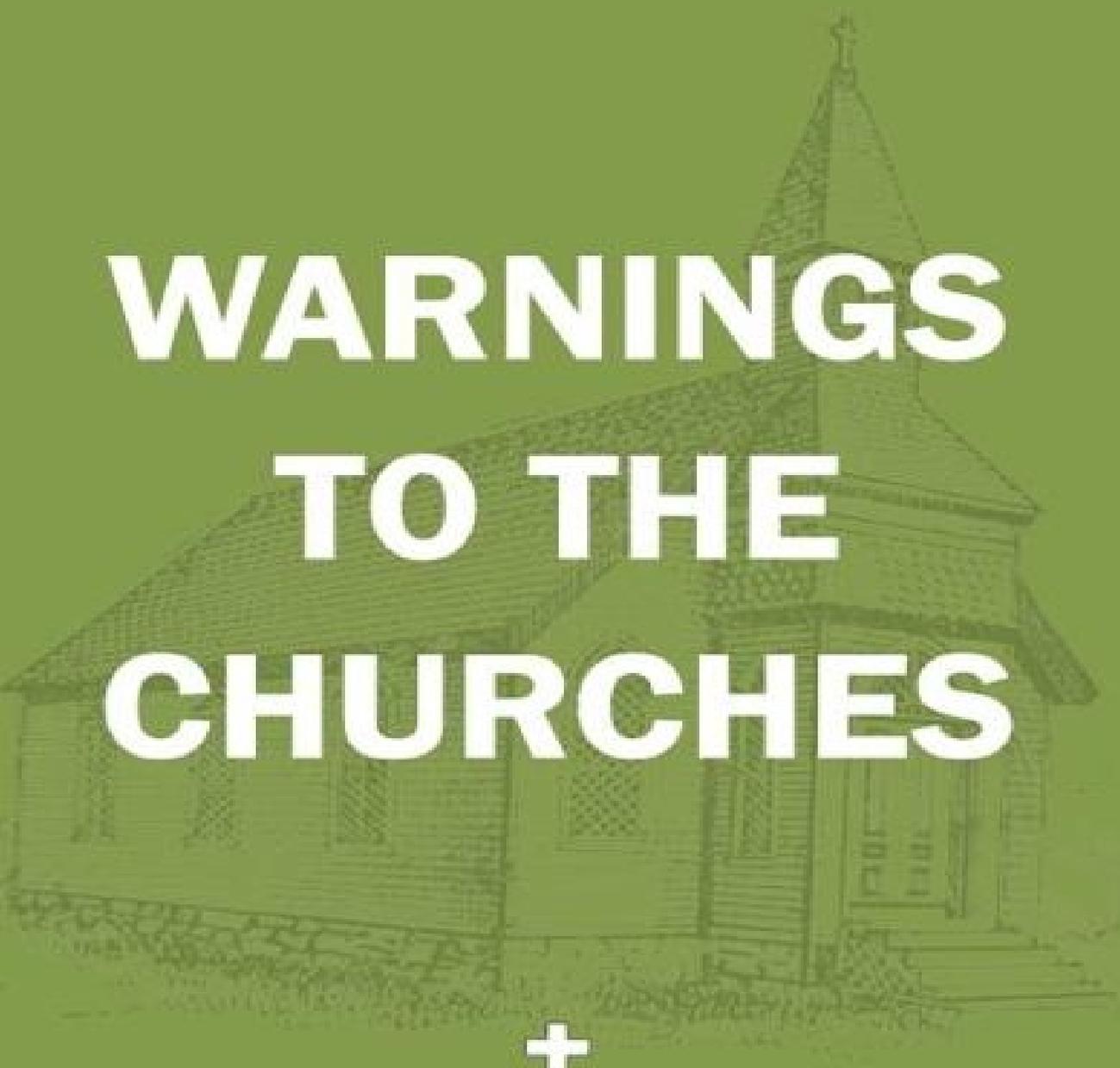


MONERGISM BOOKS

WARNINGS TO THE CHURCHES



J. C. Ryle

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Warnings to the Churches

by J. C. Ryle

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The True Church

"On this rock I will build *My church*, and the gates of hell will not overcome it." Matthew 16:18

We live in a world in which all things are passing away. Kingdoms, empires, cities, institutions, families—all are liable to change and

corruption. One universal law seems to prevail everywhere—in all created things there is a tendency to decay. There is something sad and depressing in this. What profit has a man, in the labor of his hands? Is there nothing that shall stand? Is there nothing that shall last? Is there nothing that shall endure? Is there nothing of which we can say—This shall continue forever?

