment. [Mat 22.12](#)

But this is not all. I ask every believer to remember that if he does not “hold fast,” he may pierce himself through with many sorrows, and bring great discredit on his character. We should never forget David’s awful fall in the matter of the wife of Uriah, and Peter’s thrice-repeated denial of his Master, and Cranmer’s temporary cowardice, of which he so bitterly repented at last. Are we greater and stronger than they? “Let us not be high-minded, but *fear*.” There is a godly fear which is of great use to the soul. It was the great Apostle of the Gentiles who wrote these words: “I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection — lest, after I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1Cor 9.27).

Does any Christian reader of these pages desire much happiness in his religion, and much joy and peace in believing? Let him take an old minister’s advice this day, and “hold fast his profession.” Let him resolve to be very thorough, very decided, very watchful, very careful about the state of his soul. The more boldly he shows his colours, and the more uncompromising and firm he is, the lighter he will find his heart, and the more sensibly he will feel the sun shining on his face. None are so happy in God’s service as decided Christians. When John Rogers, the first martyr in Queen Mary’s time, was being led to Smithfield to be burned, the French Ambassador reported that he looked as bright and cheerful as if he were going to his wedding.

Does any Christian reader of these pages desire much usefulness to others in his religion? Let me assure him that none do so much good in the long run of life, and leave such a mark on their generation, as those who “hold fast their profession” most tightly, and are most decided servants of Christ. Few men, perhaps, did more for the cause of the Protestant Reformation, and shook the power of Rome more completely in this country, than the two noble bishops who were burned back to back at one stake in Oxford, and would not let go their faith to save their lives. I need not say that I refer to Ridley and Latimer. The careless, thoughtless, irreligious world takes notice of such men, and is obliged to admit that there is something real and solid in their religion. The more light shines in our lives, the more good we will do in the world. It is not for nothing that our Lord says in the Sermon on the Mount, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may

see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat 5.16).

Let us gather up all these things in our memories, and never forget them. Let it be a settled principle in our minds, that it is of immeasurable importance to our happiness and usefulness to “hold fast our profession,” and to always be on our guard. Let us dismiss from our minds the crude modern idea that a believer need only sit still, and “yield himself” to God. <sup>43</sup> Let us rather maintain the language of Scripture, and strive to,

- “mortify the deeds of our body,” (Rom 8.13)
- “crucify our flesh,” (Gal 5.24)
- “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit,” (2Cor 7.1)
- wrestle, to fight, and live the soldier’s life. (2Tim 2.3; Eph 6.12; 1Tim 6.12)

One might think that the account of the armour of God in the Epistle to the Ephesians ought to settle the question of our duty. But the plain truth is, men will persist in confounding two things that differ: *justification* and *sanctification*. In justification, the word to be addressed to man is, *believe* — only believe. In sanctification, the word must be, *Watch, pray, and fight*. What God has divided, let us not mingle and confuse. I can find no words to express my own deep sense of the immense importance of “holding fast our profession.”

**III.** *In the last place, let us consider what encouragement there is to Christians, to hold fast their profession.*

The Apostle St. Paul was singularly fitted, both by grace and nature, to handle this subject. Of all the inspired writers in the New Testament, none seems to have been so thoroughly taught of God to deal with the conflicts of the human heart as St. Paul. None was better acquainted with the dangers, diseases, and remedies of the soul. The proof of this is to be seen in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, and the fifth chapter of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Those two chapters ought to be frequently studied by every Christian who wishes to understand his own heart.

Now, what is the ground of encouragement which St. Paul proposes? He tells us to “hold fast our profession,” and not let it go, because “we have a great High Priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.”

That word “High Priest” would ring with power in the ears of a Jewish reader far more than it would in the ears of Gentile Christians. It would stir up in his mind the remembrance of many typical things in the service of the tabernacle and temple. It would make him recollect,

- that the Jewish high priest was a kind of mediator between God and the people;
- that he alone went once every year into the Holy of Holies on the day of atonement, and had access through the veil to the mercy-seat;
- that he was a kind of daysman <sup>44</sup> between the twelve tribes and God, to lay his hand on both (Job. 9.33);
- that he was the chief minister over the house of God, who was intended “to have

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<sup>43</sup> That is, “Let go, and let God.”

<sup>44</sup> *Daysman*: a referee or arbitrator; an ombudsman.

compassion on the ignorant and those who were out of the way” (Heb 5.2).

All these things would give the Jews some idea of what St. Paul meant when he said, “Let us hold fast,” because we have a great High Priest in heaven. The plain truth is that the Christian is meant to understand that we have a mighty, living Friend in heaven, who not only died for us, but rose again, and after rising again, took His seat at the right hand of God, to be our Advocate and Intercessor with the Father until He comes again. We are meant to understand that Christ not only *died* for us, but is *alive* for us, and *actively working* on our behalf at this very day. In short, the encouragement that St. Paul holds out to believers is the living priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Is this not exactly what he meant when he told the Hebrews that Christ is “able to save those to the uttermost who come to God by Him, because He ever lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7.25)?

Is this not what he meant when he told the Romans, “If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we will be saved by His life” (Rom 5.10)?

Is this not what he meant when he wrote that glorious challenge, “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died — rather, indeed, who is risen again — who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (Rom 8.34)?

Here, in one word, is the believer’s fountain of consolation. He is not only to look to a Saviour who died as his Substitute, and shed His blood for him, but to a Saviour who also, after His resurrection, took His seat at God’s right hand, and lives there as his constant Intercessor and Priest.

Let us think for a moment what a wonderful and suitable High Priest is the High Priest of our profession, a million times superior to any high priest of the family of Aaron.

Jesus is a High Priest of almighty power, for He is very God of very God, never slumbering, never sleeping, never dying, and eternal. The Jewish high priests were “prevented from continuing by reason of death” (Heb 7.23), but Christ being raised from the dead, dies no more. Our great High Priest never grows old, and never dies (Rom 6.9).

Jesus is a High Priest who is perfect Man as well as perfect God. He knows what our bodies are, for He had a body Himself, and is acquainted with all its sinless weakness and pains. He knows what hunger, and thirst, and suffering are, for He lived for thirty-three years on earth, and knows the physical nature of an infant, a child, a boy, a young man, and a man of full age. “He has suffered Himself, being tempted” (Heb 2.18).

Jesus is a High Priest of matchless sympathy. He can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4.15). His heart was always overflowing with love, pity, and compassion while He was on earth. He wept at the grave of Lazarus. He wept over unbelieving Jerusalem. He had an ear ready to hear every cry for help, and was ever going about doing good to the sick and the afflicted. One of His last thoughts on the cross was one of care for His mother, and one of His first messages after His resurrection was one of “peace” to His poor fallen Apostles. *And He has not changed*. He has carried that wonderful heart up to heaven, and is ever watching the weakest lamb in His flock with merciful tenderness.

Jesus is a High Priest of perfect wisdom. He knows exactly what each of us is, and what each of us requires. “He will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear”

(1Cor 10.13), nor allow us to remain in the furnace of suffering one moment beyond the time that is required for our refining. He will give us strength according to our day, and grace according to our need. He knows the most secret feelings of our hearts, and understands the meaning of our feeblest prayers. He is not like Aaron, and Eli, and Abiathar, and Annas, and Caiaphas — an erring and imperfect high priest in dealing with those who come to Him, and who spread out their petitions before Him. He never makes any mistakes.

I challenge every reader of this paper to tell me, if he can, what greater consolation and encouragement the soul of man can have than the possession of such a High Priest as this? We do not think enough of Him these days. We talk of His death, and His sacrifice, and His blood, and His atonement, and His finished work on the cross; and no doubt we can never make too much of these glorious subjects. But we err greatly if we stop short here. We ought to look beyond the cross and the grave, to the *life*, the *priesthood*, and the *constant intercession* of Christ our Lord. Unless we do this, we have only a defective view of Christian doctrine. The consequences of neglecting this part of our Lord's offices are very serious, and have done great harm to the Church and the world.

Young men and women in all our churches, and all new believers generally speaking, are taking immense damage for lack of right teaching about the priestly office of Christ. They feel within themselves a daily craving for help, grace, strength, and guidance in running the race set before them along the narrow way of life. It does not satisfy them to hear that they should always look back to the cross and the atonement. There is something within them which whispers that they would like to have a *living* friend. Then comes the devil, and suggests that they ought to go to earthly priests and make confession, and receive absolution, and keep up the habit of doing this continually. They are often far too ready to believe it, and foolishly try to supply the hunger of their souls by extravagantly frequent reception of the Lord's Supper, and submitting to the spiritual directorship of some clergyman. All this is little better than religious opium-eating and dram-drinking. It soothes the heart for a little season, but does no real good; and it often results in bringing souls into a state of morbid superstitious bondage. It is not the medicine which Scripture has provided.

The truth which all believers need to be told, and especially young men and women in these days, is the truth of Christ's life in heaven, and priestly intercession for us. We need no earthly confessor, and no earthly priest. There is only one Priest to whom we ought to go with our daily wants, even Jesus the Son of God. It is impossible to find one more mighty, more loving, more wise, more ready to help than He is. It is a wise saying of an old divine that, "the eyes of a believer ought to be fixed on Christ in all his dealings with God. The one eye is to be set on His oblation, and the other on His intercession." Let us never forget this. The true secret of holding fast our profession, is to be continually exercising faith in the priestly office of Christ, and making use of it every day.

Whoever acts on this principle will find it possible to serve God and be a Christian in any position, however hard it may be. He need not suppose for a moment, that he cannot have true religion without retiring from the world and going into a monastery, or living like a hermit in a cave. A young woman must not suppose that she cannot serve God in her own family because of unconverted parents, brothers, and sisters, and that she must go into some "Religious House," so called, in company with a few like-minded women. All such

ideas are senseless and unscriptural; they come from beneath, and not from above. At school or in college, in the army or the navy, in the bank or at the bar, in the merchant's house or on exchange, it is possible for a man to serve God. As a daughter at home, or a teacher in a high school, or an assistant in a house of business, a woman can serve God, and must never give way to the cowardly thought that it is impossible. But how is it all to be done? Simply by living the life of faith in the Son of God — by continually looking back to Him on the cross, and to the fountain of His blood for daily pardon and peace of conscience — by daily looking up to Him at the right hand of God interceding for us — and daily drawing from Him supplies of grace in this world of need. This is the sum of the whole matter: we have a great High Priest who has passed into the heavens, and through Him it is possible not only to begin, but to “hold fast” our profession.

I will now conclude this paper by addressing a few words of direct practical exhortation to every reader into whose hands it may happen to fall.

(a) Do you belong to that huge class of so-called Christians who make no profession of religion at all? Alas! it is a pity this class should be so large; but it is vain to shut our eyes to the fact that it *is* very large. These of whom I speak are not atheists or infidels; they would not for a moment like to be told they are not Christians. They go to places of worship; they think Christianity is a very proper thing for baptisms, weddings, and funerals. They say grace before and after dinner; they like their children to have some religion in their education. But they never seem to get any further; they shrink from making a “profession.” It is useless to tell them to “hold fast,” because they have nothing to hold.

I ask such persons, in all affection and kindness, to consider how unreasonable and inconsistent their position is. Most of them believe the Apostles' Creed. They believe there is a God, and a world to come after death, and a resurrection, and a judgment, and a life everlasting. But what can be more senseless than to believe all these vast realities, and yet to travel on towards the grave without any preparation for the great future? You will not deny that you will have to meet the Lord Jesus Christ, the Judge of all, when the last trumpet sounds, and you will stand before the great white throne. But where will you be in that awful day, if you have never professed faith, love, and obedience to that Judge during the time of your life upon earth? How can you possibly expect Him to confess and own you in that hour, if you have been afraid or ashamed to confess Him, and to declare yourself boldly on His side, while you are on earth?

Think of these things, I beseech you, and change your plan of life. Cast aside vain excuses and petty reasons for delay. Resolve by the grace of God to lay firm hold on Jesus Christ, and to enlist like a man under His banners. That blessed Saviour will receive you just as you are, however unworthy you may feel yourself. Wait for nothing, and wait for nobody. Begin to pray this very day, and to pray real, lively, fervent prayers, such as the penitent thief prayed on the cross. Take down your long-neglected Bible, and begin to read it. Break off every known bad habit. Seek the company and friendship of thoroughgoing Christians. Give up going to places where your soul can get nothing but harm. In one word, begin to make “a profession,” fearing neither the laughter nor the scorn of man. The word of the Lord Jesus is for you as well as another: “Whoever comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (Joh 6.37). I have seen many people on their death-beds, but I never met with one who said he was sorry he had made a “profession” of religion.

(b) In the last place, do you belong to that much smaller class of persons who really profess Christian faith, and Christian obedience, and are trying, however weakly, to follow Christ in the midst of an evil world. I think I know something of what goes on in your hearts. You sometimes feel that you will never persevere to the end, and will be obliged some day to give up your profession. You are sometimes tempted to write bitter things against yourself, and to fancy that you have no grace at all. I am afraid there are myriads of true Christians in this condition, who go trembling and doubting toward heaven, with Despondency, and Much-Afraid, and Fearing in *the Pilgrim's Progress*, and who fear they will never get to the Celestial City at all. But oddly enough, in spite of all their groans and doubts and fears, they do not turn back to the city from which they came (Heb 11.15). They press on, though faint, yet pursuing — and as John Wesley used to say of his people, “they end well.”

Now, my advice to all such persons, if any of them are reading this paper, is very simple. Say every morning and evening of your life, “Lord, increase my faith.” Cultivate the habit of fixing your eye more simply on Jesus Christ, and try to know more of the fulness there is laid up in Him for every one of His believing people. Do not always be poring down over the imperfections of your own heart, and dissecting your own besetting sins. *Look up!* Look more to your risen Head in heaven, and try to realize more than you do, that the Lord Jesus not only *died* for you, but that He also *rose again* — and that He is ever living at God’s right hand as your Priest, your Advocate, and your Almighty Friend. When the Apostle Peter “walked on the waters to go to Jesus,” he got on very well as long as his eye was fixed on his Almighty Master and Saviour. But when he looked away to the winds and waves, and reasoned, and considered his own strength, and the weight of his body, he soon began to sink, and cried, “Lord, save me.” No wonder that our gracious Lord, while grasping his hand and delivering him from a watery grave, said, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” Alas! many of us are very like Peter — we look away from Jesus, and then our hearts faint, and we feel ourselves sinking (Mat 14.28-31).

Think, last of all, how many millions of men and women like yourself got home safe during the last eighteen hundred years. Like you, they had their battles and their conflicts, their doubts and their fears. Some of them had very little “joy and peace in believing,” [Rom 15.13](#) and were almost surprised when they woke up in Paradise. Some of them enjoyed full assurance, and strong consolation, and entered the haven of eternal life like a gallant ship in full sail. And who are these last ones who have done so? Those who not only held their profession between finger and thumb, but grasped it firmly with both hands, and were ready to die for Christ, rather than not confess Him before men. Take courage, believer. The bolder and more decided you are, the more comfort you will have in Christ.

*You cannot have two heavens — one here and the other hereafter.* You are yet in the world, and you have a body, and a busy devil is always near you. But great faith will always have great peace. The happiest person in religion will always be that man or woman who can say with a true heart, like St. Paul, “The life that I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” In myself I see nothing, but I keep ever looking to Jesus; and by His grace, I hold fast my profession (Gal 2.20).

And now I cannot leave this great and solemn subject without offering to all who read it a parting word of warning about the times in which we live. I will try to briefly explain what I mean.

I believe, then, that for three centuries there has not been an age in which it has been so needful to urge professing Christians to “hold fast” as it is at this time. No doubt there is plenty of religion of a certain sort in these days. There are many more attendants on public worship all over the land than there were thirty years ago. But it may well be doubted whether there is any increase of vital Christianity. I am greatly mistaken if there is not a growing tendency to hold *nothing* fast in religion, and a disposition to hold *everything* as loosely as possible. “Nothing fast! Everything loose!” seems the order of the day.

How is it in matters of faith and doctrine? It used to be thought important to hold clear and distinct views about such points as the inspiration of the Scriptures, the atonement, the work of the Spirit, the personality of the devil, the reality of future punishment. It is not thought so now. The old order of things has passed away. You may believe anything or nothing on these subjects, so long as you are earnest and sincere. Holding *fast* has given way to holding *loose*.

How is it in matters of worship and ritual? It used to be thought important to be content with the plain teaching of the Prayer Book. It is not thought so now. You must have the Lord’s Table called an *altar*, and the sacrament called a *sacrifice*, without the slightest warrant in the Prayer Book, and a ceremonial fitted to these novel views. And then if you complain, you are told that you are very narrow and illiberal, and that a clergyman ought to be allowed to do and say and teach anything, if only he is earnest and sincere. Holding fast has given way to holding loose.

How is it in the matter of holy living? It used to be thought important to “renounce the pomps and vanity of this wicked world,” and to keep clear of races, theatre-going, balls, card-playing, and the like. It is not thought so now. You may do anything and go anywhere you please, so long as you keep Lent, and occasionally attend early Communion! You must not be so very strict and particular! Once more I say, holding fast has given way to holding loose.

This state of things, to say the least, is not satisfactory, It is full of peril. It shows a condition of Christianity which, I am certain, would not have satisfied St. Paul or St. John. The world was not turned upside down by such vague and loose doctrine and practice eighteen centuries ago. The souls of men in the present day will never receive much benefit from such loose Christianity, either in England or anywhere else. Decision in teaching and living is the only Christianity which God has blessed in the ages that are past, or will continue to bless in our own time. Loose, vague, misty, broad Christianity may avoid offence and please people in health and prosperity, but it will not convert souls, or supply solid comfort in the hour of sorrow or sickness, or on the deathbed.

The plain truth is that “sincerity and earnestness” are becoming the idol of many English Christians in these latter days. People seem to think it matters little what opinions a man holds in religion, so long as he is “earnest and sincere;” and you are thought uncharitable if you doubt his soundness in the faith! Against this idolatry of mere “earnestness” I enter my solemn protest. I charge every reader of this paper to remember that God’s written Word is the only rule of faith, and to believe nothing to be true and soul-saving in religion which cannot be proved by plain texts of Scripture. I entreat him to read the Bible, and make it his only test of truth and error, right and wrong. And for the last time I say, “Hold *fast*, and not *loose* — hold fast your profession.”

## CHAPTER 13 – Mat 8.11.

### MANY WILL COME

“Many will come from the east and west, and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” — Mat 8.11.

THE words of Scripture which head this page were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. You may take them either as a *prophecy* or as a *promise*. In either point of view, they are deeply interesting, and contain much food for thought.

Take the words as a *prophecy*, and remember that they are sure to be fulfilled. The Bible contains many predictions of things most unlikely and improbable, which have yet proved true. Was it not said of Ishmael, the father of the Arabian race, that he was to be a “wild man, his hand against every man, and every man’s hand against him”? (Gen 16.12). We see the fulfilment of those words at this very day, when we look at the tribes in the Sudan, or observe the ways of the Bedouins. — Was it not said of Egypt that it was finally to become “the basest of kingdoms,” and its inhabitants a people who could neither govern themselves nor be governed? (Eze 29.15). We see the fulfilment of those words at this very day along the whole valley of the Nile, and every statesman in Europe knows it to his sorrow. It will be just the same with the prophecy before our eyes. “Many will sit down in the kingdom of heaven.”

Take the words as a *promise*. It was spoken for the encouragement of the Apostles, and of all Christian ministers and teachers down to the present day. We are often tempted to think that preaching, and teaching, and visiting, and trying to bring souls to Christ does no good, and that our labour is all thrown away. But here is the promise of One who “cannot lie,” and never failed to keep HIS word. He cheers us with a gracious sentence. He would have us not faint or give way to despair. Whatever we may think, and however little success we may see, there is a Scripture before us which cannot be broken, “Many will sit down in the kingdom of heaven.”

In these words we have,

- I. The NUMBER of those who will be saved.
- II. The DWELLINGS and POSITION of those who will be finally saved.
- III. The future PORTION and REWARD of those who will be finally saved.
- IV. The COMPANY which those who are finally saved will enjoy forever.

**I.** *We have first in these words the NUMBER of those who will be saved. Our Lord Jesus Christ declares that they will be “many.”*

How strange that word “many” sounds! Will any be saved who are not born again, washed in Christ’s blood, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost? Will any be saved who have not repented of sin (except infants), believed on the Lord Jesus for forgiveness, and been made holy in heart? None, none, certainly *none*. If men and women can be saved without repentance, faith, and holiness, we may as well throw the Bible away, and give up Christianity altogether.

But are there many people of this kind to be seen in the world? Alas! there are very few. The believers whom we see and know are “a little flock.” “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Mat 7.14). Few are to be seen

in towns, and few in country parishes! Few among the rich, and few among the poor! Few among the old, and few among the young! Few among the learned, and few among the unlearned! Few in palaces, and few in cottages! It is an abiding sorrow with all true Christians, that they meet so few with whom they can pray, and praise, and read the Bible, and talk of spiritual things. They often feel to stand alone. Many are the people who never go to any place of worship from the first day of January to the last day of December, and seem to live without God in the world. Few are the communicants in any congregation — a mere handful compared to those who never go to the Lord's table at all. Few are the men and women who do anything for the cause of Christ upon earth, or appear to care whether those around them are lost or saved. Can anyone deny these things? Impossible! Yet here is our Lord Jesus Christ saying, "Many will sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

Now, why did our Lord say so? He never made a mistake, and all that He says is true. Let me try to throw some light on this question.

(a) There will be "many" when all are gathered together who have died in the Lord, from Abel, the first saint, down to the last who is found alive when the trumpet sounds, and the resurrection takes place. They will be a "multitude which no man can number" (Rev 7.9).

(b) There will be "many" when all the infants who died before they knew good from evil, or their right hand from their left, are called from their little graves, and assembled. Few, probably, are aware what an enormous proportion of children never live for a year! They will be "a multitude which no man can number."

(c) There will be "many" when all the believers of every name, nation, people, and tongue — the Old Testament saints, like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and the prophets — the saints of the New Testament, like the Apostles, the saints among the primitive Christians, and the Reformers — when all these are brought together, they will be "a multitude which no man can number."

(d) There will be "many" when the true Christians are gathered together, who are now scattered over the face of the globe, and not known either by the Church or the world. There are not a few who belong to no congregation, and are not numbered on any list of communicants, though their names are in the Lamb's book of life. Some of them live and die in great neglected parishes unknown and unvisited. Some of them get hold of the truth by hearing the gospel preached by missionaries at home or abroad — though the preacher has never known them, and they have never been formally enrolled in the list of converts. Some of them are soldiers and sailors, who stand alone in regiments and on board ship, and are not understood by their companions. There are myriads of such persons, I believe, who live the life of faith, and love Christ, and are known to the Lord, though not known by men. These also will make a large addition to the "multitude which no man can number."

The plain truth is, that the family of God will be found at last much larger than most of us suppose it is. We look at the things, we see with our own eyes, and we forget how much there is going on in the world — in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America — which our eyes never see at all. The inner life of the vast majority of all around us is a hidden thing, of which we know nothing. We do not think of the ages that are past, and the countless millions who are now "dust and ashes," though each in his turn fell asleep in Christ, and

was carried to Abraham's bosom. No doubt it is perfectly true that "wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it" (Mat 7.13). It is fearful to think what an immense majority of all those around us, appear dead in sin, and utterly unprepared to meet God. But for all that, we must not underrate the number of God's children. Even supposing they are in a minority when judged by human estimate, they will still prove at last to be very many in the kingdom of glory, an enormous company, "a multitude which no man can number."

Is any reader of this paper disposed to laugh at religion because those who profess it decidedly are few in number? Are you secretly inclined to despise those who read their Bibles, and conscientiously keep their Sundays holy, and try to walk closely with God? Are you afraid of making a profession yourself because you think there will be so few *with* you and so many *against* you, and you do not like to be singular, and stand alone? Alas! there have always been many like you!

— When Noah built the Ark, there were few with him, and many mocked at him; but he was found to be in the right at last. When the Jews were rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem after the return from Babylon, Sanballat and Tobiah scoffed at them and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing?" [Neh 4.2](#)

— When the Lord Jesus Christ left the world, only a hundred and twenty disciples met together in the upper chamber in Jerusalem, while the friends of the unbelieving Pharisees, scribes, and priests were numbered by tens of thousands. But the disciples were right, and their enemies were wrong.

— When bloody Mary sat on the throne, and Latimer and Ridley were burnt at the stake, the friends of the gospel seemed very few, and their enemies were a great majority. Yet the Reformers were right, and their enemies were wrong.

— Take care what you are doing! Beware of judging vital Christianity by the small number of those who seem to profess it. You may have the crowd with you now, and the laugh may be on your side. But a day is coming when you will open your eyes with amazement, and find out, perhaps too late, that the very people whom you despised were not few, but "many," a vast company, "a multitude which no man can number."

Is any reader of this paper disposed to be cast down and discouraged, because he loves Christ, and tries to serve Him, but finds himself almost entirely alone? Does your heart sometimes fail you, and your hands hang down, and your knees grow weak, because you so seldom meet anyone whom you can pray with, and praise with, and read with, and talk with about Christ, and open your heart to without fear? Do you ever mourn in secret for lack of company? Well, you are only drinking the cup which many have drunk before you. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, and the prophets — Paul, John, and the Apostles — were all people who stood very much alone. Do you expect to fare better than them? Take comfort, and have faith. There is more grace in the world than you can see, and more Christians travelling towards heaven than you are aware of. Elijah thought he stood alone when there were "seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal." [1Kng 19.18](#) Take comfort, and look *forward*. Your good time is coming. You will have plenty of company by and by. You will find many and not few in the kingdom of heaven — many to welcome you, many to rejoice and praise with, many with whom you will spend a blessed eternity. How pleasant it is to meet a single saint now for a few short

hours! How it cheers and refreshes us, like snow in summer or sunshine after clouds! What, then, will it be when we see an enormous company of saints, without a single unconverted sinner to spoil the harmony — all men and women of faith, and none unbelievers — all wheat and no chaff — “a multitude which no man can number”! Surely the “many” we will see in heaven will make ample amends for the “few” that we now see on earth.

**II.** *We have, secondly, in our Lord Jesus Christ's words, the DWELLINGS and POSITION of those who will be finally saved. It is written “that they will come from the east and the west.”*

There can be little doubt that this expression is a proverbial one. It must not be taken literally, as if the saved were not to come from the north and south, but only from the rising and setting of the sun. We find the same expression in Psalm 103.12, where it is said, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” The meaning is simply this: The saved will come from different places, from distant places, and from places where you would have thought it most unlikely they would be found.

(a) They will not all have belonged to one Church. There will be Episcopalians, and Presbyterians, and Independents, and Baptists, and Methodists, and Plymouth Brethren, and many other kinds of Christians whom I have neither space nor time to name. However much they may disagree and dispute now, they will have to agree at last. They will find to their amazement that the points on which they were of one mind were a vast quantity, and the points on which they differed were very few. They will all be able to say with one heart, “Hallelujah! Praise to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!” And they will all be able to reply with one voice, “Amen, amen!” The anthem in heaven, said good George Whitefield, will be to all eternity: “What God has wrought!” The points of earthly disagreement will have dropped off, and melted like snow in spring. The common teaching of the Holy Ghost will stand out clear and plain before every eye in heaven. At length there will be one real “Holy Catholic Church,” without spot or blemish or any such thing, without quarrelling, controversy, or dissension, all wheat and no tares, all sound members and none unsound.

(b) They will come from various countries in every part of the globe, from Greenland's icy mountains, and the scorching regions of the tropics, from India and Australia, from America and from China, from New Zealand and the Islands of the Pacific Ocean, from Africa and from Mexico. Some will have laid their bones in solitary graves like Henry Martyn in Persia, with none to do them honour in their death. Some will have been buried at sea with a sailor's funeral. Some will have died the death of martyrs, and been burnt to ashes like our own Reformers. Some will have fallen victims to malignant climates, or heathen violence at missionary stations. And some will have died, like Moses, in places where no human eye saw them. But they will all come together, and meet again in the kingdom of heaven. It matters little where we are buried, and how we are buried, and in what kind of a grave. China is just as near to heaven as England is; and the sea will give up her dead at the same moment as the land. Our coffin, and our funeral, and the burial service, and the long procession of mourners, are all matters of very secondary importance. The one point we should aim to make sure, from whatever place we may come, is to be among those who “will sit down in the kingdom of heaven.”

(c) They will come from utterly different ranks, classes, and professions. Heaven will be a place for servants as well as masters, for maids as well as mistresses, for poor as well as rich, for the unlearned as well as the learned, for tenants as well as landlords, for subjects as well as rulers, for the pauper as well as the Queen. There is no royal road to heaven, and there will be no class distinctions when we get there. At length there will be perfect equality, perfect fraternity, and perfect freedom. It will matter nothing whether we had much money on earth, or none at all. The only question will be, whether we have really repented of our sins, really believed on the Lord Jesus, and were really converted and sanctified people. There will be no preference given to those who have come from monasteries, nunneries, or hermits' caves. It is very likely that those who have done their duty in that state of life to which God called them, and have carried Christ's cross — in the army or the navy, in Parliament or at the bar, in the bank or the merchant's office, behind the counter or at the bottom of a coal-pit — will be found in the first rank in the kingdom of heaven. It is not necessary to wear a peculiar dress, or to put on an austere countenance and retire from the world, in order to sit down in the kingdom of heaven.

(d) They will come from most unlikely places, and from positions in which you would have thought the seed of eternal life could never have grown up in a soul. Saul, the young Pharisee, came from the feet of Gamaliel, and from persecuting Christians; and he rose to be the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who turned the world upside down. Daniel lived in Babylon, and served God faithfully in the midst of idolatry and heathenism. Peter was once a fisherman on the sea of Galilee. Matthew was a public tax-gatherer, who spent his days receiving custom. Luther and Latimer began life as devoted Papists, and ended life as devoted Protestants. John Bunyan, the author of *the Pilgrim's Progress*, was once a careless, thoughtless, swearing, bell-ringing young man, in a country village. George Whitefield served in a public-house at Gloucester, and spent his early days cleaning pots and carrying out beer. John Newton, the author of well-known hymns and letters, was once the captain of a slave-ship on the coasts of Africa, and saw no harm in buying and selling human flesh and blood. All these truly "came from east and west," and seemed at one time in their lives the most unlikely people in the world to come to Christ, and "sit down in the kingdom of heaven." But they did come unmistakably, and they are an everlasting proof that our Lord Jesus Christ's words are strictly true. Men and women may "come from the east and west," and yet be found at last in the kingdom of eternal happiness and glory.

Let us learn never to despair of the salvation of anyone as long as he lives. Fathers ought never to despair of prodigal sons. Mothers ought never to despair of self-willed, headstrong daughters. Husbands should never despair of wives, nor wives of husbands. There is nothing impossible with God. The arm of grace is very long, and can reach those who seem very far off. The Holy Ghost can change any heart. The blood of Christ can cleanse away any sin. Let us pray on, and hope on for others, however unlikely their salvation may appear to be at present. We will see many in heaven whom we never expected to see there. The last may yet prove first, and the first last. When he died, the famous Grimshaw, the Apostle of Yorkshire, left his only son unconverted, careless, thoughtless, and indifferent to religion. The day came when the young man's heart was changed, and he walked in the steps of his father. And when he lay upon his death-bed, one of his last words was, "What will my old father say when he sees me in heaven!"

Let us learn not to sorrow “as those who have no hope,” when we part from friends who are true Christians, and part perhaps forever. The separations and goodbyes of this world are probably some of its most painful things. When the family circle is broken up, when the old nest begins to lose its inmates, when the young man sets sail for Australia, New Zealand, or the Fiji Islands, with no hope of returning for ten or twelve years — when these things take place, it is a sore trial to flesh and blood. I have witnessed scenes on the landing-stage at Liverpool when the great steamships are about to start for America, which might bring tears to the eyes of the most cold-hearted stranger. The partings of this world are terrible things; but true faith in Christ, and the resurrection to eternal life through Him, takes the sting out of the worst of partings. It enables a believer to look beyond the things seen to the things unseen, to the coming of the Saviour, and our gathering together unto Him. Yes, it is a pleasant thing to remember, as the great ship moves away and we wave our last *adieu* — “it is but a little time, and we will see them all again, to part no more.” God’s people will come together from east and west, and we will all meet at last “in the kingdom of heaven,” and go out no more.

**III.** *We have, thirdly, in our Lord Jesus Christ’s words, the future PORTION and REWARD of those who will be finally saved. It is written, “they will sit down in the kingdom of heaven.”*

That expression, “sit down,” is a very pleasant and comfortable one to my mind. Let us sift it, and examine it, and see what it contains. In the judgment day, believers will STAND with boldness at the right hand of Christ, and say, “Who will lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, indeed rather, who has risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (Rom 8.33-34). But when the judgment is passed and over, and the eternal kingdom begins, they will “SIT DOWN.”

(a) Sitting down implies a sense of confidence and being at home. If we were in the presence of a stern judge, or of a king clothed in awful majesty, we would not dare to sit down. But there will be nothing to make believers afraid in the kingdom of heaven. The sins of their past lives will not make them tremble and feel alarmed. However many, however great, and however black, they will all have been washed away in Christ’s precious blood, and not one spot will remain. *Completely* justified, *completely* absolved, *completely* forgiven, *completely* “accepted in the Beloved,” they will be counted righteous before God for the sake of Him who was “made sin for us, though He knew no sin” (2Cor 5.21). Though the sins of their lives “were as scarlet, they will be made white as snow; and though red like crimson, they will be as wool.” Their sins will be “remembered no more,” “sought for, and not found,” “blotted out as a thick cloud,” “cast behind God’s back,” “plunged in the depths of the sea.” Believers will need no purgatory after they die. It is ignorance and unbelief to think so. Once joined to Christ by faith, they are *complete* in the sight of God the Father — and even the perfect angels will see no spot in them. Surely they may well sit down, and feel at home! They may remember all the sins of their past lives, and be humbled at the recollection of them. But those sins will not make them afraid.

The sense of daily failure, weakness, imperfection, and inward conflict, will no longer mar their peace. At last their sanctification will be completed. The war within will come to a perfect end.

Their old besetting sins and infirmities will have dropped off, and melted away. At length they will be able to serve God without weariness, and attend on Him without distraction, and not be obliged to cry continually, “Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7.24). Who can tell the blessedness of all this while we are yet in the body? Here in this world we do not realize the completeness of our justification, and we “groan, being burdened,” because of our imperfect sanctification. Our best endeavours after holiness are accompanied by a sorrowful consciousness of daily failure. But when “the old man” is at last entirely dead, and the flesh no longer lusts against the spirit — when there is an end of indwelling sin, and the world and the devil can no longer tempt us — then at last we will understand what God has prepared for those who love Him. We will “sit down in the kingdom of heaven.”

(b) But this is not all. Sitting down implies rest, and a complete cessation of work, and toil, and conflict. There is a rest that remains for the people of God. Here in this life we are never still. The Word of God tells us that the Christian must “walk,” and “run,” and “work,” and “labour,” and “fight,” and “groan,” and “carry the cross,” and wear the “armour,” and stand like a sentinel on guard in an enemy’s land. It is not till we enter the kingdom of heaven that we must expect to “sit down.” Work for Christ is no doubt pleasant, and even in this life it brings a rich reward — the reward of a happy conscience, a reward which the mere politician, or merchant, or man of pleasure can never reap, because they only seek a corruptible crown. “Those who drink of these waters will thirst again.” [Joh 4.13](#) But even the Christian’s work is exhausting to flesh and blood; and so long as we dwell in a mortal body, work and weariness will go together. The very sight of sin in others, which we cannot check, is a daily trial to our souls. No doubt the fight of faith is a “good fight;” but there can never be fighting without wounds, and pain, and fatigue. The very armour the Christian is bid to put on, is heavy. The helmet and the breastplate, the shield and the sword, without which we cannot overcome the devil, can never be worn without constant exertion.

Surely it will be a blessed time when our enemies will all be slain, and we can lay aside our armour in safety, and “sit down in the kingdom of heaven.”

In the meantime let us never forget that the time is short. Even the devil knows that, and “has great wrath because he has but a short time” (Rev 12.12). Let us work on, and fight on, in full assurance of hope, with the blessed recollection that it will not be forever. When the great battle of Waterloo was raging, and the event of the day seemed to tremble in the balance, it is said that the Duke of Wellington kept calmly turning his eyes to the left, in the confident expectation that in a little time his Prussian allies would appear, and his victory would be sure. Let this kind of hope animate our souls when we are bearing the labour and heat of the day. Our King is coming soon, and when He comes we will “sit down,” and toil and fight no more.

**IV.** *The fourth and last thing which the words of our Lord Jesus Christ contain is, the COMPANY which those who are finally saved will enjoy for ever.*

Now, company is one great secret of happiness. Man is by nature a social being. It is a rare exception indeed to find anyone who likes to always be alone. A palace filled with untold wealth and luxuries would at last be little better than a prison, if we lived in it entirely alone. A cottage with congenial companions is a happier dwelling-place than a royal castle

with no one to speak to, no one to listen to, no one to exchange our mind with, nothing to converse with, but one's own poor heart. We all want someone to live with and love; and the dweller on a solitary island, like Robinson Crusoe, is never satisfied, if he is a real man. Our blessed Lord, who formed man out of the dust of the earth and made him what he is, knows that perfectly well. Therefore, when He describes the future portion of His believing people, He takes care to tell us what kind of company they will have in the kingdom of heaven. He says that the saved will "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" in the world to come.

Now, what does that expression mean? Let us look at it, analyse it, and see what it contains.

The companions of the saved in the eternal world will be all the believers who have ever lived on earth, from the beginning to the end. The old soldiers, the old pilgrims, the old servants of Christ, the old members of Christ's family — in a word, all who have lived by faith and served Christ, and walked with God. These will form the company in which the saved will spend an endless existence.

They will see all the old worthies of whom they read in the Old Testament — the patriarchs, the prophets, and the holy kings — who looked forward to the coming of Christ, but died without seeing Him.

They will see the New Testament saints — the Apostles, and the holy men and women who saw Christ face to face.

They will see the early Fathers who died for the truth, and were thrown to the lions, or beheaded under the persecution of the Roman emperors.

They will see the gallant Reformers who revived the gospel out of the dust on the Continent, and unstopped the wells of living water which Rome had filled up with rubbish.

They will see the blessed martyrs of our own land who brought about the glorious Protestant Reformation, and gave the Bible to our countrymen in the English tongue, and cheerfully died at the stake for the cause of the gospel.

They will see the holy men of the last century — Whitefield, Wesley, Romaine, and their companions — who in the face of bitter opposition, revived religion in the Church of England.

Above all, they will see their own friends who fell asleep in Christ, and whom they once followed to their graves with many tears — and see them with the comfortable thought that they will part no more. Surely the thought of such companionship as this should cheer us as we travel on the narrow way! It is a good thing yet to come.

There is little happiness in company unless there is entire sympathy and congeniality of taste. It is one of the heaviest trials of a true Christian on earth, that he meets so few people who are entirely of one mind with him about religion. How often in society he finds himself obliged to hold his tongue and say nothing, and to hear and see many things which make his heart ache, and send him back to his own home heavy and depressed! It is a rare privilege to meet two or three occasionally to whom he can open his heart, and with whom he can speak freely, without fear of giving offence or being misunderstood. But there will be an end of this state of things in the kingdom of heaven. Those who are saved will find none there who have not been led by the same Spirit, and gone through the same

experience as themselves. There will not be a man or woman there who has not felt deeply the burden of sin, mourned over it, confessed it, fought with it, and tried to crucify it. There will not be a man or woman there who has not fled to Christ by faith, cast the whole weight of his soul upon Him, and rejoiced in Him as his Redeemer. There will not be a man or woman there who has not delighted in the Word of God, poured out his soul in prayer at the throne of grace, and striven to live a holy life. In a word, there will be none there who have not known something of repentance toward God, faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and holiness of life and conduct. It is pleasant to meet a few people of this kind on earth as we travel along the narrow way that leads to heaven. It refreshes us like a brook by the way, and is like a little peep within the veil. But what will it be when we see “a multitude, which no man can number,” of saints completely delivered from all sin, and not one single unconverted person among them to mar the harmony!

What it will be like when we meet our own believing friends once more, at last made perfect, and find that *their* besetting sins, and *our own* besetting sins, have all passed away, and there is nothing left in us but grace without corruption! Yet all this is to come when we pass within the veil. The inhabitants are not to be a mixed multitude, unable to understand one another. They are all to be of one heart and of one mind. We are not to sit down amidst ignorant, godless, and unconverted people, but “with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” Heaven itself would be no heaven if all sorts of characters got there, as some people falsely teach. There could be no order and no happiness in such a heaven. There must be “fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1.12).

(1) And now, reader, before you lay down this paper, ask yourself whether you will be found among the many who will “sit down in the kingdom of heaven.” The question demands an answer. I charge you to give your soul no rest until you can answer it in a satisfactory way. Time is passing quickly away, and the world is growing old. The signs of the times ought to set us all thinking. “The distress of nations with perplexity” [Luk 21.25](#) seems to increase every year. The wisdom of statesmen seems utterly unable to prevent wars and confusion in every direction. The progress of art, and science, and civilization appear entirely powerless to prevent the existence of enormous moral evils. Nothing will ever cure the diseases of human nature but the return of the Great Physician, the Prince of Peace, the second coming of Jesus Christ Himself. And when He comes, will you be found among the “many” who will “sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven”?

Why should you *not* be found among the many? I know no reason except your own lack of will, or your own indolence and laziness, or your own determined love of sin and the world. An open door is before you: why not enter into it? The Lord Jesus Christ is able and ready to save you: why not commit your soul to Him, and lay hold on the hand which He holds out from heaven? I repeat that I know no reason why you should *not* be found among the “many” at the last day.

You may fancy that there is time enough, and no need for hurry or immediate decision. You had better take care what you are saying! It is not given to all men and women to live to threescore years and ten, and then die quietly in their beds. The notice to quit this mortal body sometimes comes very suddenly, and men and women are summoned to go forth in a moment into the unseen world. You had better use time while you have it, and

not make shipwreck on this miserable rock: “a convenient season.”

