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SERMONIC.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH.

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For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.—TITUS ii: 11, 12.

By the force of events certain truths have been placed into prominence before our minds. They have excited, not only investigation, but discussion. I have no doubt many of us have been anxious; some have been alarmed. I do not think there is any reason for trouble, any ground for fear. The truth can bear the light; it always comes out of discussion more definite and stable. It is true that for a moment the minds of some are unsettled. This cannot be helped: it has always been so. Anything is better than indifference; and if we need to be roused even by opposition, it is well if only our minds shall be candid, our temper shall be earnest, and we shall seek knowledge in its sources—the Word of God, and under the light and guidance of the Spirit of truth.

It is not my purpose to consider at all any of these matters which have been in this manner prominent, and which have been subject to discussion; but, as I have watched the course of things, taking no part, attending to my own duties, and trying with all humility, if not modesty, to keep my place, I have come to believe that certain misapprehensions have been disclosed that ought to be removed, and that certain practical errors have become manifest that ought to be corrected. And I desire to contribute something to this end, now and here, for your edification, and for the good of all those whom you may serve in the Gospel and kingdom of Jesus Christ.

I think we have taken too narrow a view of the purpose and method of divine grace. We have all of us undoubtedly conceived that God intends to manifest to men His mercy and loving-kindness in Jesus Christ, that He may draw them to Himself; that He vouchsafes to them in Christ the promise of the forgiveness of sins and peace with Him, through the sacrifice once offered, but always ample and availing; that He intends by His Spirit to enlighten and

[The first several sermons are reported in full; the remainder are given in condensed form. Every care is taken to make these reports correct; yet our readers must not forget that it would be unfair to hold a speaker responsible for what may appear in a condensation, made by another, of his discourse.]

A foolish girl stands amid the gay
 guests holding the bleeding head of
 the Almighty's prophet on a platter.

Of the infamous three—

"Which is it that the spirit loathes
 And shrinks from most in that bad strife?
 The tyrant's plea of guests and oaths—
 The hate of the incestuous wife—
 Or the young girl of that fell brood,
 That laps her first hot taste of blood?"

Luca Giordano has given us clearly his answer to this question in his painting, which hangs in the National Museum at Naples. It is a picture of the presentation of John's head. The old sensualist looks at it with some terror of countenance and a gesture of aversion. Salome, beautiful and not altogether hardened, holds the platter with a frightened look as if she were afraid of her awful burden. Only the heartless and abandoned Herodias wears a meretricious smile of brutal satisfaction, gloating over the closed eyes and bloodless lips which can no longer look and speak rebuke.

Now that John is disposed of, Herod, after the shock of this sight is past, may, at least, feel a sense of complete victory over the man he feared: but poor and comfortless is evil's triumph. Herod has not rid himself of John by killing him. He cannot forget the murdered face, and the man of God will not stay dead. The prophet's voice is not silenced by the executioner's hand, but sounds on in the guilty, haunted soul.

John troubles Herod more now than when he was alive. The prisoner does not stay down in the dungeon any more, but rooms with Herod, sits spectral at the Tetrarch's feasts, makes festival doleful as funeral, wakes him in the night, and keeps saying unpleasant things on the inner side of his ear-drum.

The ruler of Galilee and Perea is in such a state of mind that when he hears of strange things being done near or far, he exclaims in a shiver of fear, "It is John. He has risen from the dead!"

Who are victors:—

"The martyrs or Nero? The Spartans
 Who fell at Thermopylæ's tryst?
 Or the Persians and Xerxes? His judges
 Or Socrates? Pilate or Christ?"

THOROUGH AMENDMENT.

By THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D., IN
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*If ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, * * * then I will cause you to dwell in this place.*—Jer. vii: 5-7.