You have the answer to these questions in the words of our text. Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks of something which shall continue, and not pass away. There is one created thing which is an exception to the universal rule to which I have referred. There is one thing which shall never perish and pass away. That thing is the building founded upon the rock—the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. He declares, in the words you have heard tonight: "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it." There are five things in these words which demand your attention:

1. A Building: "My Church"
2. A Builder: Christ says, "I will build My Church"
3. A Foundation: "On this rock I will build My Church"
4. Perils Implied: "The gates of hell"
5. Security Asserted: "The gates of hell will not overcome it"

May God bless the words that shall be spoken. May we all search our own hearts tonight, and know whether or not we belong to this one Church. May we all go home to reflect and to pray!

1. First, you have a "Building" mentioned in the text. The Lord Jesus Christ speaks of "My Church." Now what is this Church? Few inquiries can be made of more importance than this. For lack of due attention to this subject, the errors that have crept into the Church, and into the world, are neither few nor small. The Church of our text is no material building. It is no temple made with hands, of wood, or brick, or stone, or marble. It is a company of men and women. It is no particular

visible Church on earth. It is not the Eastern Church or the Western Church. It is not the Church of England, or the Church of Scotland—much less is it the Church of Rome. The Church of our text is one that makes far less show in the eyes of man, but is of far more importance in the eyes of God.

The Church of our text is made up of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. It comprehends all who have repented of sin, and fled to Christ by faith, and been made new creatures in Him. It comprises all God's elect, all who have received God's grace, all who have been washed in Christ's blood, all who have been clothed in Christ's righteousness, all who have been born again and sanctified by Christ's Spirit. All such, of every nation, and people, and tongue, compose the Church of our text. This is the body of Christ. This is the flock of Christ. This is the bride. This is the Lamb's wife. This is the Church on the rock.

The members of this Church do not all worship God in the same way, or use the same form of government. Our own 34th Article declares, "It is not necessary that ceremonies should be in all places one and alike." But they all worship with one heart. They are all led by one Spirit. They are all really and truly holy. They can all say "Alleluia," and they can all reply "Amen." This is that Church, to which all visible Churches on earth are servants. Whether they are Episcopalian, Independent, or Presbyterian, they all serve the interests of the one true Church. They are the scaffolding, behind which the great building is carried on. They are the husk, under which the living kernel grows.

They have their various degrees of usefulness. The best and worthiest of them, is that which trains up most members for Christ's true Church. But no visible Church has any right to say, "*We are the only true Church. We are the men, and truth shall die with us.*" No visible Church should ever dare to say, "*We shall stand forever. The gates of hell will not overcome us.*" This is that Church to which belong the Lord's precious promises of preservation, continuance, protection, and final glory. "Whatever," says Hooker, "we read in Scripture, concerning the endless love and saving mercy which God shows towards His Churches, the only proper subject is this Church, which we properly term the mystical body of Christ." *Small and despised* as the true Church may be in this world, it is *precious* and

honorable in the sight of God. The temple of Solomon in all its glory was nothing, in comparison with that Church which is built upon a rock.

Men and brethren, see that you hold sound doctrine on the subject of "the Church." A mistake here may lead to dangerous and soul-ruining errors. The Church which is made up of true believers, is the Church for which we, who are ministers, are specially ordained to preach. The Church which comprises all who repent and believe the Gospel, is the Church to which we desire you to belong. Our work is not done, and our hearts are not satisfied, until you are made new creatures, and are members of the one true Church. Outside of this Church, there can be no salvation. I pass on to the second point, to which I proposed to call your attention.