Are you afraid that people will laugh at you, and mock you, if you begin to care for your soul, and to seek a place in the kingdom of heaven? Cast the cowardly feeling behind your back, and resolve never to be ashamed of religion. Alas! there are too many who will find at last that they were laughed *out of heaven*, and laughed *into hell*. Do not fear the reproach of man, who at most can only injure your body. Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. [Mat 10.28](#) Lay hold boldly on Christ, and He will give you the victory over all that you now fear. He that enabled the Apostle Peter, who once ran away and denied his Master, to stand firm as a rock before the Jewish Council, and at length to die for the gospel, is still living at the right hand of God, and is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him, and to make you more than a conqueror.

Do you think that you will not be happy if you seek to have your soul saved, and to sit down in the kingdom of heaven? Cast aside the unworthy thought as a lying suggestion of the devil. There are no people so truly happy as true Christians. Whatever a sneering world may please to say, they have food to eat which the world knows nothing of, and inward comforts which the world cannot understand. There is no gloominess in true religion, and no religion in looking gloomy, sour, or austere. In spite of cross and conflict, the true Christian has an inward peace compared to which the world has nothing to give — for it is a peace which trouble, bereavement, sickness, and death itself cannot take away. The words of the Master are strictly true, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you: not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (Joh 14.27). If men and women want to be truly happy, they should strive to be among those who “will sit down in the kingdom of heaven.”

(2) Last, but not least, let me wind this all up by offering a word of exhortation and encouragement to those who have reason to hope that they are among the many who will sit down in the kingdom of heaven.

Would you have much joy and peace in believing? Try to do all the good you can in the world. There is always much to be done, and few to do it. There are always many living and dying in ignorance and sin — no one goes near them, and tries to save their souls. We live in days when there is much talk about High Churchism, and Low Churchism, and Broad Churchism, <sup>45</sup> and Ritualism, and Rationalism, and Scepticism — but little real Christian work is done to mend the evils of the times! If all the communicants in all our churches laid themselves out to go among those who are without God in the world — with the Bible in their hands, and Christlike loving sympathy in their hearts — they would soon be far happier than they are now, and the face of society would soon be changed. Idleness is one great cause of the low spirits of which so many complain. Too many Christians, far too many, seem quite content to go to heaven alone, and to care nothing about bringing others into the kingdom of God.

If you try to do good in the right way, you never need doubt that good will be done. Many a Sunday-school teacher comes home on Sunday night with a heavy heart, and fancies that his or her labour is all in vain. Many a visitor <sup>46</sup> returns from his rounds, and thinks

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<sup>45</sup> *Broad Churchism*: for the sake of being broad-minded and tolerant, there is an unwillingness to accept authority or dogma — also known as *latitudinarianism*. — WHG

<sup>46</sup> Those in the church who visit the sick, shut-ins, the hospitalized, etc.

that he is producing no effect. Many a minister comes down from his pulpit desponding and cast down, imagining that his preaching is to no purpose. *But all this is disgraceful unbelief.* There is often far more going on in hearts and consciences than we see. “He that goes forth weeping, but sowing precious seed, will come again with joy at the last day, and bring his sheaves with him” (Psa 126.6). There are more being converted and saved than we suppose. “Many will sit down in the kingdom of heaven” whom we never expected to see there when we died. Let us read on, and pray on, and visit on, and speak on, and tell of Christ to everyone whom we can get at. If we are only “stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” we will find, to our amazement, that our labour was not in vain in the Lord (1Cor 15.58).

But if we try to do good, we must always cultivate *patience*. We cannot have two heavens: a heaven here, and a heaven hereafter. The battle is not yet over. The harvest-time has not yet come. The devil is not yet bound. The time when our Lord’s promise will be fulfilled has not yet arrived. But it *will* arrive before long.

When our gracious Queen at the end of the Crimean war came forward in front of the Horse Guards, and with her own royal hands gave the Victoria Cross to the gallant soldiers who had earned it, that public honour made rich amends for all that those soldiers had gone through. Balaklava, and Inkerman, and the hardships of the trenches, were all forgotten for the time, and seemed comparatively small things. What, then, will be the joy when the Captain of our salvation gathers His faithful soldiers round Him, and gives to each one a crown of glory that does not fade away! Surely we may well wait in patience for that day. It *is* coming, and it *will* surely come at last. Remembering that day, let us cast behind us doubts and unbelief, and set our faces steadily towards Jerusalem. [Luk 9.51](#) “The night is far spent, and the day is at hand” (Rom 13.12). Not one word of the blessed promise before us will fail:

“Many will come from the east and the west, and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”

## CHAPTER 14 – 2Sam 23.4-5.

### WITHOUT CLOUDS. <sup>47</sup>

“He will be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springs out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, even if He makes it not to grow.” – 2Sam 23.4-5.

THE text which heads this page is taken from a chapter which ought to be very interesting to every Christian. It begins with the touching expression, “These are the last words of David.”

Whether that means, “these are the last words which David ever spoke by inspiration as a Psalmist,” or “these are among the last sayings of David before his death,” signifies little. In either point of view, the phrase suggests many thoughts.

It contains the experience of an old servant of God, who had many ups and downs in his life. It is the old soldier remembering his campaigns. It is the old traveller looking back on his journeys.

- I. David’s humbling *confession*.
- II. The source of David’s present *comfort* in life.
- III. King David’s *hope* for the future.

#### I. *Let us first consider David’s humbling confession.*

He looks forward with a prophetic eye to the future coming of the Messiah, the promised Saviour, the seed of Abraham, and the seed of David. He looks forward to the Advent of a glorious kingdom in which there will be no wickedness, and righteousness will be the universal character of all the subjects. He looks forward to the final gathering of a perfect family in which there will be no unsound members, no defects, no sin, no sorrow, no deaths, no tears. And he says, the light of that kingdom will be “as the light of the morning when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds.”

But then he turns to his own family, and sorrowfully says, “My house is not so with God.” It is not perfect; it is not free from sin; it has blots and blemishes of many kinds. It has cost me many tears. It is not as I could wish, and as I have vainly tried to make it.

Poor David might well say this! If ever there was a man whose house was full of trials, and whose life was full of sorrows, that man was David.

- Trials from the envy of his own brethren;
- trials from the unjust persecution of Saul,
- trials from his own servants, such as Joab and Ahithophel;
- trials from a wife, even Michal, who once loved him so much;
- trials from his children, such as Absalom, Amnon, and Adonijah;
- trials from his own subjects, who at one time forgot all he had done, and drove him out of Jerusalem by rebellion.

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<sup>47</sup> The substance of this paper was delivered as an address at the opening of the Chapel of the Turner Memorial Home of Rest, the Dingle, Liverpool, October 16th, 1885.

Trials of all kinds, wave upon wave, were continually breaking upon David to the very end of his days. Some of the worst of these trials, no doubt, were the just consequences of his own sins, and the wise chastisement of a loving Father. But we must have hard hearts if we do not feel that David was indeed “a man of sorrows.”

But is not this the experience of many of God’s noblest saints and dearest children? What careful reader of the Bible can fail to see that Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Samuel, were all men of many sorrows, and that those sorrows chiefly arose out of their own homes?

The plain truth is that home trials are one of the many means by which God sanctifies and purifies His believing people.

- By them He keeps us humble.
- By them He draws us to Himself.
- By them He sends us to our Bibles.
- By them He teaches us to pray.
- By them He shows us our need of Christ.
- By them He weans us from the world.
- By them He prepares us for “a city which has foundations,” in which there will be no disappointments, no tears, and no sin.

It is no special mark of God’s favour when Christians have no trials. They are spiritual medicines which poor fallen human nature absolutely needs. King Solomon’s course was one of unbroken peace and prosperity. But it may well be doubted whether this was good for his soul.

Before we leave this part of our subject, let us learn some practical lessons.

(a) Let us learn that parents cannot give grace to their children, nor masters to their servants. We may use all means, but we cannot command success. We may teach, but we cannot convert. We may show those around us the bread and water of life, but we cannot make them eat and drink it. We may point out the way to eternal life, but we cannot make others walk in it. “It is the Spirit who quickens.” Life is that one thing which the cleverest man of science cannot create or impart. It comes “not of blood, nor of the will of man” (Joh 1.13). To give life is the grand prerogative of God.

(b) Let us learn not to expect too much from anybody or anything in this fallen world. One great secret of unhappiness is the habit of indulging in exaggerated expectations. Men are constantly expecting what they never find — from money, marriage, business, houses, children, worldly honours, political success — and the great majority die disappointed. Happy is the one who has learned to say at all times, “My soul, wait only upon God; my expectation is from Him” (Psa 62.5).

(c) Let us learn not to be surprised or fret when trials come. It is a wise saying of Job, “Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5.7). Some, no doubt, have a larger cup of sorrows to drink from than others. But few live long without troubles or cares of some kind. The greater our affections, the deeper our afflictions; and the more we love, the more we have to weep. The only certain thing to be predicted about the babe lying in his cradle is this: if he grows up, he will have many troubles; and in the end, he will die.

(d) Let us learn, lastly, that God knows far better than we do what is the best time for taking away from us those whom we love. The deaths of some of David's children were painfully remarkable, both as to age, manner, and circumstances. When David's little infant lay sick, David thought he would have liked the child to live, and so he fasted and mourned till it was all over. Yet, when the last breath was drawn, he said with strong assurance of seeing the child again, "I will go to him, but he will not return to me" (2Sam 12.23). But when, on the contrary, Absalom died in battle — Absalom the beautiful; Absalom the darling of his heart — but Absalom who died in open sin against God and his father — what did David say then? Hear his hopeless cry, "O Absalom, my son, my son, I would to God that I had died for you!" (2Sam 18.33). Alas! none of us know when it is best for ourselves, our children, and our friends to die. We should pray to be able to say, "My times are in Your hands," let it be *when* You will, *where* You will, and *how* You will (Psa 31.15).

**II.** *Let us consider, secondly, what was the source of David's present comfort in life.*

He says, "Though my house is not as I could wish, and is the cause of much sorrow, God has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." And then he adds, "This is all my salvation, and all my desire."

Now, this word "covenant" is a deep and mysterious thing when applied to anything that God does. We can understand what a covenant is between man and man. It is an agreement between two persons, by which they bind themselves to fulfil certain conditions and do certain things. But who can fully understand a covenant made by the Eternal God? It is something far above us and out of sight. It is a phrase by which He is graciously pleased to accommodate Himself to our poor weak faculties; but at best, we can only grasp a little of it.

The covenant of God to which David refers as his comfort, must mean that everlasting agreement or counsel between the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, which has existed from all eternity for the benefit of all the living members of Christ.

It is a mysterious and ineffable arrangement whereby all things necessary for the salvation of our souls — our present peace, and our final glory — are fully and completely provided. And all this is by the joint work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost:

- the REDEEMING WORK of *God the Son* by dying as our Substitute on the cross;
  - the DRAWING WORK of *God the Father* by choosing and drawing us to the Son;
  - the SANCTIFYING WORK of *the Holy Ghost* in awakening, quickening, and renewing our fallen nature;
- these are all contained in this covenant, besides everything that the soul of the believer needs between grace and glory.

The Second Person of the Trinity is the MEDIATOR Of this covenant (Heb 12.24). Through Him, all the blessings and privileges of the covenant are conveyed to every one of His believing members. And when the Bible speaks of God making a covenant with Man, as in the words of David, it means with MAN IN CHRIST — as a member and part of the Son. They are His mystical body, and He is their Head; and through the Head, all the blessings of the eternal covenant are conveyed to the body. Christ, in a word, is "the SURETY of the covenant;" and believers receive its benefits through Him. This is the great covenant

which David had in view.

True Christians would do well to think about this covenant, remember it, and roll the burden of their souls upon it far more than they do. There is unspeakable consolation in the thought that the salvation of our souls has been provided for from all eternity, and is not a mere affair of yesterday. Our names have long been in the Lamb's Book of Life. Our pardon and peace of conscience through Christ's blood, our strength for duty, our comfort in trial, our power to fight Christ's battles, were all arranged for us from endless ages, and long before we were born. Here on earth we pray, read, fight, struggle, groan, and weep, and are often "sore let and hindered" in our journey.

But we ought to remember that an Almighty eye has long been upon us, and that we have been the subjects of divine provision even though we did not know it.

Above all, Christians should never forget that the everlasting covenant is "ordered in all things and sure." The least things in our daily life are working together for good, though we may not see it at the time. The very hairs of our head are all numbered, and not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father. There is no luck or chance in anything that happens to us. The least events in our life are parts of an everlasting scheme or plan in which God has foreseen and arranged everything for the good of our souls.

Let us all try to cultivate the habit of remembering the everlasting covenant. It is a doctrine full of strong consolation if it is properly used. It was not meant to destroy our responsibility. It is widely different from Mohammedan fatalism. It is specially intended to be a refreshing cordial for practical use in a world full of sorrow and trial. We ought to remember, amid the many sorrows and disappointments of life, that "what we know not now, we will know hereafter." There is a meaning and a "necessity" in every bitter cup that we have to drink, and a wise cause for every loss and bereavement under which we mourn.

After all, how little we know! We are like children who look at a half-finished building, and have not the least idea what it will look like when it is completed. We see masses of stone, and brick, and rubbish, and timber, and mortar, and scaffolding, and dirt, and all in apparent confusion. But the architect who designed the building sees order in it all, and quietly looks forward with joy to the day when the whole building will be finished, and the scaffolding removed and taken away. It is even so with us. We cannot grasp the meaning of many a providence in our lives, and are tempted to think that all around us is confusion. But we should try to remember that the great Architect in heaven is always doing wisely and well, and that we are always being "led by the right way to a city of habitation" (Psa 107.7). The resurrection morning will explain all. It is a quaint but wise saying of an old divine, that "true faith has bright eyes, and can see even in the dark."

Barnard Gilpin was a Reformer who lived in the days of the Marian martyrdoms, and was called the Apostle of the North. It is recorded about him that he was famous for never murmuring or complaining, whatever happened to him. In the worst and blackest times he was always saying, "It is all in God's everlasting covenant, and must be for good." Towards the close of Queen Mary's reign, he was suddenly summoned to come up from Durham to London, to be tried for heresy, and in all probability, like Ridley and Latimer, to be burned. The good man quietly obeyed the summons, and said to his mourning friends, "It is in the covenant, and must be for good." On his journey from Durham to London, his horse fell, and his leg was broken, and he was laid up at a roadside inn. Once

more he was asked, "What do you think of this?" Again he replied, "It is all in the covenant, and must be for good." And so it turned out. Weeks and weeks passed away before his leg was healed, and he was able to resume his journey. But during those weeks the unhappy Queen Mary died, the persecutions were stopped, and the worthy old Reformer returned to his northern home rejoicing. "Did I not tell you," he said to his friends, "that all was working together for good?"

Well would it be for us if we had something of Barnard Gilpin's faith, and could make practical use of the everlasting covenant as he did. Happy is the Christian who can say from his heart these words —

"I know not the way I am going,  
But well do I know my Guide;  
With a childlike trust I give my hand  
To the mighty Friend by my side.  
The only thing that I say to Him,  
As He takes it, is — 'Hold it fast;  
Suffer me not to lose my way,  
And bring me home at last.'" — [*Hymn: Mary Dana Schindler ca. 1841*]

**III.** *Let us consider, lastly, what was King David's hope for the future.*

That hope, beyond doubt, was the glorious advent of the Messiah at the end of the world, and setting up a kingdom of righteousness at the final "restitution of all things" (Act 3.21).

Of course king David's views of this kingdom were dim and vague compared to those which are within reach of every intelligent reader of the New Testament. He was not ignorant of the Messiah coming to suffer, for he speaks of it in the 22nd Psalm. But he saw far beyond it the coming of Messiah to reign, and his eager faith overleaped the interval between the two Advents. I feel no doubt at all that his mind was fixed upon the promise that the "seed of the woman should" one day completely "bruise the serpent's head," and that the curse should be taken off the earth, and the effects of Adam's fall be completely removed. The Church of Christ would have done well if she had walked in David's steps, and given as much attention to the Second Advent as David did.

The figures and comparisons which David uses in speaking of the advent and future kingdom of the Messiah are singularly beautiful, and admirably fitted to exhibit the benefits which it will bring to the Church and the earth. The Second Advent of Christ will be "as the light of the morning when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." Those words deserve a thousand thoughts. Who can look around him, and consider the state of the world in which we live, and not be obliged to confess that clouds and darkness are now on every side? "The whole creation groans and travails in pain" (Rom 8.22).

Look wherever we will, we see confusion, quarrels, wars between nations, helplessness of statesmen, discontent and grumbling of the lower classes, excessive luxury among the rich, extreme poverty among the poor, intemperance, impurity, dishonesty, swindling, lying, cheating, covetousness, heathenism, superstition, formality among Christians, decay of vital religion — these are the things which we see continually over the whole globe — in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. These are the things which defile the face of creation, and prove that the devil is "the prince of this world," and the kingdom of God

has not yet come. These are clouds indeed, which often hide the sun from our eyes. But there is a good time coming, which David saw far distant, when this state of things will be completely changed. There is a kingdom coming, in which holiness will be the rule, and sin will have no place at all.

Who can look around him in his own neighbourhood, and fail to see within a mile of his own house that the consequences of sin lie heavily on earth, and that sorrow and trouble abound? Sickness, pain, and death come to all classes, and spare none, whether rich or poor. The young often die before the old, and the children before their parents. Bodily suffering of the most fearful description, and incurable disease, make the existence of many miserable. Widowhood, childlessness, and solitariness, tempt many to feel weary of life — even though everything which money can obtain is within their reach. Family quarrels, envies, and jealousies break up the peace of many a household, and are a worm at the root of many a rich man's happiness. Who can deny that all these things are to be seen on every side of us? There are many clouds now.

Will nothing end this state of things? Is creation to go on groaning and travailing forever in this fashion? Thanks be to God, the Second Advent of Christ supplies an answer to these questions. The Lord Jesus Christ has not yet finished His work on behalf of man. He will come again one day (and perhaps very soon) to set up a glorious kingdom, in which the consequences of sin will have no place at all. It is a kingdom in which there will be no pain and no disease, in which “the inhabitant will no longer say, I am sick” (Isa 33.24). It is a kingdom in which there will be no partings, no moves, no changes, and no good-byes. It is a kingdom in which there will be no deaths, no funerals, no tears, and no mourning clothes worn. It is a kingdom in which there will be no quarrels, no losses, no crosses, no disappointments, no wicked children, no bad servants, no faithless friends. When the last trumpet sounds, and the dead are raised incorruptible, there will be a grand gathering together of all God's people; and when we awake in our Lord's likeness, we will be satisfied (Psa 17.15). Where is the Christian heart that does not long for this state of things to begin? Well may we take up the last prayer in the Book of Revelation, and often cry, “Come quickly, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22.20).

(a) And *now*, do we have troubles? Where is the man or woman on earth who can say, “I have none”? Let us take them all to the Lord Jesus Christ. None can comfort like Him. He who died on the cross to purchase forgiveness for our sins, is sitting at the right hand of God with a heart full of love and sympathy. He knows what sorrow is, for He lived thirty-three years in this sinful world, allowing Himself to be tempted, and seeing suffering every day. He has not forgotten it. When He ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, He took a perfect human heart with Him. “He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4.15). He can *feel*. Almost His last thought on the cross was for His own mother, and He cares for weeping and bereaved mothers still.

He would have us never forget that our departed friends in Christ are not lost, but only gone before us. We will see them again in the day of gathering together, for “God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus,” (1Th 4.14). We will see them in renewed bodies, and know them again — but better, more beautiful, more happy than we ever saw them on earth. Best of all, we will see them with the comfortable feeling that we meet to part no more.

## Chap. 14. Without Clouds

(b) Do we have troubles? Let us never forget the everlasting covenant to which old David clung to the end of his days. It is still in full force. It is not cancelled. It is the property of every believer in Jesus, whether rich or poor, just as much as it was the property of the son of Jesse. Let us never give way to a fretting, murmuring, complaining spirit. Let us firmly believe at the worst of times, that every step in our lives is ordered by the Lord, with perfect wisdom and perfect love, and that we will see it all at last. Let us not doubt that He is always doing all things well. He is good in giving, and equally good in taking away.

(c) Finally, do we have troubles? Let us never forget that one of the best remedies and most soothing medicines, is to try to do good to others, and to be useful. Let us lay ourselves out to make the sorrow less, and the joy greater, in this sin-burdened world. There is always some good to be done within a few yards of our own doors. Let every Christian strive to do it, and to relieve either bodies or minds.

“To comfort and to bless,  
To find a balm for woe,  
To tend the lone and fatherless,  
Is angel’s work below.” – *Hymn: William W. How.*

Selfish feeding on our own troubles, and lazy poring over our sorrows, are one secret of the melancholy misery in which many spend their lives. If we trust in Jesus Christ’s blood, let us remember His example. He ever “went about doing good” (Act 10.38). He did not come to be ministered to, but to minister, as well as to give His life a ransom for many. Let us try to be like Him. Let us walk in the steps of the good Samaritan, and give help wherever help is really needed. Even a kind word spoken in season is often a mighty blessing. That Old Testament promise is not yet worn out:

“Blessed is the man who provides for the sick and needy; the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble” (Psa 41.1, *Prayer-book version*).

## CHAPTER 15 – Song of Songs 4.12.

### THE LORD’S GARDEN.

THE Lord Jesus Christ has a garden. It is the company of all who are true believers in Him. They are His garden.

Viewed in one light, believers are Jesus Christ’s SPOUSE. They are all joined to Him by an everlasting covenant that cannot be broken; wedded to Him by the marriage of faith; taken by Him to be His forever, with all their debts and liabilities, with all their faults and imperfections. Their old name is gone; they have no name but that of their Bridegroom. God the Father regards them as one with His dear Son. Satan can lay no charge against them. They are the Lamb’s wife: “My Beloved is mine, and I am His” (Song 2.16).

Viewed in another light, believers are Christ’s SISTER. They are like Him in many things. They have His Spirit; they love what He loves, and hate what He hates; they count all His members brethren; through Him they have the spirit of adoption, and can say of God, “He is my Father.” Their resemblance to their elder Brother is faint indeed, yet they are alike.

Viewed in a third light, believers are Christ’s GARDEN. Let us see how and in what way.

- I. They are altogether different from the men of the world.
- II. They are in a distinctive garden, a garden enclosed.
- III. They are the flowers that fill the Lord’s garden.

*I. Jesus calls His people a garden, because they are altogether different from the men of the world.*

The world is a wilderness: it produces little but thorns and thistles; it is fruitful in nothing but sin. The children of this world are an untilled wilderness in God’s sight. With all their arts and sciences, intellect and skill, eloquence and statesmanship, poetry and refinement — with all this, they are a wilderness, barren of repentance, faith, holiness, and obedience to God. The Lord looks down from heaven, and where He sees no grace, there the Lord can see nothing but a “wilderness” state of things. The Lord Jesus Christ’s believing people are the green spot of the earth; the oasis amidst barren deserts; they are His garden.

He calls His people a garden, because they are sweet and beautiful to His mind. He looks on the world, and it grieves Him to the heart; He looks on the little flock of His believing people, and is well pleased. He sees in them the fruit of His travail, and is satisfied. He rejoices in spirit when He sees the kingdom revealed to babes, though the wise and prudent do not receive it. As in the day of Noah’s sacrifice, He smells a sweet aroma and is refreshed. It is very wonderful, very mysterious! Believers are vile in their own eyes, and feel themselves miserable sinners; yet Jesus says, “You are all fair — your voice is sweet — your countenance is lovely — beautiful as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, fair as the moon, and clear as the sun” (Song 1.15, 4.7, 2.14, 6.10, etc.). Oh, the depths! It sounds incomprehensible and almost incredible; but it is true.

He calls His people a garden because He delights to walk among them. He sees the children of this world, but He does not mingle with them. His eyes are on all their ways, but He does not come down to talk with them, as He did with Abraham, like a man with his friend.

On the other hand, He loves to walk among His candlesticks, and see whether the light burns brightly. He loves to be present in the assemblies of His saints, and to come in and sup with them, and they with Him. He loves to come with His Father, and make His abode with His disciples; and wherever two or three are gathered in His name, there He is. He loves to come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits; to go down to the beds of spices, and gather lilies; to see whether the vine flourishes, and the tender grape appears, and the pomegranates bud (Song 7.12). In short, He holds special communion with His people, and deals familiarly with them, as He does not with the world.

He calls His people a garden, because they are useful, and bear fruit and flowers. Where is the real use of the children of this world? Of what value are they while they continue unconverted? They are unprofitable tenants and worthless cumberers of the ground. They bring no glory to the Lord who bought them; they do not fulfil their part in creation; they stand alone in the world of created beings, not doing the work for which their Maker meant them. The heavens declare the glory of God — the trees, the corn, the grass, the flowers, the streams, the birds, speak forth His praise — but the man of the world does nothing to show that he cares for God, or serves God, or loves God, or feels grateful for Christ's redeeming death.

The Lord's people are not so. They bring Him some revenue of glory. They bear some little fruit, and are not altogether barren and unprofitable servants. Compared to the world, they are a garden.

**II. *The Lord's garden has a distinctive peculiarity about it. It is a garden enclosed.***

There is an enclosure round believers; or else they never would be saved. This is the secret of their safety. It is not their faithfulness, their strength, or their love, it is the wall around them which prevents their being lost. They are a "garden enclosed."

They are enclosed by God the Father's everlasting election. Long before they were born — long before the foundations of the world, God knew them, chose them, and appointed them to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ. The children of this world do not like to hear this doctrine proclaimed. It humbles man, and leaves him no room to boast. But whether it is abused or not, the DOCTRINE OF ELECTION is true. It is the cornerstone of the believer's foundation, that he was chosen in Christ before the world began. Who can rightly estimate the strength of this enclosure?

They are enclosed by the special love of God the Son. The Lord Jesus is the Saviour of *all* men, but He is specially the Saviour of those who *believe*. He has power over all flesh, but He gives eternal life to those who are specially given to Him, in a way that He does to no others. He *shed* His blood on the cross for all, but He only *washes* those who have part in Him. He *invites* all, but He *quickens* whom He will, and brings them to glory. He prays for *them*: He does not pray for the world. [Joh 17.9](#) He intercedes for *them*, that *they* may be kept from evil, that *they* may be sanctified by the truth, that *their* faith not fail. Who can fully describe the blessedness of this enclosure?

They are enclosed by the effectual working of God the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of Christ calls them out from the world, and separates them as effectually as if a wall were built between them and it. He puts in them new hearts, new minds, new tastes, new desires, new sorrows, new joys, new wishes, new pleasures, new longings. He gives them new eyes, new ears, new affections, new opinions. He makes them new creatures; they are born

again, and with a new *birth*, they begin a new *existence*. Mighty indeed is the transforming power of the Holy Spirit! The believer and the world are completely put asunder, and everlastingly separated. You may place a believer and an unbeliever together, marry them, join them under one roof, but you cannot unite them any further into one piece. The one is part of the "garden enclosed," and the other is not. EFFECTUAL CALLING is a barrier that cannot be broken.

Who can tell the comfort of this threefold wall of enclosure! Believers are enclosed by ELECTION, enclosed by washing and INTERCESSION, enclosed by calling and REGENERATION. Great is the consolation of these threefold bands of love around us, the love of God the Father, the love of God the Son, the love of God the Holy Ghost! A threefold cord is not easily broken. [Ecc 4.12](#)

Does any reader suppose for a moment that all this was not needed? I believe that nothing short of this threefold enclosure could save the Lord's garden from utter ruin. Without ELECTION, INTERCESSION, and REGENERATION, there is not one soul who would get to heaven. The wild boar out of the wood would break in and devour; the roaring lion would come in and trample all under his feet. The devil would soon lay the Lord's garden level with the ground.

Blessed be God for this: that we are "a garden enclosed!" Blessed be God, our final safety does not hang on anything of our own — not on our graces and feelings — not on our degree of sanctification — not on our perseverance in well-doing — not on our love — not on our growth in grace — not on our prayers and Bible-readings — not even on our faith. It hangs on nothing else but the work of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. If this threefold work enclosed us, who will overthrow our hope? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Adam had a heart free from sin. Adam was strong in innocence, and undefiled by contact with bad examples and corrupt neighbours. Adam was on vantage ground, a thousand times higher than we now occupy; and yet Adam fell before temptation. There was no enclosure round him, no wall to keep Satan out, no barrier round the first flower of the Lord's garden — and see how Adam fell!

Let believers open their sleepy eyes, and try to understand the value of their privileges! This is the most blessed part of the Lord's garden. It is a "garden enclosed." I believe if there was no election, there would be no salvation. I never saw a man who would be saved if it depended in any way on himself. Let us all thank the Lord Jesus every day, and thank Him from our hearts, that His people are a chosen and guarded people, and that His garden is nothing less than "a garden enclosed."

**III.** *The Lord's garden is not empty: it is always full of flowers. It has had many in times past, it has many at the present time. Believers are the flowers that fill the Lord's garden.*

I will mention two things about the flowers in the garden of the Lord Jesus. In some things they are all exactly like one another. In some things they are as various and diverse as the flowers in the gardens of this world.

(a) In some things they are all alike.

(1) They have all been *transplanted*. Not one of the Lord's flowers grew naturally in His garden. They were all born children of wrath, even as others. No man is born with grace in his heart. Every believer among the Lord's people was at one time at enmity with Him,

and in a state of condemnation. It was the grace of God that first called him out of the world. It was the Spirit of Christ who made him what he is, and planted him in the garden of the Lord. The Lord's people are all alike in this: they are all transplanted flowers.

(2) The Lord's flowers are all *alike in their root*. In outward things they may differ, but underneath they are all the same. They are all rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ. Believers may worship in different places, and belong to different churches, but their foundation is the same — the cross and the blood.

(3) The Lord's flowers are all *weak at their beginning*. They do not come to full maturity at once. They are at first like new-born babes, tender and delicate, and needing to be fed with milk, and not with strong meat. They are soon checked and thrown back. All begin in this way.

(4) The Lord's flowers all need *the light of the sun*. Flowers cannot live without light. Believers cannot live comfortably unless they see much of the face of Jesus Christ. To be ever looking on Him, feeding on Him, communing with Him — *this* is the hidden spring of the life of God in man's soul.

(5) The Lord's flowers all need *the dews of the Spirit*. Flowers wither without moisture. Believers need daily, hourly, to be renewed by the Holy Ghost in the spirit of their minds. We cannot live on old grace, if we would be fresh, living, real Christians. We must be more filled with the Spirit *daily*. Every chamber in the inward temple must be filled.

(6) The Lord's flowers are all *in danger of weeds*. Flower-beds need constant weeding. Believers need *daily* to search and see that they do not let besetting sins grow on undisturbed. These are the things that choke the actings of grace, and chill the influences of the Spirit. All are in peril of this; all should beware.

(7) The Lord's flowers all *require pruning and digging*. Flowers left alone soon dwindle and grow small. No careful gardener leaves his roses alone all year round. Just so, believers need stirring, shaking, mortifying, or else they become sleepy, and incline like Lot to settle down by Sodom. And if they are slow about the work of pruning, God will often take it in hand for them.

(8) The Lord's flowers all *grow*. None but hypocrites and wolves in sheep's clothing, and "painted" Christians, stand still. True believers are never the same for long. It is their desire to go on from grace to grace, strength to strength, knowledge to knowledge, faith to faith, holiness to holiness. Visit a border of the Lord's garden after two or three years' absence, and you will see this. If you do not see it, you may well suppose there is a worm at the root. Life *grows*; but death stands still and *decays*.

(b) But while the Lord's flowers are all alike in some things, they are various and diverse in others, even as the flowers in our own gardens. Let us consider this point a little.

Believers have many things in common: one Lord, one faith, one baptism of the Spirit, one hope, one foundation, one reverence for the Word, one delight in prayer, one newness of heart. And yet there are some things in which they are *not* one. Their general experience is the same, and their title to heaven is the same — and yet there are varieties in their specific experience. There are shades of diversity in their views and feeling. They are not so altogether and completely one, that they can quite understand each other in all things,

at all times, and in all points. It is very important to bear this in mind! Believers are one in genus, but not one in species — one in great principles, not one in all particulars — one in reception of the whole truth, not one in the proportion they give to the parts of truth — one in the root, but not one in the flower — one in the part that only the Lord Jesus sees, not one in the part that is seen by the world.

You cannot understand your brother or sister in some things. You could not do as they do, speak as they speak, act as they act, laugh as they laugh, admire what they admire. Oh, do not be hasty to condemn them! Do not make them offenders for a word. Do not set them down in a low place because they and you have little sympathy, and few harmonizing and responding strings in your hearts. If you do, you will soon come to a standstill in communing with them, and discover that they and you have only a limited extent of ground in common! Write it down on the tablets of your heart, that there are many schools, orders, classes, and diversities of Christians. You may all be in the Lord's garden, and be united on grand doctrines; and yet for all that, the Lord's garden is made up of various sorts of flowers. All His flowers are useful: none must be despised. And yet His garden contains widely different sorts.

(1) Some who grow in the Lord's garden are like the flowers which are brilliant and showy in colour, but not sweet. You see them from afar, and they attract the world's eye, and their tints are beautiful, but you can say no more than that.

These are frequently the public Christians — the popular preachers — the speakers on platforms — the lions of listening companies — the people talked of, and pointed at, and run after. Such persons are the tulips, and sunflowers, and peonies, and dahlias of the Lord's garden: wonderful, gaudy, bright and glorious in their way, but not sweet.

(2) Some are like those flowers which make no show at all, and yet they are the sweetest.

These are the Christians whom the world never hears of; they rather shrink from public observation. They hold on the even tenor of their way, and pass silently on towards home; but they sweeten all around them.

These are rare and hard to find: but the better they are known, the more they are loved. Ask their true character in their own homes, and in their families — ask husbands, wives, children, and servants, about their character, and you will soon discover that not a tenth part of their beauty and excellence is known by the world. The nearer you go, the more perfume these dwellers in the Lord's garden will give out. These are the Lord's violets — valued by only few, but to those who know them, oh, how sweet!

(3) Some in the Lord's garden are like those flowers which cannot live in cold weather.

These are the Christians who have but a little strength, who faint in the day of adversity, who only flourish when everything around them is smooth and warm. A cold wind of trial, an unexpected frost of affliction, nips them and cuts them down. But the Lord Jesus is very merciful; He will not allow them to be tempted beyond what they can endure. He plants them in sheltered and sunny places of His garden. He protects them and hedges them round by strong plants, to break the cold. Let no man despise them. They are the Lord's flowers, beautiful in their place and in their way.

(4) Some in the Lord's garden are like those hardy flowers which flower even in winter.

## Chap. 15. The Lord's Garden

These are those rough Christians who never seem to feel any trials; whom nothing, either of opposition or affliction, appears to move. Doubtless there is not that softness and sweetness about them that we admire in others. We miss that lovable delicacy which in some people is such an unexplainable charm. They chill us sometimes by their rudeness and lack of sympathy when compared to many we know. And yet, let no man despise them. They are the crocuses in the garden of the Lord, beautiful in their place and way, and valuable in their own season.

(5) Some in the Lord's garden are never so sweet as after the rain.

These are the Christians who show most grace under trial and affliction. In the day of sunshine and prosperity they become careless: they need the shower of some sorrow to come down on them to make their full excellency appear. There is more beauty of holiness about their *tears*, than about their *smiles*: they are more like Jesus when they *weep* than when they *laugh*. These are the roses of the Lord's garden: lovely and sweet and beautiful at all times, but never so much so as after the rain.

(6) Some in the Lord's garden are never so sweet as at night.

These are the believers who need constant trial to keep them close to the throne of grace. They cannot bear the sunshine of prosperity: they become careless in prayer, sleepy about the Word, listless about heaven, too fond of nestling with some Benjamin in the corner of this world. The Lord Jesus often keeps such persons under a cloud, to preserve them in a right frame. He sends wave after wave, trouble after trouble, to make them sit like Mary at His feet, and be near the cross. It is the very darkness that they are obliged to walk in, which makes them so sweet.

(7) Some in the Lord's garden are never so sweet as when crushed.

These are the Christians whose reality comes out most under some tremendous and uncommon judgment. The winds and storms of heavy affliction roll over them — and then, to the astonishment of the world, the spices flow out. I once saw a young woman who had lain on a bed six years in a garret, with a spinal complaint, helpless, motionless, cut off from everything that could make this world enjoyable. But she belonged to the garden of Jesus: she was not alone, for He was with her. You would think she would have been gloomy; she was all brightness. You would expect her to be sorrowful; she was ever rejoicing. You would suppose she was weak and needed comfort; she was strong and able to comfort others. You would fancy she must have felt dark; she seemed to me all light. You would imagine her countenance was grave; it was full of calm smiles, and the gushing forth of inward peace. You would have pardoned her, almost, if she had murmured; she breathed nothing but perfect happiness and content. The crushed flowers in the Lord's garden are sometimes exceeding sweet!

(8) Some of the flowers in the Lord's garden are never fully valued till they are dead.

These are those humble believers who, like Dorcas, are full of good works and active love towards others. These are those unostentatious ones who dislike profession and publicity, and love to go about, like their Lord and Master, doing good to souls — visiting the fatherless and the widows, pouring balm on wounds which this heartless world neither knows nor cares for, ministering to the friendless, helping the destitute, and preaching the gospel not to silk and velvet, but to the poor.

## Chap. 15. The Lord's Garden

These are not noticed by this generation: but the Lord Jesus knows them, and His Father also. When they are dead and gone, their work and labour of love all comes out. It is written with a diamond on the hearts of those they have assisted: it cannot be hidden. They speak when dead, though they were silent when living. We know their worth when they are gone, if we did not while we had them with us. The tears of those who have been fed in soul or body by their hand, tell the wondering world that some have gone home whose place cannot easily be supplied, and that a gap is made which it will be hard to fill up. These will never have that wretched epitaph, "Departed without being desired." These are the lavender in the Lord's garden, never so much appreciated and admired as when cut off and dead.

And now let me wind up with a few words of practical application.

There is one thing about the Lord's garden, which I see nothing like in this world.

The flowers of this world all die, and wither, and lose their sweetness, and decay, and come to nothing in the end. The fairest flowers are not really everlasting. The oldest and strongest of *nature's children* comes to an end.

It is not so with the *Lord's flowers*. The children of grace can never die. They may sleep for a season; they may be taken away when they have served their generation, and done their work. The Lord is continually coming down to His garden and "gathering lilies," laying flowers in His bosom one after the other; but the Lord's flowers will all rise again.

When the Lord comes again the second time, He will bring His people with Him. His flowers will live once more, brighter, sweeter, lovelier, more beautiful, more glorious, more pure, more shining, more fair. They will have a glorious body like their Lord's, and will flourish forever in the courts of our God.

(1) Reader, are you in the Lord's garden, or are you in the wilderness of this world?

You must be in one or the other. You must take your choice. Which have you chosen, and which do you choose now? The Lord Jesus would gladly transplant you.

He strives with you by His Spirit. He would gladly add you to the number of His beloved ones. He knocks at the door of your heart by word and by providence. He whispers to your conscience, "Awake, arise, repent, be converted, and come away!"

Oh, do not turn away from Him who speaks! Do not resist the Holy Ghost. Do not choose your place in the wilderness, but in the garden. Awake, arise, and turn away from the world.

(2) Reader! The wilderness or the garden? Which will you have?

If the *wilderness*, you will have your own way, run wild, grow to waste, bring forth fruit and flowers to yourself, become a barren, unprofitable, useless plant, live unloved and unlovable to yourself, and at last be gathered in the bundle with the tares, and burned!

If the *garden*, you will not have your own way. But you will have what is far better: you will have God and Christ for your own. You will be cultivated, watered, tended, moved, pruned, trained by the Lord Jesus Himself; and at last, your name will be found in the bundle of life.

## CHAPTER 16 – Pro 22.6.

### THE DUTIES OF PARENTS

“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” — Pro 22.6.

I SUPPOSE that most professing Christians are acquainted with the text at the head of this page. The sound of it is probably familiar to your ears, like an old tune. It is likely you have heard it, or read it, talked of it, or quoted it, many a time. Is it not so?

But, after all, how little is the substance of this text regarded! The doctrine it contains appears scarcely known; the duty it puts before us seems fearfully seldom practised. Reader, do I not speak the truth?

It cannot be said that the subject is a new one. The world is old, and we have the experience of nearly six thousand years to help us. We live in days when there is a mighty zeal for education in every quarter. We hear of new schools rising on all sides. We are told of new systems, and “new books for the young, of every sort and description. And still, for all this, the vast majority of children are manifestly not trained in the way they should go; for when they grow up to man’s estate, they do not walk with God.

Now, how will we account for this state of things? The plain truth is, the Lord’s *commandment* in our text is not regarded; and therefore the Lord’s *promise* in our text is not fulfilled.

Reader, these things may well give rise to great searchings of heart. Suffer then a word of exhortation from a minister, about the right training of children. Believe me, the subject is one that should come home to every conscience, and make every one ask himself the question, “Am I doing what I can in this matter?”

It is a subject that concerns almost all. There is hardly a household that it does not touch. Parents, nurses, teachers, godfathers, godmothers, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters — all have an interest in it. Few can be found, I think, who might not influence some parent in the management of his family, or affect the training of some child by suggestion or advice. All of us, I suspect, can do something here, either directly or indirectly — and I wish to stir up all to bear this in remembrance.

It is a subject, too, on which all concerned are in great danger of coming short of their duty. This is pre-eminently a point in which men can see the faults of their neighbours more clearly than their own. They will often bring up their children in the very path which they have denounced to their friends as unsafe. They will see splinters in other men’s families, and overlook beams in their own. They will be quick-sighted as eagles in detecting mistakes abroad, and yet blind as bats to fatal errors which are daily going on at home. They will be wise about their brother’s house, but foolish about their own flesh and blood. Here, if anywhere, we need to suspect our own judgment. This, too, you will do well to bear in mind. <sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> As a minister, I cannot help remarking that there is hardly any subject about which people seem so tenacious as they are about their children. I have sometimes been perfectly astonished at the slowness of sensible Christian parents to allow that their own children are at fault, or deserve blame. There are not a few persons to whom I would far rather speak about their *own* sins, than tell them their *children* had done anything wrong.