ONE of the bravest of men once stood in the temple gate at Jerusalem and uttered this short yet searching sermon. It is a model of plain, practical, pungent preaching. God's people had wandered, following after idols. He sends them a double message—one of threatening, and one of promise: "If ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, then I will let you dwell in this place." If they would return, then their temple would be glorious with His presence, their fields rich with harvests, and their homes with God's favor. Remember that God's principles of government do not change; nor does human nature, materially. Jew and Gentile, old nations and new, need the same renovating grace.

1. Religion has to do with character and conduct. Religion is that which "binds," and it has a tremendous grip. It has to do not only with creeds, and forms, and rites, but with character and conduct.

2. Religion makes little of mere emotion. Some persons delight in the excitation of the sensibilities. The Master's word is, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." This is the proof of genuine love. The mother takes her boy's kiss as a sign of emotion, but sees in his obedience the proof of principle, which is more than mere feeling. We hold religion too cheaply, and speak of the ease with which it may be had, overlooking the stubborn depravity of the heart and the power of Satan. Some would like to ride to heaven in a close carriage, that would never be jolted, or enjoy sunshine all the way to the gates of glory. Too much of preaching encourages this feeling. There is no clinch of principle. Rutherford speaks of the "loose work" of those who take Christ for nothing, and never use "a sick night over their sins."

The eyes that wept over Bethany will also shoot out flames of wrath—the “wrath of the Lamb.” Some look on the lovable side of Jesus. They feel on Sunday no opposition to Him, but the next day they find it hard to keep their temper, or to make restitution for wrong-doing.

The first characteristic of true religion is a right view of sin. Liberal theology, so called, and true theology meet and part at a signboard marked “sin.” One road leads to the Cross, the other away from it. Christ did not come here to act a dramatic performance. Our prayer should be, “Wash me thoroughly,” even as the spotted robe was in David’s day cleansed in a vat with strong acid and alkali, mauled and bruised with mallet, till the stain was gone. We glibly sing:

“Now wash me, and I shall be
Whiter than snow.”

We do not know what it costs to be bleached! God uses powerful methods to purify. Some dread to be born again, because they know that they will be required to thoroughly amend their ways, i. e., “throughly,” as the word was formerly spelled. True amendment goes through and through to the uttermost end—clear to the furthest limit.

Secondly, there must be not only right views, but a clean sweep of sin. The people of Israel found that those they spared of idolatrous nations were thorns in their sides and pricks in their eyes. If we do not drive sin out, sin will drive us out. What we call little sins accumulate, as do the snowflakes which stop a locomotive. We shall arrest the power and blessing of God by tolerating small transgressions. These deform character, as Maclaren says ants will pick a carcass cleaner than a lion.

Thirdly, thorough amendment comprehends character and conduct—what we are and what we do. It were useless to throw our prayers into a malarious swamp and leave the source, the well-head, unclean. Pray that God’s Spirit may create “a clean heart.” Then follow conscience. When a covetous man chooses to devote to God what he has hitherto kept to himself, laying up real

estate in heaven, you may be sure that his heart is melting. When a frivolous woman says, “This world is not a ball-room, and life a mere frolic; I will care for my soul,” you may be sure that she has begun a new course. Mr. Finney was the most extraordinary man of this century in probing the conscience. “Will you give up this?” he said to a man, over and over again. “Yes,” was the repeated reply. He finally was silent when asked, “Will you serve God in your business?” When pressed, he replied, “*I am in the liquor business!*” He had not the audacity—no man ever had the audacity—to say that he would serve God in the liquor business. He went away sorrowfully. The amendment enjoined in the text is a new life. Christ and the soul are firmly united, and He is the model. A little fiber, just enough to cling to the sacrament, is not enough. That Hamburg grapevine last October would not have yielded you those rich clusters if the branches had not been closely united to the vine. You are Christ’s. You will hate sin because He abhors it. You will also heed Christ’s demands on your time, your income, and your strength. Whether you work or play, eat or drink, live or die, you will be His. You will reprove sin by your example. Look in a mirror. You see but one face. Look in the Bible and see yourself alone. Then honestly say, “I am a sinner: let all Brooklyn sin, I will try to do my duty.”