2. Our text contains not merely a building, but a "Builder". The Lord Jesus Christ declares, "I will build My Church." The true Church of Christ is tenderly cared for by all the three persons of the blessed Trinity. In the economy of redemption, beyond all doubt, God the *Father* chooses, and God the *Holy Spirit* sanctifies, every member of Christ's mystical body. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three Persons in one God, cooperate for the salvation of every saved soul. This is truth, which ought never to be forgotten. Nevertheless, there is a peculiar sense in which the help of the Church is laid on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is peculiarly and preeminently the Redeemer and the Savior. Therefore it is, that we find Him saying in our text, "I will build—the work of building is *my* special work." It is Christ who calls the members of the Church in due time. They are "the called of Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:6). It is Christ who gives them life. "The Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it" (John 5:21). It is Christ who washes away their sins. He "who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood" (Revelation 1:5). It is Christ who gives them peace. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you" (John 14:27). It is Christ who gives them eternal life. "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish" (John 10:28). It is Christ who grants them repentance. "God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior, that he might give repentance" (Acts 5:31). It is Christ who enables them to become God's children. "To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). It is Christ who carries on the work within them, when

it is begun. "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19).

In short, "God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Christ]" (Colossians 1:19). He is the author and finisher of faith. From Him every joint and member of the mystical body of Christians is supplied. Through Him they are strengthened for duty. By Him they are kept from falling. He shall preserve them to the end, and present them faultless before the Father's throne with exceeding great joy. He is all things, and all in all to believers.

The mighty *agent* by whom the Lord Jesus Christ carries out this work in the number of His Churches, is, without doubt, the *Holy Spirit*. He it is who applies Christ and His benefits to the soul. He it is who is ever renewing, awakening, convincing, leading to the cross, transforming, taking out of the world, stone after stone, and adding it to the mystical building. But the great Chief Builder, who has undertaken to execute the work of redemption and bring it to completion, is the Son of God—the Word who was made flesh. It is Jesus Christ who "builds."

In building the true Church, the Lord Jesus condescends to use many subordinate *instruments*. The ministry of the Gospel, the circulation of the Scriptures, the friendly rebuke, the word spoken in season, the drawing influence of afflictions—all, all are means and methods by which His work is carried on. But Christ is the great superintending architect, ordering, guiding, directing all that is done. What the sun is to the whole solar system—that Christ is to all the members of the true Church. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but *God* gives the increase." Ministers may preach, and writers may write, but the Lord Jesus Christ alone can build. And except He builds, the work stands still.

Great is the *wisdom* with which the Lord Jesus Christ builds His Church. All is done at the right time, and in the right way. Each stone in its turn is put in the right place. Sometimes He chooses great stones, and sometimes He chooses small stones. Sometimes the work moves fast, and sometimes it moves slowly. Man is frequently impatient, and thinks that nothing is happening. But man's time is not God's time. A thousand years in His sight are but as a single day. The great Builder makes no mistakes. He knows what He is doing. He sees the end from the beginning. He

works by a perfect, unalterable and certain plan. The mightiest conceptions of architects, like Michaelangelo are mere insignificant child's play, in comparison with Christ's wise counsels respecting His Church.

Great is the *condescension* and *mercy*, which Christ exhibits in building His Church. He often chooses the most unlikely and roughest stones, and fits them into a most excellent work. He despises no one, and rejects none—on account of former sins and past transgressions. He delights to show mercy. He often takes the most thoughtless and ungodly, and transforms them into polished corners of His spiritual temple.

Great is the *power* which Christ displays in building His Church. He carries on his work in spite of opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil. In storm, in chaos, through troublesome times—silently, quietly, without noise, without stir, without excitement—the building progresses. "I will work," He declares, "and none shall hinder it." Brethren, the children of this world take no interest in the building of this Church, they care nothing for the conversion of souls. What are broken spirits and penitent hearts to them? It is all foolishness in their eyes. But while the children of this world care nothing, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God. For the preserving of that Church, the laws of nature have oftentimes been suspended. For the good of that Church, all the providential dealings of God in this world are ordered and arranged. For the elect's sake, wars are brought to an end, and peace is given to a nation. Statesmen, rulers, emperors, kings, presidents, heads of governments, have their schemes and plans, and think them of vast importance.