Come now, and let me place before you a few hints about right training. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost bless them, and make them words in season to you all Do not reject them because they are blunt and simple; do not despise them because they contain nothing new. Be very sure, if you would train children for heaven, these are hints that should not be lightly set aside. First, then, if you would train your children rightly,

**1. TRAIN THEM IN THE WAY THEY *SHOULD* GO,  
AND NOT IN THE WAY THAT THEY *WOULD* GO.**

Remember children are born with a decided bias towards evil; and therefore, if you let them choose for themselves, they are certain to choose wrong.

The mother cannot tell what her tender infant may grow up to be — tall or short, weak or strong, wise or foolish. He may be any of these things or not — it is all uncertain. But one thing the mother can say with certainty: he will have a corrupt and sinful heart. It is natural to us to do wrong. “Foolishness,” says Solomon, “is bound in the heart of a child” (Pro 22.15). “A child left to himself brings his mother to shame” (Pro 29.15). Our hearts are like the earth on which we tread; leave it alone, and it is sure to bear weeds.

If, then, you would deal wisely with your child, you must not leave him to the guidance of his own will. *Think* for him, *judge* for him, *act* for him, just as you would for one who is weak and blind — but for pity’s sake, do not give him up to his own wayward tastes and inclinations! It must not be his likings and wishes that are consulted. He does not yet know what is good for his mind and soul, any more than what is good for his body. You do not let him decide what he will eat, and what he will drink, and how he will be clothed. Be consistent, and deal with his *mind* in like manner. Train him in the way that is scriptural and right, and not in the way that he fancies.

If you cannot make up your mind to this first principle of Christian training, it is useless for you to read any further. SELF-WILL is almost the first thing that appears in a child’s mind; and it must be your first step to resist it.

**2. TRAIN UP YOUR CHILD WITH ALL TENDERNESS, AFFECTION, AND PATIENCE.**

I do not mean that you are to spoil him, but I do mean that you should let him see that you love him. Love should be the silver thread that runs through all your conduct. Kindness, gentleness, long-suffering, forbearance, patience, sympathy, a willingness to enter into childish troubles, a readiness to take part in childish joys — these are the cords by which a child may be led most easily — these are the clues you must follow if you would find the way to his heart.

Few are to be found, even among grown-up people, who are not easier to draw than to drive. There is in all our minds, that which rises in arms against compulsion; we get our backs up and stiffen our necks at the very idea of forced obedience. We are like young horses in the hand of a breaker: handle them kindly and make much of them, and by and by you may guide them with thread; use them roughly and violently, and it will be many a month before you get the mastery of them at all.

Now, children’s minds are cast in much the same mould as our own. Sternness and severity of manner chill them and throw them back. It shuts up their hearts, and you will weary yourself to find the door.

But let them only see that you have an affectionate feeling towards them — that you are

really desirous to make them happy, and do them good — that if you punish them, it is intended for their profit — and that, like the pelican, you would give your heart's blood to nourish their souls — let them see this, I say, and they will soon be all your own. But they must be wooed with kindness if their attention is ever to be won.

And surely reason itself might teach us this lesson. Children are weak and tender creatures, and as such, they need patient and considerate treatment. We must handle them delicately, like frail machines, lest by rough fingering we do more harm than good. They are like young plants, and need gentle watering — often, but little at a time.

We must not expect all things at once. We must remember what children are, and teach them as they are able to bear. Their minds are like a lump of metal — not to be forged and made useful at once, but only by a succession of little blows. Their understandings are like narrow-necked vessels we must pour in the wine of knowledge gradually, or much of it will be spilled and lost. “Line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little,” must be our rule. The whetstone does its work slowly, but frequent rubbing will bring the scythe to a fine edge. Truly there is need of patience in training a child; but without it, nothing can be done.

Nothing will compensate for the absence of this tenderness and love. A minister may speak the truth as it is in Jesus, clearly, forcibly, unanswerably; but if he does not speak it in love, few souls will be won. Just so, you must set before your children their duty — command, threaten, punish, reason — but if affection is lacking in your treatment, your labour will all be in vain.

Love is one grand secret of successful training. Anger and harshness may frighten, but they will not persuade the child that you are right; and if he sees you often out of temper, you will soon cease to have his respect. A father who speaks to his son as Saul did to Jonathan (1Sam 20.30), need not expect to retain his influence over that son's mind.

Try hard to keep a hold on your child's affections. It is a dangerous thing to make your children afraid of you. Anything is almost better than reserve and constraint between your child and yourself; and this will come in with fear. Fear puts an end to an open manner — fear leads to concealment — fear sows the seed of much hypocrisy — and fear leads to many a lie. There is a mine of truth in the Apostle's words to the Colossians: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, lest they be discouraged” (Col 3.21). Do not let the advice it contains be overlooked.

**3. TRAIN YOUR CHILDREN WITH AN ABIDING PERSUASION IN YOUR MIND,  
THAT MUCH DEPENDS ON YOU.**

GRACE is the strongest of all principles. See what a revolution grace effects when it comes into the heart of an old sinner — how it overturns the strongholds of Satan — how it casts down mountains, fills up valleys — makes crooked things straight — and newly creates the whole man. Truly, nothing is impossible to grace.

NATURE, too, is very strong. See how it struggles against the things of the kingdom of God — how it fights against every attempt to be more holy — how it keeps up an unceasing warfare within us to the last hour of life. Nature indeed is strong.

But after nature and grace, undoubtedly, there is nothing more powerful than EDUCATION. Early habits (if I may speak so) are everything with us, under God. We are made what we

are by *training*. Our character takes the form of that mould into which our first years are cast. <sup>49</sup>

We depend, in a vast measure, on those who bring us up. We get from them a colour, a taste, a bias which cling to us more or less all our lives. We catch the language of our nurses and mothers, and learn to speak it almost insensibly; and unquestionably, we catch something of their manners, ways, and mind at the same time. Only time will show, I suspect, how much we all owe to early impressions, and how many things in us may be traced to seeds sown in the days of our very infancy, by those who were around us. A very learned Englishman, Mr. Locke, has gone so far as to say that, "Of all the men we meet, nine out of ten are what they are, good or bad, useful or not, according to their education."

And all this is one of God's merciful arrangements. He gives your children a mind that will receive impressions like moist clay. He gives them a disposition at the starting-point of life to believe what you tell them, and to take for granted what you advise them, and to trust your word rather than a stranger's. He gives you, in short, a golden opportunity to do them good. See that the opportunity is not neglected and thrown away. Once you let it slip, it is gone forever.

Beware of that miserable delusion into which some have fallen, that parents can do nothing for their children, that you must leave them alone, wait for grace, and sit still. These persons have wishes for their children in Balaam's fashion: they would like them to die the death of the righteous man, but they do nothing to make them live his life. They desire much, and have nothing. And the devil rejoices to see such reasoning, just as he always does over anything which seems to excuse indolence, or to encourage neglect of means.

I know that you cannot convert your child. I know well that those who are born again are born, not of the will of man, but of God. But I also know that God expressly says, "Train up a child in the way he should go," and I know that He never laid a command on man which He would not give man grace to perform. And I know, too, that our duty is not to stand still and dispute, but to go forward and obey. It is in the going forward that God will meet us. The path of obedience is the way in which He gives the blessing. We have only to do as the servants were commanded at the marriage feast in Cana, to fill the water-pots with water, and we may safely leave it to the Lord to turn that water into wine.

**4. TRAIN WITH THIS THOUGHT CONTINUALLY BEFORE YOUR EYES —  
THAT THE SOUL OF YOUR CHILD IS THE FIRST THING TO BE CONSIDERED.**

No doubt these little ones are precious in your eyes; but if you love them, think often of their souls. No interest should weigh with you so much as their eternal interests. No part of them should be so dear to you as that part which will never die. The world, with all its glory, will pass away; the hills will melt; the heavens will be wrapped together as a scroll; the sun will cease to shine. But the spirit which dwells in those little creatures, whom you love so well, will outlive them all — and whether it is in happiness or misery (to speak as a man) will depend on you.

This is the thought that should be uppermost on your mind in all you do for your children.

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<sup>49</sup> "He has seen but little of life who does not discern everywhere the effect of education on men's opinions and habits of thinking. The children bring out of the nursery that which displays itself throughout their lives." — Cecil.

In every step you take about them, in every plan, and scheme, and arrangement that concerns them, do not leave out that mighty question, “How will this affect their souls?”

Soul-love is the soul of *all* love. To pet and pamper and indulge your child, as if this world was all he had to look to, and this life was the only season for happiness — to do this is not true love, but *cruelty*. It is treating him like some beast of the earth, which has but one world to look to, and nothing after death. It is hiding from him that grand truth which he ought to be made to learn from his very infancy: that the chief end of his life is the salvation of his soul.

A true Christian must be no slave to fashion, if he would train his child for heaven. He must not be content to do things merely because they are the custom of the world; to teach them and instruct them in certain ways, merely because it is usual; to allow them to read books of a questionable sort, merely because everybody else reads them; to let them form habits of a doubtful tendency, merely because they are the habits of the day. He must train With an eye to his children’s souls. He must not be ashamed to hear his training called singular and strange. What if it is? The time is short — the fashion of this world passes away. He that has trained his children for heaven, rather than for earth, for God, rather than for man, *he* is the parent that in the end will be called wise.

#### **5. TRAIN YOUR CHILD TO A KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE.**

You cannot make your children love the Bible; I admit it. None but the Holy Ghost can give us a heart to delight in the Word. But you can make your children acquainted with the Bible. And you can be sure that they cannot be acquainted with that blessed book too soon, or too well.

A thorough knowledge of the Bible is the foundation of all clear views of religion. He that is well-grounded in it will not generally be found a waiverer, and carried about by every wind of new doctrine. Any system of training which does not make a knowledge of Scripture the first thing, is unsafe and unsound.

You need to be careful on this point just now — for the devil is abroad and error abounds. Some are to be found among us who give the *Church* the honour due to *Jesus Christ*. Some are to be found who make out the sacraments to be saviours and passports to eternal life. And some are to be found, in like manner, who honour a catechism more than the Bible, or fill the minds of their children with miserable little story-books, instead of the Scripture of truth. But if you love your children, let the simple Bible be everything in the training of their souls; and let all other books go down and take second place.

Do not care as much for their being mighty in the catechism, as for being mighty in the Scriptures. This is the training, believe me, that God will honour. The Psalmist says of Him, “You have magnified Your Word above all Your name” (Psa 138.2); and I think that He gives a special blessing to all who try to magnify it among men.

See that your children read the Bible REVERENTLY. Train them to look at it, not as the word of *men*, but as it is in truth, the Word of *God*, written by the Holy Ghost Himself, *all* true, *all* profitable, and able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

See that they read it REGULARLY. Train them to regard it as their soul’s daily food, as a thing essential to their soul’s daily health. I know well that you cannot make this anything

more than a form; but there is no telling the amount of sin which a mere form may indirectly restrain.

See that they read it ALL. You need not shrink from bringing any doctrine before them. You need not fancy that the leading doctrines of Christianity are things which children cannot understand. Children understand far more of the Bible than we are apt to suppose.

Tell them of SIN, its guilt, its consequences, its power, and its vileness. You will find they can comprehend something of this.

Tell them of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and His work for our salvation — the atonement, the cross, the blood, the sacrifice, the intercession. You will discover there is something not beyond them in all this.

Tell them of the WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT in man's heart, how He changes, and renews, and sanctifies, and purifies. You will soon see they can go along with you in some measure in this.

In short, I suspect that we have no idea how much a little child can take in of the length and breadth of the glorious gospel They see far more of these things than we suppose.<sup>50</sup>

Fill their minds with Scripture. Let the Word dwell in them richly. Give them the Bible, the whole Bible, even while they are young.

#### **6. TRAIN THEM TO A HABIT OF PRAYER.**

Prayer is the very life-breath of true religion. It is one of the first evidences that a man is born again. "Behold," said the Lord about Saul the day he sent Ananias to him, "Behold, he *prays*" (Act 9.11). He had begun to pray, and that was proof enough.

Prayer was the distinguishing mark of the Lord's people in the day that there began to be a separation between them and the world. "Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen 4.26).

Prayer is the peculiarity of all real Christians *now*. They pray — for they tell God their wants, their feelings, their desires, their fears; and they mean what they say. The nominal Christian may repeat prayers, and good prayers too, but he goes no further.

Prayer is the turning-point in a man's soul. Our ministry is unprofitable, and our labour is vain, till you are brought to your knees. Till then, we have no hope about you.

Prayer is one great secret of spiritual prosperity. When there is much private communion with God, your soul will grow like the grass after rain; when there is little, all will be at a standstill — you will barely keep your soul alive. Show me a growing Christian, a going forward Christian, a strong Christian, a flourishing Christian, and I am sure he is someone who speaks often with his Lord. He *asks* much, and he *has* much. He tells Jesus everything, and so he always knows how to act.

Prayer is the mightiest engine that God has placed in our hands. It is the best weapon to use in every difficulty, and the surest remedy in every trouble. It is the key that unlocks the treasury of promises, and the hand that draws forth grace and help in time of need. It

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<sup>50</sup> As to the age when the religious instruction of a child should begin, no general rule can be laid down. The mind seems to open in some children much more quickly than in others. We seldom begin too early. There are wonderful examples on record of what a child can attain to, even at three years old.

is the silver trumpet that God commands us to sound in all our necessity, and it is the cry He has promised to always attend to, even as a loving mother to the voice of her child.

Prayer is the simplest means that man can use in coming to God. It is within reach of all — the sick, the aged, the infirm, the paralytic, the blind, the poor, the unlearned — *all* can pray. It avails you nothing to plead lack of memory, and lack of learning, and lack of books, and lack of scholarship in this matter. So long as you have a tongue to tell your soul's state, you may and *ought* to pray. Those words, "You have not, because you ask not" (Jas. 4.2), will be a fearful condemnation to many in the Day of Judgment.

Parents, if you love your children, do all that lies in your power to train them up to a habit of prayer. Show them how to begin. Tell them what to say. Encourage them to persevere. Remind them if they become careless and slack about it. Let it not be your fault, at any rate, if they never call on the name of the Lord.

Remember, this is the first step in religion which a child is able to take. Long before he can read, you can teach him to kneel by his mother's side, and repeat the simple words of prayer and praise which she puts in his mouth. And as the first steps in any undertaking are always the most important, so is the manner in which your children's prayers are prayed, a point which deserves your closest attention. Few seem to know how much depends on this. You must beware lest they get into a way of saying them in a hasty, careless, and irreverent manner. You must beware of giving up the oversight of this matter to servants and nurses, or of trusting too much to your children doing it when left to themselves. I cannot praise that mother who never looks after this most important part of her child's daily life *herself*. Surely if there is any habit which your own hand and eye should help in forming, it is the habit of prayer. Believe me, if you never hear your children pray yourself, you are much to blame. You are little wiser than the bird described in Job, "which leaves her eggs in the earth, and warms them in the dust, and forgets that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain, without fear" (Job 39.14-16).

Prayer is, of all habits, the one which we recollect the longest. Many a grey-headed man could tell you how his mother used to make him pray in the days of his childhood. Other things have passed away from his mind perhaps. The church where he was taken to worship, the minister whom he heard preach, the companions who used to play with him — all these, it may be, have passed from his memory, and left no mark behind. But you will often find it is far different with his first prayers. He will often be able to tell you where he knelt, and what he was taught to say, and even how his mother looked all the while. It will come up as fresh before his mind's eye as if it was but yesterday.

Reader, if you love your children, I charge you, do not let the seed-time of a prayerful habit pass away unimproved. If you train your children to anything, train them, at least, to a habit of prayer.

**7. TRAIN THEM TO HABITS OF DILIGENCE,  
AND REGULARITY ABOUT PUBLIC MEANS OF GRACE.**

Tell them of the duty and privilege of going to the house of God, and joining in the prayers of the congregation. Tell them that wherever the Lord's people are gathered together, there the Lord Jesus is present in a special manner, and that those who absent themselves must expect, like the Apostle Thomas, to miss a blessing. Tell them of the importance of

hearing the Word preached, and that it is God's ordinance for converting, sanctifying, and building up the souls of men. Tell them how the Apostle Paul enjoins us not "to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb 10.25); but to exhort one another, to stir one another up to it, and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

I call it a sad sight in a church when nobody comes up to the Lord's table but the elderly people, and the young men and the young women all turn away. But I call it a sadder sight still when no children are to be seen in a church, except those who come to Sunday School, and are *obliged* to attend. Let none of this guilt lie at your doors. There are many boys and girls in every parish, besides those who come to school; and you who are their parents and friends, should see to it that they come with you to church.

Do not allow them to grow up with a habit of making vain excuses for not coming. Give them plainly to understand that so long as they are under your roof, it is the rule of your house for everyone in health to honour the Lord's house on the Lord's day, and that you reckon the Sabbath-breaker to be a murderer of his own soul.

See to it too, if it can be so arranged, that your children go with you to church, and sit near you when they are there. To go to church is one thing, but to behave well at church is quite another. And believe me, there is no security for good behaviour like that of having them under your own eye.

The minds of young people are easily drawn aside, and their attention lost — and every possible means should be used to counteract this. I do not like to see them coming to church by themselves. They often get into bad company by the way, and so they learn more evil on the Lord's day than in the rest of the week. Nor do I like to see what I call "a young people's corner" in a church. They often catch habits of inattention and irreverence there, which it takes years to unlearn, if they are ever unlearned at all. What I like to see is a whole family sitting together, old and young, side by side — men, women, and children, serving God according to their households.

But there are some who say that it is useless to urge children to attend means of grace, because they cannot understand them.

I would not have you listen to such reasoning. I find no such doctrine in the Old Testament. When Moses goes before Pharaoh (Exo 10.9), I observe that he says, "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters: for we must hold a feast to the Lord." When Joshua read the law (Jos 8.35), I observe, "There was not a word which Joshua did not read before the whole congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them." "Thrice in the year," says Exo 34.23, "all your male children will appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel." And when I turn to the New Testament, I find children mentioned there as partaking in public acts of religion as well as in the Old. When Paul was leaving the disciples at Tyre for the last time, I find it said (Act 21.5), "They all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed."

Samuel, in the days of his childhood, appears to have ministered to the Lord some time before he really knew Him. "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him" (1Sam 3.7). The Apostles themselves do not seem to have

understood all that our Lord said at the time that it was spoken: “His disciples did not understand these things at first: but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him” (Joh 12.16).

Parents, comfort your minds with these examples. Do not be cast down because your children do not see the full value of the means of grace now. Only train them up to a habit of regular attendance. Set it before their minds as a high, holy, and solemn duty, and believe me, the day will very likely come when they will bless you for your deed.

### **8. TRAIN THEM TO A HABIT OF FAITH.**

I mean by this, you should train them up to believe what you say. You should try to make them feel confidence in your judgment, and respect for your opinions, as better than their own. You should accustom them to think that when you say a thing is bad for them, it must be bad; and when you say it is good for them, it must be good — that your knowledge, in short, is better than their own, and that they may rely implicitly on your word. Teach them to feel that what they do not know now, they will probably know afterward, and to be satisfied that there is a reason and a necessity for everything you require them to do.

Who indeed can describe the blessedness of a real spirit of faith? Or rather, who can tell the misery that unbelief has brought upon the world? Unbelief made Eve eat the forbidden fruit — she doubted the truth of God’s word: “You will surely die.” Unbelief made the old world reject Noah’s warning, and so perish in sin. Unbelief kept Israel in the wilderness — it was the bar that kept them from entering the promised land. Unbelief made the Jews crucify the Lord of glory — they did not believe the voice of Moses and the prophets, though read to them every day. And unbelief is the reigning sin of man’s heart down to this very hour:

- unbelief in God’s promises;
- unbelief in God’s threatenings;
- unbelief in our own sinfulness;
- unbelief in our own danger;
- unbelief in everything that runs counter to the pride and worldliness of our evil hearts.

Reader, you train your children to little purpose if you do not train them to a habit of implicit faith — faith in their parents’ word — confidence that what their parents say must be right.

I have heard it said by some, that you should require nothing of children which they cannot understand: that you should explain and give a reason for everything you desire them to do. I warn you solemnly against such a notion. I tell you plainly, I think it an unsound and rotten principle. No doubt it is absurd to make a mystery of everything you do, and there are many things which it is well to explain to children in order that they may see that they are reasonable and wise. But to bring them up with the idea that they must take nothing on trust, that with their weak and imperfect understandings, they must have the “why” and the “wherefore” made clear to them at every step they take. This is indeed a fearful mistake, and likely to have the worst effect on their minds.

Reason with your child if you are so disposed at certain times; but never forget to keep him in mind (if you really love him) that he is but a child after all — that he thinks as a child, he understands as a child, and therefore he must not expect to know the reason for

everything at once.

Set before him the example of Isaac, on the day when Abraham took him to be offered on Mount Moriah (Gen 22). He asked his father that single question, “Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?” and he got no answer but this, “God will provide Himself a lamb.” How, or where, or why, or in what manner, or by what means — all this Isaac was not told; but the answer was enough. He believed that it would be well, because his father said so, and he was content.

Tell your children, too, that we must all be learners in our beginnings — that there is an alphabet to be mastered in every kind of knowledge, that the best horse in the world needs once to be broken — that a day will come when they will see the wisdom of all your training. But in the meantime, if you say a thing is right, it must be enough for them — they must believe you, and be content.

Parents, if any point in training is important, it is this. I charge you by the affection you have for your children, use every means to train them up to a habit of faith.

#### **9. TRAIN THEM TO A HABIT OF OBEDIENCE.**

This is an object which it is worth any labour to attain. No habit, I suspect, has such an influence over our lives as this. Parents, determine to make your children obey you, though it may cost you much trouble, and cost them many tears. Let there be no questioning, and reasoning, and disputing, and delaying, and answering back. When you give them a command, let them see plainly that you will have it done.

Obedience is the only reality. It is faith *visible*, faith *acting*, and faith *incarnate*. It is the test of real discipleship among the Lord’s people. “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (Joh 15.14). It ought to be the mark of well-trained children, that they do whatever their parents command them. Where indeed is the honour which the fifth commandment enjoins, if fathers and mothers are not obeyed cheerfully, willingly, and at once?

Early obedience has all Scripture on its side. It is in Abraham’s praise, not merely that he will train his family, but “he will command his children, and his household after him” (Gen 18.19). It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, that when “He was young He was subject to Mary and Joseph” (Luk 2.51). Observe how implicitly Joseph obeyed the order of his father Jacob (Gen 37.13). See how Isaiah speaks of it as an evil thing when “the child will behave himself proudly against the ancient” (Isa 3.5). Mark how the Apostle Paul names disobedience to parents as one of the bad signs of the latter days (2Tim 3.2). Mark how he singles out this grace of requiring obedience as one that should adorn a Christian minister: “a bishop must be one who rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.” And again, “Let the deacons rule their children and their own houses well” (1Tim 3.4-12). And again, an elder must be one “having faithful children, children not accused of riot, or unruly” (Tit. 1.6).

Parents, do you wish to see your children happy? Take care, then, that you train them to obey when they are spoken to — to do as they are bid. Believe me, we are not made for entire independence; we are not fit for it. Even Christ’s freemen have a yoke to wear; they “serve the Lord Christ” (Col 3.24). Children cannot learn too soon that this is a world in which we are not all intended to rule, and that we are never in our right place until we know how to obey our betters. Teach them to obey while young, or else they will be fretting

against God all their lives long, and wear themselves out with the vain idea of being independent of His control.

Reader, this hint is only too much needed. You will see many in this day who allow their children to choose and think for themselves long before they are able; and they even make excuses for their disobedience, as if it were a thing not to be blamed. To my eyes, a parent always yielding, and a child always having its own way, are a most painful sight — painful, because I see God's appointed order of things inverted and turned upside down — painful, because I feel sure the consequence to that child's character in the end will be self-will, pride, and self-conceit. You must not wonder that men refuse to obey their Father who is in heaven, if you allow them, when children, to disobey their father who is on earth.

Parents, if you love your children, let obedience be a motto and a watchword continually before their eyes.

**10. TRAIN THEM TO A HABIT OF ALWAYS SPEAKING THE TRUTH.**

Truth-speaking is far less common in the world than we are disposed to think at first sight. The whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is a golden rule which many would do well to bear in mind. Lying and prevarication are old sins. The devil was the father of them — he deceived Eve by a bold lie, and ever since the fall it is a sin against which all the children of Eve need to be on their guard.

Only think how much falsehood and deceit there is in the world! How much exaggeration! How many additions are made to a simple story! How many things are left out if it does not serve the speaker's interest to tell them! How few there are about us of whom we can say, we put unhesitating trust in their word! Truly the ancient Persians were wise in their generation: it was a leading point with them in educating their children, that they should learn to speak the truth. What an awful proof it is of man's natural sinfulness, that it should be needful to name such a point at all!

Reader, I would have you remark how often God is spoken of in the Old Testament as the *God of truth*. Truth seems to be especially set before us as a leading feature in the character of Him with whom we have to deal. He never swerves from the straight line. He abhors lying and hypocrisy. Try to keep this continually before your children's minds. Press upon them at all times, that less than the truth is a lie; that evasion, excuse-making, and exaggeration are all halfway houses towards what is false, and ought to be avoided. Encourage them in any circumstances to be straightforward, and whatever it may cost them, to speak the truth.

I press this subject on your attention, not merely for the sake of your children's character in the world — though I might dwell much on this. I urge it rather for your own comfort and assistance in all your dealings with them. You will find it a mighty help indeed, to be able to always trust their word. It will go far to prevent that habit of concealment which so unhappily prevails sometimes among children. Openness and straightforwardness depend greatly on a parent's treatment of this matter in the days of our infancy.

**11. TRAIN THEM TO A HABIT OF ALWAYS REDEEMING THE TIME.**

Idleness is the devil's best friend. It is the surest way to give him an opportunity to do us harm. An idle mind is like an open door; and if Satan does not enter in by it himself, it is certain that he will throw something in to raise bad thoughts in our souls.

No created being was ever meant to be idle. Service and work is the appointed portion of every creature of God. The angels in heaven work — they are the Lord’s ministering servants, ever doing His will. Adam, in Paradise, had work — he was appointed to dress the garden of Eden, and to keep it. The redeemed saints in glory will have work — “They do not rest day and night,” singing praise and glory to Him who bought them. And man — weak, sinful man — must have something to do, or else his soul will soon get into an unhealthy state. We must have our hands filled, and our minds occupied with something, or else our imaginations will soon ferment and breed mischief.

And what is true of us, is true of our children too. Alas, indeed, for the man who has nothing to do! The Jews thought idleness a positive sin. It was a law of theirs that every man should bring up his son in some useful trade — and they were right. They knew the heart of man better than some of us appear to do.

Idleness made Sodom what she was. “This was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: pride, fulness of food, and abundant idleness was in her” (Eze 16.49). Idleness had much to do with David’s awful sin with the wife of Uriah. I see in 2Sam 11.1, that Joab went out to war against Ammon, “but David tarried still at Jerusalem.” Was that not idle? And it was then that he saw Bathsheba — and the next step we read about is his tremendous and miserable fall.

Truly, I believe that idleness has led to more sin than almost any other habit that could be named. I suspect it is the mother of many a work of the flesh, the mother of adultery, fornication, drunkenness, and many other deeds of darkness that I do not have time to name. Let your own conscience say whether I speak the truth. You were idle, and at once the devil knocked at the door and came in.

And indeed I do not wonder — everything in the world around us seems to teach the same lesson. It is the still water which becomes stagnant and impure; running, moving streams are always clear. If you have steam machinery, you must work it, or it soon gets out of order. If you have a horse, you must exercise him; he is never so well as when he has regular work. If you would have good bodily health yourself, you must exercise. If you always sit still, your body is sure at length to complain. And just so is it with the soul. The active moving mind is a hard mark for the devil to shoot at. Always try to be full of useful employment, and thus your enemy will find it difficult to get room to sow tares.

Reader, I ask you to set these things before the minds of your children. Teach them the value of time, and try to make them learn the habit of using it well. It pains me to see children idling over what they have in hand, whatever it may be. I love to see them active and industrious, and giving their whole heart to all they do; giving their whole heart to lessons, when they have to learn — giving their whole heart even to their amusements, when they go to play.

But if you love them well, let idleness be counted a sin in your family.

**12. TRAIN THEM WITH A CONSTANT FEAR OF OVER-INDULGENCE.**

This is the one point of all on which you have the most need to be on your guard. It is natural to be tender and affectionate towards your own flesh and blood; and it is the excess of this very tenderness and affection which you have to fear. Take heed that it does not make you blind to your children’s faults, and deaf to all advice about them. Take heed lest it make you overlook bad conduct, rather than have the pain of inflicting punishment

and correction.

I know well that punishment and correction are disagreeable things. Nothing is more unpleasant than giving pain to those we love, and bringing forth their tears. But so long as hearts are what hearts are, it is vain to suppose, as a general rule, that children can ever be brought up without correction.

Spoiling is a very expressive word, and sadly, full of meaning. Now, it is the shortest way to spoil children to let them have their own way — to allow them to do wrong and not to punish them for it. Believe me, you must not do it, whatever pain it may cost you — unless you wish to ruin your children's souls.

You cannot say that Scripture does not speak expressly on this subject: "He that spares his rod, hates his son; but he that loves him, chastens him early" (Pro 13.24). "Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not let your soul spare for his crying" (Pro 19.18). "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child: but the rod of correction will drive it from him" (Pro 22.15). "Do not withhold correction from the child, for if you beat him with the rod, he will not die. You will beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell" (Pro 23.13-14). "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself brings his mother to shame." "Correct your son, and he will give you rest — indeed, he will give delight to your soul" (Pro 29.15-17).

How strong and forcible are these texts! How melancholy is the fact that in many Christian families they seem almost unknown! Their children need reproof, but it is hardly ever given; they need correction, but it is hardly ever employed. And yet this book of Proverbs is not obsolete and unfit for Christians. It is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable. It is given for our learning, just as the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians. Surely the believer who brings up his children without attention to its counsel, is making himself wise above that which is written, and he greatly errs.

Fathers and mothers, I tell you plainly, if you never punish your children when they are at fault, you are doing them a grievous wrong. I warn you, this is the rock on which the saints of God, in every age, have only too frequently made shipwreck. I would gladly persuade you to be wise in time, and keep clear of it. See it in Eli's case. His sons Hophni and Phinehas "made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them." He gave them no more than a tame and lukewarm reproof, when he should have rebuked them sharply. In one word, *He honoured his sons above God*. And what was the end of these things? He lived to hear of the death of both his sons in battle, and his own grey hairs were brought down with sorrow to the grave (1Sam 2.22-29, 3.13).

See, too, the case of David. Who can read without pain the history of his children, and their sins? Amnon's incest, Absalom's murder and proud rebellion — Adonijah's scheming ambition. Truly these were grievous wounds for the man after God's own heart to receive from his own house. But was there no fault on his side? I fear there can be no doubt there was. I find a clue to it all in the account of Adonijah in 1Kng 1.6, "His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why have you done so?" *There* was the foundation of all the mischief. David was an over-indulgent father who let his children have their own way, and he reaped as he had sown.

Parents, I beseech you, for your children's sake, beware of over-indulgence. I call on you to remember, it is your first duty to consult their real *interests*, and not their *fancies* and

likings — to *train* them, not to *humour* them — to *profit*, not merely to *please*.

You must not give way to every wish and caprice of your child's mind, however much you may love him. You must not let him suppose that *his* will is to be everything, and that he has only to desire a thing and it will be done. Do not, I pray you, make your children idols, lest God take them away, and break your idol, just to convince you of your folly.

Learn to say "No" to your children. Show them that you are able to refuse whatever you think is not fit for them. Show them that you are ready to punish disobedience, and that when you speak of punishment, you are not only ready to threaten, but also to perform. Do not threaten too much.<sup>51</sup> Threatened folks, and threatened faults, live long. Punish seldom, but really and in good earnest; frequent and slight punishment is a wretched system indeed.<sup>52</sup>

Beware of letting small faults pass unnoticed under the idea "it is a little one." There are no little things in training children; all are important. Little weeds need plucking up as much as any. Leave them alone, and they will soon be great.

Reader, if there is any point which deserves your attention, believe me, it is this one. It is one that will give you trouble, I know. But if you do not *take* trouble with your children when they are young, they will *give* you trouble when they are old. Choose which you prefer.

### **13. TRAIN THEM REMEMBERING CONTINUALLY HOW GOD TRAINS HIS CHILDREN.**

The Bible tells us that God has an elect people, a family in this world. All poor sinners who have been convinced of sin, and fled to Jesus for peace, make up that family. All of us who really believe in Christ for salvation are its members.

Now, God the Father is ever training the members of this family for their everlasting abode with Him in heaven. He acts as a husbandman pruning his vines, that they may bear more fruit. He knows the character of each of us: our besetting sins, our weaknesses, our peculiar infirmities, our special wants. He knows our works and where we dwell; who our companions are in life, and what our trials are; what our temptations, and what our privileges are. He knows all these things, and is ever ordering all for our good. He allots to each of us, in His providence, the very things we need in order to bear the most fruit — as much of sunshine as we can stand, and as much of rain — as much of bitter things as we can bear, and as much of sweet. Reader, if you would train your children wisely, mark well how God the Father trains His. He does all things well; the plan which He adopts must be right.

See, then, how many things there are which God withholds from His children. Few could be found among them, I suspect, who have not had desires which He has never been pleased to fulfil. There has often been some one thing they wanted to attain, and yet there has always been some barrier to prevent attainment. It has been just as if God was placing it above our reach, and saying, "This is not good for you; this must not be." Moses desired

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<sup>51</sup> Some parents and nurses have a way of saying, "Naughty child," to a boy or girl on every slight occasion, and often without good cause. It is a very foolish habit. Words of blame should never be used without real reason.

<sup>52</sup> As to the best way of punishing a child, no general rule can be laid down. The characters of children are so exceedingly different, that what would be a severe punishment to one child, would be no punishment at all to another. I only beg to enter my decided protest against the modern notion that no child should ever be whipped. Doubtless some parents use bodily correction far too much, and far too violently; but many others, I fear, use it far too little.

exceedingly to cross over the Jordan, and see the good land of promise; but you will remember that his desire was never granted.

See, too, how often God leads His people by ways which seem dark and mysterious to our eyes. We cannot see the meaning of all His dealings with us; we cannot see the reasonableness of the path in which our feet are treading. Sometimes so many trials have assailed us, so many difficulties encompassed us, that we have not been able to discover the necessity of it all. It has been just as if our Father was taking us by the hand into a dark place and saying, "Ask no questions, but follow Me." There was a direct road from Egypt to Canaan — yet Israel was not led into it; but around it, through the wilderness. And this seemed hard at the time. "The soul of the people," we are told, "was much discouraged because of the way" (Exo 13.17; Num 21.4).

See also, how often God chastens His people with trial and affliction. He sends them crosses and disappointments; He lays them low with sickness; He strips them of property and friends; He changes them from one position to another; He visits them with things that are most hard to flesh and blood; and some of us have well-nigh fainted under the burdens laid upon us. We have felt pressed beyond strength, and have been almost ready to murmur at the hand which chastened us. Paul the Apostle had a thorn in the flesh appointed to him, some bitter bodily trial no doubt, though we do not know exactly what it was. But this we know: he begged the Lord three times that it might be removed; yet it was not taken away (2Cor 12.8-9).

Now, reader, notwithstanding all these things, did you ever hear of a single child of God who thought his Father did not treat him wisely? No, I am sure you never did. God's children would always tell you, in the long run, it was a blessed thing they did not have their own way, and that God had done far better for them than they could have done for themselves. Yes! And they could tell you, too, that God's dealings had provided more happiness for them than they ever would have obtained themselves; and that His way, however dark at times, was the way of pleasantness and the path of peace.

I ask you to lay to heart the lesson which God's dealings with His people is meant to teach you. Do not fear to withhold from your child anything you think will do him harm, whatever his own wishes may be. This is God's plan.

Do not hesitate to lay on him commands, of which he may not at present see the wisdom, and to guide him in ways which may not now seem reasonable to his mind. This is God's plan.

Do not shrink from chastising and correcting him whenever you that see his soul's health requires it, however painful it may be to your feelings; and remember, medicines for the mind must not be rejected because they are bitter. This is God's plan.

And do not be afraid, above all, that such a plan of training will make your child unhappy. I warn you against this delusion. Depend on it: there is no surer road to unhappiness than always having our own way. To have our wills checked and denied is a blessed thing for us; it makes us value enjoyments when they come. To be indulged perpetually is the way to be made selfish; and believe me, selfish people and spoiled children are seldom happy.

Reader, do not be wiser than God; train your children as He trains His.

**14. TRAIN THEM REMEMBERING CONTINUALLY  
THE INFLUENCE OF YOUR OWN EXAMPLE.**

Instruction, and advice, and commands will profit little, unless they are backed up by the pattern of your own life. Your children will never believe you are in earnest, and really wish them to obey you, so long as your actions contradict your counsel. Archbishop John Tillotson (1630-1694) made a wise remark when he said, “To give children good instruction, and a bad example, is but beckoning to them with the head to show them the way to heaven, while we take them by the hand and lead them in the way to hell.”

We little know the force and power of example. No one of us can live to himself in this world; we are always influencing those around us in one way or another — either for good or for evil, either for God or for sin. They see our ways, they mark our conduct, they observe our behaviour — and what they see us practise, *that* they may fairly suppose we think is right. And never, I believe, does example tell so powerfully as it does in the case of parents and children.

Fathers and mothers, do not forget that children learn more by the eye than they do by the ear. No school will make such deep marks on character as home. The best of schoolmasters will not imprint on their minds as much as they will pick up at your fireside. Imitation is a far stronger principle with children than memory. What they *see* has a much stronger effect on their minds than what they are *told*.

Take care, then, what you do before a child. It is a true proverb, “Who sins before a child, sins double.” Strive rather to be a living epistle of Christ, such as your families can read, and that plainly too. Be an example of reverence for the Word of God, reverence in prayer, reverence for means of grace, reverence for the Lord’s day. — Be an example in words, in temper, in diligence, in temperance, in faith, in charity, in kindness, in humility. Do not think that your children will practise what they do not see you do. You are their model picture, and they will copy what you are. Your reasoning and your lecturing, your wise commands and your good advice — all this they may not understand; but they can understand your life.

Children are very quick observers; very quick in seeing through some kinds of hypocrisy, very quick in finding out what you really think and feel, very quick in adopting all your ways and opinions. You will often find as the father is, so is the son.

Remember the word that the conqueror Caesar always used to his soldiers in a battle. He did not say “Go forward,” but “Come.” So it must be with you in training your children. They will seldom learn habits which they see you despise, or walk in paths in which you do not walk yourself. He that preaches to his children what he does not practise, is working a work that never goes forward. It is like the fabled web of Penelope of old, who wove all day, and unwove all night. Even so, the parent who tries to train without setting a good example is building with one hand, and pulling down with the other.

**15. TRAIN THEM REMEMBERING CONTINUALLY THE POWER OF SIN.**

I name this briefly in order to guard you against unscriptural expectations.

You must not expect to find your children’s minds a sheet of pure white paper, and to have no trouble if you only use the right means. I warn you plainly: you will find no such thing. It is painful to see how much corruption and evil there is in a young child’s heart, and how

soon it begins to bear fruit. Violent tempers, self-will, pride, envy, sullenness, passion, idleness, selfishness, deceit, cunning, falsehood, hypocrisy, a terrible aptness to learn what is bad, a painful slowness to learn what is good, a readiness to pretend anything in order to gain their own ends. You must be prepared to see all these things, or some of them, even in your own flesh and blood. In little ways they will creep out at a very early age; it is almost startling to observe how naturally they seem to spring up. Children require no schooling to learn to sin.

But you must not be discouraged and cast down by what you see. You must not think it is a strange and unusual thing, that little hearts can be so full of sin. It is the only portion which our father Adam left us; it is that fallen nature with which we come into the world; it is that inheritance which belongs to us all. Let it rather make you more diligent in using every means which seem most likely, by God's blessing, to counteract the mischief. Let it make you more and more careful, so far as it lies in you, to keep your children out of the way of temptation.

Never listen to those who tell you that your children are good, and well brought up, and can be trusted. Think rather that their hearts are always inflammable as tinder. At their very best, they only want a spark to set their corruptions alight. Parents are seldom too cautious. Remember the natural depravity of your children, and take care.

**16. TRAIN THEM REMEMBERING CONTINUALLY THE PROMISES OF SCRIPTURE.**

I also name this briefly, in order to guard you against discouragement.

You have a plain promise on your side, "Train up your child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Pro 22.6). Think what it means to have a promise like this. Promises were the only lamp of hope which cheered the hearts of the patriarchs before the Bible was written. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph — all lived on a few promises, and prospered in their souls. Promises are the cordials which in every age have supported and strengthened the believer. Whoever has a plain text on his side, need never be cast down. Fathers and mothers, when your hearts are failing and ready to stop, look at the word of this text, and take comfort.

Think who it is that promises. It is not the word of a man, who may lie or repent; it is the word of the King of kings, who never changes. Has He said a thing, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? [Num 23.19](#) Neither is anything too hard for Him to perform. [Gen 18.14](#) The things that are impossible with men are possible with God. [Mat 19.26](#) Reader, if we do not get the benefit of the promise we are dwelling upon, the fault is not in Him, but in ourselves.

Think, too, what the promise contains, before you refuse to take comfort from it. It speaks of a certain time when good training will especially bear fruit — "when a child is old." Surely there is comfort in this. You may not see with your own eyes the result of careful training, but you do not know what blessed fruits may spring from it, long after you are dead and gone. It is not God's way to give everything at once.

- "Afterward" is the time when He often chooses to work, both in the things of nature and in the things of grace.
- "Afterward" is the season when affliction bears the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Heb 12.11).

- “Afterward” was the time when the son who refused to work in his father’s vineyard, repented and went (Mat 21.29).
- And “afterward” is the time to which parents must look forward if they do not see success at once — you must sow in hope, and plant in hope.

