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SERMONIC.

LOVE TO AN UNSEEN CHRIST.

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*"And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest
all things; thou knowest that I love thee."*

—John xxi: 17.

THERE were occasions in the earthly history of Christ when He exhibited all the sympathies and affections of the human heart, both of joy and of sorrow; for example, at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, and at the tomb of Lazarus. But, so far as I can remember, this is the only instance in which He ever betrayed anything approaching to what we ordinarily call sentiment. In the severity of His holiness as man, and in sublime consciousness of His trust as the mediator we are accustomed to think of Him as lifted above the necessity, if not above the reach, of human sympathy. The reader, therefore, pauses upon this peculiar passage, feeling that there must be in it something more than sentiment, and seeks for a deeper significance lying concealed. That Christ should thrice challenge Simon's love, and should thrice impose upon him a corresponding injunction, is suggestive of some moral purpose, which we nat-

urally desire to explore. When it is remembered that Peter, but a little before, had thrice denied his Lord, we find in this a clue to the whole dialogue. It was throughout a proceeding of compassionate love, offering His now penitent disciple an opportunity of retracting his profane denial; and the three-fold injunction, "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep," was the restitution of his honor and office, which Peter might well suppose forfeited by his fall.

But see the severity of Christ in the very dealing of His love. It is intimated in the style of the address: "Simon, son of Jonas"—not Peter, the baptismal name of discipleship. Does it not seem to imply that the new relation of grace was forever canceled?—that Peter is now to be thrown out of the school of his Lord, and to be nothing more than what he was before his call to the apostleship, "Simon, son of Jonas?" It is intimated again in the question, "Lovest thou me more than these?" which refers not, as many superficially interpret, to the fishes and the nets; as though Christ meant to say, "Dost thou love me more than these earthly possessions, and art thou now willing to forsake all and follow me?" The language

[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.]

Why a foe? It becomes our foe when the earthly and temporal take the place of the spiritual and eternal, when it tempts us to forget God, lose sight of the cross and miss the crown. But the world's grossest evils are not its most powerful weapons to assail the Christian. Let sin transfigure herself in a veil the thinnest and most transparent and the danger is begun. She comes then in the form of a tempter, with pleasures to allure us, and comforts to lull us to sleep. Thus the world assails us through the medium of the senses; makes us forget we are strangers and pilgrims, and would banish the remembrance of Gethsemane's tears and Calvary's atonement.

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S INVINCIBLE WEAPON—"faith."

How constantly does this great word occur in Holy Scripture. Faith is the first requisite to believing there is a God—the first requisite to salvation. Great men have all been men of faith. Their discoveries, etc., were all the rewards of their faith. So, all who have been great in the Church have had like faith. Jochebed, Abraham and David. These achieved bloodless victories. No other victories can equal those of faith. Some men are overcoming the world by material civilization, others by their intellectual life; but the true heroes are overcoming it by faith. They are in alliance with Christ, who cheers them on by saying, "I have overcome the world."

The faith that overcomes for life shall triumph in death. God will not leave the victors alone then, but they shall be able, like the dying warrior who waves his broken blade, to say, "This is the victory that overcometh"—DEATH—"even your faith."

THE VANITIES.

BY T. DEWITT TALMAGE, D.D., IN THE
BROOKLYN TABERNACLE.

Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.—Eccles. xii: 8.

KING SOLOMON is the author of this text. It seemed as if the world exhausted itself on that man. It wove its brightest flowers into his garland, set its richest gems into his coronet, pressed

the rarest wine to his lips, etc. All was his; and yet, standing amid all that splendor, the tears start and the heart breaks, and he exclaims, "Vanity of vanities," etc. I learn—

I. THAT OFFICIAL POSITION WILL NEVER GIVE SOLACE TO A MAN'S SOUL. There have been very happy men in very high positions, but the joy came not from their elevated positions, but from the Lord whom they tried to serve. The honor that is worth possessing comes from God; you can be kings and priests unto God forever.

II. THAT WORLDLY WEALTH CANNOT SATISFY THE SOUL'S LONGING. The more money a man has the better, if he gets it honestly and uses it lawfully. But the man who builds his soul's happiness on earthly accumulation is not wise. No amount that he can gather by the sweat of his brow or the strength of his arm can make him happy. The heart right, all is right. He invites you to higher riches, to crowns that never fade, to investments that always declare dividends.

III. THAT LEARNING CANNOT SATISFY THE SOUL. Solomon was one of the largest contributors to the literature of the day. The man who tries to make learning and science his God has a life of gigantic wretchedness. Byron had all that genius and sympathy with nature and literary applause could give a man, and yet he died of wretchedness.

IV. THAT IN THE LIFE OF THE VOLUPTUARY THERE IS NO COMFORT. I need not draw aside the curtain that hides the excesses into which Solomon's dissoluteness plunged him. But I tear off the garlands which hide this death's head, and I hold before you the reeking skull of sinful pleasure. *There is no peace* in the life of a voluptuary. Solomon answers, "None! none!" Where is there any? In the religion of Jesus. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. In Christ is peace. In Christ is pardon. In Christ is everlasting joy, and nowhere else.

PLEASURES of sin make temptation potent.