Finally, the text promises permanency; not merely a visit, but an abode where one can root and grow, work and worship, till transplanted to heaven.

Brethren, the text says, “If ye will thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, *then, THEN*—” but if you contradict my statements here by your lives before the world, in the family, or in business, then I have lost my case! Had I been a lawyer—I came near being one—and, pleading a case, had I found my witnesses contradicting my statements, not the eloquence of a Webster could carry the jury. O let me see you rather confirming the truths uttered here, and so, like “a great cloud of wit-

nesses," repeating and enforcing the Word of God before an unbelieving world!

THE CHILD-HEART.

BY CANON BOYD CARPENTER, IN THE TEMPLE CHURCH, LONDON.

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.—Luke x: 21.

OUR Lord draws an *intellectual* contrast between the wise and prudent on one side, and on the other the babes. He draws a *moral* contrast, also, between those who follow in the wake of worldly wisdom and prudence, and that sweet moral disposition which He describes as a childlike heart. We must keep both contrasts in mind.

I. THE INTELLECTUAL CONTRAST. The world, Christ would tell us, is divisible into the simple and the wise. Our Lord rejoices that the larger section is not excluded from participation in the things of the kingdom of God; that men do not need worldly wisdom and the prudence of experience in order to knowing the truths of salvation. This is really the characteristic of Christianity. Aristocratic tendencies appear in other religions—race, birth, nationality, or intellect, confers the privileges of them. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. No exclusive sentence is written over the portals of Christianity. It is adjusted to the lowest and meanest capacity. It would be a mockery if high intellectual attainments were required. Well might Jesus rejoice in spirit that the simplest and lowliest in heart can perceive the meaning of the Gospel. He did not disparage intellect; no more than He disparaged righteousness when He said, "I came not to call the righteous." He rejoices that His mission was to *all humanity*—weak, low, ignorant, debased—to all who know the weight of earth's sorrows and sins.

II. THE MORAL CONTRAST. He wishes to tell us what is essential—that it is

only to the child-heart that revelation will be made. We know the contrast between the child-heart, and a heart sophisticated by life. As years pass over us, they tend to impoverish our affection; to give us selfishness and isolation in place of the fresh, confiding heart of childhood. Worldly and hardened hearts cannot receive the revelation of the things of heaven. (1) It is even so in regard to the world of beauty around us. We fill our hearts with cares, and immerse ourselves in business, so that we cannot see the beauty of a landscape which entrances the child-heart. (2) It is true also of noble actions or ideas: only the care-free child-heart feels their beauty and sublimity. (3) When a great evil is to be dealt with, we notice how slowly the consciences of worldly-wise, practical men rise to a great public duty, and how swiftly the child-heart perceives the line between right and wrong. The wise and prudent heart has lost—much as it has gained—the freshness, the simplicity, the warm enthusiasm of child-life. It is true, then, that natural beauty, intellectual beauty, and moral beauty are best perceived by unsullied hearts—childlike hearts—and the same principle must hold in regard to the spiritual revelation. This Christ loved to preach. He "set a child in the midst" to say, "You must get back the child-heart." His rejection by His people proved it. The insincerities of the wise and prudent heart rejected Him whom the unsophisticated people heard gladly.

III. THE PRACTICAL RESULT. Christ rejoices that none are excluded from His kingdom. But no gigantic effort of intellect will enable us to climb over the battlements of heaven. Wisdom is nearer to us when we stoop. We must put our energy, thought, patience, into the language of prayer rather than the language of research. The gates of God's eternal truth are locked to the strongest intellects; but at the touch, and at the simplest trembling knock of the little child's hand, or of the contrite heart, they will roll back and the secrets of God's heaven shall be unveiled.