“Cast your bread upon the waters,” says the Spirit, “for you will find it after many days” (Ecc 11.1). Many children, no doubt, will rise up in the day of judgment and bless their parents for good training, who never gave any signs of having profited by it during their parents’ lives. Go forward then in faith, and be sure that your labour will not be altogether thrown away. Three times Elijah stretched himself on the widow’s child before it revived. Take an example from him, and persevere.

**17. TRAIN THEM, LASTLY, WITH CONTINUAL PRAYER  
FOR A BLESSING ON ALL YOU DO.**

Without the blessing of the Lord, your best endeavours will do no good. He has the hearts of all men in His hands; and unless He touches the hearts of your children by His Spirit, you will weary yourself to no purpose. Therefore, water the seed you sow on their minds, with unceasing prayer. The Lord is far more willing to hear than we are to pray; far more ready to give blessings than we are to ask for them; but He loves to be entreated for them. And I set this matter of prayer before you, as the top-stone and seal of all you do. I suspect the child of many prayers is seldom cast away.

Look upon your children as Jacob looked on his; he tells Esau they are “the children which God has graciously given your servant” (Gen 33.5). Look on them as Joseph looked on his; he told his father, “They are the sons whom God has given me” (Gen 48.9). Count them with the Psalmist to be “a heritage and reward from the Lord” (Psa 127.3). And then ask the Lord, with a holy boldness, to be gracious and merciful to His own gifts. Mark how Abraham intercedes for Ishmael, because he loved him, “Oh that Ishmael might live before you” (Gen 17.18). See how Manoah speaks to the angel about Samson, “How will we order the child, and how will we deal with him?” (Jdg 13.12).<sup>53</sup> Observe how tenderly Job cared for his children’s souls, “He offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all, for he said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus Job did continually” (Job 1.5). Parents, if you love your children, go and do likewise. You cannot name their names before the mercy-seat too often.

And now, reader, in conclusion, let me once more press upon you the necessity and importance of using every single means in your power, if you would train children for heaven.

I know well that God is a sovereign God, and does all things according to the counsel of His own will. I know that Rehoboam was the son of Solomon, and Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, and that you do not always see godly parents having a godly seed. But I also know that God is a God who works by means, and I am sure that if you make light of such means as I have mentioned, your children are not likely to turn out well.

Fathers and mothers, you may take your children to be baptized, and have them enrolled in the ranks of Christ’s Church — you may get godly sponsors to answer for them, and help you by their prayers — you may send them to the best of schools, and give them Bibles

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<sup>53</sup> The NKJ renders it, “What will be the boy’s rule of life, and his work?” KJV: “...how shall we do unto him?”

and Prayer Books, and fill them with head knowledge. But if all this time there is no regular training at home, I tell you plainly, I fear it will go hard in the end with your children's souls. Home is the place where habits are formed — home is the place where the foundations of character are laid — home gives the bias to our tastes, and likings, and opinions. See then, I pray you, that there is careful training at home. Happy indeed is the man who can say, as Bolton said to his children upon his dying bed, "I do believe not one of you will dare to meet me before the tribunal of Christ in an unregenerate state."

Fathers and mothers, I charge you solemnly before God and the Lord Jesus Christ: take every pain to train your children in the way they should go. I charge you not merely for the sake of your children's souls; I charge you for the sake of your own future comfort and peace. Truly, it is in your interest to do so. Truly, your own happiness in great measure depends on it. Children have ever been the bow from which the sharpest arrows have pierced man's heart. Children have mixed the bitterest cups that man has ever had to drink. Children have caused the saddest tears that man has ever had to shed. Adam could tell you so; Jacob could tell you so; David could tell you so. There are no sorrows on earth like those which children have brought upon their parents. Oh! take heed, lest your own neglect lays up misery for you in your old age. Take heed, lest you weep under the ill-treatment of a thankless child, in the days when your eye is dim, and your natural force is abated.

If ever you wish your children to be the restorers of your life and the nourishers of your old age — if you would have them be blessings and not curses, joys and not sorrows, Judahs and not Reubens, Ruths and not Orpahs — if you would not, like Noah, be ashamed of their deeds, and, like Rebekah, be made weary of your life by them — if this is your wish, then remember my advice early on: train them while young, in the right way.

And as for me, I will conclude by putting up my prayer to God for all who read this paper, that you may all be taught of God to feel the value of your own souls. This is one reason why baptism is too often a mere form, and Christian training is despised and disregarded. Too often parents do not feel for themselves, and so they do not feel for their children. They do not realize the tremendous difference between a state of nature and a state of grace; and therefore they are content to let them alone.

Now, the Lord teach you all, that sin is that abominable thing which God hates. Then I know you will mourn over the sins of your children, and strive to pluck them out as brands from the fire.

The Lord teach you all how precious Christ is, and what a mighty and complete work He has done for our salvation. Then I feel confident that you will use every means to bring your children to Jesus, that they may live through Him.

The Lord teach you all of your need of the Holy Spirit, to renew, sanctify, and quicken your souls. Then I feel sure you will urge your children to pray for Him without ceasing, and never rest till He has come down into their hearts with power, and made them new creatures.

The Lord grant this, and then I have a good hope that you will indeed train up your children well — train well for *this life*, and train well for *the life to come*; train well for *earth*, and train well for *heaven*; train them for *God*, for *Christ*, and for *eternity*.

## CHAPTER 17 – Phi 1.1.

### THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF LAY CHURCHMEN. <sup>54</sup>

“Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.” – Phi 1.1.

THIS opening verse of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians is a very remarkable text of Scripture. I suspect it receives far less attention from Bible-readers than it deserves. Like the gold of California, men have walked over it for centuries, and have not observed what was under their feet. In fact, if some Anglican divines had stood at the Apostle’s elbow when he wrote this verse, I believe they would have hinted that he had made a mistake.

Now, what do I mean by all this? What is the remarkable point to which I refer? The point on which I place my finger is St. Paul’s mention of “the saints” *before* the “bishops and deacons.” He places the laity before the clergy when he addresses the Philippian Church. He puts the body of the baptized in the front rank, and the ministers in the rear.

There is no room for dispute about the various readings of manuscripts in this case. Here, at any rate, the Revised Version does not touch the language of the text.

It was unmistakably given by inspiration of God, and written for our learning. As such, I see in it the germ of a great truth which demands special notice in the present day. In short, it opens up the grave subject of the rights and duties of the lay members of a Christian Church.

There are three questions which I propose to examine in this paper:

- I. What was the position of the lay members of a Church in the days of the Apostles?
- II. What has been the position of the laity of the Church of England for the last 200 years?
- III. What should we aim at, in the matter of the laity, in order to strengthen and reform the Established Church of England?

I approach the whole subject with a deep sense of its delicacy and difficulty. I disclaim the slightest sympathy with those revolutionary counsellors who want us to throw overboard Creeds and Articles and Formularies, and turn the Church into a Pantheon, in the vain hope of buying off invaders. I desire nothing but scriptural and reasonable reforms, and I know no reform so likely to strengthen the Church of England as that of placing her laity in their rightful position. One of the best modes of promoting effective Church defence in this day is to promote wise Church reform.

*I. What, then, was the position of the lay members of Churches in the days of the Apostles?*

Let us imagine ourselves paying a visit to the baptized communities at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, or Jerusalem, and let us see what we would have found, and what Scripture teaches about them. In this, as in many other matters, we have a right to ask, “What light can we get from the New Testament?”

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<sup>54</sup> The substance of this paper was originally preached as a sermon in Winchester Cathedral on April 2, 1886.

## Chap. 17. The Rights and Duties of Lay Churchmen

This is an inquiry which deserves special attention, and I am much mistaken if the result does not astonish some persons, and make them open their eyes.

I say then, without hesitation, that you will not find a single text in the New Testament in which the ordained ministers alone are ever called “the Church,” or ever act for the Church without the laity uniting and co-operating in their action.

Are the deacons appointed? The twelve recommend it, but “the whole multitude” choose (Act 6.5).<sup>55</sup> Is a council held to consider whether the heathen converts should be circumcised, and keep the ceremonial law? The decision arrived at is said to come from “the apostles, and elders, and *brethren*,” with “the *whole Church*” (Act 15.22-23).

Are inspired Epistles written by St. Paul to particular Churches? In eight cases they are addressed to “the *Church*, the *saints*, the faithful *brethren*” — and in only one case (the Epistle to the Philippians) is there any mention of “bishops and deacons” in the opening address.

Does St. Paul send instructions to the Church about the Lord’s Supper, and about speaking with tongues? He sends them to “*those who are sanctified* in Christ Jesus” not to the ministers.

Is discipline exercised against an unsound member? I find St. Paul giving directions to the *saints* at Corinth, without mentioning the *ministry*: “Put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1Cor 5.13).

Is a man “overtaken in a fault” to be restored to communion? St. Paul tells those who are “*spiritual*” among the Galatians to do it, and does not refer it to their *ministers*. (Gal 6.1).

Is an Epistle written to the Christian Hebrews? Not a word is said about “rulers” until you come to the last chapter.

Does St. James write a General Epistle? He addresses the “twelve tribes,” and only names “teachers” in the third chapter.

Does St. Peter write a General Epistle? He writes to the *whole body* of the elect, and says nothing to the “elders” till he arrives at the last chapter. And even then, he is careful to remind them that they are not “lords over God’s heritage.”

As for the Second Epistle of St. Peter, and the Epistles of St. John and St. Jude, they never touch the subject of the ministry at all.

*Now, let no one mistake me.* To my eyes, it is most plainly taught in the New Testament, that there was to be a distinct order of men to minister to the Church. St. Paul, we are told, “ordained elders in every Church” (Act 14.23). See 1Cor 12.28; Eph 4.11; 1st and 2nd Epistles to Timothy; and Titus. But it seems to me as clear as the sun at noon-day, that “the Church” in any city or country meant especially the *laity*; and the ministers were only regarded as the “servants of the Church” (2Cor 4.5). As for a Church in which the clergy acted alone, *settled* everything, *decided* everything, *judged* everything, and *managed* everything, and the laity had no voice at all — I cannot find the ghost of the shadow of such a thing in the Acts or Epistles of the New Testament. On the contrary, while St. Paul

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<sup>55</sup> "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom **we may appoint** over this business; (Act 6:3 <sup>NKJ</sup>)

tells the Thessalonians to “esteem their ministers very highly,” it is to the *laity*, and not the *clergy*, that he addresses the words, “Warn those who are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak” (1Th 5.13-14). I trust that Churchmen who remember the Sixth Article of our English Church will not fail to observe this. <sup>56</sup>

Before I go any further in this paper, I think it right to say a few words in self-defence, to prevent possible misunderstanding. If anyone supposes that I wish to exalt and exaggerate the position of the laity at the expense of the clergy, and that I think lightly of the ministerial office, he is totally mistaken. In a deep sense of the value of the Christian ministry, as an ordinance of Christ, and a necessity in a fallen world, I give way to no man. But I dare not overstep scriptural limits in this matter. I cannot refrain from saying that a *sacerdotal* ministry, <sup>57</sup> a *mediatorial* ministry, an *infallible* ministry, a ministry of men who by virtue of episcopal ordination have any monopoly of knowledge, or any special ability to settle disputed questions of faith or ritual — such a ministry, in my judgment, is an innovation of man, and utterly without warrant of Holy Scripture. It is a ministry which has been borrowed from the typical system of the Jewish Church, and has no place in the present dispensation. The Christian minister is a *teacher*, an *ambassador*, a *messenger*, a *watchman*, a *witness*, a *shepherd*, a *steward*, and is expressly authorized by the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, where his duties are clearly laid down. But there is a conspicuous absence of New Testament proof that he is a *sacrificing priest*.

In saying this, I do not stand alone. The learned Bishop of Durham, <sup>58</sup> in his exhaustive work on Philippians, uses the following language:

“The kingdom of Christ has no sacerdotal system. It interposes no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man by whose entreaties alone God is reconciled and man forgiven. Each individual member holds personal communion with the Divine Head. *To Him* he is immediately responsible, and *from Him* he directly obtains pardon and draws strength” (p. 174, ed. 3).

Again, he says:

“The sacerdotal title is never once conferred on the ministers of the Church. The only priests under the gospel, designated as such under the New Testament, are the saints — the members of the Christian brotherhood” (p. 132, ed. 3).

This is sound speech, which cannot be condemned.

First published in 1868, it has stood the test of eighteen years’ criticism, and its principles remain unanswered and unanswerable. To these principles I firmly adhere, and I press them on the consideration of all English Churchmen in the present day.

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<sup>56</sup> Thirty-Nine Articles. VI. *Of the sufficiency of the holy Scriptures for salvation.* Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

<sup>57</sup> *Sacerdotalism*: a belief that priests can act as mediators between human beings and God. Protestantism rejects the idea that ministers of the word occupy such a “priestly” office. Christ is our only priest and Mediator. From the start, however, the Anglican Church of England has wavered between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, acting as a hybrid. In 1833, Keble’s sermon ‘Nat’l Apostasy’ began the OXFORD MOVEMENT in England (Anglo-Catholicism). This is what Ryle decries — abandoning the Reformation. See also Ryle’s *Holiness*: “Wants of the Times.” – WHG

<sup>58</sup> Joseph B. Lightfoot (1828-1889).

I leave the subject of the lay members of the apostolic Churches at this point, and commend it to the attention of all who read this paper. It is my conviction that the prominent position occupied by the laity in these primitive communities was one grand secret of their undeniable strength, growth, prosperity, and success. There were no sleeping partners in those days. Every member of the ecclesiastical body worked. Everyone felt bound to do something. All the baptized members, whether men or women, if we may judge from the 16th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, took a direct active interest in the welfare and progress of the whole ecclesiastical body. They were not tame, ignorant sheep, led here and there at the beck of an autocratic shepherd. The best regiment in an army, is that in which officers and privates take an equal interest in the efficiency of the whole corps. It is the ferment in which the officers trust the privates, and the privates trust the officers, as they did when they fought through that eventful night at Rorke's Drift in the Zulu war. It is the regiment in which every private is intelligent, and behaves as if the success of the campaign depended on him. It is the regiment in which every private knows his duty, and is honourably proud of his profession, and would fight to the last for the colours, even if every officer fell. Such a regiment was a primitive Church in apostolic days. It had its officers, its bishops, and deacons. It had orders, due subordination, and discipline. But the mainspring and backbone of its strength lay in the zeal, intelligence, and activity of its laity. Oh, that we had something of the same sort in the organization of the Church of England!

**II.** *The second thing which I propose to do is to examine the position of the laity of the Church of England during the last two centuries and at the present day.*

Let us begin with a definition. When we talk of the laity of our Established Church, what do we mean? We mean, of course, all within her pale who are not ordained to any ministerial office. We mean the people of the Church, in contradistinction to the clergy. How immensely important a body they are, it is needless to say. It would be a waste of time to dwell long on such a point. Without the lay members, a Church can hardly be said to exist. No doubt the old saying is true, "*Ubi tres, ibi ecclesia.*"<sup>59</sup> But a general without an army, a colonel without a regiment, or a ship captain without a crew, are not more useless and helpless than a Church consisting of clergy without laity. In the Church of England, at any rate, there is at present no lack of laymen. There are probably 500 laymen in proportion to each clergyman. In point of numbers alone, therefore, apart from all other considerations, the laity are a most important part of the Church of England.

Now, I contend that the position of our lay Churchmen at this moment falls very short of the New Testament standards, and is therefore very unsatisfactory. I hold it to be a canon and axiom of the Christian faith, that the nearer a Church can get to the pattern of Scripture, the better she is, and the farther she gets away from it, the worse she is. It is vain to deny that in the actual working machinery and administration of our Church, in its arrangements, plans, schemes, and normal organization, the lay members have comparatively no place at all!

— Do the bishops meet in solemn conclave at Lambeth Palace to consider the state of our Zion? There is no place for the laity.

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<sup>59</sup> "Where three are, there is a church."

## Chap. 17. The Rights and Duties of Lay Churchmen

- Does Convocation hold its annual debates? There is no representation of the laity.
- Does the bishop of a diocese make his annual arrangements for the work of his See?
- Does he have any difficult problem to solve about discipline, or the best mode of dealing with some criminal cleric? He has no council of laymen.
- Does he have a vacant living or incumbency to be filled up? The appointment is made without the slightest regard to the opinion of the parishioners.

I state simple facts. I defy anyone to deny their correctness.

Of course, I will be reminded that the laity are represented in our Church by the churchwardens,<sup>60</sup> who are elected every Easter, and summoned annually to the visitation of the archdeacon or bishop. I have not forgotten this at all. I only ask, in reply, whether churchwardens are not, as a rule, appointed with very little regard to spiritual qualifications? I ask whether their annual attendance at visitations is not ordinarily a mere ceremony and form? How many churchwardens know anything about a visitation, except that they go to a certain town, hear a charge about some dry subject which very possibly they do not understand, perhaps dine with the other churchwardens, and then go home? How many churchwardens accept office with the least idea of taking a constant active interest in all the Church's affairs? How many of them are expected to know anything about the Church's doctrines, ceremonies, government, difficulties, schemes, or plans? They are often most excellent men, and capable of doing excellent service. But practically little or nothing is expected of them, and little or nothing except secular and financial business is ever given them to do.

The man who thinks that the office of churchwarden completely fulfils the New Testament idea of the laity's position in a Church must have taken leave of his common sense. I am well aware that there are exceptional churchwardens who really do great things for the Church. But they are such brilliant exceptions that they only prove the truth of my rule. If *all* churchwardens would do their duty *always*, as *some* churchwardens do their duty *sometimes*, the Church of England would be a far stronger Church than it is.

Of course, I will be reminded again that lay Churchmen occupy a prominent place in Church confessions and conferences, and fill a very useful position on the committees of religious societies. I am quite aware of this; but it is entirely beside the question. All these are purely voluntary agencies which form no part of the Church's authorized and normal machinery. It is the organized system of the Church that I am looking at, and not the gratuitous service of exceptional lay volunteers.

But some one, again, will remind me that the House of Commons represents the laity of the Church of England. Surely the less we say about that the better! The man who talks in this way must have read history to very little purpose, or has been asleep for 200 years. We are not living in 1686, but in 1888. The pleasant old theory that Church and State are

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<sup>60</sup> *Churchwarden*: a lay official in a parish or congregation of the Anglican Communion, usually working as a part-time volunteer. Holders of these positions are *ex officio* members of the parish board, usually called a vestry, or parochial church council. They represent the laity and co-operate with the incumbent (or, in cases of vacancy, the bishop). They are expected to lead the parishioners by setting a good example and encouraging unity and peace. They have a duty to maintain order and peace in the church and churchyard at all times, and especially during services. Churchwardens in many parts of the Anglican Communion are legally responsible for all the property and movable goods belonging to a parish church.

co-extensive and identical, has long since vanished into thin air, and is a thing of the past. The House of Commons is a powerful body, no doubt, and “monarch of all it surveys.” But it is no longer an assembly of none but “Churchmen.” Moreover, it is notorious that there is no subject the House of Commons “cares so little to discuss as religion — and that there are no religious interests which fare so badly in its hands, as those of the Church of England.

But unhappily this is not all. There is something more remaining. The laity of our Church are not where they ought to be in the direct work of Christ, and the furtherance of Christianity in the land. A mischievous habit of leaving all religion to the parson of the parish has overspread the country, and the bulk of lay Churchmen seem to think that they have nothing to do with the Church but to receive the benefit of her means of grace, while they contribute nothing in the way of personal active exertion to promote her efficiency. The vast majority of church-goers appear to suppose that when they have gone to church on Sunday, and have been at the Lord’s Supper, they have done their duty, and are not under the slightest obligation to warn, to teach, to rebuke, to edify others, to promote works of charity, to assist evangelization, or to raise a finger in checking sin, and advancing Christ’s cause in the world. Their only idea is to be perpetually receiving, but never doing anything at all. They have taken their seats on the right train, and are only to sit quiet, while the clerical engine draws them to heaven, perhaps half asleep.

If an Ephesian or Philippian or Thessalonian lay Churchman were to rise from the dead and see how little work lay Churchmen do for the English Church, he would not believe his eyes. The difference between the primitive type of lay Churchman and the English type is the difference between light and darkness, black and white. The one used to be awake and alive, and always about his Master’s business. The other is too often asleep practically, torpid and idle, and content to leave the religion of the parish in the hands of the parson. Each is baptized. Each uses means of grace. Each hears sermons, and professes himself a Christian. But the Churchmanship of the one is utterly unlike that of the other.

When this is the case — and who will deny it? — there must be something painfully wrong in our organization. If the Philippian lay Churchman was right, then the English lay Churchman cannot be right. We are weighed in the balances and found wanting. The very language in common use is a plain proof that there is something sadly wrong. The “Church” now-a-days means the “clergy;” and when some young man proposes to be ordained, his friends tell you that he is “going into the Church,” as if he had not been in the Church long ago!

With every desire to make the best of our Church and its constitution, I cannot avoid the conclusion that, in the matter of the laity, its system is at present defective and infra-scriptural.<sup>61</sup> I cannot reconcile the position of the English lay Episcopalian in 1888 with that of his brother in any apostolic Church eighteen centuries ago. I cannot make the two things square. To my eyes, it seems that in the regular working of the Church of England, almost everything is left in the hands of the clergy, and hardly anything is assigned to the laity! The clergy *settle* everything! The Clergy *manage* everything! The clergy *arrange* everything! The laity are practically allowed neither voice, nor place, nor opinion, nor power, and must accept whatever the clergy decide for them. In all this, there is no

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<sup>61</sup> [Infra-scriptural: reading something into Scripture that is not there, but is not specifically excluded.](#)

intentional slight. Not the smallest reflection is implied on the trustworthiness and ability of the laity. But from one cause or another, they are left out in the cold, passive recipients and not active members, in a huge ecclesiastical corporation — sleeping partners, and not working agents in an unwieldy and ill-managed concern. In short, in the normal action of the Church of England, lay Churchmen have been left on a siding. Like soldiers not wanted, they have fallen out of the ranks, retired to the rear, and sunk out of sight.

Now, what is the true cause of this anomalous state of things? It is one which may easily be detected. The position of the English laity is neither more nor less than a rag and remnant of Popery. It is part of that “*damnosa haereditas*”<sup>62</sup> which Rome has bequeathed to our Church, and which has never been completely purged away. Our Reformers themselves were not perfect men, and the characteristic jealousy of Queen Elizabeth prevented their perfecting the work of the English Reformation. Among other blots which they left on the face of our Church, I must sorrowfully admit that neglect of the interests of the laity was not the least one. To make the clergy into mediators between Christ and man — to exalt them far above the laity, and put all ecclesiastical power into their hands — to clothe them with sacerdotal authority, and regard them as infallible guides in all Church matters — this has always been an essential element of the Romish system. This element our Reformers, no doubt, ought to have corrected by giving more power to the laity, as John Knox did in Scotland. They omitted to do so, either from lack of time or lack of royal permission. The unhappy fruit of the omission has been that, gradually, the chief authority in our Church matters has fallen almost entirely into the hands of the clergy; and the laity have been left without their due rights and powers. The effect at the present day is that the English laity are far below the position they ought to occupy, and the English clergy are far above theirs. Both parties, in short, are in the wrong place.

What are the consequences of this unsatisfactory state of things? They are precisely what might be expected — evil and only evil. Departure from the mind of God, even in the least things, is always sure to bear bitter fruit. Lifted above their due position, the English clergy have always been inclined to sacerdotalism, priestism, self-conceit, and an overweening estimate of their own privileges and powers. Fallen below their due position, the English laity, with occasional brilliant exceptions, have taken little interest in Church matters, and have been too ready to leave everything ecclesiastical to be managed by the clergy. In the meantime, for three centuries the Established Church of England has suffered great and almost irremediable damage.

Seldom considered, seldom consulted, seldom trusted with power, seldom invested with authority, the English lay Churchman, as a rule, is ignorant, indifferent, or apathetic about Church questions. How few laymen know anything about Church work in their own diocese! How few care one jot for Convocation! How few could tell you, if their lives depended on it, who are the proctors of their diocese!<sup>63</sup> How few understand the meaning of the great doctrinal controversies by which their Church is almost rent asunder! How few exhibit as much personal interest or anxiety about them, as a Roman spectator would have exhibited about the fight of a couple of gladiators in the arena of the Coliseum! How

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<sup>62</sup> An inheritance from a person who dies insolvent, and whose debts the heir is bound to discharge.

<sup>63</sup> A proctor represents the clergy in Church of England dioceses. Historically, a proctor was a legal practitioner in the ecclesiastical courts. They were licensed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to undertake the duties that were performed in common law courts by attorneys and in the courts of equity by solicitors. The Judicature Acts of 1873 and 1875, which created the Supreme Court of Judicature, combined the three roles.

few could tell you anything more than this: “that there is some squabble among the parsons; and they don’t pretend to understand it!” — This is a melancholy picture; but I fear it is a sadly correct one. And yet who can wonder? The English laity have never yet had their rightful position in the management of the Church of England.

You may lay it down as an infallible rule, that the best way to make a man feel an interest in a business is to make him a “part of the concern.” The rule applies to ecclesiastical corporations as well as to commercial ones. The Scotch Presbyterians, the English Nonconformists, the American Episcopalians, the Colonial Episcopalians, all realize the importance of this principle, and take care to carry it out. The Church of England alone has lost sight of this principle altogether. The laity have never been properly employed, or trusted, or considered, or called forward, or consulted, or placed in position, or armed with authority, as they ought to have been. The consequence is that, as a body, they neither know, nor care, nor feel, nor understand, nor think, nor read, nor exercise their minds, nor trouble their heads much, about Church affairs. The system under which this state of things has grown up is a gigantic mistake. The sooner it is cut up by the roots and turned upside down the better. If we want to remove one grand cause of our Church’s present weakness, we must completely alter the position of the laity. On this point, if on no other, there is great need of Church reform.

**III.** *Let us, in the last place, consider our own immediate duty. What should we aim at in the matter of the laity, in order to strengthen the Established Church of England?*

When I speak of aims, I will have to come to practical details, and I will not shrink from saying precisely what I mean. Grant for a moment that we have at length discovered that our lay Churchmen are not in their rightful position. — What is the remedy for the evil? What is the change that is required? What ought to be done?

The answers that some men give to these questions are so puerile, weak, and inadequate, that I am almost ashamed to name them. They tell us coolly that the laity may become lay-agents and Scripture-readers, though even this at one time, I remember, was thought a shocking innovation.

They may even exhort and give little addresses — may teach Sunday schools and be parochial visitors — may manage Reformatories and Houses of Refuge — may attend Committees, and superintend Church finance! My reply is that all such suggestions are ridiculously below the mark, and show woeful ignorance of the Church’s need. I marvel that sensible men can have the face to make them. Oh, mighty condescension! Oh, wondrous liberality! We will let laymen do rough work which could not be done at all without them, and which they have no need to ask the clergy’s leave to do! If this is all that people mean when they talk of enlisting “lay co-operation,” I am sorry for them. Such doctoring will not heal the wounds of our Zion. Such reforms will not win back the lukewarm sympathies of our laity, and make them the right arm of the Church of England.

The reform I plead for in the position of our laity is something far deeper, higher, wider, broader, more thorough, more complete. I plead for the general recognition of the mighty principle that *nothing* ought to be done in the Church without the laity, in things great or in things small. I contend that the laity ought to have a part, and voice, and hand, and vote, in everything that the Church says and does, except ordaining and ministering in the congregation. I contend that the voice of the Church of England ought to be not merely

the voice of the bishops and presbyters, but the voice of the laity as well — and that no Church action should ever be taken, and no expression of Church opinion ever put forth, in which the laity do not have an equal share with the clergy. Such a reform would be a return to New Testament principles. Such a reform would increase a hundredfold the strength of the Church of England. What the details of such a reform ought to be, I will now proceed to explain.

(a) The unit with which we ought to begin, if we would raise the position of lay Churchmen to the standard of the apostolic times, beyond doubt, is the *parish*. From one end of the land to the other we should try to establish the great principle, that every clergyman will continually consult his lay parishioners.

If he does not like to have anything so stiff and formal-sounding as a “parochial council,” let him at any rate often confer with his churchwardens, sidesmen,<sup>64</sup> and communicants about his work. Especially let him do nothing in the way of changing times and modes of worship, nothing in the matter of new ceremonials, new decorations, new gestures, new postures, without first taking counsel with his lay-people. The church is *theirs*, and not *his*; he is *their* servant, and they are not *his*. They surely have a right to be consulted. Who can tell the amount of offence that might be prevented if clergymen always acted in this way? No people, I believe, are more reasonable than lay Churchmen, if they are only approached and treated in a reasonable way. Above all, let every parochial incumbent make a point of teaching every communicant that he is an integral part of the Church of England, and is bound to do all that he can for its welfare — to visit, to teach, to warn, to exhort, to edify, to help, to advise, to comfort, to support, to evangelize; to awaken the sleeping, to lead on the inquiring, to build up the saints, to promote repentance, faith, and holiness everywhere, according to his gifts, time, and opportunity. He should educate his people to see that they must give up the lazy modern plan of leaving everything to the parson, and must be active agents instead of *sleeping partners*. I grieve to say, the Methodists and Dissenters<sup>65</sup> beat Churchmen hollow on this point. With them, every new member is a new home missionary in their cause. Never will things go well with the Church of England until every individual member realizes that he has a duty to do to his Church, and keeps that duty continually in view.

I begin purposely with this point. I am certain that it is a vital one, and lies at the root of the whole subject which we are considering. Best of all, it is a reform which may be commenced at once, and needs no Act of Parliament to start it. It needs nothing but a determination on the part of the rectors, vicars, and perpetual curates of England to bring the matter before the communicants of their respective parishes, and to incite them to come forward and do their duty. They have the matter, I believe, in the hollow of their hands. The laity, I believe, would respond to the invitation, if they once realized that the health of the Church was at stake, and that there was work for them to do. In truth, it is our day of visitation. In our Established Church, it will never do to try to man the walls with officers, and let the rank and file sit idle in their barracks. Clergy and laity must learn to work together. We must have not only an apostolic succession of *ministers*, but an apostolic succession of *laymen*, if our Church is to stand much longer.

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<sup>64</sup> *Sidesman*: an assistant to a churchwarden, whose duties may include collecting offerings during a service, greeting members of the congregation, and overseeing seating arrangements in the church (an usher).

<sup>65</sup> *Dissenter*: a Protestant Christian who does not follow the official, national Church.

(b) The next point which demands our attention, if we want to raise the laity of the Church to a scriptural position, is the absolute necessity of giving every parish and congregation some voice and vote in the appointment of its ministers. I make no apology for taking up this defect in our present system, because it is directly handled in the Church Patronage Bill which is being brought before Parliament. I admit that I care little for some of the provisions of that Bill; and I greatly doubt that they would work well, supposing they passed the fiery ordeal of Lords' and Commons' Committees. But there is one clause in the proposed measure which is most praiseworthy, and I hail it with deep satisfaction. I refer to the clause which would enable the inhabitants of any parish to offer objections to a clergyman being placed over them, for a certain time after his name is made known. I regard this as emphatically a move in the right direction. I am not anxious to see patronage concentrated in one set of hands. Much less am I anxious to see clergymen elected entirely by the parishioners or congregation. But I do think that the people should have some voice in the appointment of ministers, and that they should not be left to the mercy of an incompetent patron, and not allowed to make any objection to his choice. We all know that a *si quis*<sup>66</sup> must be read before an ordination, and I contend that a *si quis* should be required in every case before an Institution.

Our present system of appointment to livings entirely ignores the laity, and often proves a grievous abuse. Clergymen are constantly thrust upon unwilling parishes and disgusted congregations, who are entirely unfit for their position, and the people are obliged to submit. The parishioners are consequently driven away from church, and the Establishment suffers irreparable damage. It is high time to give up this system. Let every patron be required to send the name of the clergyman whom he wishes to nominate to a vacant living, to the churchwardens, one month before he presents the name to the bishop. Let the name of the proposed new incumbent be publicly read out in church like banns, and affixed to the church doors, on three or four Sundays consecutively, and let any one be invited to object if he can. Let the objector be obliged to satisfy the bishop and his council that there are good reasons, whether doctrinal or practical, for his objections, and let the bishop and his council have power, if satisfied, to refuse the patron's nominee. Of course such a safeguard as this might often be ineffectual. The objections to the nominee may often be frivolous or incapable of proof. But at any rate a principle would be established. The laity of a parish could no longer complain that they are perpetually handed over to new parsons without having the slightest voice in the transaction. One right the laity even now possess, I remind them, which I heartily wish they would exercise more frequently than they do. They may effectually prevent young men being ordained who are unfit for orders, by objecting when the *si quis* is read. It would be well for the Church of England if the laity in this matter would always do their duty!

(c) The third and last reform in the position of the laity which we should aim to obtain, is the admission of lay Churchmen to their rightful place in the administration and management of the whole Church. I entirely agree with two of my Right Rev. Brethren, that we greatly want a National Church Council, composed of bishops, presbyters, and laymen.

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<sup>66</sup> *si quis*: a notification by a candidate for Holy Orders of his intention to enquire whether any impediment may be alleged against him.

## Chap. 17. The Rights and Duties of Lay Churchmen

Such a council should not possess any legislative powers, or interfere in the slightest degree with the prerogative of the Crown or the Royal supremacy. There should therefore be no great difficulty in obtaining legal powers for its formation, and it should not be regarded with jealousy when formed. Its main object should be to bring the clergy and the laity face to face, and to enable them to consider all matters affecting the Church's welfare and, if necessary, to bring them under the notice of Parliament. Its main advantage would be that when it brought anything before Parliament which required legislation, it would be able to say, "Here is a matter about which the clergy and laity of the Established Church are agreed. In the name of that Church we ask you to take it up, and make it the law of the land."

I am afraid it is vain to hope for any large measure of Convocation reform. Ancient and venerable as the Synods of Canterbury and York undoubtedly are, I think no one will say that they truly represent the Church of England. Even if they adequately represented the clergy, it is certain that they do not represent the laity. This alone is an immense and intolerable defect, and completely prevents the laity, as a rule, taking any interest in the proceedings of Convocation. They feel that they are left out in the cold, and have neither voice, nor vote, nor place, nor part in the discussions, either at Westminster or York, even when the subjects discussed concern themselves most intimately. We need not wonder that they do not like this. According to the word of God, *they* are "the Church" as much as the clergy. They have quite as much at stake in the Church's welfare. They are often as well educated, as intelligent, as well-informed, as spiritually-minded, as able to discern "things that differ" in religion, as any cleric. The words of the judicious Hooker are worth remembering:

"Till it is proved that some special law of Christ has forever annexed to the clergy alone the power to make ecclesiastical laws, we are to hold it a thing most consonant with equity and reason, that no ecclesiastical laws be made in a Christian commonwealth, without consent of the laity as well as of the clergy."<sup>67</sup>

The simple fact that the lay people have at present neither voice nor place in the English Convocation, is enough to show that it is an institution totally unsuited to the age, and behind the times.

Of course, I do not forget that a house of laymen has been called into existence in the province of Canterbury, with the express purpose of acting as a consultative body, and an assistant to Convocation. And it has been resolved to form a similar house of laymen at York. No doubt the formation of these two bodies is a great step in the right direction. It is a public acknowledgment that the time has come when lay Churchmen must be asked to take a more active interest in the affairs of the Established Church; and their past torpid position as sleeping partners in the great ecclesiastical concern, can no longer be maintained. I am very thankful for this tardy recognition of the rights and duties of laymen. A great principle has been established and I trust the clock will never be put back.

But though I lay no claims to infallibility of judgement, I must respectfully express a doubt whether these new Houses of Laymen meet the wants of the day, and are anything more than a temporary makeshift. I might say something about the extreme difficulty of getting a really representative House of Laymen to meet at York! But I will not dwell on this. I

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<sup>67</sup> Hooker, Book viii. chap. 6

will only point out three objections which appear to me not easily answered.

(a) In the first place, these Houses of Laymen will have no legal status, unless they are formally authorized by the Crown and Parliament; and they will be nothing more than voluntary debating societies. Convocation, on the contrary, is one of the oldest legal institutions in the realm. How these two bodies are to work together under these conditions is not very clear. It is an attempt to unite iron and clay. It is sewing a new patch on an old garment.

(b) In the second place, the mode of forming, composing, and electing these Houses of Laymen appears at present far from satisfactory. If they are to consist of laymen elected by the various diocesan conferences, they certainly will not be a fair representation of the laity of the Church of England. For one thing, the constitution of diocesan conferences is not uniform, and differs widely in different dioceses of England and Wales. For another thing, it is notorious that in most dioceses very few lay Churchmen attend a diocesan conference, and most of them ignore it altogether.

(c) Last, but not least, it does not seem quite clear what these Houses of Laymen are to be allowed to discuss. The idea which has been propounded — that they are never to open their mouths about “questions of faith and doctrine” — is to my mind most objectionable. It is unreasonable to suppose that intelligent English laymen, men of light and leading and intellectual power, will ever submit to be practically muzzled, and forbidden to speak of any but temporal matters.

Such a prohibition, in my opinion, is sure to lead ultimately to friction and collision. If you call in the laity to aid in the administration of the Church, you must trust them, and give them liberty of speech.

It is very possible that answers may be found to these objections, though at present I fail to see them. I am thankful for the avowed expression of a desire to call in the help of the laity, and make use of their opinion on Church matters. But I have a firm conviction that no movement in this direction will ever do much good, until we have a real National Council, composed of the 30 bishops, and some 60 presbyters, and 120 laymen, elected from the 30 dioceses of England and Wales, and including laymen of the middle class, as well as of the upper ranks of society. But I believe that the best and ablest lay Churchmen will never join a mere voluntary assembly in which their discussions and decisions would be utterly destitute of any authority, and their resolutions would carry no weight.

Above all, we want a Council in which bishops, presbyters, and laymen, will sit together and consider subjects face to face. The clergy would then have an opportunity of finding out what public opinion is, and discovering that they are not infallible. The laity would have an opportunity to show the clergy what is really going on in the world, and introducing practical business-like wisdom into their councils. This plan would be of immense advantage to all parties.

I leave the rights and duties of lay Churchmen at this point. I have no time to pursue the subject further. I am conscious that I have advanced opinions which are distasteful to some minds, and startling because of their novelty. But I have yet to learn that the reform in the position of the laity which I have suggested is not most desirable in the abstract, and most imperatively demanded by the times. Between Liberationists, Romanists, and Agnostics, the good ship of the Church is on a lee shore, and the breakers are in sight.

Clergy and laity must co-operate if the ship is to be saved. It is no time to prophesy smooth things, and look through telescopes with blind eyes, and cry “Peace, peace! Let us sit still.”

(a) “Sacriligious reform!” some will cry. They think it downright wicked to let the laity have anything to do with spiritual matters. They wish them to be nothing but Gibeonites, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the clergy. They talk gravely about Dathan, and Abiram, and Uzzah putting his hand to the ark, and Uzziah taking on himself to burn incense in the temple. To such men I reply, “Look at the Irish Church, and learn wisdom.” If Disestablishment comes — and many far-sighted men say it is sure to come at last — you will be obliged to cast yourselves on the aid of the laity, whether you like it or not. Even if it does not come, you will never be really strong unless you place the laity in their rightful position. As to the vague talk about *sacrilege*, it is all nonsense. Touch the idea with the Ithuriel spear of Scripture, and it will vanish away. <sup>68</sup>

(b) But “it is a dangerous reform,” some men will cry. “The laity will take the reins into their hands, and lord it over the consciences of the clergy.” Such fears are simply ridiculous. There is far more real danger in letting the laity sit idle, and giving them no active interest in the Church’s affairs. I have a better opinion of the laity than these alarmists have. The new ecclesiastical machinery may work awkwardly at first, like a new steam-engine, when its joints are stiff and its bearings hot. The laity may not understand at first what they have to do. But give them time, give them time. Show them that you trust them, and make them see what is wanted, and I have no doubt the laity will soon settle down in their place, and work with a will. Remember how admirably the Irish laity set their house in order after Disestablishment <sup>69</sup> — and have more faith in English laymen.

(c) “But it is a useless reform,” some men will finally cry. “The laity are unfit to advise bishops, or sit in Church councils, or give an opinion about the fitness of incumbents.” I do not believe it for one moment. The lay members of our Church may not be critics of Greek or Hebrew, or deep theologians, compared to many of the clergy. But many of them have quite as much grace, and quite as much knowledge of the English Bible. Above all, they have, as a rule, much more common sense than the clergy. No man who knows how our best laymen conduct themselves on the committees of our great religious Societies, can be ignorant of that. The observation of Lord Clarendon about the clerical body is, alas! only too true. After long experience, he declared his conviction that “clergymen understand the least, and take the worst measure of human affairs of all mankind that can write or read.” I fear that if he lived in the present day, he would not give us a much better character, as a body. Nothing, I firmly believe, would be such an advantage to the Church as to leaven all its action with a judicious mixture of the lay element. The true cause of half the Church’s mistakes in these latter days has been the absence of the laity from their rightful place.

The greatest peril of the Established Church in this day consists in the favourite policy of

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<sup>68</sup> In John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, IV, 778, 788, Ithuriel, along with the Zephon, is dispatched by Gabriel to locate Satan. The “grieslie King” is discovered in the Garden of Eden “squat like a Toad close at the ear of Eve.” By touching Satan with his spear, Ithuriel causes the Tempter to resume his proper likeness.

<sup>69</sup> The Irish Church Act 1869 was passed during William Gladstone’s administration. It disestablished the (Anglican) Church of Ireland, a body that commanded the adherence of a small minority of the population of Ireland, disassociating it from the state, and repealing the law that required tithes to be paid to it. It also ceased to send representatives to the House of Lords.

total inaction which pleases so many, and their inability to see that we are in danger. “A little more sleep! a little more slumber! Why can you not let things alone?” This is the reply continually made when Church reforms are spoken of, and pressed on men’s attention. “Why should we fear?” they cry. “There is no real danger.” Will anyone tell me there is no inward danger, when the “real presence,” and the Romish confessional, and ecclesiastical lawlessness, and Home Rule, are quietly tolerated on one side, and the atonement, and Christ’s divinity, and the inspiration of Scripture, and the reality of miracles, are coolly thrown overboard on the other? Will anyone tell me there is no outward danger, when infidels, Papists, and Dissenters are hungering and thirsting after the destruction of the Establishment, and compassing sea and land to accomplish their ends? — What! no danger, when myriads of our working classes never enter the walls of our Church, and would not raise a finger to keep her alive, while by household suffrage they have gotten all power into their hands! What! no danger, when the Irish Church has been disestablished, the Act of Union has been trampled under foot, Protestant endowments have been handed over to Papists, the thin edge of the wedge for severing Church and State has been let in, and the statesman who did all this is still alive, and thought by many to be infallible. *No danger, indeed!* I can find no words to express my astonishment that men say so. But, alas! there are never men lacking who, having eyes, do not see; and having ears, do not hear; and who *will* not understand.

The Established Church of England is in danger. There is no mistake about it. This is the one broad, sweeping reason why I advocate Church reforms. There is “handwriting on the wall,” flashing luridly from the other side of St. George’s Channel, which needs no Daniel to interpret it. There is a current setting in towards the Disestablishment of all National Churches, and we are already in it. We are gradually drifting downwards, though many do not perceive it; but those who look at the old landmarks cannot fail to see that we move. We will soon be in the rapids. A few, a very few years, and we will be over the falls, unless we exert ourselves. The English public seems drunk with the grand idea of “free trade” in everything, in religion as well as in commerce, in churches as well as in corn. A portion of the daily press is constantly harping on the subject. And will we sit still and refuse to set our house in order? I, for one, say, God forbid! Will we wait till we are turned out into the street and obliged to reform ourselves in the midst of a hurricane of confusion? I, for one, say, God forbid! The experienced general tells us that it is madness to change front in the face of an enemy. If we believe that danger is impending over the Church Establishment, let us not wait till the storm bursts. Let us gird up our loins while we can, and attempt Church reforms.

1. I now commend the whole subject to the prayerful attention of the clergy. “Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.” [2Tim 2.7](#) Oh that I could blow a trumpet in the ear of every rector and vicar in England, and awaken him to a sense of the Church’s danger! The horizon is very black. I believe it is our time of visitation. It is no time to fold our arms and sit still. Is our Church going to live or die? If we would defend her, we must “set in order the things that are lacking,” [Tit 1.5](#) and aim at Church reforms.
2. I commend the whole subject to the minds of all thoughtful lay Churchmen. I invite you to assist us in maintaining the Church of our forefathers, the old Protestant Church of England, and to come forward and take up your rightful place and position. It is your best policy to do so. Unless clergy and laity close ranks and work shoulder to

shoulder, we will never hold the fort, and win the day. It would be your happiness to do so. You would find a rich reward for your soul in activity for Christ's cause in this sinful world, and being general fellow-helpers with your clergy. Think what an immense blessing one single layman like Lord Shaftesbury may be to the land in which he lives. Think what England might be if we had a hundred more lay Churchmen like him. You would soon discover the enormous luxury of doing good, and being useful to your fellow-creatures. Just now, you would give new life to the Church of England — render her, by God's blessing, invincible by her foes — and hand her down to your children's children, "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (Song 6.10).

**NOTE.**

I commend to all readers of this sermon, the following extract from a leading article in the Guardian newspaper of January 5, 1870. From such a quarter, testimony as to the importance of the "Position of Laity" is doubly valuable:

"We have shown, we trust, that we are far from insensible to the dangers that might possibly arise from the admission of the laity to a larger degree of authority and influence than they now enjoy in the Anglican communion as known within these isles. Let us now glance for a moment at the strength of the case on behalf of the claims being urged by the laity.

"Under the patriarchal system, the regale and the pontifical were united. The head of the family was at once king and priest; and the idea that some sacrifices could only be offered by a king was so widely spread that Athens, after becoming a democracy, retained for this end a King-Archon, and Rome in like manner a REX SACRIFICULUS. This union is to some extent still preserved in Tibet, in China, and in most countries under Mahometans rule. In Palestine we know that the two authorities were dissevered — the royalty ultimately falling to Judah, and the priesthood to Levi. Subsequently we read of Saul, Uzzah, and Uzziah being punished for usurpation of offices not entrusted to their care. Yet, when we reflect on the great pains bestowed by David in the matter of ritual, on the deposition of Abiathar by Solomon, on the action of pious monarchs such as Josiah and Hezekiah, and on the position of Zerubbabel and his descendants after the captivity, it must surely be acknowledged that the lay influence under the Mosaic dispensation was immense. One of the famous Jesuit commentators (either Lapede or Maldonatus) does not hesitate to admit that in the Jewish polity, the State was superior to the Church. In the time of our Lord, at least one-third of the Sanhedrin consisted of laymen.

"When we turn to the infant Church Catholic, almost the earliest step taken by the community is one involving the action of the laity. The seven deacons were chosen by the whole multitude. And if various readings cause some difficulty respecting the Council of Jerusalem, yet the confirmation of its decision by the whole Church is a recorded fact. Evidence of the continuation of a line of thought and action consistent with these commencements is supplied by Dr. Moberly from the works of great and saintly doctors, Cyprian and Chrysostom, and from the Acts of early councils held at Carthage, at Eliberis, at Toledo, and among our own Anglo-Saxon ancestors. At the Councils of Pisa and of Constance, a prominent place was assigned to Canonists and other doctors of law who were simple laymen. Moreover, the great universities of Europe, though lay corporations, having received from the Church as well as from the State commissions to teach theology — were constantly appealed to for opinions both on questions relating to the faith and on cases of conscience. The reference concerning the lawfulness of Henry VIII's marriage to these famous bodies is the best-known instance in our history; but it is by no means a solitary one. In the fourteenth century, such judgments, especially those proceeding from the University of Paris, had been very numerous; and so much weight was attached to them that they almost supplied the place (says Palmer) of the judgments of Provincial Synods.

## Chap. 17. The Rights and Duties of Lay Churchmen

“Nor have the laity achieved merely small things in the way of theology. It is true, as might have been expected, that the formation of dogma, necessitated by heresy, has been for the most part the work of bishops and presbyters — an Athanasius, a Leo, an Augustine. But not only have masterly apologies for the faith and works of Christian literature proceeded in great numbers from laic pens, but laymen have also, at certain times and places, shown themselves superior in their zeal for purity of doctrine to that portion of the Church which, as a rule, constitutes *Ecclesia docens*.<sup>70</sup> A notable example occurs in the history of Arianism. Certain bishops of semi-Arian tendencies found it impossible to infuse into the laity of their flocks the heretical poison which they themselves had imbibed. It was a layman, too, who first called attention to the heresy of Nestorius. In our own time, the lay members of ecclesiastical Conventions in the United States have not infrequently exhibited a more moderate and conservative tone than their clerical brethren.”

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<sup>70</sup> *Ecclesia docens*: the teachings of the Church (i.e., it is authoritative by long use and widespread acceptance).

## **CHAPTER 18 – Joh 3.3; 2Cor 5.17**

### **QUESTIONS ABOUT REGENERATION**

THE paper which begins at this page is intended to supply information to all Churchmen who are puzzled and perplexed about BAPTISMAL REGENERATION. That famous doctrine is so widely held, and so confidently declared to be true, that I think it desirable to discuss the whole subject under the simple form of questions and answers. I wish to show those whose minds are in a state of suspense, that Churchmen who hold that baptism and regeneration do not always go together, have a great deal more of reason, logic, Scripture, and the Prayer Book on their side than is commonly supposed. Their views, at any rate, should not be regarded, as they too often are, with supercilious and unreasoning contempt. I therefore venture to think that the arguments contained in this paper deserve respectful consideration.

#### **1. *What is regeneration?***

It is that complete change of heart and character which the Holy Spirit works in a person when he becomes a real Christian. The Church Catechism calls it “a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness.” It is the same thing as being “born again,” or “born of God,” or “born of the Spirit,” “Unless a man is born again” means “unless a man is regenerate.” “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature;” that is, he is “born again, or regenerate” (Joh 3.3; 2Cor 5.17).

#### **2. *But are not all professing Christians real Christians?***

Certainly not. Thousands, unhappily, are only Christians in name, and have nothing of real Christianity either in their hearts or lives. Just as St. Paul said, “He is not a Jew, who is one outwardly” (Rom 2.28); so he would have said, “He is not a Christian, who is one outwardly.” Just as he said, “He is a Jew, who is one inwardly;” so he would have said, “He is a Christian, who is one inwardly.” In short, real Christians are regenerate, and merely nominal Christians are not.

#### **3. *But how are we to know whether we are regenerate or not? Is it a thing we can possibly find out before we die?***

Regeneration may always be known by the fruits and effects it produces on a person’s life and character. It is always attended by certain marks, evidences, effects, results, and consequences. Every regenerate person has these marks more or less distinctly; and whoever does not have them is not regenerate. A regeneration which produces no effects, and bears no fruit, and cannot be seen in a person’s life, is a regeneration never mentioned in Scripture.

#### **4. *What are the marks and evidences of regeneration?***

They are laid down for us so clearly and plainly in the First Epistle of St. John, that whoever would, may read them. It is written there,

- “Whoever is born of God, does not commit sin;” (1Joh 3.9)
- “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;” (1Joh 5.1)
- “Everyone who does righteousness, is born of Him;” (1Joh 2.29)
- “Everyone who loves, is born of God;” (1Joh 4.7)
- “Whoever is born of God, overcomes the world;” (1Joh 5.4)

– “He that is begotten of God, keeps <sup>71</sup> himself” (1Joh 5.18).

If plain English words have any meaning, these texts mean that whoever has these marks is “born again” or “regenerate;” and whoever does not have them not is not regenerate.

**5.** *Do all regenerate persons have these marks of regeneration in the same degree of depth, strength, clearness, and distinctness?*

Most certainly not. There is a wide difference between the highest and lowest measure of grace possessed by those who are “born again.” There are real and true Christians who are only “babes” in spiritual attainments, and there are others who are “strong,” and vigorous, and able to do great things for Christ (1Joh 2.12-14). The Scripture speaks of little faith and great faith, of little strength and great strength. Only one thing is certain — every regenerate person has the marks of regeneration more or less; and he who has *none* of them is not born again (Mat 14.31, 15.28; Rev 3.8; Rom 15.1).

**6.** *But are not all baptized persons regenerate, and does not regeneration always accompany baptism?*

Certainly not. Myriads of baptized persons do not have a single Scriptural mark of regeneration about them, and never had in their lives. They know nothing whatever of “a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness.” On the contrary, they too often live in sin, and are enemies of all righteousness. To say that such persons are “regenerate” on account of their baptism, is to say what seems flatly contrary to the First Epistle of St. John. The Church Catechism says that baptism contains two parts — the outward and visible sign, and the inward and spiritual grace But the Catechism nowhere says that the sign and the grace always go together.

**7.** *But does not the Baptismal Service of the Church Prayer Book say of every baptized child, “This child is regenerate,” and does it not tell us to thank God that it has “pleased Him to regenerate the infant”? What can this mean? How can it be explained?*

The Baptismal Service uses these expressions in the charitable supposition that those who use the Service, and bring their children to be baptized, are really what they profess to be. As Bishop Carleton <sup>72</sup> says, “All this is the charity of the Church; and what more can you make of it?” As Bishop Downam <sup>73</sup> says, “We are to distinguish between the judgment of *charity* and the judgment of *certainty*.”

**8.** *But is this explanation of the language of the Baptismal Service honest, natural, and just? Is it the real meaning which ought to be put on the words?*

It is the only meaning which is consistent with the whole spirit of the Prayer Book. From first to last, the Prayer Book charitably assumes that all who use it are real, thorough Christians. This is the only sense in which the Burial Service can be interpreted. This is the only sense in which we can teach children the Church Catechism. We bid them to say, “The Holy Ghost sanctifies me and all the elect people of God.” Yet no man in his senses would say that all children who say the Catechism are really “sanctified” or really “elect,” because they use these words.

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<sup>71</sup> *Keep* is the Greek word *terein*; used in Joh 9.16; 14.24; 1Tim 5.22; Rev 3.3 – to observe, uphold, or abide by.

<sup>72</sup> Bishop George Carleton (1559-1628) was a delegate to the Synod of Dort.

<sup>73</sup> Bishop George Downam (1560-1634) – Lord Bishop of Derry, chaplain to James I and King James VI.

**9.** *But should we not believe that all who use Christ's ordinances receive a blessing as a matter of course?*

Certainly not. The benefit of Christ's ordinances depends entirely on the spirit and manner in which they are used. The Scripture expressly says that a man may receive the Lord's Supper "unworthily," and eat and drink "to his own condemnation." The Articles of the Church of England declare that they have a wholesome effect and operation only in those who receive the sacraments "rightly, worthily, and with faith." They do not convey grace as a matter of course, "*ex opere operato*,"<sup>74</sup> in the same way that a medicine acts on the body. The famous Hooker teaches that "all do not receive the grace of God, who receive the sacraments of His grace." To maintain that every child who is baptized with water is at once regenerated and born again, appears to turn the sacrament of baptism into a mere form, and to contradict both Scripture and the Thirty-nine Articles.

**10.** *But do not all infants receive baptism worthily, since they offer no obstacle to the grace of baptism? And are they not consequently all regenerated, as a matter of course, the moment they are baptized?*

Certainly not. No infant is of itself worthy to receive grace, because as the Catechism says, it is "born in sin and a child of wrath." It can only be received into the Church, and baptized on the faith and profession of its parents or sponsors. No true missionary thinks of baptizing heathen children without friends or sponsors. The Church Catechism asks the question, "Why are infants baptized?" But it does not give as an answer, "Because they offer no obstacle to grace," — rather, "because they promise repentance and faith by their Sureties." Let us always remember that an infant has no title to baptism except the profession of its Sureties. Surely when these Sureties know nothing of repentance or faith, or of what they are promising, common sense points out that the infant is not likely to get any inward benefit from the sacrament. In plain words, if parents or sponsors bring an infant to baptism in utter ignorance, without faith or prayer or knowledge, it is monstrous to suppose that this infant must, nevertheless, receive regeneration. At this rate, it would not matter at all in what way sacraments are used, whether with ignorance or with knowledge. And it would signify nothing, whether those who use them were godly or ungodly; the children of believing and of unbelieving parents would receive precisely the same benefit from baptism! Such a conclusion seems unreasonable and absurd.

**11.** *But does not St. Paul say in his Epistles that Christians are "buried with Christ in baptism," and that baptized persons have "put on Christ" (Gal 3.27; Col 2.12).*

No doubt St. Paul says so. But the persons of whom he said this were not baptized in infancy, but when they were grown up, and in days too when faith and baptism were so closely connected, that as soon as a man believed, he confessed his faith publicly by baptism. But there is not a single passage in the New Testament which describes at length the effect of baptism on an infant, nor a single text which says that all infants are born again, or regenerated, or buried with Christ in baptism. As Canon Mozley says, "Scripture nowhere asserts, either explicitly or implicitly, the regeneration of infants in baptism" (Mozley's *Baptismal Controversy*, p. 34). Besides this, we are expressly told that Simon the sorcerer, after his baptism, had "no part" in Christ, and his "heart was not right in the

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<sup>74</sup> Literally, "of the work, worked." A phrase used by the reformers to characterize the Roman Catholic belief that the sacraments operate in and of themselves (they are *effective* to convey grace). The reformers rejected such an idea.

sight of God.” Simon, therefore, could not have been regenerated, nor born again in baptism (Act 8.21).

**12.** *But does not St. Peter say, “Baptism also saves us”? And if it saves us, must it not also regenerate us? (1Pet 3.21).*

No doubt St. Peter says so. But those who quote this text should not stop at the words “save us,” but read carefully on to the end of the sentence. They will then see that St. Peter distinctly fences and guards his statement by saying that the baptism which “saves” is not the mere outward application of water to the body, but the baptism which is accompanied by the “answer of a good conscience toward God.” Moreover, it is a curious fact that St. Peter, who uses the expression “baptism saves,” is the very same Apostle who told Simon after baptism that he was “in the bond of iniquity,” and his “heart was not right in the sight of God” (Act 8.21).

**13.** *But does not our Lord Jesus Christ say to Nicodemus, “Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”? (Joh 3.3). Does this not prove that all who are baptized with water are regenerate?*

Certainly not. It proves nothing of the kind. The utmost that can be made of this famous and often quoted text is that it shows the necessity of being “born of water and the Spirit” if we would be saved. But it does not say that all who are baptized, or “born of water,” are at the same time “born of the Spirit.” It may prove that there is a connection sometimes between baptism and regeneration, but it does not supply the slightest proof that an invariable connection always exists.

**14.** *But may it not be true that all baptized persons receive the grace of spiritual regeneration in baptism, and that many of them afterwards lose it?*

There is no plain warrant for such a statement in the Bible. St. Peter says expressly, that we are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible” (1Pet 1.23). The Seventeenth Article of our Church speaks of grace as a thing that cannot be lost: “Those who are endowed with so excellent a benefit of God, walk religiously in good works — and at length attain to everlasting felicity.” It is very dishonouring to the mighty inward work of the Holy Ghost to suppose that it can be so continually lost and trampled underfoot. Moreover, myriads of baptized persons from their very earliest infancy never give the slightest evidence of having any grace to lose, and are not one bit better, as boys and girls, than the unbaptized children of Quakers and Baptists. No wonder that Robert Abbott, Bishop of Salisbury in 1615, asks the question, “If there is that cure that they speak of in the baptized, how is it that there is so little effect or token of it?”

**15.** *But may it not be true that all baptized persons receive the grace of regeneration in baptism, and that it remains within them like a dormant seed, alive, though at present bearing no fruit?*

Certainly not. The Apostle St. John expressly forbids us to suppose that there can be such a thing as dormant or sleeping grace. He says, “Whoever is born of God does not commit sin, for his seed remains in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God” (1Joh 3.9). This witness is true. When there can be light which cannot be seen, and fire without heat, then, and not till then, there may be grace that is dormant and inactive. The well-known words, “Stir up the gift of God that is in you,” are far too often addressed to the baptized.

Yet common sense will tell anyone who refers to his Bible, that these words were not used at all about the effects of baptism, but about the gifts of ministers (2Tim 1.6).

**16.** *But do not the early Fathers hold that all baptized persons are necessarily regenerated in baptism? And have not many great and learned divines in every age maintained the same opinion?*

The Fathers used very extravagant language about both sacraments, and they are not safe guides on this point. Moreover, they often contradict themselves and one another. The divines who deny that regeneration always accompanies baptism are as worthy of attention, and as learned and wise, as any divines who ever held baptismal regeneration. It is sufficient to say that Archbishops Cranmer, Whitgift, Usher, and Leighton, and Bishops Latimer, Ridley, Jewell, Davenant, Carleten, Hopkins, and Robert Abbott, have left distinct evidence that they did not consider the grace of spiritual regeneration to be necessarily and invariably tied to baptism. After all, in questions like these we must call no man Master. It matters little what man says. What does the Scripture say?

**17.** *But does not this view of regeneration, according to which many baptized persons are not regenerate at all, and receive no benefit whatever from their baptism, do great dishonour to one of Christ's sacraments, and tend to bring it into contempt?*

Not at all. The truth is exactly the other way. To say that infant baptism confers grace mechanically, as a chemical solution produces an effect on a photographic plate, and that if water and certain words are used by a thoughtless, careless clergyman over the child of thoughtless, ignorant parents, the child is at once born again — to furthermore say that an immense spiritual effect is produced by baptism when no effect whatever can be seen — all this, to many thinking persons, seems calculated to degrade baptism! It tends to make observers suppose that baptism is useless, or that regeneration means nothing at all. He that would do honour to baptism should maintain that it is a high and holy ordinance which, like every ordinance appointed by Christ, should not be touched without solemn reverence; and that no blessing can be expected unless it is used with heart, and knowledge, and faith, and prayer, and followed by godly training of the child baptized. Above all, he should maintain that when baptism does good, the good will be seen in the life and ways of the baptized. Those who do not feel satisfied about this matter will do well to study attentively the strong language which God uses about His own ordinances, when they are used formally and carelessly, in the prophet Isaiah (Isa 1.11-12).

When he wrote these words: “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me? says the Lord... I do not delight in the blood of bullocks or of lambs” — what did the prophet mean? He evidently meant that God's own ordinances may be made perfectly useless by man's misuse of them.

**18.** *But may we not believe that regeneration means nothing more than a change of state, and does not mean a moral and spiritual change at all? May we not believe that it is a mere ecclesiastical word, signifying nothing more than admission to a state of Church privilege? And may we not then say that every person baptized is regenerated in baptism?*

Of course we may say and believe anything we please in a free country like England. And this idea of an ecclesiastical regeneration cuts the knot of some difficulties, and has always satisfied some minds. But it is an insuperable difficulty that the word “regeneration” is

never once used in this sense in the New Testament. Moreover, the parallel expression “born of God,” in St. John’s First Epistle, most certainly means a great deal more than being admitted into a state of ecclesiastical privilege! To say, for instance, “Whoever is baptized does not commit sin... and overcomes the world,” would be ridiculous, because it is untrue. Moreover, the Church Catechism distinctly teaches that the inward and spiritual grace in baptism is not a mere ecclesiastical change, but “a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness.” Moreover, the Homily for Whitsunday expressly describes regeneration as an inward and spiritual change. One thing is very certain: no unlearned reader of the Bible ever seems to understand how a person can be “regenerate” and yet not be saved. The poor and simple-minded cannot take in the idea of ecclesiastical regeneration!

**19.** *But is it not more kind, and liberal, and charitable, to assume that all baptized persons are regenerate, and to address them as such?*

Most certainly not. On the contrary, it is calculated to lull conscience into a fatal security. It is likely to feed sloth, check self-examination, and encourage an easy, self-satisfied condition of soul. No religious statement is kind and charitable which is not strictly true. To keep back any part of God’s truth in order to appear kind, is not only a mistake, but a sin. The way to do good is to warn people plainly, that they must not suppose they are regenerate because they are baptized. They must be told to examine themselves whether they are “born again,” and not to believe they are regenerate unless they have the scriptural marks of regeneration.

**20.** *But is it really necessary to attach such importance to this doctrine of regeneration? Is it not sufficient to teach people that they must be “good,” and go to church, and be “in earnest,” and do their duty, and that then they will get to heaven, somehow, at last, without telling them in this positive dogmatic way, they must be “born again”?*

The answer to these questions is short and simple. Christians have no rule of religious faith and practice except the Bible. If the Bible is true, regeneration is absolutely necessary to salvation. It is written, “Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;” “You must be born again” — “Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Joh 3.3-8; Mat 18.3). It is possible for people to enter heaven and be saved, like the penitent thief, without baptism; but no one can be saved and go to heaven without regeneration. The penitent thief, though not baptized, was “born again.” Regeneration, therefore, is a doctrine of primary and first-rate importance.

**21.** *But if these things are true, and no one can be saved without regeneration, are there not many professing Christians who are in a very dangerous position? Are not those who are without the marks of being “born again” in imminent peril of being lost forever?*

Of course they are. But this is exactly what the Bible teaches from first to last about them. It is written, “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.” (Mat 7.13) It is written again, “Many walk, of whom I tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction” (Phi 3.18). It is the most miserable part of many people’s religious condition, that they fancy they will go to heaven because they are baptized and go to church — while in reality, not being regenerate, they are on the road to eternal ruin.

**22.** *Can ministers of the Church of Christ give regenerating grace to their people?*

Most certainly not. St. John expressly says that those who are born of God are born, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (Joh 1.13). “It is the Spirit that quickens” (Joh 6.63). Paul may plant, and Apollos may water; but God only can “give the increase” (1Cor 3.7). Ministers, like John the Baptist, can baptize with water, but Christ alone can “baptize with the Holy Ghost” (Mar 1.8). To give spiritual life, as well as physical life, is the peculiar prerogative of God. Man can neither give it to himself, nor to another.

**23.** *But supposing these things are true, what should those unhappy persons do who have no marks of regeneration about them, and feel that they are not born again? Are they to sit still in hopeless despair?*

The Bible gives a simple answer to that question. If a man really feels his need of regeneration and desires it, then he must seek Christ, the fountain of life, and cry mightily to Him. He must ask Him who baptizes with the Holy Ghost to baptize his heart, and to give him grace. It is written, “To as many as received Him, He gave power to become the sons of God” (Joh 1.12). He must pray for a new heart. It is written, “Your Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luk 11.13)” He must seek life diligently in the use of God’s Word. It is written that “faith comes by hearing” (Rom 10.17). “Of his own will he birthed us with the Word of truth” (Jas 1.18). No man ever sought grace honestly in this way, and sought in vain. He that will not take the trouble to seek in this fashion, does not really desire regeneration, and is not in earnest about his soul.

**24.** *But supposing a person finds in himself some reason to hope that he really is born again, and has the true marks of regeneration, what is he to do? Is he to sit still, and take no more trouble about his soul?*

Certainly not. He must strive daily to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ” (2Pet 3.18). He must seek to deepen and strengthen the work of the Holy Spirit within him, by diligently exercising the grace he has received. He must “cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Cor 7.1). He must endeavour to “abide in Christ” more closely, and to live the life of faith in the Son of God. He that thinks he is regenerate, and does not feel a continual desire to be more holy and more like Christ every year he lives, is in a very unsatisfactory and unhealthy state of soul (Joh 15.4-5; Gal 2.20; 2Pet 1.5-10).

**25.** *Have Evangelical Churchmen who hold the views of regeneration maintained in this paper any cause to be ashamed of their opinions?*

None whatever. They can safely defy anyone to prove that their views are not in harmony with Scripture, with the Thirty-nine Articles, with the Prayer Book, with the Catechism, with the Homilies, and with the writings of many of the best divines in the Church of England. Those who occupy such a position as this have no cause to be ashamed. The last day will prove who is right. To the judgment of that day, we may safely and confidently appeal.

I CONCLUDE this paper with one general remark about the great principle on which the “Book of Common Prayer” was at first compiled. It is one which runs throughout the Liturgy from end to end. The mischief which has arisen, and the false teaching which has

flowed from gross ignorance or neglect of this principle, are simply incalculable. Let me show what it is.

The PRINCIPLE of the Prayer Book is to suppose that all members of the Church are in *reality* what they are in *profession* — to be true believers in Christ, to be sanctified by the Holy Ghost. The Prayer Book takes the highest standard of what a Christian ought to be, and is worded accordingly throughout. The minister addresses those who assemble together for public worship as believers. The people who use the words the Liturgy puts into their mouths, are supposed to be believers. But those who drew up the Prayer Book never meant to assert that all who were members of the Church of England were actually and really true Christians! On the contrary, they tell us expressly in the Articles, that “in the visible Church the evil are ever mingled with the good.” But they held that if forms of devotion were drawn up at all, they must be drawn up on the supposition that those who used them were real Christians, and not false ones. And I think they were quite right in so doing. A Liturgy for unbelievers and unconverted men would be absurd, and practically useless. The part of the congregation for whom it was meant would care little or nothing for any Liturgy at all. The holy and believing part of the congregation would find its language entirely unsuited to them, and beneath their wants.

How anyone can fail to see this principle running through the Prayer-book Services, is one of those things which I must frankly say I fail to understand. It is quite certain that St. Paul wrote his Epistles in the New Testament to the Churches upon this principle. He constantly addresses their members as “saints” and “elect,” and as having grace, and faith, and hope, and love, though it is evident that some of them had no grace at all! I am firmly convinced that the compilers of our Prayer Book drew up its Services upon the same lines, the lines of *charitable* supposition; and it is on this principle alone that the book can be interpreted, and especially on the subject of Baptism and Regeneration.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Those who wish to study this subject more deeply are advised to read Canon Faber’s *Primitive Doctrine of Regeneration*, 8vo. Dean Goode on *The Effects of Infant Baptism*, 8vo. Canon Mozley on *Baptismal Regeneration*, 8vo. Canon Mozley on *The Baptismal Controversy*, 8vo.

## CHAPTER 19 – Tit. 2.6.

### THOUGHTS FOR YOUNG MEN

WHEN St. Paul wrote his Epistle to Titus about his duty as a minister, he mentioned young men as a class requiring peculiar attention. After speaking of aged men and aged women, and young women, he adds this pithy advice, “Likewise, exhort young men to be sober-minded” (Tit. 2.6). I am going to follow the Apostle’s advice. I propose to offer a few words of friendly exhortation to young men.

I am growing old myself, but there are few things I remember so well as the days of my youth. I have a most distinct recollection of the joys and the sorrows, the hopes and the fears, the temptations and the difficulties, the mistaken judgments and the misplaced affections, the errors and the aspirations, which surround and accompany a young man’s life. If I can only say something to keep some young man in the right way, and preserve him from faults and sins which may mar his prospects both for time and eternity, I will be very thankful.

There are four things which I propose to do:

- I. I will mention some general reasons why young men need exhorting.
- II. I will note some special dangers against which young men need to be warned.
- III. I will give some general counsels which I entreat young men to receive.
- IV. I will set down some special rules of conduct which I strongly advise young men to follow.

On each of these four points I have something to say, and I pray God that what I say may do good to some soul.

#### *I. Reasons for exhorting Young Men.*

In the first place, What are the GENERAL reasons why young men need peculiar exhortation? I will mention several of them in order.

(1) For one thing, there is the painful fact that there are few young men anywhere who seem to have any religion. I speak without respect of persons; I say it of all. High or low, rich or poor, gentle or simple, learned or unlearned, in town or in country — it makes no matter. I tremble to observe how few young men are led by the Spirit — how few are in that narrow way which leads to life — how few are setting their affections on things above — how few are taking up the cross, and following Christ. I say it with all sorrow, but I believe, as in God’s sight, I am saying nothing more than the truth.

Young men, you form a large and most important class in the population of this country; but where, and in what condition, are your immortal souls? Alas, whatever way we turn for an answer, the report will be one and the same!

Let us ask any faithful minister of the gospel, and mark what he will tell us. How many unmarried young people can he reckon up who come to the Lord’s Supper? Who are the most backward about means of grace — the most irregular about Sunday services — the most difficult to draw to weekly lectures and prayer meetings — the most inattentive under preaching at all times? Which part of his congregation fills him with most anxiety? Who are the Reubens for whom he has the deepest “searchings of heart”? Who in his flock are the hardest to manage — who require the most frequent warnings and rebukes — who

occasion him the greatest uneasiness and sorrow — who keep him most constantly in fear for their souls, and seem most hopeless? Depend on it, his answer will always be, “The Young Men.”

Let us ask the parents in any parish throughout England, and see what they will generally say. Who in their families give them most pain and trouble? Who need the most watchfulness, and most often vex and disappoint them? Who are the first to be led away from what is right, and the last to remember cautions and good advice? Who are the most difficult to keep in order and bounds? Who most frequently break out into open sin, disgrace the name they bear, make their friends unhappy, embitter the old age of their relations, and bring down grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? Depend on it, the answer will generally be, “The Young Men.”

Let us ask the magistrates and officers of justice, and mark what they will reply. Who go to public-houses and beer-shops most? Who are the greatest Sabbath-breakers? Who make up riotous mobs and seditious meetings? Who are most often arrested for drunkenness, breaches of the peace, fighting, poaching, stealing, assaults, and the like? Who fill the jails, and penitentiaries, and convict ships? Who are the class which requires the most incessant watching and looking after? Depend on it, they will at once point to the same quarter — they will say, “The Young Men.”

Let us turn to the upper classes, and mark the report we will get from them. In one family the sons are always wasting time, health, and money, in the selfish pursuit of pleasure. In another, the sons will follow no profession, and fritter away the most precious years of their life in doing nothing. In another, they take up a profession as a mere form, but pay no attention to its duties. In another, they are always forming wrong connections, gambling, getting into debt, associating with bad companions, keeping their friends in a constant fever of anxiety. Alas, rank, title, wealth, and education, do not prevent these things! Anxious fathers, and heart-broken mothers, and sorrowing sisters, could tell sad tales about them, if the truth were known. Many a family, with everything this world can give, numbers among its connections some name that is never named — or only named with regret and shame — some son, some brother, some cousin, some nephew — who will have his own way, and is a grief to all who know him.

There is seldom a rich family which does not have some thorn in its side, some blot in its page of happiness, some constant source of pain and anxiety — and often, far too often, is not this the true cause: “The Young Men”?

What will we say to these things? These are facts — plain staring facts — facts which meet us on every side — facts which cannot be denied. How dreadful this is! How dreadful the thought that every time I meet a young man, I meet one who is in all probability an enemy of God — travelling in the broad way which leads to destruction — unfit for heaven! Surely, with such facts before me, you will not wonder that I exhort you. You must allow that there is a cause.

(2) For another thing, death and judgment are before young men, even as others, and they nearly all seem to forget it.

Young men, it is appointed to you once to die; and however strong and healthy you may be now, the day of your death is perhaps very near. I see young people sick as well as old. I bury youthful corpses as well as aged. I read the names of persons no older than

yourselves in every churchyard. I learn from books that, excepting infancy and old age, more die between thirteen and twenty-three than at any other season of life. And yet you live as if you were sure at present not to die at all.

Are you thinking you will mind these things tomorrow? Remember the words of Solomon: “Do not boast of tomorrow; for you do not know what a day may bring forth” (Pro 27.1). “Serious things tomorrow,” said a heathen <sup>76</sup> to someone who warned him of coming danger; but his tomorrow never came. Tomorrow is the devil’s day, but today is God’s. Satan does not care how spiritual your intentions may be, and how holy your resolutions, if only they are fixed for tomorrow. Oh, do not give way to the devil in this matter! Answer him, “No: Satan! It will be today: *today*.” All men do not live to be patriarchs, like Isaac and Jacob. Many children die before their fathers. David had to mourn the death of his two finest sons; Job lost his ten children in one day. Your lot may be like one of theirs. And when death summons, it will be vain to talk of tomorrow — you must go at once.

Are you thinking that you will have a convenient season to mind these things by and by? So thought Felix and the Athenians to whom Paul preached; but it never came. Hell is paved with such fancies. Better make sure work while you can. Leave nothing unsettled that is eternal. Run no risk when your soul is at stake. Believe me, the salvation of a soul is no easy matter. All need a “great” salvation, whether young or old — all need to be born again — all need to be washed in Christ’s blood — all need to be sanctified by the Spirit. Happy is that man who does not leave these things uncertain, but never rests till he has the witness of the Spirit within him, that he is a child of God.

Young men, your time is short. Your days are but a span long — a shadow, a vapour — a tale that is soon told. Your bodies are not brass. “Even the young men,” says Isaiah, “will utterly fall” (Isa 40.30). Your health may be taken from you in a moment — it only needs a fall, a fever, an inflammation, a broken blood-vessel — and the worm will soon feed upon you. There is but a step between any one of you and death. This night your soul might be required of you. You are fast going the way of all the earth — you will soon be gone. Your life is all uncertainty — your death and judgment are perfectly sure. You too must hear the Archangel’s trumpet, and go forth to stand before the great white throne — you too must obey that summons, which Jerome says was always ringing in his ears: “Arise, you dead, and come to judgment.” “Surely I come quickly,” is the language of the Judge Himself. I cannot, *dare* not, *will* not let you alone.

Oh that you would all lay to heart the words of the Preacher: “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment” (Ecc 11.9). It is surprising that with such a prospect, any man can be careless and unconcerned! Surely none are so mad as those who are content to live unprepared to die. Surely the unbelief of men is the most amazing thing in the world. Well may the clearest prophecy in the Bible begin with these words, “Who has believed our report? (Isa 53.1). Well may the Lord Jesus say, “When the Son of man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” (Luk 18.8). Young men, I fear lest this be the report of many of you in the courts above: “They will not believe” I fear lest you be hurried out of the world, and awake to find out, too late, that death and judgment are realities.

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<sup>76</sup> Archias the Theban.

I fear all this, and therefore I exhort you.

(3) For another thing, what young men will be, in all probability depends on what they are now, and they seem to forget this. Youth is the seed-time of full age — the moulding season in the little space of human life — the turning-point in the history of man's mind.

By the shoot we judge the tree — by the blossoms we judge the fruit — by the spring we judge the harvest — by the morning we judge the day — and by the character of the young man, we may generally judge what he will be when he grows up.

Young men, do not be deceived. Do not think that you can, at will, serve lusts and pleasures in your beginning, and then go and serve God with ease at your latter end. Do not think that you can live with Esau, and then die with Jacob. It is a mockery to deal with God and your souls in such a fashion. It is an awful mockery to suppose you can give the flower of your strength to the world and the devil, and then put off the King of kings with the scraps and leavings of your hearts, the wreck and remnant of your powers. It is an awful mockery, and you may find to your cost the thing *cannot* be done.

I daresay you are reckoning on a late repentance. You do not know what you are doing. You are reckoning without God. Repentance and faith are the gifts of God, and gifts that He often withholds when they have been long offered in vain. I grant you, true repentance is never too late; but I warn you at the same time, late repentance is seldom true. I grant you, one penitent thief was converted in his last hours so that no man might despair; but I warn you, only *one* was converted so that no man might presume. I grant you, it is written that Jesus is “able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by Him” (Heb 7.25). But I warn you, it is also written by the same Spirit, “Because I have called, and you refused, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes” (Pro 1.24-26).

Believe me, you will find it no easy matter to turn to God just when you please. It is a true saying of good Archbishop Leighton <sup>77</sup>: “The way of sin is downhill; a man cannot stop when he would.” Holy desires and serious convictions are not like the servants of the Centurion, ready to come and go at your desire; rather they are like the wild ox in Job — they will not obey your voice, nor attend at your bidding. <sup>Job 39.9</sup> It was said of a famous general <sup>78</sup> of old, when he could have taken the city <sup>79</sup> he warred against, that he *would* not; and by and by when he would, he *could* not. Beware, lest the same kind of event befall you in the matter of eternal life.

Why do I say all this? I say it because of the force of habit. I say it because experience tells me that people's hearts are seldom changed if they are not changed when young. Seldom indeed are men converted when they are old. Habits have long roots. Sin once allowed to nestle in your bosom, will not be turned out at your bidding. Custom becomes second nature, and its chains are threefold cords not easily broken. The prophet says well, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good, who are accustomed to do evil” (Jer 13.23). Habits are like stones rolling downhill: the further they roll, the faster and more ungovernable is their course. Habits, like trees, are

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<sup>77</sup> Robert Leighton (1611-1684) — Scottish prelate and scholar, Bishop of Dunblane, Archbishop of Glasgow, and Principal of the University of Edinburgh from 1653 to 1662.

<sup>78</sup> Hannibal.

<sup>79</sup> Rome

strengthened by age. A boy may bend an oak when it is a sapling; a hundred men cannot root it up when it is a full-grown tree. A child can wade over the Thames at its fountainhead; the largest ship in the world can float in it when it gets near the sea. So it is with habits: the older the stronger, the longer they have held possession, the harder they will be to cast out. They grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength. Custom is the nurse of sin. Every fresh act of sin lessens fear and remorse, hardens our hearts, blunts the edge of our conscience, and increases our evil inclination.

Young men, you may fancy that I am laying too much stress on this point. If you had seen old men, as I have, on the brink of the grave — without feeling, seared, callous, dead, cold, hard as the nether mill-stone, you would not think so. Believe me, you cannot stand still in the affairs of your souls. Habits of good or evil are daily strengthening in your hearts. Every day you are either getting nearer to God, or further off. Every year that you continue impenitent, the wall of division between you and heaven becomes higher and thicker, and the gulf to be crossed becomes deeper and broader. Oh, dread the hardening effect of constant lingering in sin! *Now* is the accepted time. See that your flight is not in the winter of your days. If you do not seek the Lord when young, the strength of habit is such that you will probably never seek Him at all.

I fear this, and therefore I exhort you.

(4) For another thing, the devil uses special diligence to destroy the souls of young men, and they seem not to know it. Satan knows well that you will make up the next generation, and therefore he employs every art early, to make you his own. I would not have you ignorant of his devices.

You are those on whom he plays off all his choicest temptations. He spreads his net with the most watchful carefulness, to entangle your hearts. He baits his traps with the sweetest morsels, to get you into his power. He displays his wares before your eyes with his utmost ingenuity, in order to make you buy his sugared poisons, and eat his accursed dainties. You are the grand object of his attack. May the Lord rebuke him, and deliver you out of his hands.

Young men, beware of being taken by his snares. He will try to throw dust in your eyes, and prevent you seeing anything in its true colours. He would gladly make you think evil is good, and good is evil. He will paint, and gild, and dress up sin, in order to make you fall in love with it. He will deform, and misrepresent, and caricature true religion, in order to make you take a dislike to it. He will exalt the pleasures of wickedness — but he will hide from you the sting. He will lift up before your eyes the cross and its painfulness — but He will keep out of sight the eternal crown. He will promise you everything, as he did to Christ, if you will only serve him. <sup>Mat 4.9</sup> He will even help you wear a form of religion, if you will only neglect its power. <sup>2Tim 3.5</sup> He will tell you at the beginning of your lives, it is too soon to serve God — he will tell you at the end, it is too late. Oh, do not be deceived!

You little know the danger you are in from this enemy; and it is this very ignorance which makes me afraid. You are like blind men walking amidst holes and pitfalls; you do not see the perils around you on every side.

Your enemy is mighty. He is called “The Prince of this world” (Joh 14.30). He opposed our Lord Jesus Christ all through His ministry. He tempted Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and so he brought sin and death into the world. He tempted even David,

the man after God's own heart, and caused his latter days to be full of sorrow. He tempted even Peter, the chosen Apostle, and made him deny his Lord. Surely his enmity is not to be despised!

Your enemy is restless. He never sleeps. He is always going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.<sup>1Pet 5.8</sup> He is ever going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it. <sup>Job 1.7</sup> You may be careless about your souls: he is not. He wants them to make them miserable, like himself; and he will have them if he can. Surely his enmity is not to be despised!

And your enemy is cunning. For nearly six thousand years he has been reading one book, and that book is the heart of man. He ought to know it well, and he *does* know it — all its weakness, all its deceitfulness, all its folly. And he has a store of temptations, such as are most likely to do it harm. Never will you go to the place where he will not find you. Go into towns — he will be there. Go into a wilderness, he will be there also. Sit among drunkards and revilers — and he will be there to help you. Listen to preaching — and he will be there to distract you. Surely such enmity is not to be despised!

Young men, this enemy is working hard for your destruction, however little you may think so. You are the prize for which he is specially contending. He foresees that you must either be the blessings or the curses of your day, and he is thus trying hard to effect a lodging in your hearts early, that you may help forward his kingdom by and by. He well understands that to spoil the bud is the surest way to mar the flower.

Oh that your eyes were opened like those of Elisha's servant in Dothan! Oh that you could but see what Satan is scheming against your peace! I must *warn* you — I must *exhort* you. Whether you will hear or not, I cannot, I *dare not*, leave you alone.

(5) For another thing, young men need exhorting because of the sorrow it will save them, to begin serving God *now*.

Sin is the mother of all sorrow, and no sort of sin appears to give a man so much misery and pain as the sins of his youth. The foolish acts he did — the time he wasted — the mistakes he made — the bad company he kept — the harm he did himself, both body and soul — the chances of happiness he threw away — the openings of usefulness he neglected — *all* these are things that often embitter the conscience of an old man, throw a gloom on the evening of his days, and fill the later hours of his life with self-reproach and shame.

Some men could tell you of the untimely loss of health brought on by youthful sins. Disease racks their limbs with pain, and life is almost a weariness. Their muscular strength is so wasted that a grasshopper seems a burden. Their eye has become prematurely dim, and their natural force abated. The sun of their health has gone down while it is yet day, and they mourn to see their flesh and body consumed. Believe me, this is a bitter cup to drink.

Others could give you sad accounts of the consequences of idleness. They threw away the golden opportunity for learning. They would not get wisdom at the time when their minds were most able to receive it, and their memories most ready to retain it. And now it is too late. They do not have the leisure to sit down and learn. They no longer have the same power, even if they had the leisure. Lost time can never be redeemed. This too is a bitter cup to drink.

Others could tell you of grievous mistakes in judgment, from which they suffer all their lives. They would have their own way. They would not take advice. They formed some connection which has been altogether ruinous to their happiness. They chose a profession for which they were entirely unsuited. And they see it all now. But their eyes are only open when the mistake cannot be retrieved. Oh, this is also a bitter cup to drink!

Young men, young men, I wish you only knew the comfort of a conscience not burdened with a long list of youthful sins. These are the wounds that pierce the deepest. These are the arrows that drink up a man's spirit. This is the iron that enters into the soul. Be merciful to yourselves. Seek the Lord early, and so you will be spared many a bitter tear.

This is the truth that Job seems to have felt. He says, "You write bitter things against me, and make me possess the iniquities of my youth" (Job 13.26). So also his friend Zophar says, speaking of the wicked, "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which will lie down with him in the dust" (Job 20.11).

David also seems to have felt it. He says to the Lord, "Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions" (Psa 25.7).

Beza, the great Swiss Reformer, felt it so strongly that he named it in his will as a special mercy that he had been called out from the world by the grace of God, at the age of sixteen.

Go and ask believers now, and I think many a one will tell you much the same. "Oh that I could live my young days over again!" He will most probably say, "Oh that I had spent the beginning of my life in a better fashion! Oh that I had not laid the foundation of evil habits so strongly in the spring-time of my course!"

Young men, I want to save you all this sorrow if I can. Hell itself is truth known too late. Be wise in time. What youth sows, old age must reap. Do not give the most precious season of your life to that which will not comfort you in your latter end. Rather, sow to yourselves in righteousness; break up your fallow ground; do not sow among thorns.

Sin may go lightly from your hand, or run smoothly off your tongue now — but depend on it, sin and you will meet again by and by, however little you may like it. Old wounds will often ache and give pain long after they are healed and only a scar remains: so you may find with your sins. The footprints of animals have been found on the surface of rocks that were once wet sand, thousands of years after the animal that made them has perished and passed away;<sup>80</sup> so it may also be with your sins.

"Experience," says the proverb, "keeps a costly school, but fools will learn in no other." I want you all to escape the misery of learning in that school. I want you to avoid the wretchedness that youthful sins are sure to entail. This is the last reason why I exhort you.

## II. *Dangers for Young Men.*

In the second place, there are some *special* dangers against which young men need to be warned.

(1) One danger to young men is PRIDE.

I know well that all souls are in fearful peril. Old or young, it does not matter; all have a

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<sup>80</sup> See Buckland's Bridgewater Treatise, vol. ii. plate 26.

## Chap. 19. Thoughts For Young Men

race to run, a battle to fight, a heart to mortify, a world to overcome, a body to keep under, a devil to resist; and we may well say, Who is sufficient for these things? <sup>2Cor 2.16</sup> But still, every age and condition has its own peculiar snares and temptations, and it is well to know them. He that is forewarned is forearmed. If I can only persuade you to be on your guard against the dangers I am going to name, I am sure I will do your souls an essential service.

Pride is the oldest sin in the world. Indeed, it was *before* the world. Satan and his angels fell by pride. They were not satisfied with their first estate. Thus pride stocked hell with its first inhabitants.

Pride cast Adam out of paradise. He was not content with the place God assigned him. He tried to raise himself, and fell. Thus sin, sorrow, and death entered in by pride.

Pride sits in all our hearts by nature. We are born proud. Pride makes us rest satisfied with ourselves — think we are good enough as we are — stop our ears against advice — refuse the gospel of Christ — turn every one to his own way. But pride never reigns anywhere so powerfully as in the heart of a young man.

How common is it to see young men heady, high-minded, and impatient of counsel! How often they are rude and discourteous to all about them, thinking they are not valued and honoured as they deserve! How often they will not stop to listen to a hint from an older person! They think they know everything. They are full of conceit of their own wisdom. They reckon elderly people, and especially their relations, stupid, and dull, and slow. They fancy they want no teaching or instruction themselves: they understand all things. It makes them almost angry to be spoken to. Like young horses, they cannot bear the least control. They must be independent, and have their own way. They seem to think, like those whom Job mentioned, “We are the people, and wisdom will die with us” (Job 12.2). And this is all pride.

Such a one was Rehoboam, who despised the counsel of the old experienced men who stood before his father, and hearkened to the advice of the young men of his own generation. He lived to reap the consequences of his folly. There are many like him.

Such a one was the prodigal son in the parable, who must have the portion of goods which fell to him, and set up for himself. He could not submit to live quietly under his father’s roof, but would go into a far country, and be his own master. Like the little child that would leave its mother’s hand and walk alone, he soon smarted for his folly. He became wiser when he had to eat husks with the swine. But there are many like him.

Young men, I beseech you earnestly, beware of pride. Two things are said to be very rare sights in the world, one is a humble young man, and the other is a content old man. I fear this saying is only too true.

Do not be proud of your own abilities — your own strength — your own knowledge — your own appearance — your own cleverness. Do not be proud of yourself and of your endowments of any kind. It all comes from not knowing yourself and the world. The older you grow, and the more you see, the less reason you will find for being proud. Ignorance and inexperience are the pedestal of pride; once you let the pedestal be removed, pride will soon come down.

Remember how often Scripture sets before us the excellence of a humble spirit. How strongly we are warned “not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think”!

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(Rom 12.3). How plainly we are told, “If any man thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know!” (1Cor 8.2). How strict is the command, “Put on humbleness of mind”! (Col 3.12). And again, “Be clothed with humility” (1Pet 5.5). Alas, this is a garment of which many seem not to have so much as a rag.

Think of the great example our Lord Jesus Christ leaves us in this respect. He washed the feet of His disciples, saying, “You should do as I have done to you” (Joh 13.15). It is written, “Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor” (2Cor 8.9). And again, “He made Himself of no reputation, and took the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself” (Phi 2.7-8). Surely, to be proud is to be more like the devil and fallen Adam, than like Christ. Surely it can never be mean and low-spirited to be like Him.

Think of the wisest man that ever lived — I mean Solomon. See how he speaks of himself as a “little child,” — as one who “did not know how to go out or come in,” or manage for himself (1Kng 3.7-8). That was a very different spirit from his brother Absalom’s, who thought himself equal to anything: “Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man who has any suit or cause might come to Me, and I would do him justice” (2Sam 15.4). That was a very different spirit from his brother Adonijah’s, who “exalted himself, saying, I will be king” (1Kng 1.5). Humility was the beginning of Solomon’s wisdom. He writes it down as his own experience, “Do you see a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope for a fool than for him” (Pro 26.12).

Young men, lay to heart the Scriptures quoted here. Do not be too confident in your own judgment. Cease to be sure that you are always right, and others wrong. Be distrustful of your own opinion when you find it contrary to that of older men than yourselves, and especially to that of your own parents. Age gives experience, and therefore it deserves respect. It is a mark of Elihu’s wisdom, in the book of Job, that “he waited till Job had spoken, because they were older than himself” (Job 32.4). And afterwards he said, “I am young, and you are very old; therefore I was afraid, and dared not show you my opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom” (Job 32.6-7). Modesty and silence are beautiful graces in young people. Never be ashamed of being a learner: Jesus was one at twelve years; when He was found in the temple, He was “sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions” (Luk 2.46). The wisest men would tell you they are always learners, and are humbled to find how little they know after all. The great Sir Isaac Newton used to say that he felt himself no better than a little child who had picked up a few precious stones on the shore of the sea of knowledge.

Young men, if you would be wise, if you would be happy, remember the warning I give you, *Beware of pride*.

(2) Another danger to young men is the LOVE OF PLEASURE.

Youth is the time when our passions are strongest — and like unruly children, they cry most loudly for indulgence. Youth is the time when we generally have the most health and strength: death seems far away, and to enjoy ourselves in this life seems everything. Youth is the time when most people have few earthly cares or anxieties to take up their attention. And all these things help to make young men think of nothing so much as pleasure. “I serve lusts and pleasures:” that is the true answer many a young man should give if asked,

“Whose servant are you?”

Young men, time would fail me if I were to tell you all the fruits this love of pleasure produces, and all the ways in which it may do you harm. Why should I speak of revelling, feasting, drinking, gambling, theatre-going, dancing, and the like? Few are to be found who do not know something of these things by bitter experience. And these are only instances. All things that give a feeling of excitement for the time — all things that drown thought, and keep the mind in a constant whirl — all things that please the senses and gratify the flesh — these are the sort of things that have mighty power at your time of life, and they owe their power to the love of pleasure. Be on your guard. Do not be like those of whom Paul speaks, “Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (2Tim 3.4).

Remember what I say: if you would cling to earthly pleasures, these are the things which murder souls. There is no surer way to get a seared conscience and a hard impenitent heart, than to give way to the desires of the flesh and mind. It seems nothing at first; but it tells in the long run.

Consider what Peter says: “Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1Pet 2.11). They destroy the soul’s peace, break down its strength, lead it into hard captivity, make it a slave.

Consider what Paul says: “Mortify your members which are upon the earth” (Col 3.5). “Those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts” (Gal 5.24). “I keep my body under control, and bring it into subjection” (1Cor 9.27). Once the body was a perfect mansion of the soul; now it is all corrupt and disordered, and needs constant watching. It is a burden to the soul, not a helpmeet — a hindrance, not an assistance. It may become a useful servant, but it is always a bad master.

Consider, again, the words of Paul: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not make provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts” (Rom 13.14). “These,” says Leighton, “are the words, the very reading of which so worked with Augustine, that he turned from a licentious young man, to a faithful servant of Jesus Christ.” Young men, I wish this might be the case with all of you.

Remember, again, if you would cling to earthly pleasures, they are all unsatisfying, empty, and vain. Like the locusts of the vision in Revelation, they seem to have crowns on their heads: but like the same locusts, you will find they have stings — real stings — in their tails. All is not gold that glitters. All is not good that tastes sweet. All is not real pleasure that pleases for a time.

Go and take your fill of earthly pleasures if you will; you will never find your heart satisfied with them. There will always be a voice within, crying like the horse-leech in Proverbs, “Give, give!” [Pro 30.15](#) There is an empty place there, which nothing but God can fill. You will find, as Solomon did by experience, that earthly pleasures are but a vain show — vanity and a vexation of spirit [Ecc 6.9](#) — whited sepulchres, fair to look at without, full of ashes and corruption within. [Mat 23.27](#) Better be wise in time. Better write “poison” on all earthly pleasures. The most lawful of them must be used with moderation. All of them are soul-destroying if you give them your heart.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> “Pleasure,” says Adams on Second Peter, “must first have the *warrant*, that it be without sin — then the *measure*, that it be without excess.”

And here I will not shrink from warning all young men to remember the seventh commandment: to beware of adultery and fornication, of all impurity of every kind. I fear there is often a lack of plain speaking on this part of God's law. But when I see how prophets and Apostles have dealt with this subject — when I observe the open way in which the Reformers of our own Church denounce it — when I see the number of young men who walk in the footsteps of Reuben, and Hophni, and Phinehas, and Amnon — I for one cannot, with a good conscience, hold my peace. I doubt whether the world is any better for the excessive silence which prevails upon this commandment. <sup>82</sup> For my own part, I feel it would be false and unscriptural delicacy in addressing young men, not to speak of that which is pre-eminently “the young man's sin.”

The breach of the seventh commandment is the sin above all others, that, as Hosea says, “takes away the heart” (Hos 4.11). It is the sin that leaves deeper scars upon the soul than any sin that a man can commit. It is a sin that slays its thousands in every age, and has overthrown not a few of the saints of God in times past. Lot, and Samson, and David are fearful proofs. It is the sin that man dares to smile at, and smoothes over under the names of gaiety, unsteadiness, wildness, and irregularity. But it is the sin that the devil peculiarly rejoices over, for he is the “unclean spirit;” and it is the sin that God peculiarly abhors, and declares He “will judge” (Heb 13.4).

Young men, “flee fornication” (1Cor 6.18) if you love life. “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience” (Eph 5.6). Flee the occasions of it — the company of those who might draw you into it — the places where you might be tempted to it. Read what our Lord says about it in Mat 5.28. Be like holy Job: “Make a covenant with your eyes” (Job 31.1). Flee talking of it. It is one of the things that should not so much as be named. You cannot handle pitch and not be defiled. <sup>Sir 13.1</sup> Flee the thoughts of it; resist them, mortify them, pray against them — make any sacrifice rather than give way. Imagination is the hotbed where this sin is too often hatched. Guard your *thoughts*, and there is little fear about your *deeds*.

Consider the caution I have been giving. If you forget all else, do not let *this* be forgotten.

(3) Another danger to young men is THOUGHTLESSNESS and inconsideration.

Lack of thought is one simple reason why thousands of souls are cast away forever. Men will not consider — will not look forward — will not look around them — will not reflect on the end of their present course and the sure consequences of their present ways — and they awake at last to find they are damned for lack of thinking.

Young men, none are in more danger of this than yourselves. You know little of the perils around you, and so you are heedless how you walk. You hate the trouble of sober, quiet thinking, and so you form wrong decisions and run your heads into sorrow. Young Esau must have his brother's pottage and sell his birthright: he never thought how much he would one day want it. Young Simeon and Levi must avenge their sister Dinah, and slay the Shechemites: they never considered how much trouble and anxiety they might bring upon their father Jacob and his house. Job seems to have been specially afraid of this thoughtlessness among his children. It is written that when they had a feast, and “the days of their feasting were over, Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning

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<sup>82</sup> Ryle lived in the Victorian Age, in which certain things were never mentioned, and rarely hinted at.

and offered burnt-offerings, according to the number of them all. For Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually” (Job 1.5).

Believe me, this world is not a world in which we can do well without thinking, and least of all, do well in the matter of our souls. “Don’t think,” whispers Satan. He knows that an unconverted heart is like a dishonest tradesman’s books; it will not bear close inspection. “Consider your ways,” says the Word of God; stop and think — consider and be wise. Well says the Spanish proverb, “Hurry comes from the devil.” Just as men marry in haste and then repent at leisure, so they make mistakes about their souls in a minute, and then suffer for it for years. Just as a bad servant does wrong, and then says, “I never gave it a thought,” so young men run into sin, and then say, “I did not think about it — it did not look like sin.” Not look like sin! What would you have? Sin will not come to you, saying, “I am sin;” it would do little harm if it did. Sin always seems “good, and pleasant, and desirable,” at the time of commission. [Gen 2.9](#) Oh, get wisdom, get discretion! Remember the words of Solomon: “Ponder the paths of your feet, and let your ways be established” (Pro 4.26). It is a wise saying of Lord Bacon, “Do nothing rashly. Stay a little, that you make an end the sooner.”

Some, I dare say, will object that I am asking what is unreasonable; that youth is not the time of life when people ought to be grave and thoughtful. I answer, there is little danger of their being too much so in the present day. Foolish talking, and jesting, and joking, and excessive merriment, are only too common. Doubtless there is a time for all things; but to always be light and trifling is anything but wise. What does the wisest of men say? “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth” (Ecc 7.2-4). Matthew Henry tells a story of a great statesman <sup>83</sup> in Queen Elizabeth’s time, who retired from public life in his latter days, and gave himself up to serious thought. His former jovial companions came to visit him, and told him he was becoming melancholy:” No,” he replied, “I am serious; for all are serious round about me. God is serious in observing us — Christ is serious in interceding for us — the Spirit is serious in striving with us — the truths of God are serious — our spiritual enemies are serious in their endeavours to ruin us — poor lost sinners are serious in hell — why, then, should you and I not be serious too?”

Oh, young men, learn to be thoughtful! Learn to consider what you are doing, and where you are going. Make time for calm reflection. Commune with your own heart, and be still. Remember my caution: — Do not be lost, merely for the lack of thought.

(4) Another danger to young men is CONTEMPT OF RELIGION.

This also is one of your special dangers. I always observe that none pay so little outward respect to religion as young men. None attend so badly to means of grace, none take so little part in our services when they are present at them — use Bibles and Prayer Books so little — sing so little — listen to preaching so little. None are so generally absent at prayer-meetings, and lectures, and all such week-day helps to the soul. Young men seem to think they do not need these things — they may be good for women and old men, but not for

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<sup>83</sup> Secretary Walsingham.

them. They appear ashamed of seeming to care about their souls. One would almost fancy they reckoned it a disgrace to go to heaven at all. And *this* is contempt of religion — it is the same spirit which made the young people of Bethel mock Elisha — and I say to all young men, *beware* of this spirit! If it is worthwhile to have a religion, it is worthwhile to be in earnest about it.

Contempt of holy things is the high road to infidelity. Once a man begins to make a jest and joke of any part of Christianity, I am never surprised to hear that he has turned out a downright unbeliever.

Young men, have you really made up your minds to this? Have you fairly looked into the gulf which is before you if you persist in despising religion? Call to mind the words of David: “The fool has said in his heart, There is no God” (Psa 14.1). The *fool*, and none but the fool! The fool has said there is no God, but he has never proved it! Remember, if ever there was a book which has been proved true from beginning to end, by every kind of evidence, that book is the Bible. It has defied the attacks of all enemies and fault-finders. “The Word of the Lord is indeed tried” (Psa 18.30). It has been tried in every way; and the more it has been tried, the more evidently has it been shown to be the very handiwork of God Himself. What will you believe, if you do not believe the Bible? There is no choice but to believe something ridiculous and absurd.<sup>84</sup> Depend on it, no man is so grossly credulous as the man who denies the Bible to be the Word of God — and if it *is* the Word of God, take heed that you do not despise it.

Men may tell you there are difficulties in the Bible — things hard to be understood. It would not be God’s book if there were not. And what if there are? You do not despise medicines because you cannot explain all that your doctor does by them. But whatever men may say, the things needful to salvation are as clear as daylight. Be very sure of this: people never reject the Bible because they cannot understand it. They understand it only too well; they understand that it condemns their own behaviour; they understand that it witnesses against their own sins, and summons them to judgment. They try to believe it is false and useless, because they do not like to admit that it is true. “A bad life,” said the celebrated Lord Rochester, laying his hand on the Bible, “a bad life is the only grand objection to this book.” “Men question the truth of Christianity,” says South, “because they hate the practice of it.”

Young men, when did God ever fail to keep His word? Never. What He has said, He has always done; and what He has spoken, He has always made good. Did He fail to keep His word at the flood? — No. Did He fail with Sodom and Gomorrah? — No. Did He fail with unbelieving Jerusalem? — No. Has He failed with the Jews up to this very hour? — No. He has never failed to fulfil His word. Take care, lest you be found among those by whom God’s Word is despised.

Never laugh at religion. Never make a jest of sacred things. Never mock those who are serious and in earnest about their souls. The time may come when you will count those happy whom you laughed at — a time when your laughter will be turned into sorrow, and your mockery into heaviness.

(5) Another danger to young men is the FEAR OF MAN’S OPINION.

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<sup>84</sup> See Faber’s Difficulties of Infidelity on this subject.

“The fear of man” does indeed “bring a snare” (Pro 29.25). It is terrible to observe the power which it has over most minds, and especially over the minds of the young. Few seem to have any opinions of their own, or to think for themselves. Like dead fish, they go with the stream and tide — what others think right, they think right; and what others call wrong, they call wrong too. There are not many original thinkers in the world. Most men are like sheep, they follow a leader. If it was the fashion of the day to be Romanists, they would be Romanists — if it were to be Mahometans, they would be Mahometans. They dread the idea of going against the current of the times. In a word, the opinion of the day becomes their religion, their creed, their Bible, and their God.

The thought, “What will my friends say or think of me?” nips many a good inclination in the bud. The fear of being observed and laughed at, ridiculed, prevents many a good habit being taken up. There are Bibles that would be read this very day, if the owners dared. They know they ought to read them, but they are afraid: — “What will people say?” There are knees that would be bent in prayer this very night, but the fear of man forbids it: — “What would my wife, my brother, my friend, my companion say, if they saw me praying?” Alas, what wretched slavery this is, and yet how common! “I feared the people,” said Saul to Samuel: and so he transgressed the commandment of the Lord (1Sam 15.24). “I am afraid of the Jews,” said Zedekiah, the graceless king of Judah: and so he disobeyed the advice which Jeremiah gave him (Jer 38.19). Herod was afraid of what his guests would think of him: so he did that which made him “exceedingly sorry” — he beheaded John the Baptist. Pilate feared offending the Jews: so he did that which he knew in his conscience was unjust — he delivered up Jesus to be crucified. If this is not slavery, what is?

Young men, I want you all to be free from this bondage. I want each of you to care nothing for man’s opinion when the path of duty is clear. Believe me, it is a great thing to be able to say “No!” Here was good King Jehoshaphat’s weak point — he was too easy and yielding in his dealings with Ahab, and hence many of his troubles (1Kng 22.4). Learn to say “No!” Do not let the fear of not seeming good-natured make you unable to do it. When sinners entice you, be able to say decidedly, “I will not consent” (Pro 1.10).

Consider only how unreasonable this fear of man is. How short-lived is man’s enmity, and how little harm he can do you!” Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man who will die, and of the son of man, who will be as grass: and forget the Lord your Maker, that has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?” (Isa 51.12-13). And how thankless is this fear! None will really think better of you for it. The world always respects those most who act boldly for God. Oh, break these bonds, and cast off these chains! Never be ashamed of letting men see that you want to go to heaven. Think it no disgrace to show yourself a servant of God. Never be afraid of doing what is right.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus: “Do not fear those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mat 10.28). Only try to please God, and He can soon make others pleased with you. “When a man’s ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Pro 16.7).

Young men, be of good courage. Do not care for what the world says or thinks: you will not be with the world always. Can man save your soul? — No. Will man be your judge in the great and dreadful day of account? — No. Can man give you a good conscience in life, a good hope in death, a good answer on the morning of resurrection? — No! no! no! Man

can do nothing of the sort. Then “do not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their revilings: for the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool” (Isa 51.7-8). Call to mind the saying of good Colonel Gardiner: “I fear God, and therefore I have none else to fear.” Go and be like him.

Such are the warnings I give you. Lay them to heart. They are worth thinking over. I am greatly mistaken if they are not greatly needed. The Lord grant that they may not have been given to you in vain.

### III. *General Counsels to Young Men.*

In the third place, I wish to give some GENERAL COUNSELS to young men.

(1) *For one thing, try to get a clear view of the evil of sin.*

Young men, if you only knew what sin is, and what sin has done, you would not think it strange that I exhort you as I do. You do not see it in its true colours. Your eyes are naturally blind to its guilt and danger, and hence you cannot understand what makes me so anxious about you. Oh, do not let the devil succeed in persuading you that sin is a small matter!

Think for a moment what the Bible says about sin — how it dwells naturally in the heart of every man and woman alive (Ecc 7.20; Rom 3.23) — how it defiles our thoughts, words, and actions, and does that continually (Gen 6.5; Mat 15.19) — how it renders us all guilty and abominable in the sight of a holy God (Isa 64.6; Hab 1.13) — how it leaves us utterly without hope of salvation if we look to ourselves (Psa 143.2; Rom 3.20) — how its fruit in this world is shame, and its wages in the world to come, death (Rom 6.21-23). Think calmly of all this. I tell you this day, it is not sadder to be dying of consumption and not know it, than to be a living man and not know it.

Think what an awful change sin has worked on all our natures. Man is no longer what he was when God formed him out of the dust of the ground. He came out of God’s hand upright and sinless (Ecc 7.29). In the day of his creation he was, like everything else, “very good” (Gen 1.31). And what is man now? — A fallen creature, a ruin, a being that shows the marks of corruption all over — his heart like Nebuchadnezzar, degraded and earthly, looking down and not up — his affections like a household in disorder, calling no man master, all extravagance and confusion — his understanding is like a lamp flickering in the socket, impotent to guide him, not knowing good from evil — his will is like a rudderless ship, tossed to and fro by every desire, and constant in choosing *any* way rather than God’s. Alas, what a wreck man is, compared to what he might have been! Well may we understand images being used such as blindness, deafness, disease, sleep, death, when the Spirit has to give us a picture of man *as he is*. And man, as he is, remember, was made so by sin.

Think, too, what it has cost to make atonement for sin, and to provide a pardon and forgiveness for sinners. God’s own Son must come into the world, and take our nature upon Him in order to pay the price of our redemption, and deliver us from the curse of a broken law. He who was in the beginning with the Father, and by whom all things were made, must suffer for sin, the just for the unjust — he must die the death of a malefactor, before the way to heaven can be laid open to any soul. See the Lord Jesus Christ despised and rejected by men, scourged, mocked, and insulted — behold Him bleeding on the cross

of Calvary — hear Him crying in agony, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” — mark how the sun was darkened, and the rocks rent at the sight — and then consider, young men, what the evil and guilt of sin must be.

Think, also, what sin has done already upon the earth. Think how it cast Adam and Eve out of Eden — brought the flood upon the old world, caused fire to come down on Sodom and Gomorrah, drowned Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, destroyed the seven wicked nations of Canaan, scattered the twelve tribes of Israel over the face of the globe. Sin alone did all this.

Think, moreover, of all the misery and sorrow that sin has caused, and is causing at this very day. Pain, disease and death, strifes, quarrels and divisions, envy, jealousy and malice, deceit, fraud and cheating, violence, oppression and robbery, selfishness, unkindness and ingratitude — *all* these are the fruits of sin. Sin is the parent of them all. It is sin that has so marred and spoiled the face of God’s creation.

Young men, consider these things and you will not wonder that we preach as we do. Surely, if you only *thought* of them, you would break with sin forever. Would you play with poison? Would you sport with hell? Would you take fire in your hand? Would you harbour your deadliest enemy in your heart? Would you go on living as if it did not matter at all whether your own sins were forgiven or not, whether sin had dominion over you, or you had dominion over sin? Oh, awake to a sense of sin’s sinfulness and danger! Remember the words of Solomon: “Fools,” none but fools, “mock at sin” (Pro 14.9).

Hear, then, the request that I make of you this day: pray that God would teach you the real evil of sin. As you would have your soul saved, arise and *pray*.

*(2) For another thing, seek to become acquainted with our Lord Jesus Christ.*

This is indeed the principal thing in religion. This is the cornerstone of Christianity. Till you know this, my warnings and advice will be useless and your endeavours — whatever they may be — will be in vain. A watch without a mainspring is no more serviceable than religion without Christ.

But let me not be misunderstood. It is not merely knowing Christ’s *name* that I mean — it is knowing His mercy, grace, and power — knowing Him not by the hearing of the ear, but by the experience of your hearts. I want you to know Him *by faith*. As Paul says, I want you to know “the power of His resurrection; being made conformable to His death” (Phi 3.10). I want you to be able to say of Him, He is my peace and my strength, my life and my consolation, my Physician and my Shepherd, my Saviour and my God.

Why do I make such a point of this? I do it because in Christ alone “all fulness dwells” (Col 1.19) — because in Him alone there is a full supply of all that we require for the necessities of our souls. Of ourselves we are all poor, empty creatures — empty of righteousness and peace — empty of strength and comfort — empty of courage and patience — empty of the power to stand, or go on, or make progress in this evil world. It is in Christ alone that all these things are to be found: grace, peace, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It is just in proportion as we live upon Him, that we are strong Christians. It is only when self is nothing and Christ is all our confidence, it is then only that we will do great exploits. Then only are we armed for the battle of life, and will overcome. Then only are we prepared for the journey of life, and will get forward. To live on Christ is to draw all from Christ — to do all in the strength of Christ — to be ever looking unto Christ — *this*

is the true secret of spiritual prosperity. “I can do all things,” says Paul, “through Christ who strengthens me” (Phi 4.13).

Young men, I set before you Jesus Christ this day as the treasury of your souls; and I invite you to begin by going to Him, if you would run so as to obtain. Let this be your first step: go to Christ. Do you want to consult friends? He is the best friend: “a friend that sticks closer than a brother” (Pro 18.24).

Do you feel unworthy because of your sins? — Fear not: His blood cleanses from all sin. He says, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow: though they are red like crimson, they will be as wool” (Isa 1.18).

Do you feel weak, and unable to follow Him? — Fear not: He will give you power to become sons of God. He will give you the Holy Ghost to dwell in you, and seal you for His own; He will give you a new heart, and He will put a new spirit within you.

Are you troubled or beset with peculiar infirmities? — Fear not: there is no evil spirit that Jesus cannot cast out; there is no disease of soul that He cannot heal.

Do you feel doubts and fears? — Cast them aside: “Come to Me,” He says; “Whoever comes, I will by no means cast out.” He knows well the heart of a young man. He knows your trials and your temptations, your difficulties and your foes. In the days of His flesh He was like yourselves — a young man at Nazareth. He knows by experience a young man’s mind. He can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities — for He suffered Himself, being tempted. Surely you will be without excuse if you turn away from such a Saviour and Friend as this.

Hear the request I make of you this day: if you love life, seek to become acquainted with Jesus Christ.

*(3) For another thing, never forget that nothing is so important as your soul.*

Your soul is eternal. It will live forever. The world and all that it contains will pass away — firm, solid, beautiful, well-ordered as it is, the world will come to an end. “The earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2Pet 3.10). The works of statesmen, writers, painters, architects, are all short-lived — your soul will outlive them all. The angel’s voice will proclaim one day that, “Time will be no longer” (Rev 10.6) — but that will never be said of your souls.

Try, I beseech you, to realize the fact that your soul is the one thing worth living for. It is the part of you which should always be considered first. No place, no employment is good for you, which injures your soul. No friend, no companion deserves your confidence, who makes light of your soul’s concerns. The man who hurts your person, your property, your character, does you only temporary harm. He is the true enemy who contrives to damage your *soul*.

Think for a moment what you were sent into the world for. Not merely to eat and drink, and indulge the desires of the flesh — not merely to dress your body, and follow its lusts wherever they may lead you — not merely to work, and sleep, and laugh, and talk, and enjoy yourselves, and think of nothing but time. No! you were meant for something higher and better than this. *You were placed here to train for eternity.* Your body was only intended to be a house for your immortal spirit. It is flying in the face of God’s purposes to do as many do — to make the soul a servant to the body, and not the body a servant to

the soul. <sup>85</sup>

Young men, God is no respecter of persons. He regards no man's coat, or purse, or rank, or position. He does not see with man's eyes. The poorest saint who ever died in a workhouse is nobler in His sight than the richest sinner who ever died in a palace. God does not look at riches, titles, learning, beauty, or anything of the kind. God looks at one thing only, and that is the immortal soul. He measures all men by one standard, one measure, one test, one criterion, and that is the state of their souls.

Do not forget this. Keep the interests of your soul in view, morning, noon, and night. Rise up each day desiring that it may prosper — lie down each evening inquiring of yourself whether it has really got on. Remember Zeuxis, the great painter of old. <sup>86</sup> When men asked him why he laboured so intensely, and took such extreme pains with every picture, his simple answer was, "I paint for eternity." Do not be ashamed to be like him. Set your immortal soul before your mind's eye; and when men ask you why you live as you do, answer them in his spirit, "I live for my soul." Believe me, the day is fast coming when the soul will be the one thing men will think of, and the only question of importance will be this, "Is my soul lost or saved?"

*(4) For another thing, remember it is possible to be a young man, and yet to serve God.*

I fear the snares that Satan lays for you on this point. I fear lest he succeed in filling your minds with the vain notion that to be a true Christian in youth is impossible. I have seen many carried away by this delusion. I have heard it said, "You are requiring impossibilities in expecting so much religion from young people. Youth is no time for seriousness. Our desires are strong, and it was never intended that we should keep them under, as you wish us to do. God meant us to enjoy ourselves. There will be time enough for religion by and by." And this kind of talk is only too much encouraged by the world. The world is only too ready to wink at youthful sins. The world appears to think it a matter of course that young men must "sow their wild oats." The world seems to take it for granted that young people must be irreligious, and that it is not possible for them to follow Christ.

Young men, I will ask you this simple question — Where will you find anything of all this in the Word of God? Where is the chapter or verse in the Bible which will support this talking and reasoning of the world? Does the Bible not speak to old and young alike, without distinction? Is not sin, sin, whether committed at the age of twenty or fifty? Will it form the slightest excuse in the day of judgment, to say, "I know I sinned, but then I was young"? Show your common sense, I beg of you, by giving up such vain excuses. You are responsible and accountable to God from the very moment that you know right and wrong.

I know well there are many difficulties in a young man's way, I allow it fully. But there are always difficulties in the way of doing right. The path to heaven is always narrow, whether we are young or old.

There are difficulties — but God will give you grace to overcome them. God is no hard master. He will not, like Pharaoh, require you to make bricks without straw. He will take

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<sup>85</sup> The Assembly's Larger Catechism begins with this admirable question and answer. "What is the chief and highest end of man?" "To glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him forever."

<sup>86</sup> Zeuxis: a Greek painter who flourished during the 5th century BC., noted for his realism and small scale.

care the path of plain duty is never impossible. He never laid commands on man which He would not give man the power to perform.

There are difficulties, but many a young man has overcome them before now, and so may you. Moses was a young man of like passions with yourselves. But see what is said of him in Scripture: “By faith Moses, when he had come of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he regarded the recompense of the reward” (Heb 11.24-26).

Daniel was a young man when he began to serve God in Babylon. He was surrounded by temptations of every kind. He had few with him, and many against him. Yet Daniel’s life was so blameless and consistent that even his enemies could find no fault in him, except “concerning the law of his God” (Dan 6.5).

And these are not solitary cases. There is a cloud of witnesses whom I could name. Time would fail me, if I were to tell you of young Isaac, young Joseph, young Joshua, young Samuel, young David, young Solomon, young Abijah, young Obadiah, young Josiah, young Timothy. These were not angels, but men, with hearts naturally like your own. They too had obstacles to contend with, lusts to mortify, trials to endure, hard places to fill, like any of yourselves. But young as they were, they all found it possible to serve God. Will they not all rise in judgment and condemn you if you persist in saying it cannot be done?

Young men, try to serve God. Resist the devil when he whispers that it is impossible. *Try* — and the Lord God of the promises will give you strength in the trying. He loves to meet those who struggle to come to Him; and He will meet you and give you the power that you feel you need. Be like the man whom Bunyan’s Pilgrim saw in the Interpreter’s house — go forward boldly, saying, “Set down my name.” Those words of our Lord are true, though I often hear them repeated by heartless and unfeeling tongues: “Seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Mat 7.7). Difficulties which seemed like mountains will melt away like snow in spring. Obstacles which seemed like giants in the mist of distance, will dwindle into nothing when you fairly face them. The lion in the way which you fear, will prove to be chained. If men believed the promises more, they would never be afraid of duties. But remember that little word I press upon you. And when Satan says, “You cannot be a Christian while you are young:” answer him, “Get behind me, Satan: by God’s help I will *try*.”

*(5) For another thing, determine as long as you live to make the Bible your guide and adviser.*

The Bible is God’s merciful provision for sinful man’s soul — the map by which he must steer his course if he would attain eternal life. All that we need to know in order to make us peaceful, holy, or happy, is richly contained there. If a young man would know how to begin life well, let him hear what David says: “How will a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed to it according to Your word” (Psa 119.9).

Young men, I charge you to make a habit of reading the Bible, and to not let the habit be broken. Do not let the laughter of companions — do not let the bad customs of the family you may live in — let none of these things prevent your doing it. Determine that you will not only *have* a Bible, but also make time to *read* it too. Let no man persuade you that it

is only a book for Sunday-school children and old women. It is the book from which King David got wisdom and understanding. It is the book which young Timothy knew from his childhood. Never be ashamed of reading it. Do not “despise the Word” (Pro 13.13).

Read it with prayer for the Spirit’s grace to make you understand it. Bishop Beveridge says well, “A man may as soon read the letter of Scripture without eyes, as to understand the spirit of it without grace.”

Read it reverently as the Word of God, not of man — believing implicitly that what it approves is right, and what it condemns is wrong. Be very sure that every doctrine which will not stand the test of Scripture is false. This will keep you from being tossed to and fro, and carried about by the dangerous opinions of these latter days. Be very sure that every practice in your life which is contrary to Scripture, is sinful and must be given up. This will settle many a question of conscience, and cut the knot of many a doubt. Remember how differently two kings of Judah read the Word of God: Jehoiakim read it, and at once he cut the writing to pieces, and burned it on the fire (Jer 36.23). And why? — Because his heart rebelled against it, and he was resolved not to obey. Josiah read it, and at once he rent his clothes, and cried mightily to the Lord (2Chr 34.19). And why? — Because his heart was tender and obedient. He was ready to do anything which Scripture showed him was his duty. Oh, that you may follow the last of these two, and not the first!

And read it *regularly*. This is the only way to become “mighty in the Scriptures.” A hasty glance at the Bible now and then does little good. At that rate you will never become familiar with its treasures, or feel the sword of the Spirit fitted to your hand in the hour of conflict. But get your mind stored with Scripture by diligent reading, and you will soon discover its value and power. Texts will rise up in your hearts in the moment of temptation. Commands will suggest themselves in seasons of doubt. Promises will come across your thoughts in the time of discouragement. — And thus you will experience the truth of David’s words, “I have hidden Your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Psa 119.11) — and of Solomon’s words, “When you go, it will lead you; when you sleep, it will keep you; and when you awake, it will talk with you” (Pro 6.22).

I dwell on these things more because this is an age of reading. There seems no end of making many books, [Ecc 12.12](#) though few of them are really profitable. There seems a rage for cheap printing and publishing. Newspapers of every sort abound, and the tone of some, which have the widest circulation, speaks badly for the taste of the age. Amidst the flood of dangerous reading, I plead for my Master’s book — I call upon you not to forget the book of the soul. Do not let newspapers, novels, and romances be read, while the prophets and Apostles are despised. Do not let the exciting and licentious swallow up your attention, while the edifying and the sanctifying can find no place in your mind.

Young men, give the Bible the honour due to it every day you live. Whatever you read, read that first. And beware of *bad* books: there are plenty in this day. Take heed what you read. I suspect there is more harm done to souls in this way than most people have an idea is possible. Value all books in proportion to how agreeable they are to Scripture. Those that are nearest to it are the best, and those that are farthest from it, and most contrary to it, are the worst.

*(6) For another thing, never make an intimate friend of anyone who is not a friend of God.*

## Chap. 19. Thoughts For Young Men

Understand me — I do not speak of acquaintances. I do not mean that you ought to have nothing to do with any but true Christians. To take such a line is neither possible nor desirable in this world. <sup>1Cor 5.9-10</sup> Christianity requires no man to be uncourteous.

But I do advise you to be very careful in your choice of *friends*. Do not open all your heart to a man merely because he is clever, agreeable, good-natured, high-spirited, and kind. These things are all very good in their way, but they are not everything. Never be satisfied with the friendship of anyone who will not be useful to your soul.

Believe me, the importance of this advice cannot be overrated. There is no telling the harm that is done by associating with godless companions and friends. The devil has few better helps in ruining a man's soul. Grant him this help, and he cares little for all the armour with which you may be armed against him. Good education, early habits of morality, sermons, books, regular homes, letters of parents — he knows well that all these will avail you little, if you will only cling to ungodly friends.

You may resist many open temptations, and refuse many plain snares; but once you take up with a bad companion, the devil is content. That awful chapter which describes Amnon's wicked conduct about Tamar begins with these words, "But Amnon had a friend, ...a very subtle man" (2Sam 13.3).

You must recollect, we are all creatures of imitation: *precept* may teach us, but it is *example* that draws us. There is that in us all, that we are always disposed to catch the ways of those with whom we live; and the more we like them, the stronger the disposition grows. Without our being aware of it, they influence our tastes and opinions — we gradually give up what they dislike, and take up what they like, in order to become closer friends with them. And, worst of all, we catch their ways in things that are wrong, far quicker than in things that are right. Health, unhappily, is not contagious; but disease is. It is far easier to catch a chill than to impart a glow; and to make each other's religion dwindle away, than to grow and prosper.

Young men, I ask you to lay these things to heart. Before you let anyone become your constant companion, before you get into the habit of telling him everything, and going to him in all your troubles and all your pleasures — before you do this, just think of what I have been saying. Ask yourself, "Will this be a useful friendship to me or not?"

"Evil communications" do indeed "corrupt good manners" (1Cor 15.33). I wish that text were written in hearts as often as it is in copy-books. Good friends are among our greatest blessings — they may keep us back from much evil, quicken us in our course, speak a word in season, draw us upward, and draw us on. But a bad friend is a positive misfortune — a weight continually dragging us down, and chaining us to earth. Keep company with an irreligious man, and it is more than probable that in the end, you will become like him. That is the general consequence of all such friendships. The good go down to the bad, and the bad do not come up to the good. Even a stone will give way before a continual dropping. The world's proverb is only too correct: "Clothes and company tell true tales about character." "Show me who a man lives with," say the Spaniards, "and I will show you what he is."

I dwell more on this point, because it has more to do with your prospects in life than at first sight appears. If you ever marry, it is more than probable you will choose a wife among the connections of your friends. If Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, had not formed a

friendship with Ahab's family, he would most likely not have married Ahab's daughter. And who can estimate the importance of a right choice in marriage? It is a step which, according to the old saying, "either makes a man or mars him." Your happiness in both lives may depend on it. Your wife must either help your soul or harm it: there is no medium. She will either fan the flame of religion in your heart, or throw cold water on it and make it burn low. She will either be wings or fetters, a rein or a spur to your Christianity, according to her character. He that finds a good wife does indeed "find a good thing;" but if you have the least wish to find one, be very careful how you choose your friends.

Do you ask me what kind of friends you will choose? Choose friends who will benefit your soul — friends whom you can really respect — friends whom you would like to have near you on your death-bed — friends who love the Bible, and are not afraid to speak to you about it — friends you will not be ashamed of owning at the coming of Christ, and the day of judgment. Follow the example that David sets you: he says, "I am a companion of all those who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts" (Psa 119.63). Remember the words of Solomon: "He that walks with wise men will be wise; but a companion of fools will be destroyed" (Pro 13.20). Depend on it, bad company in the life that now is, is the sure way to procure worse company in the life to come.

#### *IV. Special Rules for Young Men.*

In the last place, I will set down some particular rules of conduct which I strongly advise all young men to follow.

*(1) For one thing, resolve at once, by God's help, to break off every known sin, however small.*

Look within, each one of you. Examine your own hearts. Do you see there any habit or custom which you know to be wrong in the sight of God? If you do, do not delay a moment in attacking it. Resolve at once to lay it aside.

Nothing darkens the eyes of the mind so much, and deadens the conscience so surely, as an allowed sin. It may be a little one, but it is not the less dangerous for all that. A small leak will sink a great ship, and a small spark will kindle a great fire, and a little allowed sin in like manner will ruin an immortal soul. Take my advice, and never spare a little sin. Israel was commanded to slay every Canaanite, both great and small. Act on the same principle, and show no mercy to little sins. Well does the Song of Songs say, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines" (Song 2.15).

Be sure no wicked man ever meant to be so wicked at his first beginnings. But he began with allowing himself some little transgression; and that led on to something greater; and that in time produced something greater still — and thus he became the miserable being that he now is. When Hazeel heard from Elisha of the horrible acts that he would one day do, he said with astonishment, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" (2Kng 8.13). But he allowed sin to take root in his heart, and in the end he did them all.

Young men, resist sin in its *beginnings*. They may look small and insignificant, but mind what I say, resist them — make no compromise, let no sin lodge quietly and undisturbed in your heart. "The mother of mischief," says an old proverb, "is no bigger than a midge's wing." There is nothing finer than the point of a needle; but once it has made a hole, it

draws all the thread after it. Remember the Apostle's words, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1Cor 5.6).

Many a young man could tell you with sorrow and shame, that he traces the ruin of all his worldly prospects to the point I speak of — to giving way to sin in its beginnings. He began habits of falsehood and dishonesty in little things, and they grew upon him. Step by step, he has gone on from bad to worse, till he has done things that at one time he would have thought impossible — till at last he has lost his place, lost his character, lost his comfort, and well-nigh lost his soul. He allowed a gap in the wall of his conscience, because it seemed a little one — and once allowed, that gap grew larger every day, till at length the whole wall seemed to come down.

Remember this especially in matters of truth and honesty. Be conscientious about pins and syllables. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much" (Luk 16.10). Whatever the world may please to say, there are no little sins. All great buildings are made up of little parts — the first stone is as important as any other. All habits are formed by a succession of little acts, and the first little act is of mighty consequence. The axe in the fable only begged the trees to let him have one little piece of wood to make a handle, and he would never trouble them any more. He got it, and then he soon cut them all down. <sup>87</sup> The devil only wants to get the wedge of a little allowed sin into your heart, and you will soon be all his own. It is a wise saying of old William Bridge, "There is nothing small betwixt us and God, for God is an infinite God."

There are two ways of coming down from the top of a church steeple; one is to jump down — and the other is to come down by the steps: but both will lead you to the bottom. So also there are two ways of going to hell; one is to walk into it with your eyes open — few people do that; the other is to go down by the steps of little sins — and that way, I fear, is only too common. Put up with a few little sins, and you will soon want a few more. Even a heathen <sup>88</sup> could say, "Who was ever content with only one sin?" And then your course will be regularly worse and worse every year. Jeremy Taylor <sup>89</sup> well described the progress of sin in a man: "First it startles him, then it becomes pleasing, then easy, then delightful, then frequent, then habitual, then confirmed, then the man is impenitent, then obstinate, then resolves never to repent, and *then he is damned.*"

Young men, if you would not come to this, recollect the rule I give you this day — resolve at once to break off every known sin.

*(2) For another thing, resolve by God's help to shun everything which may prove an occasion of sin.*

It is an excellent saying of good Bishop Hall, "He that would be safe from the *acts* of evil, must widely avoid the *occasions.*" <sup>90</sup> It is not enough that we determine to commit no sin, we must carefully keep at a distance from all approaches to it. By this test, we ought to try our ways of spending our time — the books we read, the families we visit, the society into

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<sup>87</sup> Aesop's Fables, "The Trees and the Axe."

<sup>88</sup> Juvenal — a late first and early second century Roman poet; author of the *Satires*.

<sup>89</sup> Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667) achieved fame as an author during the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell. He is sometimes known as the "Shakespeare of Divines," and considered one of the greatest prose writers in the English language.

<sup>90</sup> There is an old fable, that the butterfly once asked the owl how she should deal with the fire which had singed her wings; and the owl counselled her, in reply, not to behold so much as its smoke.

which we go. We must not content ourselves with saying, “There is nothing positively wrong here;” we must go further, and say, “Is there anything here which may prove to me an occasion of sin?”

This, let it be remembered, is one great reason why idleness is so much to be avoided. It is not that doing nothing is of itself so positively wicked; it is the opportunity that it affords to evil thoughts and vain imaginations; it is the wide door it opens for Satan to throw in the seeds of bad things; it is *this* which is mainly to be feared. If David had not given occasion to the devil by idling on his house-top at Jerusalem, he would probably never have seen Bathsheba, nor murdered Uriah.

This, too, is one great reason why worldly amusements are so objectionable. It may be difficult in some instances to show that they are, in themselves, positively unscriptural and wrong. But there is little difficulty in showing that the *tendency* of almost all of them is most injurious to the soul.

- They sow the seeds of an earthly and sensual frame of mind.
- They war against the life of faith.
- They promote an unhealthy and unnatural craving after excitement.
- They minister to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.
- They dim the view of heaven and eternity, and give a false colour to the things of time.
- They indispose the heart to private prayer, Scripture-reading, and calm communion with God.

The man who mingles in them is like one who gives Satan vantage-ground. He has a battle to fight, and he gives his enemy the help of sun, wind, and hill. It would be strange indeed if he did not find himself continually overcome.

Young men, endeavour, as much as it lies in you, to keep clear of everything which may prove injurious to your soul. Never hold a candle to the devil. People may say you are over scrupulous; too particular; where is the mighty harm of such and such things? But do not heed them. It is dangerous to play tricks with sharp-edged tools; it is far more dangerous to take liberties with your immortal soul. Whoever would be safe, must not come near the brink of danger. He must look at his heart as a magazine of gunpowder, and be cautious not to handle one spark of temptation more than he can help.

Where is the use of your praying, “Lead us not into temptation,” unless you are yourselves careful not to run into it — and “deliver us from evil,” unless you show a desire to keep out of its way? Take an example from Joseph. Not merely did he refuse his mistress’s solicitation to sin, but he showed his prudence in refusing to be “with her” at all (Gen 39.10). Lay to heart the advice of Solomon: do not merely “*not* enter the path of wickedness,” but “avoid it, pass it by, turn away from it, and pass on” (Pro 4.14-15) — do not merely *not* be drunken, but do not even “look at the wine when it is red” (Pro 23.31). The man who took the vow of a Nazarite in Israel not only took no wine, but he even abstained from grapes in any shape whatever. “*Abhor* that which is evil,” says Paul to the Romans (Rom 12.9); do not merely *not* do it. “*Flee* youthful lusts,” he writes to Timothy; get away from them as far as possible (2Tim 2.22). Alas, how needful are such cautions! Dinah must go out among the wicked Shechemites to see their ways, and she lost her character. [Gen 34.1-2](#) Lot must pitch his tent near sinful Sodom, [Gen 13.12](#) and he lost everything but his life.

Young men, be wise in time. Do not always test how near you can allow the *enemy* of souls to come, and yet escape him. Hold him at arm's length. Try to keep clear of temptation as far as possible, and this will be one great help to keep clear of sin.

(3) *For another thing, resolve never to forget the eye of God.*

The eye of God! Think of that. Everywhere, in every house, in every field, in every room, in every company, alone or in a crowd, the eye of God is always upon you. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Pro 15.3); and they are eyes that read *hearts* as well as *actions*.

Endeavour, I beseech you all, to realize this fact. Recollect that you have to deal with an all-seeing God — a God who never slumbers nor sleeps — a God who understands your thoughts from afar, and with whom the night shines as the day. You may leave your father's roof, and go away into a far country, like the prodigal son, and think that there is nobody to watch your conduct — but the eye and ear of God are there before you. You may deceive your parents or employers; you may tell them falsehoods, and be one thing before their faces, and another behind their backs — but you cannot deceive God. He knows you through and through. He heard what you said as you came here today. He knows what you are thinking of at this minute. He has set your most secret sins in the light of His countenance, and they will one day come out before the world, to your shame — unless you take heed.

How little is this really felt! How many things are continually done, which men would never do if they thought they were seen! How many matters are transacted in the chambers of imagination, which would never bear the light of day! Yes, men entertain thoughts in private, and say words in private, and do acts in private, which they would be ashamed and blush to have exposed before the world. The sound of a footstep coming has stopped many a deed of wickedness. A knock at the door has caused many an evil work to be hastily suspended, and hurriedly laid aside. But oh, what miserable driveling folly all this is! There is an all-seeing Witness with us wherever we go. Lock the door, draw down the blind, shut the shutters, put out the candle — it does not matter; it makes no difference. God is *everywhere*; you cannot shut Him out or prevent HIS seeing. "All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to deal" (Heb 4.13). Young Joseph understood this well when his mistress tempted him. There was no one in the house to see them — no human eye to witness against him. But Joseph was one who lived as if seeing Him who is invisible: "How can I do this great wickedness," he said, "and sin against God?" (Gen 39.9).

Young men, I ask you all to read Psalm 139. I advise you all to learn it by heart. Make it the test of all your dealings in this world's business: say to yourself often, "Do I remember that God sees me?"

Live as in the sight of God. This is what Abraham did — *he walked before Him*. This is what Enoch did — *he walked with Him*. This is what heaven itself will be — the eternal presence of God. Do nothing you would not like God to see. Say nothing you would not like God to hear. Write nothing you would not like God to read. Go to no place where you would not like God to find you. Read no book of which you would not like God to say, "Show it to Me." Never spend your time in such a way that you would not like to have God say, "What are you doing?"

*(4) For another thing, be diligent in the use of all public means of grace.*

Be regular in going to the house of God whenever it is open for prayer and preaching, and it is in your power to attend. Be regular in keeping the Lord's day holy, and determine that God's day, out of the seven, will henceforth always be given to its rightful owner.

I would not leave any false impression on your minds. Do not go away and say I told you that keeping your church made up the whole of religion. I tell you no such thing. I have no wish to see you grow up formalists and Pharisees. If you think merely carrying your body to a certain house, at certain times, on a certain day in the week, will make you a Christian and prepare you to meet God, I tell you flatly that you are miserably deceived. All services without heart-service are unprofitable and vain. True worshippers are only those who "worship God in spirit and in truth: the Father seeks such to worship Him" (Joh 4.23).

But means of grace are not to be despised because they are not saviours. Gold is not food — you cannot eat it, but you would not therefore say it is useless, and throw it away. Your soul's eternal well-doing most certainly does not depend on means of grace; but it is no less certain that without them, as a general rule, your soul will not do well. God might take all who are saved to heaven in a chariot of fire, as He did Elijah — but He does not do so. He might teach them all by visions, and dreams, and miraculous interpositions, without requiring them to read or think for themselves — but He does not do so. And why not? Because He is a God who works by means, and it is His law and will that in all man's dealings with him, means will be used. None but a fool or enthusiast would think of building a house without ladders and scaffolding — and just so, no wise man will despise means.

I dwell more on this point, because Satan will try hard to fill your minds with arguments against means.

He will draw your attention to the numbers of persons who use them and are no better for the using. "See there," he will whisper, "do you not observe those who go to church are no better than those who stay away?" But do not let this move you. It is never fair to argue against a thing, because it is improperly used. It does not follow that means of grace can do no good because many attend on them and get no good from them. Medicine is not to be despised because many take it and do not recover their health. No man would think of giving up eating and drinking because others choose to eat and drink improperly, and so they make themselves ill. The value of means of grace, like other things, depends in a great measure on the manner and spirit in which we use them.

I dwell on this point too, because of the strong anxiety I feel, that every young man should regularly hear the preaching of Christ's gospel. I cannot tell you how important I think this is. By God's blessing, the ministry of the gospel might be the means of converting your soul — of leading you to a saving knowledge of Christ — of making you a child of God in deed and in truth. This would be cause for eternal thankfulness indeed. This would be an event over which angels would rejoice. [Luk 15.10](#) But even if this were not the case, there is a restraining power and influence in the ministry of the gospel, under which I earnestly desire every young man to be brought. There are thousands whom it keeps back from evil, though it has not yet turned them to God; it has made them far better members of society, though it has not yet made them true Christians.

There is a certain kind of mysterious power in the faithful preaching of the gospel, which tells insensibly on multitudes who listen to it without receiving it into their hearts. To hear sin decried, and holiness extolled — to hear Christ exalted, and the works of the devil denounced — to hear the kingdom of heaven and its blessedness described, and the world and its emptiness exposed — to hear this week after week, Sunday after Sunday, is seldom without good effect to the soul. It makes it far harder afterwards to run into any excess of riot and profligacy. It acts as a wholesome check on a man's heart. This, I believe, is one way in which that promise of God is made good, "My word will not return to Me void" (Isa 55.11). There is much truth in that strong saying of Whitefield, "The gospel keeps many a person from the jail and gallows, if it does not keep him from hell."

Let me name here another point which is closely connected with this subject. Let nothing ever tempt you to become a Sabbath-breaker. I press this upon your attention. Be conscientious about giving your whole Sabbath to God. A spirit of disregard for this holy day is growing up among us with fearful rapidity, and not least among young men. Sunday travelling by railways and steamboats, Sunday visiting, Sunday excursions, are becoming more common every year than they were; and they are doing infinite harm to souls.

Young men, be jealous on this point. Whether you live in town or country, take up a decided line; resolve not to profane your Sabbath. Do not let the plausible argument of "needful relaxation for your body" — do not let the example of all around you — do not let the invitation of companions with whom you may be thrown — let *none* of these things move you to depart from this settled rule: that God's day will be given to God.

Once you give up caring for the Sabbath, in the end you will give up caring for your soul. The steps which lead to this conclusion are easy and regular. Begin with not honouring God's *day*, and you will soon not honour God's *house* — cease to honour God's *house*, and you will soon cease to honour God's *book* — cease to honour God's *book*, and by and by you will give *God* no honour at all. Let a man lay the foundation of having no Sabbath, and I am never surprised if he finishes with the top-stone of no God. It is a remarkable saying of Judge Hale, "Of all the persons who were convicted of capital crimes while he was upon the bench, he found only a few who would not confess, on inquiry, that they began their career of wickedness by neglecting the Sabbath."

Young men, you may be thrown among companions who forget the honour of the Lord's day; but resolve, by God's help, that *you* will always remember to keep it holy. Honour it by a regular attendance at some place where the gospel is preached. Settle down under a faithful ministry; and once settled, let your place in church never be empty. Believe me, you will find a special blessing following you:

"If you call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable — and if you honour Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words — then you will delight yourself in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth" (Isa 58.13-14).

And one thing is very certain — your feelings about the Sabbath will always be a test and criterion of your fitness for heaven. Sabbaths are a foretaste and fragment of heaven. The man who finds them a burden and not a privilege, may be sure that his heart stands in need of a mighty change.

*(5) For another thing, resolve that wherever you are, you will pray.*

## Chap. 19. Thoughts For Young Men

Prayer is the life-breath of a man's soul. Without it, we may have a name to live, and be counted as Christians; but we are *dead* in the sight of God. The feeling that we must cry to God for mercy and peace, is a mark of grace; and the habit of spreading before Him our soul's wants, is an evidence that we have the spirit of adoption. And *prayer* is the appointed way to obtain relief for our spiritual necessities. It opens the treasury, and sets the fountain flowing. If we have not, it is because we ask not. [Jas 4.2](#)

Prayer is the way to procure the outpouring of the Spirit upon our hearts. Jesus has promised the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. [Joh 14.16](#) He is *ready* to come down with all His precious gifts — renewing, sanctifying, purifying, strengthening, cheering, encouraging, enlightening, teaching, directing, guiding into all truth. But then He *waits* to be entreated.

And here it is, I say it with sorrow, here it is that men fall short so miserably. Few indeed are to be found who pray. There are many who go down on their knees, and say a form perhaps, but few who pray;

- few who cry unto God,
- few who call upon the Lord,
- few who seek as if they wanted to find,
- few who knock as if they hungered and thirsted,
- few who wrestle,
- few who strive with God earnestly for an answer,
- few who give Him no rest,
- few who continue in prayer,
- few who watch unto prayer,
- few who pray always without ceasing, and do not faint.

Yes: *few* pray! It is just one of the things assumed as a matter of course, but seldom *practised*; a thing which is everybody's business, but in fact hardly anybody *performs*.

Young men, believe me, if your soul is to be saved, you must pray. God has no dumb children. If you are to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, then *you must pray*. It is in vain to look for strength in the hour of trial, if it has not been sought for. You may be thrown with those who never do it; you may have to sleep in the same room with someone who never asks anything of God — still, mark my words, *you must pray*.

I can quite believe that you find great difficulties about it, difficulties about opportunities, and seasons, and places. I dare not lay down rules that are too positive on such points as these. I leave them to your own conscience. You must be guided by circumstances. Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed on a mountain; Isaac prayed in the fields; Hezekiah turned his face to the wall as he lay upon his bed; Daniel prayed by the riverside; Peter, the Apostle, on the housetop. I have heard of young men praying in stables and haylofts. All that I contend for is this: you must know what it means to “enter into your closet” (Mat 6.6). There must be stated times when you must speak to God face to face — you must have your seasons for prayer every day. *You must pray*.

Without this, all advice and counsel are useless. This is that piece of spiritual armour which Paul names last in his catalogue in Ephesians 6, but in truth, it is first in value and importance. This is that food which you must eat daily if you would travel safely through the wilderness of this life. It is only in the strength of this, that you will get onward towards

the mount of God. I have heard it said that the needle-grinders of Sheffield sometimes wear a magnetic mouthpiece at work, which catches all the fine dust that flies around them, prevents it entering their lungs, and so it saves their lives. Prayer is the mouthpiece that you must wear continually, or else you will never work uninjured by the unhealthy atmosphere of this sinful world. *You must pray.*

Young men, be sure no time is so well spent as that which a man spends upon his knees. Make time for this, whatever your employment may be. Think of David, king of Israel: what does he say? “Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray and cry aloud, and He will hear my voice” (Psa 55.17). Think of Daniel He had all the business of a kingdom on his hands; yet he prayed three times a day. See there the secret of his safety in wicked Babylon. Think of Solomon. He begins his reign with prayer for help and assistance, and hence his wonderful prosperity. Think of Nehemiah. He could find time to pray to the God of heaven, even when standing in the presence of his master, Artaxerxes. Think of the example these godly men have left you, and go and do likewise.

Oh that the Lord may give you all the spirit of grace and supplication! “Wilt you not from this time cry unto God, My Father, You are the guide of my youth?” (Jer 3.4). Gladly would I consent that all this address should be forgotten, if only this doctrine of the importance of prayer might be impressed on your hearts.

#### V. Conclusion.

And now I hasten towards a conclusion. I have said things that many perhaps will not like, and not receive; but I appeal to your consciences: Are they not true?

Young men, you all have consciences. Corrupt and ruined by the fall as we are, *each* of us has a conscience. In a corner of each heart there sits a witness for God — a witness who condemns when we do wrong, and approves when we do right. To that witness I make my appeal this day: Are not the things that I have been saying, true?

Go then, young men, and resolve this day to remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Before the day of grace is past — before your conscience has become hardened by age, and deadened by repeated trampling underfoot — while you have strength, and time, and opportunities, go and join yourself to the Lord in an everlasting covenant not to be forgotten. The Spirit will not always strive. The voice of conscience will become feebler and fainter every year you continue to resist it. The Athenians said to Paul, “We will hear you again about this matter” — but they had heard him for the last time (Act 17.32). Make haste, and do not delay. Linger and hesitate no more.

Think of the unspeakable comfort you will give to parents, relations, and friends, if you take my counsel. They have expended time, money, and health to rear you, and make you what you are. Surely they deserve some consideration at your hands. Who can reckon up the joy and gladness which young people have it in their power to occasion? Who can tell the anxiety and sorrow that sons like Esau, and Hophni, and Phinehas, and Absalom may cause? Solomon says truly indeed, “A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother” (Pro 10.1). Oh, consider these things, and give God your heart! Do not let it be said of you in the end, as it is said of many, that your “youth was a blunder, your manhood a struggle, and your old age a regret.”

Think of the good you may be the instruments of doing to the world. Almost all the most eminent saints of God sought the Lord early. Moses, Samuel, David, Daniel — *all* served

God from their youth. God seems to delight in putting special honour upon young servants — remember the honour He placed on our own young king, Edward the Sixth. And what might we not confidently expect if young men in our own day would consecrate the springtime of their lives to God? Agents are wanted now in almost every great and good cause, and cannot be found. Machinery of every kind for spreading truth exists, but there are no hands to work it.

Money is more easily gotten for doing good, than men. Ministers are wanted for new churches — missionaries are wanted for new stations — visitors are wanted for neglected districts — teachers are wanted for new schools — many a good cause is standing still merely for lack of agents. The supply of godly, faithful, trustworthy men for posts like those I have named, is far below the demand.

Young men of the present day, you are wanted *for God*. This is peculiarly an age of activity. We are shaking off some of our past selfishness. Men no longer sleep the sleep of apathy and indifference about others, as their forefathers did. They are beginning to be ashamed of thinking, like Cain, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” A wide field of usefulness is open before you, if only you are willing to enter it. The harvest is great, and the labourers are few. Be zealous of good works. Come, *come* to the help of the Lord against the mighty.<sup>91</sup>

In some sort, this is to be like God, not only “good, but *doing* good” (Psa 119.68). This is the way to follow in the steps of your Lord and Saviour: “He went about doing good” (Act 10.38). This is to live as David did; he “served his own generation” (Act 13.36).

And who can doubt that this is the path which most becomes an immortal soul? Who would not rather leave this world like Josiah, lamented by all, than depart like Jehoram, “without being desired”? (2Chr 21.20). Whether it is better to be an idle, frivolous, useless cumberer of the ground — to live for your body, your selfishness, your lusts, and your pride — or to spend and be spent in the glorious cause of usefulness to your fellow-men;

- to be like Wilberforce or Lord Shaftesbury, a blessing to your country and the world
- to be like Howard, the friend of the prisoner and the captive
- to be like Schwartz, the spiritual father of hundreds of immortal souls in heathen lands
- to be like that man of God, Robert McCheyne, a burning and a shining light, an epistle of Christ, known and read by all men, the quickener of every Christian heart that comes across your path?

Oh, who can doubt? Who can for one moment doubt? Young men, consider your responsibilities. Think of the privilege and luxury of doing good. Resolve this day to be *useful*. Give your hearts to Christ at once.

Think, lastly, of the happiness that will come to your own soul if you serve God — happiness by the way, as you travel through life — and happiness in the end, when the journey is over. Believe me, whatever vain notions you may have heard, *believe me*, there is a reward for the righteous *even in this world*. Godliness has indeed the promise of *this* life, as well as that which is to come. There is a solid peace in feeling that God is your

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<sup>91</sup> The Church of England Young Men’s Society for Aiding Missions at Home and Abroad; and the Young Men’s Christian Association, in London, deserve the support of all true Christians. It is one of the few cheering signs in an evil day, that such institutions have been formed. I rejoice to see that kindred societies have been established at other places. — I trust that God will abundantly bless them.

## Chap. 19. Thoughts For Young Men

friend. There is a real satisfaction in knowing that however great your unworthiness, you are complete in Christ — that you have an enduring portion — that you have chosen that good part which will not be taken from you.

The backslider in heart may well be filled with his own ways, but “a good man will be satisfied from himself” (Pro 14.14).<sup>92</sup> The path of the worldly man grows darker and darker every year that he lives. The path of the Christian is like a shining light, brighter and brighter to the very end — his sun is just rising, when the sun of the worldly is setting forever — his best things are all beginning to blossom and bloom forever, when those of the worldly are all slipping out of his hands, and passing away.

Young men, these things are *true*. Suffer the word of exhortation. Be persuaded. Take up the cross. Follow Christ. Yield yourselves unto God.

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<sup>92</sup> NKJ **Pro 14:14** The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, But a good man *will be satisfied* from above.

ESV **Pro 14:14** The backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his ways, and a good man will be filled with the fruit of his ways.

NLT **Pro 14:14** Backsliders get what they deserve; good people receive their reward.

NAS **Pro 14:14** The backslider in heart will have his fill of his own ways, But a good man will *be satisfied* with his.

NIV **Pro 14:14** The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways, and the good man rewarded for his.

## CHAPTER 20 – QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LORD’S SUPPER

THE paper which begins at this page requires a few words of prefatory explanation. It consists of fifty-one questions about the Lord’s Supper, with special reference to points which are the subject of much dispute and controversy in the present day. It supplies fifty-one answers to these questions, chiefly drawn from the New Testament, the Articles, Communion Service, and the Catechism of the Church of England. It contains, in addition, some valuable extracts from the writings of standard English divines.

It is a painful fact, and one which it is impossible to deny, that the principal cause of differences among Churchmen at this moment is the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Whether that blessed ordinance is to be regarded as a sacrifice or not, whether the Lord’s Table is an altar or not, whether the officiating clergyman is a sacrificing priest or not — whether there is a corporeal, material presence of Christ’s body and blood in the consecrated elements of bread and wine or not — whether these elements and the Lord’s Table ought to be regarded with as much lowly reverence and honour as if Christ was bodily present or not — all these are questions which are continually coming to the front. To speak plainly, they seem likely to divide the English clergy into two distinct parties, and to pain the Church of England!

Nor is this all. It is another painful and dangerous fact that the great majority of English lay Churchmen seem utterly unable to understand the very serious nature of the question which is dividing the clergy, and the doctrinal consequences which are bound up with it. Most lay Churchmen can only see that the service in some churches is more ornamental and musical than in others, and that in some there is more importance attached to the Lord’s Table, and to flowers, decorations, gestures, dress, and postures, than in others. But they can see no further. They cannot, or will not, perceive that the ceremonial actions in administering the Lord’s Supper, about which the clergy disagree, are not mere ornamental trifles, as some suppose. So far from being “trifles,” they are the outward and visible expressions of a most mischievous doctrine, which strikes at one of the first principles of the Reformed Church of England. They think all earnest, eloquent, zealous, hard-working clergymen cannot be far wrong. And when you tell them that there is an avowed determination among many clergymen to unprotestantize the Established Church, to leave behind the Reformation, and to bring back the Romish Mass and the Confessional, you are too often smiled at as an alarmist, and not believed. It is my deliberate conviction that unless English lay Churchmen can be awakened to see the real nature of the existing differences about the Lord’s Supper, in a few years there will come the disestablishment, disendowment, and disruption of the Church of England. Half the lay Churchmen seem so absorbed in politics, or fine arts, or cotton, or iron, or coal, or corn, or shipping, or railways, that you cannot get them to look at religious questions. Of the other half, too many are crying “Peace, peace.” when there is no peace, and insisting that every “earnest” clergyman should be allowed to do what is right in his own eyes — to break the law, and be let alone. In short, unless a change comes soon, our candlestick will be taken away, [Rev 2.5](#) and our Church will be ruined.

The paper now in the reader’s hands is a humble contribution to the cause of truth about the Lord’s Supper. It is truth as I find it in the New Testament, truth as I find it in the authorized formularies of our Church, truth as I find it in the writings of our greatest

English divines — it is this truth which I advocate in these pages.

**1.** *Is the Lord's Supper a subject of primary importance in the Christian religion? Do not thousands of Churchmen live and die without receiving it? Do not the majority of church-goers turn their backs on it, and always go away when it is administered? How is this?*

Nothing can possibly be of small importance which the Lord Jesus Christ ordained and appointed. Our Lord most distinctly commanded His disciples to "eat bread" and "drink wine" in remembrance of Him. What right has any Christian to disobey this commandment? No doubt a man may be saved, like the penitent thief, without having received the Lord's Supper. It is not a matter of absolute and indispensable necessity, like repentance, faith, and conversion. But it is impossible to say that any professing Christian is in a safe, healthy, or satisfactory condition of soul, who habitually refuses to obey Christ and attend the Lord's Table. If he is not fit to be a communicant, as many say, then he is confessing that he does not live as he should, and is not fit to die and meet God. It is very difficult to see what habitual non-communicants will be able to say for themselves in the judgment-day. There is a judgment to come, a judgment of things left undone which we should have done, as well as a judgment of things done which we should not have done.

**2.** *Is it of much importance to have right and true views of the Lord's Supper?*

It is of the utmost possible importance. On no subject in Christianity has there been such an immense amount of superstitious error taught and held for nearly eighteen centuries. No error probably has done more harm to the souls of men. Those who think it does not matter what opinions we hold about the Lord's Supper, so long as we receive it, are under a strong delusion. No ordinance appointed by Christ does good to our souls "*ex opere operato*," or by the mere outward bodily use of it. The value of the Lord's Supper depends entirely on its being rightly *understood*, and rightly *used*.

**3.** *Where will we find right and true views of the Lord's Supper?*

We will find them in the four accounts of the institution of the ordinance given by St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke in their Gospels, and by St. Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (see Mat 26.26-28; Mar 14.22-24; Luk 22.19-20; 1Cor 11.23-29). These are our only full sources of information in God's Word. In the three Pastoral Epistles to Timothy and Titus, written especially for the instruction of ministers, the Lord's Supper is not once named. The views and principles of the Church of England are to be found in her Articles, Communion Service, Catechism, and Twenty-seventh Homily. Any views which cannot be reconciled with these formularies are not "Church views."

**4.** *What is the Lord's Supper?*

It is an ordinance or sacrament appointed by Jesus Christ the night before He was crucified, for the perpetual benefit and edification of His Church, until He comes again at the end of the world. The only other sacrament is *baptism*. The Church of Rome holds that Confirmation, Penance (or Confession and Absolution), Ordination, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction, are sacraments of the gospel. The Church of England, in her Twenty-fifth Article, says distinctly that they are not.

**5.** *How many Parts are there in the Lord's Supper?*

The Catechism of the Church of England rightly tells us that there are two parts. One is

the outward and visible part, which is received by all communicants, both good and bad, without exception. The other is the inward and invisible part which is the thing signified by the outward part, and is only received by believers — and received by them, as the Twenty-eighth Article says, “in a heavenly and spiritual manner.”

**6. *What is the outward and visible part or sign in the Lord's Supper?***

The outward and visible part of the sacrament consists of bread and wine, which are placed on the Lord's Table — consecrated and set apart by the minister — seen, touched, received, eaten, and drunk by the communicants.

**7. *What is the inward part or thing signified in the Lord's Supper?***

The inward or invisible part is that body and blood of Christ which were offered for our sins on the cross. It is neither seen, nor touched, nor tasted, nor received into the mouth by communicants. It is not a tangible and material thing, and can only be eaten and drunk spiritually, with the heart, and by faith.

**8. *What did our Lord mean, when He said of the bread, “This is My body,” and of the wine, “This is My blood,” at the first institution of the Lord's Supper?***

He certainly did not mean, “This bread is literally and materially My body, and this wine is literally My blood.” It is quite plain that the Apostles did not so understand His words. As devout and well-taught Jews, they would have been shocked and horrified at the idea of drinking literal blood. Our Lord simply meant, “This bread and this wine represent and are emblems of My body and My blood.” It is the same form of speech He used when He said, “The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom” (Mat 13.38).

**9. *Why was the sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?***

The answer of the Church Catechism is the best that can be given. It was ordained “for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.” The bread broken, given, and eaten, was intended to remind Christians of Christ's body given for our sins on the cross. The wine poured out and drunk was intended to remind Christians of Christ's blood shed for our sins. The whole ordinance was intended to keep the Church in perpetual recollection of Christ's death and substitution for us, and His atonement for our sins. Five times over in the Communion Office of the Prayer Book, the words “memory” and “remembrance” are expressly used, to describe the principal object of the Lord's Supper.

**10. *Who should come to the Lord's Supper?***

Only those who have the marks and qualifications which are described in the last answer in the Church Catechism. People who “repent truly of their former sins, and stedfastly purpose to lead a new life,” — people who “have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, and a thankful remembrance of His death,” — people who are “in charity with all men,” — these, and only these, are fit to be communicants.

**11. *What good do fit communicants receive from the Lord's Supper?***

Their souls, as the Catechism says, are “strengthened and refreshed” by inward spiritual communion with the body and blood of Christ, in the same manner that a material body is strengthened by bread and wine. Their repentance is deepened, their faith increased, their hope brightened, their knowledge enlarged, their habits of holy living strengthened.

**12.** *Who should not come to the Lord's Supper?*

Those who are living in open sin, those who are manifestly ignorant of true religion — thoughtless, careless, unconverted, and without the Spirit of Christ. To tell such persons that it will do them good to come to the Lord's Table is to do them positive harm. Justification is not by the sacraments. To eat the bread and drink the wine is not the way to obtain forgiveness of sins or converting grace. On the contrary, St. Paul says that a man may eat and drink to his own condemnation (1Cor 11.29). The Twenty-ninth Article says that "the wicked, and those who are void of a lively faith, although they carnally and visibly press with their teeth the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet in no way are they partakers of Christ: but rather, to their own condemnation they eat and drink the sign or sacrament of so great a thing."

**13.** *But should not all persons without exception be pressed to come to the Lord's Table, in order that their souls may be saved? Is not reception of the Lord's Supper the truest, shortest, and best way to obtain forgiveness of sins and have eternal life? Does not our Lord Jesus Christ say in the 6th chapter of St. John's Gospel, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you;" and again, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life" (Joh 6.53-54). Do these texts not refer to the Lord's Supper?*

Those two texts have nothing to do with the Lord's Supper. This is the opinion of all the best Protestant commentators, and also of some Romish ones. The "eating and drinking" here spoken of mean the spiritual eating and drinking of the heart by faith, and the "flesh and blood" mean Christ's vicarious sacrifice of His body on the cross. — The penitent thief most certainly did not receive the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, yet it is certain that he "had eternal life," and went to paradise when he died. Judas Iscariot did eat the bread and wine, but he did not "have eternal life," and died in his sins. The Prayer-book Service for the Communion of the Sick contains the following statement in one of its concluding rubrics: "If the sick man truly repents of his sins, and stedfastly believes that Jesus Christ has suffered death on the cross for him, and shed His blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he has thereby, and giving Him thanks therefore, he eats and drinks the body and blood of Christ profitably to his soul's health, even if he does not receive the sacrament with his mouth." In fact, to maintain that no one "has eternal life" who does not receive the Lord's Supper, is a most narrow, cruel, and illiberal doctrine. It condemns to eternal death myriads of our fellow-Christians who, from one cause or another, have never become communicants. It condemns the whole body of the Quakers, who allow no sacraments. He that can hold such doctrine must be in a strange state of mind.

**14.** *Does not St. Paul tell the Corinthians, that "the cup of blessing is a communion of the blood of Christ, and the bread a communion of the body of Christ" (1Cor 10.16). Is this not a proof that there is a real corporeal presence of Christ's natural body and blood in the Lord's Supper?*

It is no proof at all. St. Paul does not say that the bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ, but only a COMMUNION of them. By that, he means every communicant who receives the bread and wine rightly, worthily, and with faith, has spiritual and heart communion with the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood which was offered for his sins on the cross. For this is precisely one of the objects for which the Lord's Supper was

appointed. It was intended to deepen and strengthen the heart-union of believers with their crucified Saviour. More than this cannot fairly be gotten from the text.

**15.** *Does not the Church Catechism say that the "body and blood of Christ are truly and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper"? Do not the words "truly and indeed" mean that, in the judgment of those who drew up the Catechism, there is a real corporeal presence of Christ's natural body and blood in the consecrated bread and wine?*

The simplest answer to this question is to be found in the Twenty-eighth Article: "The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper only in a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the means whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper, is faith." The following quotation deserves close attention. It is from the work of a very learned divine, Archdeacon Waterland:

"The words of the Church Catechism, truly and indeed taken and received by the faithful, are rightly interpreted of a real participation in the benefits purchased by Christ's death. The body and blood of Christ are taken and received by the faithful, not corporeally, not internally, but truly and indeed — that is, *effectually*." — Waterland's Works, vol. iv. p. 42.

**16.** *Does any change take place in the bread and wine when the minister consecrates them in the Lord's Supper?*

Most certainly not. The bread continues to be bread just as it was before, and the wine continues to be wine — the same in colour, taste, and composition. The Twenty-eighth Article of the Church of England declares, "Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy writ; but it is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthrows the nature of a sacrament, and has given occasion to many superstitions.

**17.** *Is there any real presence of Christ's natural body and blood in the bread and wine after consecration?*

Most certainly not, if by "real" is meant a corporeal and material presence. The rubric at the end of the Prayer-book Communion Service distinctly says, "The natural body and blood of our Saviour Christ are in heaven and not here, it being against the truth of Christ's natural body to be at one time in more places than one." If the body of Him who was born of the Virgin Mary can be present in the bread and wine on the Lord's Table, then it cannot be a true human body, and the comfortable truth that our Saviour is perfect man would be overthrown. Those who tell us that as soon as the words of consecration are pronounced, at once the body and blood of Christ come down into the bread and wine, are in great error, and assert what they cannot prove.

**18.** *Should the consecrated bread and wine in the Lord's Supper be elevated, adored, and worshipped?*

Most certainly not. The bread is still really and truly bread, and the wine really and truly wine. They ought to be reverently and carefully handled, as signs and emblems of very holy things after consecration. But the change is in the *use* of them, not in the *substance*; and to adore them is to break the second commandment. The Prayer-book rubric expressly says, "The sacramental bread and wine still remain in their very natural

substance, and may not be adored; for that would be idolatry, to be abhorred by all faithful Christians." The Twenty-eighth Article says, "The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped."

**19.** *Is there any sacrifice of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper?*

Most certainly not. The ordinance is never once called a sacrifice in the New Testament. There is not the slightest trace of any sacrifice in the four accounts of its first institution. There is not a word to show that the Apostles thought they saw any sacrifice offered up. Moreover, we are repeatedly taught in the New Testament, that as soon as Christ was sacrificed for our sins on the cross, there was no more sacrifice needed; and that after His one offering of Himself, there was no need of any other offering for sin (Heb 10.14-18). To attempt to offer up Christ again is an act of ignorance akin to blasphemy. The Prayer Book never once calls the Lord's Supper a sacrifice. The "oblations" it speaks of in one place are the offering of money in the offertory. The only "sacrifice" it mentions is that of "praise and thanksgiving;" and the only offering it mentions is that of "ourselves, souls and bodies," to be a "reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice" unto God. [Rom 12.1](#) Those who call the sacrament a sacrifice cannot possibly prove what they say.

**20.** *Is the minister who consecrates the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper a priest?*

He is a priest no doubt, if by the word "priest" we only mean a presbyter, or one in the second order of the ministry; and in this sense *only* is he called a priest in the Prayer Book. But he is certainly *not* a priest, if we mean by that word one who offers up a sacrifice. He cannot be, because he has no sacrifice to offer; and a priest without a sacrifice is a meaningless title. He cannot be, because Christian ministers are never once called "priests" in the New Testament. The Jewish priests in the Old Testament had to offer sacrifices daily, and were types and figures of the great High Priest who was to come. But when Christ offered up Himself on the cross, a sacerdotal ministry was at once done away forever. All believers are now "kings and priests," because they "present their bodies a living sacrifice to God" (Rom 12.1). But Christian ministers are not sacrificing priests, and cannot be. They are Christ's ambassadors, messengers, witnesses, watchmen, shepherds, and stewards of the mysteries of God, but nothing more, whatever dress they may wear, and whatever title they may assume. Christians have only one Priest, even Him who is "passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God" (Heb 4.14).

**21.** *Is the table in the Lord's Supper rightly called an altar?*

Most certainly not. It is never once called an altar in the New Testament. The text in Hebrews 13.10, "We have an altar," has nothing whatever to do with the Lord's Supper. That learned divine, Dr. Waterland, says, "That altar is Christ our Lord, who is Altar, Priest, and Sacrifice all in one" (Waterland's *Works*, vol. v. p. 268, Oxford ed.). Not once is the Lord's Table called an "altar" in the English Prayer Book. The Reformers of our Church ordered altars everywhere to be pulled down and removed, and wooden tables to be set up. Those Churchmen who carelessly call the Lord's Table an "altar," and talk of "altar services," and brides being "led to the altar" at weddings, are doing immense harm, ignorantly borrowing the language of the corrupt Church of Rome, and countenancing a mischievous error. If St. Paul rose from the grave, and was shown an "altar" in a Christian Church, he would not understand what it meant.

**22.** *Is there anything sinful or wrong "in having the Lord's Supper in the evening?"*

Most certainly not. It cannot possibly be sinful to follow the example of Christ and His Apostles. Every reader of the New Testament must know that the institution of the Lord's Supper took place in the evening. It is certain that no special hour is recommended to us in the Acts or Epistles. It is equally certain that the Prayer Book leaves the matter to the discretion of every clergyman, and allows him to do what is best for his congregation, and wisely lays down no hard and fast rule about the time. To forbid evening communions would completely shut out many persons in large town parishes from the Lord's Table. The mothers of many families among the working classes cannot possibly leave home in the morning. The very name "Supper" seems to point to the evening of a day rather than the morning. In the face of these facts, to denounce evening communion as irreverent and profane is neither reasonable nor wise.

**23.** *Is it needful, advantageous, and desirable to receive the Lord's Supper fasting?*

It is certainly not necessary, because the practice is neither commanded nor recommended in Scripture. Moreover, it is perfectly clear that at the first institution of the sacrament, the Apostles could not have received the elements fasting, because they had just eaten the Passover. There cannot, therefore, be anything very important in this point, and every believer may use his liberty, and do what he finds edifying to himself without condemning others. But it may be feared that there lies in the minds of many who attach immense value to fasting communion, a vague belief that the consecrated bread and wine which we receive are in some mysterious way *not* real bread and wine, and should not therefore be mixed with other food in our bodies! Such a belief cannot be praised. Those who teach that fasting communion is an obligatory rule on all, take up a position which is not only unscriptural, but cruel. To go fasting to an early morning communion is likely to cause the death of delicate persons. <sup>1Cor 11:33-34</sup>

**24.** *Is it necessary, or desirable, or useful for communicants to confess their sins privately to a minister, and to receive absolution, before they come to the Lord's Supper?*

It cannot be necessary. There is not a single verse in the New Testament to show that the Apostles recommended such confession, or that the first Christians practised it. It is certainly not desirable or useful. The habit of private or auricular confession to a minister, under *any* circumstances, is one of the most mischievous and dangerous inventions of the corrupt Church of Rome, and has been the cause of enormous immorality and wickedness. Moreover, it is so expressly condemned in the "Homily of Repentance," that no minister of the Church of England has any right to recommend, encourage, or permit it, if he is honest, and faithful to his ordination vows.

**25.** *But is not private confession before communion sanctioned by that passage in the Communion Service of our Prayer Book, in which the minister says, "If any of you cannot quiet his own conscience, but requires further comfort or counsel, let him come to me or some other discreet and learned minister of God's Holy Word, and open his grief, that by the ministry of God's Word he may receive the benefit of absolution"?*

It is impossible, with any fairness, to extract auricular confession and sacramental absolution out of this passage. The simple meaning is that people who are troubled in mind with some special difficulties of conscience, are advised to go to some minister and talk privately with him about them, and to get them cleared up and resolved by texts of

Scripture — that is,” by the ministry of God’s Word.” This is exactly what every wise minister in the present day does with those who seek private interviews with him, or wait for an after-meeting at the end of a sermon. But it is as utterly unlike the mischievous practice of habitual confession before communion, as wholesome medicine is unlike opium-eating, and water is unlike poison.

**26.** *Does a minister do anything wicked or wrong if he pronounces the words of administration only once in giving the bread and wine to a number of communicants altogether, and not to each one separately?*

He certainly does nothing wrong according to Scripture. He does exactly what our Lord Jesus Christ did when He first instituted the Lord’s Supper. In each of the four accounts given in the New Testament, He used the plural number and not the singular. In each He pronounced the words once, and only once, and then gave the bread and wine to the whole company of the Apostles. In the face of our Lord’s own example, to blame and condemn ministers who find it necessary to do the same, is surely not wise.

**27.** *Does not the rubric of the Prayer Book order that the minister will say the words of administration to each communicant separately?*

Most certainly it does. Yet reason and common sense point out that the compilers of the Prayer Book could not have meant this rubric to be interpreted and obeyed literally and exactly, when such obedience is seriously inconvenient, if not impossible. When a clergyman with only one curate, has to give the elements of bread and wine to 300 or 400 persons, the service must necessarily be so long that aged and delicate people are wearied, and any following service is interfered with, or prevented altogether. No doubt when the rubric was drawn up, parishes were small, communicants were few, there were no Sunday Schools, and few clergymen had more than one full service a day. Rules drawn up at that date, under such circumstances, are not to be rigorously applied to this day, especially when the application injures the Sunday services, and does more harm than good.

**28.** *Does any clergyman literally obey all the rubrics of the Communion Service in the Prayer Book?*

It is probable that there is not one who obeys them all, and certainly no one obeys the four which immediately precede the Communion Service. The order to place the table “in the body of the church” is never attended to by anyone! Custom in this matter has completely overridden the rubric. But this being the case, there must evidently be some discretion allowed in interpreting the communion rubrics.

**29.** *Are communicants more likely to be edified if the words of administration are said to each one separately, than they are if they are said to the whole rail collectively?*

It is impossible to answer this question. It is a matter of feeling and opinion. It is certain that many communicants feel pained and offended if they do not each hear the words addressed to themselves. It is equally certain that many others strongly dislike the incessant repetition of the words of administration, and especially where seven or eight ministers are employed, some giving the bread and some the wine, at the same time. Many complain that it confuses and distracts their minds. On such a point we must think and let think, and not judge one another. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. The argument that some clergymen will not repeat the words to each communicant separately, because they hold the doctrine of “particular redemption,” is an absurd,

baseless, and ignorant suggestion, destitute of truth.

**30.** *In receiving the bread and wine, are any bodily actions, attitudes, or gestures specially obligatory on communicants?*

None are prescribed in Scripture. The Apostles at the first institution of the Lord's Supper were evidently reclining in the manner of the times. Kneeling is wisely ordered in the Prayer Book, to use the words of the rubric: "To signify our humble and grateful acknowledgment of the benefits of Christ given in the sacrament to all worthy receivers, and for avoiding profanation and disorder." Whether we should receive the bread with our fingers or upon the open palm of our hands, seems an open question, which each must decide for himself. Only, let it be remembered that to refrain to touch the bread with our hands, and to require it to be put into our mouths, has a strong appearance of superstition. As for bowing down till we almost grovel on the ground like serfs, it is a posture unworthy of Christ's freemen, and a painfully suspicious symptom of ignorance of the real nature of the consecrated elements.

**31.** *Does it add to the value and usefulness of the Lord's Supper, or promote the edification of the communicants, to have the sacrament administered with the following accompaniments, viz.*

- Lights on the Communion Table in broad daylight;
- Mixing water with the wine;
- Clothing the minister in a peculiar dress called a chasuble; <sup>93</sup>
- Burning incense?

These things cannot be shown to be of any real value. Not one of them is recommended, or even named, in the New Testament. Not one of them is prescribed or ordered in the Prayer Book; and the best English lawyers pronounce them illegal. They are borrowed from the corrupt Church of Rome, and not a few clergymen, after beginning by using them, have ended by believing the sacrifice of the Mass, and joining the Romish communion. Such things no doubt have "a show of wisdom," and "satisfy the flesh" (Col 2.23). They suit the many ignorant people who like a mere outward religion. But it is vain to suppose that they please God. In the nature of things, they tend to distract and divert the minds of communicants from the true, scriptural, and simple view of the Lord's Supper. No one in his right senses can dare to say that they are essential to the validity of the sacrament, or that our Lord or His Apostles ever used them. They are neither more nor less than "will-worship," and the invention of man (Col 2.23). The clergyman who persists in using these illegal ceremonial acts, in defiance of his bishop's monitions, causes division, offence, strife, and controversy in the Church about things that are not essential, and he is justly deserving of censure.

**32.** *Did the reformers of the Church of England, to whom we owe our Articles and Prayer Book, attach much weight to right and true views of the lord's Supper, and especially of the real meaning of the presence of Christ in that sacrament?*

Yes! Most certainly. It was precisely on this point that our Protestant Reformers differed most widely from the Church of Rome. It was precisely because they would not admit that the natural body and blood of Christ were corporeally present under the forms of bread

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<sup>93</sup> [A long sleeveless vestment worn by a priest when celebrating Mass.](#)

and wine after the words of consecration were pronounced, that many of them were condemned to death and burned at the stake in Queen Mary's reign. Fuller, the famous Church historian, says,

“The sacrament of the altar was the main touchstone to discover the poor Protestants. This point of the real corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament., the same body that was crucified, was the compendious way to discover those of the opposite opinion.” — Fuller's Church History, vol. iii. p. 399, Tegg's edition.

**33.** *Why was John Rogers, the protomartyr, Vicar of St. Sepulchre's and Prebendary of St. Paul's, burned in Smithfield, on February 4, 1555?*

Let us hear his own account:

“I was asked whether I believed the very body and blood of our Saviour Christ, that was born of the Virgin Mary, and hanged on the cross, is really and substantially in the sacrament? I answered, ‘I think it is false. I cannot understand ‘really and substantially’ to signify other than corporeally. But corporeally Christ is only in heaven; and so Christ cannot be corporeally in your sacrament.’” Foxe *in loco*, vol. iii. p. 101, edit. 1684.

And so he was burned.

**34.** *Why was Hugh Latimer, sometime Bishop of Worcester, burned at Oxford, on October 16, 1555?*

Let us hear what Foxe says were the articles exhibited against him:

“That you have openly affirmed, defended, and maintained that the true and natural body of Christ, after the consecration of the priest, is not really present in the sacrament of the altar, and that the substance of bread and wine still remains in the sacrament of the altar.”

And to this article the good old man replied:

“After a corporeal being, which the Romish Church furnishes, Christ's body and blood is not in the sacrament under the forms of bread and wine.” Foxe *in loco*, vol. iii. p. 426.

And so he was burned.

**35.** *Why was Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London, burned at Oxford, on October 16, 1555?*

Once more let us hear what Foxe says were the words of his sentence of condemnation:

“The said Nicholas Ridley affirms, maintains, and stubbornly defends certain opinions, assertions, and heresies, contrary to the Word of God and the received faith of the Church, as in denying that the true and natural body and blood of Christ are in the sacrament of the altar, and secondarily, in affirming that the substance of bread and wine remain after the words of consecration.” Foxe *in loco*, vol. iii. p. 426.

And so he was burned.

**36.** *Why was John Bradford, Prebendary of St. Paul's, chaplain to Bishop Ridley, and one of Edward the Sixth's chaplains, burned at Smithfield, on July 1, 1555?*

Let us hear what Foxe says he wrote to the men of Lancashire and Cheshire while he was in prison:

“The chief thing which I am condemned for as a heretic, is because I deny the sacrament of the altar (which is not Christ's Supper, but a plain perversion as the Papists now use it) to be a real, natural, and corporeal presence of Christ's body and blood under the forms and accidents<sup>94</sup> of bread and wine — that is, because I deny transubstantiation, which is the darling of the devil, and daughter and heir to Antichrist's religion.” — Foxe *in loco*, vol. iii. p. 260.

And so he was burned.

**37.** *But may not these four men who were burned have been isolated cases, and not true representatives of the Church of England? May they not have been violent fanatics, and unlearned and ignorant men?*

Nothing can be further from the truth than these suggestions. The doctrines for which these four men laid down their lives were the doctrines professed by the whole Church of England in the reign of Edward the Sixth. So far from standing alone, their opinions were shared by 280 other persons, who were burned in Queen Mary's reign. As to ignorance and lack of learning, Ridley and Rogers were among the most learned men of their day, and we are indebted to Ridley in particular, for the foundations of our English Prayer Book.

**38.** *But is it not said that the English Reformers, having just come out of Rome, adopted very extreme and rather defective views of the Lord's Supper? Have not English divines since the Reformation taken up much more moderate and temperate opinions about the doctrine of the Real Presence?*

Whoever says this, says what he cannot possibly prove. With very few exceptions, all the greatest, ablest, and most learned English theologians of every school of thought, for three hundred years, have agreed in maintaining that there is no real corporeal presence of Christ's natural body and blood in the consecrated bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.

**39.** *What does Bishop Jewell say in his work on the Sacraments?*

“Let us examine what difference there is between the body of Christ and the Sacrament of His body.

“The difference is this: a sacrament is a figure or token; the body of Christ is figured or tokened. The sacramental bread is bread, it is not the body of Christ; the body of Christ is flesh; it is not bread. The bread is beneath; the body is above. The bread is on the table; the body is in heaven. The bread is in the mouth; the body is in the heart. The bread feeds the body; the body feeds the soul. The bread will come to nothing; the body is immortal and will not perish. The bread is vile; the body of Christ is glorious. Such is the difference between the bread, which is a sacrament of the body, and the body of Christ itself. The sacrament is eaten by the wicked as well as by the faithful; the body is only eaten by the faithful. The sacrament may be eaten unto judgment; the body cannot be eaten except unto salvation. Without the sacrament we may be saved; but without the body of Christ we have no salvation: we cannot be saved.” — Jewell's Works, vol. ii., *Treatise on Sacraments*, Parker Society edition, p. 1121.

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<sup>94</sup> In logic, an *accident* is an incidental, non-essential, non-substantive property of something. The whiteness of bread is an accidental property of the bread. It is not what makes the bread, bread. — WHG

**40.** *What does Richard Hooker say in his "Ecclesiastical Polity"?*

"The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not to be sought in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament.

"And the very order of our Saviour's words agrees with this. First, 'Take and eat;' then, 'This is My body which is broken for you.' First, 'Drink you all of this;' then follows, 'This is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.' I do not see how it should be gathered by the words of Christ, when and where the bread is His body, or the wine is His blood, except in the very heart and soul of the one who receives them. As for the sacraments, for all we can gather from what is written about them, they exhibit that they are not really, nor do they really contain in themselves, that grace which it pleases God to bestow with them or by them." Hooker, *Eccl. Pol.*, book v. p. 67.

**41.** *What does Jeremy Taylor say in his book on the Real Presence (ed. 1654, pp. 13-15)?*

"We say that Christ's body is in the sacrament *really*, but *spiritually*. The Roman Catholics say that it is there *really*, but *spiritually*. For so Bellarmine is bold to say the word may be allowed in this question. Where now is the difference? Here, by 'spiritually,' they mean spiritual in the manner of a spirit. We, by 'spiritually,' mean present to *our* spirit only. They say that Christ's body is truly present there, as it was on the cross, but not in the manner of all or any *body*, but in that manner of being as an angel is in a place. That's their 'spiritually.' But we, by the 'real spiritual presence of Christ,' understand Christ to be present as the Spirit of God is present, in the hearts of the faithful by blessing and grace; and this is all we mean beside a topical and figurative presence."

**42.** *What did Archbishop Usher say in his sermon before the House of Commons?*

"In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the bread and wine are *not* changed in substance from being the same with that which is served at ordinary tables. But in respect to the sacred use to which they are consecrated, such a change is made that now they differ as much from common bread and wine as heaven from earth. Neither are they to be accounted barely *significative*, but also truly *exhibitive* of those heavenly things to which they relate — as being appointed by God to be a means of conveying the same to us, and putting us in actual possession of them. So that in the use of this holy ordinance, as truly as a man with his *bodily* hand and mouth receives the earthly creatures of bread and wine, so truly with his *spiritual* hand and mouth, if he has any, he receives the body and blood of Christ. And this is that real and substantial presence which we affirm to be in the inward part of this sacred action."

**43.** *What does Waterland say?*

"The Fathers well understood that to make Christ's natural body the real sacrifice of the Eucharist, would not only be absurd in reason, but highly presumptuous and profane; and that to make the outward symbols a proper sacrifice, a material sacrifice, would be entirely contrary to gospel principles, degrading the Christian sacrifice into a Jewish one — indeed, making it much lower and meaner than the Jewish one, both in value and dignity. The right way, therefore, was to make the sacrifice *spiritual*, and it could be no other upon gospel principles." — *Works*, vol. iv. p. 762.

“No one has any authority or right to offer Christ as a sacrifice, whether really or symbolically, except Christ Himself; such a sacrifice is *His* sacrifice, not ours — offered *for* us, not *by* us, to God the Father.” Works, vol. iv. p. 753.

**44.** *What does Bishop Burnet say in his work on the Articles?*

“We assert a real presence of the body and blood of Christ — not of His body as it is now glorified in heaven, but of His body as it was broken on the cross, when His blood was shed and separated from it; that is, His death, with the merits and effects of it, are in a visible and federal act offered in the sacrament to all worthy believers.

By ‘real’ we understand ‘true,’ in opposition both to fiction and imagination, and to those shadows that were in the Mosaic dispensation in which the manna, the rock, the brazen serpent — but eminently, the cloud of glory — were types and shadows of Messiah who was to come. With Him came grace and truth, that is, a most wonderful manifestation of the mercy and grace of God, and a verifying of the promises made under the law.

In this sense, we acknowledge a real presence of Christ in the sacrament. Though we are convinced that our first Reformers judged rightly concerning the use of the phrase ‘Real Presence,’ it was better to let it fall than be continued. For the use of it, and that idea which naturally arises from the common acceptance of it, may stick deeper, and feed superstition more, than all those larger explanations that are given to it are able to cure.” — Burnet on the Twenty-eighth Article.

**45.** *What does Henry Philpotts, Bishop of Exeter, say in his letter to Charles Butler?*

“The Church of Rome holds that the body and blood of Christ are present under the accidents of bread and wine; the Church of England holds that their real presence is in the soul of the *communicant* at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

“She holds that after the consecration of the bread and wine they are changed, not in their *nature*, but in their *use* — that instead of nourishing our bodies only, they now are instruments by which, when worthily received, God gives to our souls the body and blood of Christ to nourish and sustain them — that this is not a fictitious or imaginary exhibition of our crucified Redeemer to us, but a real though *spiritual* one — more real, indeed, because it is more effectual than the carnal exhibition and manducation <sup>95</sup> of Him could be, for the flesh profits nothing.”

“In the same manner, then, as our Lord Himself said, ‘I am the true bread that came down from heaven’ (not meaning thereby that he was a lump of baked dough or manna, but the true means of sustaining the true life of man, which is *spiritual*, not *corporeal*), so too in the sacrament, though mere bread and wine in their nature, the crucified body and blood of Christ are yet given truly, really, and effectively to the worthy receiver of the consecrated elements — that body and blood which are the instruments of man's redemption, and upon which our spiritual life and strength solely depend.

“It is in *this* sense that the crucified Jesus is present in the sacrament of His Supper — not in or with the bread and wine, nor under their accidents, but in the souls of *communicants* — not carnally, but effectually and faithfully, and therefore most really.” — Philpotts' *Letter to Butler*, 8vo edit. 1825, pp. 235, 236.

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<sup>95</sup> *Manducation*: the belief that eating the bread of the Eucharist is eating the actual flesh of Jesus.

**46.** *What did Archbishop Longley say in his last Charge, printed and published after his death in 1868?*

“The doctrine of the real presence is, in one sense, the doctrine of the Church of England. She asserts that the body and blood of Christ are ‘truly and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper.’ And she asserts equally that such presence is not material or corporeal, but that Christ’s body is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only in a heavenly and spiritual manner’ (Art. 28). Christ’s presence is effectual for all those intents and purposes for which His body was broken and His blood shed. As to a presence elsewhere than in the heart of a believer, the Church of England is silent, and the words of Hooker therefore represent her views: ‘The real presence of Christ’s most blessed body and blood is not to be sought in the *sacrament*, but in the worthy *receiver* of the sacrament.’”

**47.** *What did the Judicial Committee of Privy Council declare in the famous case of Shepherd V. Bennet?*

“It is not lawful for a clergyman to teach that the sacrifice and offering of Christ on the cross, or the redemption, propitiation, or satisfaction wrought by it, is or can be repeated in the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper; nor that there is or can be in that ordinance any sacrifice or offering of Christ which is efficacious in the sense in which Christ’s death is efficacious, to procure the remission of guilt or punishment of sins.”

“Any presence of Christ in the Holy Communion, which is not a presence to the soul of the faithful *receiver*, the Church of England does not affirm by her Articles and formularies, nor require her ministers to accept. This cannot be stated too plainly.”

**48.** *What is the declaration which, under the “Act of Settlement,” and by the law of England, every Sovereign of this country, at his or her Coronation, must “make, subscribe, and audibly repeat”!*

It is the declaration, let it be remembered, which was made, subscribed, and repeated by Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.

“I, Victoria, do solemnly and sincerely, in the presence of God, profess, testify, and declare that I do believe that in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper there is not any transubstantiation of the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, at or after the consecration of it, by any person whatever; and that the invocation or adoration of the Virgin Mary or any other saint, and the sacrifice of the mass, as they are now used in the Church of Rome, are superstitious and idolatrous. And I do solemnly, in the presence of God, profess, testify, and declare, that I do make this declaration, and every part of it, in the plain and ordinary sense of the words read to me, as they are commonly understood by English Protestants, without any evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation, and without any dispensation already granted me for this purpose by the Pope or any other authority or person whatever, or without any hope of any such dispensation from any person or authority whatever, or without thinking that I am or can be acquitted before God or man, or absolved of this declaration or any part of it, even if the Pope or any other person or persons, or power whatever, will dispense with or annul the same, or declare that it was null and void from the beginning.”

**49.** *After all, are these nice and deep questions about a real corporeal presence and a sacrifice in the Lord's Supper of any vital importance? Do they really interfere with any leading truths of the gospel? Are they not all strifes about words which are of no consequence? Are they not all mere aesthetic squabbling about ornaments, on which tastes may be allowed to differ?*

The man who can say such things as this, exhibits most woeful ignorance of Christian theology as laid down in the New Testament, and has very much to learn. The "harmless theory," as some people call it, of a real corporeal presence of Christ's natural body and blood in the bread and wine, if pursued to its legitimate consequences, obscures every leading doctrine of the gospel, and damages and interferes with the whole system of Christ's truth. Grant for a moment that the Lord's Supper is a *sacrifice*, and not a *sacrament* — grant that every time the words of consecration are used, the natural body and blood of Christ are present on the communion table under the forms of bread and wine — grant that everyone who eats that consecrated bread and drinks that consecrated wine, really eats and drinks the body and blood of Christ — grant these things for a moment, and the most momentous consequences result from these premises.

— You spoil the blessed doctrine of Christ's finished work when He died on the cross. A sacrifice that needs to be repeated is not a perfect and complete thing. You spoil the priestly office of Christ. If there are priests who can offer an acceptable sacrifice to God besides Him, the great High Priest is robbed of His glory.

— You spoil the scriptural doctrine of the Christian ministry. You exalt sinful men into the position of mediators between God and man. You give to the sacramental elements of bread and wine an honour and veneration they were never meant to receive, and produce an idolatry that is to be abhorred by faithful Christians.

— Last, but not least, you overthrow the true doctrine of Christ's human nature. If the body born of the Virgin Mary can be in more places than one, at the same time, it is not a body like our own, and Jesus was not the second Adam in the truth of our nature. Our martyred Reformers saw and felt these things even more clearly than we do; and seeing and feeling them, they chose to die rather than admit the doctrine of the Real Presence.

**50.** *But may not these unhappy divisions about the Lord's Supper be healed and laid to rest by sanctioning a policy of general compromise and toleration? Why should not Churchmen agree to allow every clergyman to believe and teach just what he likes about the Lord's Supper? Why not proclaim by authority, that for peace' sake one clergyman may call this ordinance a sacrament, and another clergyman in the next parish may call it a sacrifice — one man may tell his people that there is a real corporeal presence of Christ on the Lord's Table, and another tell his people that there is no such presence at all? Why not permit all this for the sake of peace? Why not sacrifice all distinct doctrine in order to avoid controversy?*

The answer is plain and obvious. This "policy of compromise and toleration" would bring no peace at all, but would rather increase, emphasize, crystallize, and solidify our unhappy divisions. It would be regarded by the laity of the middle and lower classes as a deliberate attempt to bring back the Romish Mass, and leave behind the Protestant Reformation. It would split the clergy of every diocese into two distinct bodies, neither of which would hold any communion with the other. It would increase the difficulties of bishops tenfold,

and make it impossible to examine any candidate for orders about the Lord's Supper. Above all, this policy of universal toleration would sooner or later bring down the displeasure of God, and ruin the Church of England. Peace, cessation of controversy, free thought, and liberty in administering sacraments, are excellent things to talk about, and they look beautiful at a distance. But they must have some bounds. The Church which in its zeal for peace, throws creeds and rubrics overboard, and regards Deism, Socinianism, Romanism, and Protestantism with equal favour or equal indifference, is a mere Babel, a city of confusion, and not a city of God. This is what the Church of England will come to if she ever gives up the principles of her martyred Reformers about the Lord's Supper.

**51.** *What is the Real Presence that the Church of England specially needs in these latter days?*

IT IS THE PRESENCE OF GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT. This is of far more importance than any corporeal presence of Christ. Our question in every place of worship should not be, "Is Christ's body here?" but, "Is the Spirit, the Comforter, here?" Excessive craving for Christ's material bodily presence before the Second Advent, is in reality dishonouring the Holy Spirit. Where He is, there will be God's blessing. Where He is, there will be true honour given to the body and blood of Christ. What the Church of Christ needs everywhere, is the real presence of the Holy Ghost. If the Holy Spirit is not present, the highest show of reverence for the consecrated bread and wine in the Lord's Supper is useless formality, and completely worthless in God's sight.

## CHAPTER 21 – 1Th 2.1-2.

### “FOR KINGS.”<sup>96</sup>

“I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all who are in authority.” — 1Th 2.1-2.

THE words which head this page are taken from a passage of Scripture which is eminently suitable to the solemn occasion which gathers us together, the Jubilee of our gracious Sovereign Queen Victoria’s reign. A royal Jubilee is a very rare event in history, and in all human probability this is the only one in England which any of us will ever live to see. Let us lay this seriously to heart in today’s service of prayer and praise!

The words of the text occur in the first direction which St. Paul gave, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to his young friend Timothy, about the conduct of public worship. “First of all,” he says emphatically — “first of all, I exhort that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all who are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life.”

I might say something about the striking contrast between the elaborate and minute ritual of the Old Testament Church under the ceremonial law, and the remarkable simplicity and brevity of the ritual provided for the Church of the new dispensation. It is a contrast easily explained. The worship of the Old Testament was designed for the Jews alone — for one single nation practically cut off from the rest of mankind — and was full of types and emblems of good things to come. The worship of the New Testament was intended for all the world, and as the Thirty-fourth Article of our Church has wisely said, “Ceremonies may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men’s manners.”

One thing, however, is very certain. The rule, or rubric, laid down by St. Paul for the guidance of Timothy at Ephesus, is meant to be a rule of perpetual obligation as long as the world stands, and until the Lord comes. Whenever Christians meet together for public worship, there ought to be “prayers and intercessions for all men,” and specially “for kings,” as well as “thanksgiving for mercies received. This primary rule you are invited to observe this day.

*I. Concerning the general duty of praying for others, I think it useful to say something. But my words will be few.*

I suspect the thought crosses some minds, “What is the use of my intercession? What am I but a debtor to Christ’s mercy and grace? How can the prayer of such a poor sinner be of any use to others? Praying for myself I can understand; but not praying for another.”

The answer to all such thoughts is short and simple. It is the command of God, and it is a plain duty to obey it. In this, as in many other matters, it becomes a mortal man to believe that the light of the last day will make all clear. In the meantime, the “how” and the “why” and the “wherefore” had better be left alone. What we do not know now, we will know hereafter. The practice of almost every saint in the Bible, of whom much is recorded, ought to silence all objections. Patriarchs, prophets, kings, and apostles have left us examples of

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<sup>96</sup> The paper now in the reader’s hands contains file substance of a sermon preached in Liverpool Cathedral, on June 20th, 1887, on the occasion of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria, before the Mayor and leading inhabitants of Liverpool.

intercession. Do we know more than they did? Do we think they wasted their time when they named others before God? Are we wiser than they?

I have a firm conviction that in this matter, God tests our faith and our love. Do we believe that the eternal God is too wise to make any mistake? Then, when He says, “Pray for others,” let us not stand still, reasoning and arguing, but do as He tells us. When our Lord Jesus Christ says that the best proof of a high standard of love is to “Pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you” (Mat 5.44), let us believe and obey. I always thank God that our time-honoured Prayer Book contains such a grand specimen of intercession as the Litany. I believe the last day alone will show how the prayers of God’s elect have affected the history of this world, and influenced the rise and fall of nations. There was deep truth in the saying of unhappy Mary Queen of Scots, “I fear the prayers of John Knox more than an army of 20,000 men.” So, when we kneel to pray for ourselves, let us never forget to pray for others.

**II.** *Concerning the special duty of praying for kings and all who are in authority, I must not omit to say something. But once again my words will be few.*

A moment’s reflection will tell us that St. Paul’s injunction to “pray for kings” is a very singular and remarkable one. For consider in whose hands the government of the world lay at the time when the Epistle to Timothy was written. Think what a monster of iniquity wore the imperial purple at Rome — Nero — whose very name is a proverb. Think of such rulers of provinces as Felix and Festus, Herod Agrippa and Gallio. Think of the ecclesiastical heads of the Jewish Church, Annas and Caiaphas. Yet these were the men for whom St. Paul says Christians were to pray! Their personal characters might be bad. But they were persons ordained by God to keep some outward order in this sin-burdened world. As such, for their office’ sake, they were to be prayed for.

After all, we must never forget that none are so truly to be pitied — none in such spiritual danger — none so likely to make shipwreck to all eternity — and none stand in such need of our prayers, as the kings of this world. Few out of the many who criticise their conduct, seriously consider the enormous difficulties of their position.

Think of the temptations which surround them. Seldom advised, seldom contradicted, seldom warned, they dwell in bodies like our own, and have like passions as ourselves, and are liable to be overcome by the world, the flesh, and the devil, just like other men. I do not wonder to read that when Buchanan, once tutor to James the First, was lying on his deathbed, he sent a last message to his royal pupil, “that he was going to a place to which few kings and princes ever came.” If it is true, as of course it must be because our Lord said it, how “hardly a rich man will enter the kingdom of God,” [Mat 19.23](#) then how much harder will entrance be for a king!

Think of the countless knots which a king has to untie, and the awkward questions which he often has to decide. How to arrange differences with other countries — how to promote the prosperity of all classes of the community — how to decide when to tighten the reins of government, and when to loosen them — how to select the right men to fill vacant posts — how to deal fairly and justly with all ranks, sorts, and conditions of men, attending impartially to all, and neglecting none — all these are difficulties which the poor fallible occupant of a throne has to face every week of his life. Can we wonder if he makes mistakes? Well might a poet of our own say, “Uneasy sleeps the head that wears a crown.”

Think of the immense responsibility of a king's office, and the tremendous issues which depend on his decisions. A single error in judgment in managing a negotiation, a lack of temper in dealing with an ambassador, a hasty reliance on erroneous information — any one of these things may involve his subjects in a war attended by fearful bloodshed, losses abroad, discontent at home, heavy taxation, and finally perhaps, revolution and deposition from his throne. And all of it may come from one man's mistake.

Yes! we may well be exhorted to "pray for kings." If we could only believe it, of all the children of Adam they most deserve our daily intercessions. Raised above their fellows by their position, they find themselves, like the Alpine traveller who scales the Matterhorn, fearfully alone. In the nature of things, they can have no equals with whom to exchange hearts and sympathies. They are surrounded by those who are tempted to be flatterers and sycophants, and to make things pleasant to royal ears. They seldom hear the whole truth. They are only human beings like ourselves, needing the same Christ — the same Holy Spirit. Yet they are expected to never err, and are blamed if they do.

Yes! we may well "pray for kings." It is easy to criticise and find fault with their conduct, and write furious articles against them in newspapers, or make violent speeches about them on platforms. Any fool can rip and rend a costly garment; but not every man can cut out and make one. To expect perfection in kings, prime ministers, or rulers of any kind, is senseless and unreasonable. We should exhibit more wisdom if we prayed for them more, and criticised less.

**III.** *Let me now invite your attention to the special subject which calls us together this day, viz. the celebration of the Royal English Jubilee.*

This very day our gracious Queen Victoria completes the fiftieth year of her reign. I ask you to come with me and look back on the half century which has just concluded. My aim is to show you as briefly as possible some of the great reasons why we ought to be a very thankful people this day. In a fallen world like ours there always will be many unredressed evils; and murmurers and complainers will be found in every quarter. For myself, I can only say that, on a calm retrospect of the last fifty years, I see so many causes for national thankfulness, that I find it hard to know what I should select, and where to begin. Let me, however, try to name a few.

(a) First and foremost among the reasons for thankfulness, let me mention the stainless and blameless personal character which our gracious Sovereign has borne during the long fifty years of her reign. In all the relations of life as a mother and a wife — in the high moral standard which she has maintained in her Court and household — in her scrupulous and diligent discharge of the countless daily duties which her high office entails upon her — in her boundless sympathy with the sorrows of her humblest subjects — where, in the long roll of English sovereigns, will you find one who can be compared with our good Queen Victoria?

I believe we do not realize sufficiently the immense importance of a Sovereign's personal character in the present day. The character of a ruler, like the insensible pressure of the atmosphere on every square inch of our bodies, will always have a silent, quiet influence on the conduct of subjects. The lives of sovereigns are an open book which all can read, and the example of a crowned head often does more than legal enactments. There can be no doubt that the enormous immorality of the French Court in the eighteenth century

was the true cause of the first French Revolution, and the Reign of Terror. During the last half century, the foundations of not a few governments in the world have been rudely shaken, and some have been completely overturned. Nothing, I suspect, had contributed so largely to the stability of the British throne as the high character of the Royal Lady who has occupied it. A revolutionary spirit, we all know, has been frequently in the air during the last fifty years; and a disposition to pull down all established institutions, and substitute new-fangled schemes of government, has repeatedly shown itself. The rise and progress of Chartism and Socialism have often made many afraid. Nothing, I firmly believe, has kept the ship of the British State on an even keel so much as the inner life of our beloved Queen. If that inner life had been such as the lives of some of the Plantagenets, Tudors, and Stuarts, I extremely doubt whether the royal standard would have been flying at Windsor Castle this week.

(b) In the next place, let us be thankful for the singularly long period of time during which God has permitted our gracious Sovereign to sit on the throne of her ancestors. Of all the kings of Judah who reigned in Jerusalem, Uzziah and Manasseh were the only two who held the sceptre for more than fifty years, and even David and Solomon's reigns were only forty years long. Our own kings, Henry the Third, Edward the Third, and George the Third, each reigned more than fifty years. But, since the world began, we know of no female sovereign in historic times, on the face of the globe, who has worn a crown so long as our good Queen Victoria. I am sure we are not sufficiently grateful for this. Even under a constitutional monarchy like ours — in which everything does not depend on the whim of an imperial autocrat — frequent changes on the throne are calculated to have a disturbing influence; and a new sovereign's views of his power and duties may not always coincide with those of his predecessor. There is a deep meaning in Solomon's words: "For the transgression of a land, many are the princes of it" (Pro 28.2). In early English history, the bloody wars of the Roses swept away the flower of our nobility; and struggles between the rival houses of York and Lancaster frequently shook the throne, and desolated the realm. At a later date, the unhappy Commonwealth struggle<sup>97</sup> overturned for a time our long-established institutions. Happy is the land in which there are few changes on the throne. "Grant our Sovereign a long life," and "God save the Queen," should be the daily prayer of every British patriot.

(c) In the next place, let us thank God for the enormous growth in national wealth and prosperity by which the half century of Queen Victoria's reign has been distinguished. It is a simple matter of fact, that in no preceding fifty years of English history has there been anything like it. To use a well-known phrase, the capital or income of the country has moved on "by leaps and bounds." In spite of occasional cycles of bad times and commercial depression — in spite of bloody and expensive wars, such as the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny — in spite of providential visitation, such as cholera and the Irish potato famine — the progress of the nation and the increase of wealth have been

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<sup>97</sup> The *Commonwealth* was the period from 1649 to 1660 when England and Wales, and later Ireland and Scotland, were ruled as a republic. This followed the end of the SECOND ENGLISH CIVIL WAR, and the execution of Charles I. Fighting continued, particularly in Ireland and Scotland, between the parliamentary forces and those opposed to them, a period now referred to as the THIRD ENGLISH CIVIL WAR. In 1653, after the forcible dissolution of the Rump Parliament, the Army Council made Oliver Cromwell the Lord Protector of the "Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland." This was the period known as the *Protectorate*.

something astounding. The waves on the shore have seemed to come and go, to advance and retire — but on the whole, the tide has been steadily rising every year.

In 1837, the sums of money deposited in Savings Banks were only 14 million. They are now 90 million. In 1843, when the income tax was first imposed, each penny in the pound brought £772,000 into the National Exchequer. In 1885, each penny produced £1,992,000. In 1843, the assessable value of lands and tenements was only 95 million. In 1885, it was 180 million. The assessable value of trades and professions in 1843 was only 71 million. In 1885, it was 282 million. The population of the United Kingdom was 25 million in 1837. It is now, in spite of the Irish famine and a ceaseless emigration, 37 million.

In our own city of Liverpool, the population in 1837 was only 246,000. It is now, including suburbs, 700,000. The tonnage of shipping at our port in 1837 was only 1,953,894. It is now 7,546,623. The number of ships entering was 15,038. It is now 21,529. In 1837, Liverpool had 9 docks, with a frontage of two miles and a half to the river. There are now fifty docks and basins with a frontage of six miles. In 1837, Liverpool dock dues were £173,853. They are now £694,316.

Surely we ought to be thankful. This is the finger of God. It is “the blessing of the Lord that makes rich.” — “Both riches and honour come from Him” (Pro 10.22; 1Chr 29.12).<sup>98</sup>

(d) In the next place, we ought to be thankful for the extraordinary advances which science has made during the half century of our gracious Sovereign’s reign. We have bridged the Atlantic with our steamers, and brought our English-speaking cousins within a week of our shores — a thing which I well remember Dr. Lardner declared to be impossible. We have covered the land with a network of railways, making journeys possible in a few hours, which formerly occupied days. We have opened communication with every part of the world by electric telegraph, and can send messages in a few hours, which formerly would not have been conveyed in as many months.

All these things, and many others, have budded, blossomed, and bloomed since Queen Victoria ascended her throne. They have added immensely to the comfort and convenience of modern life. They have practically annihilated time and space, and lengthened life, and enabled us to do an amount of work in twenty-four hours, which our grandfathers would have thought Quixotical, romantic, absurd, and impossible. But they are simple facts. Surely we ought to be thankful

(e) Finally, and above all, we ought to be most thankful for the immense advance which the cause of religion, education, and morality has made throughout the realm since Queen Victoria came to the throne. Human nature, no doubt, has not changed. The millennium has not begun, and much evil abounds. But still, that man must be blind or obstinately prejudiced, who does not see an immense change for the better, both as regards duty to God and duty to our neighbours throughout the country, in the last half century. Church building, no doubt, is not everything, and bricks and mortar do not constitute religion. Yet the mere fact that 2000 new churches, besides Nonconformist chapels, have been built in England and Wales during the last fifty years, by voluntary efforts; and nearly thirty million pounds have been spent in restoring old places of

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<sup>98</sup> For the figures in this paragraph I am chiefly indebted to my friend Sir James Picton, of Liverpool, a well-known master of statistics.

worship and building new ones, speaks volumes. Even here in Liverpool and its suburbs, there were only 36 churches and about 70 clergymen in 1837. At this moment there are 90 churches and 185 clergy. In 1837, the income of the Church Missionary Society was £71,000; it is now £232,000. The Pastoral Aid Society only received £7363. It now receives £50,122. In 1837, there were only 58,000 children receiving education in all the schools of the National and British and Foreign School Societies throughout England and Wales. In 1885, there were nearly 4,000,000 under instruction and inspection. It is a striking fact that during the half century of Queen Victoria's reign, her Governments have spent fifty million on education.

As to works of philanthropy and efforts to promote morality, time would fail me if I tried to recount them. The labours of men like Lord Shaftesbury and others have raised the condition of the working classes [ten] percent. The Ten Hours Factory Act, the legislation about women and children working in mines, the creation of Ragged Schools and reformatories, the rise and progress of the temperance movement, the many efforts to ameliorate the condition of the working classes by education, sanitation, public parks, and recreation grounds — *all* these things have been the creation of the last fifty years. I call them healthy symptoms of our condition as a nation. I humbly confess that we are still very imperfect. There is still a vast amount of improvidence, wilful poverty, drunkenness, impurity, and Sabbath-breaking in the land, which is greatly to be regretted. But these evils are less than they were in proportion to the population. And at any rate, we see them, know them, and are honestly using means to prevent them. Surely our hearts, when we compare 1837 and 1887, ought to be deeply thankful.

On a day like this it is fit, right, and our bound duty to praise God. Let me earnestly entreat all whom I address today to turn from the black clouds on his horizon, to look at the blue sky, and to be thankful. Where is the nation on the face of the globe which has had such reason to thank God for the last half century as Great Britain? And who can deny that, in reckoning up the many blessings of that period, we have reason to thank God for the wise and beneficent reign of our Queen? There are names in the long roll of English kings which no Englishman can think of without shame. The memory of a Royal William, or Henry, or Edward, or James, or Charles, or George, is by no means always fragrant. But I doubt if the future historian will ever record the name of a monarch whose subjects will have had such cause to be thankful as we have for Queen Victoria.

And now, to these praises and thanksgivings let us add an earnest prayer that the life of our beloved Sovereign may yet be spared to us for many years, and that these years may be years of increasing happiness and usefulness to the end. We all know that she has had many sorrowful times to pass through. The deaths of the Prince Consort, the Princess Alice, and the Duke of Albany, were crushing trials which will never be forgotten. Let us pray that she may be spared further trials of this kind, that she may long continue to live in the affections of a prosperous, united, and contented people, and that when she is removed from this world of sorrow, she may enter with an abundant entrance into that kingdom where tears are wiped from all eyes, and receive that crown of glory which alone never fades away.

**THE END**