But there is another work going on of infinitely greater significance, for which they are all but as the axes and saws in God's hands. That work is the gathering in of living stones into the one true Church. How little are we told in God's Word about unconverted men, compared with what we are told about believers! The history of Nimrod, the mighty hunter, is dismissed in a few words. The history of Abraham, the father of the faithful, occupies several chapters. Nothing in Scripture is so important as the concerns of the true Church. The world makes up little of God's Word. The Church and its story make up much.

Forever let us thank God, my beloved brethren, that the building of the one true Church is laid on the shoulders of One who is mighty. Let us bless God that it does not rest upon man. Let us bless God that it does not depend on missionaries, ministers, or committees. Christ is the almighty Builder. He will carry on His work, though nations and visible Churches do not know their duty. Christ will never fail. That which He has undertaken He will certainly accomplish! I pass on to the third point, which I proposed to consider—

3. The FOUNDATION upon which this Church is built. The Lord Jesus Christ tells us, "On this **rock** I will build my church." What did the Lord Jesus Christ mean, when He spoke of this foundation? Did He mean the Apostle Peter, to whom He was speaking? I think assuredly not. I can see no reason, if he meant Peter, why did He not say, "On you" will I build My church. If He had meant Peter, He would have said, I will build My Church on you, as plainly as He said, "I will give you the keys." No! it was not the person of the Apostle Peter, but the *good confession* which the Apostle had just made. It was not Peter, the erring, unstable man; but the mighty truth which the Father had revealed to Peter. It was *the truth concerning Jesus Christ himself*, which was the Rock. It was Christ's Mediatorship, and Christ's Messiahship. It was the blessed truth, that Jesus was the promised Savior, the real Intercessor between God and man. This was the rock, and this was the foundation on which the Church of Christ was to be built.

My brethren, this foundation was laid at a mighty cost. It was necessary that the Son of God should take our nature upon Him, and in that nature live, suffer, and die, not for His own sins, but for ours. It was necessary that in that nature Christ should go to the grave, and rise again. It was necessary that in that nature Christ should go up to heaven, to sit at the right hand of God, having obtained eternal redemption for all His people. No other foundation but this could have borne the weight of that Church of which our text speaks. No other foundation could have met the necessities of a world of sinners.

That foundation once obtained, is very strong. It can bear the weight of the sin of all the world. It has borne the weight of all the sins of all the

believers who have built on it. Sins of thought, sins of the imagination, sins of the heart, sins of the head, sins which everyone has seen, and sins which no man knows, sins against God, and sins against man, sins of all kinds and descriptions—that mighty rock can bear the weight of all these sins, and not give way. The mediatorial office of Christ is a sufficient remedy for all the sins of all the world.

To this one foundation every member of Christ's true Church is joined. In many things believers are disunited and disagreed. In the matter of their soul's foundation they are all of one mind. They are all built on the rock. Ask where they get their peace, and hope, and joyful expectation of good things to come. You would find that it all flows from that one mighty truth—Christ the Mediator between God and man, and the office that Christ holds, as the High priest and Promise of sinners.

Here is the point which demands our personal attention. Are we on the rock? Are we really joined to the one foundation? What does that godly man, Leighton say? "God has laid this precious stone for this very purpose—that weary sinners may rest upon it. The multitude of imaginary believers lie all around it, but they are not any better for that, any more than stones that lie loose in heaps, near a foundation, but not joined to it. There is no benefit to us by Christ, without union with Him."

Look to your foundation, my beloved brethren, if you would know whether or not you are members of the one true Church. It is a point that may be known to yourselves. Your public worship we can see—but we cannot see whether you are personally built upon the rock. Your attendance at the Lord's table we can see—but we cannot see whether you are joined to Christ, and one with Christ, and Christ in you. But all shall come to light one day. The secrets of all hearts shall be exposed. Perhaps you go to church regularly and you pray faithfully. All this is right and good, so far as it goes. But see that you make no mistake about your own personal salvation. See that your own soul is on the rock. Without this, all else is nothing. Without this, you will never stand in the day of judgment. Better a thousand times in that day to be found in a poor cottage on the rock, than in a stately palace on the sand! I proceed, in the fourth place, to speak of—

4. The implied TRIALS of the Church, to which our text refers. There is mention made of "the gates of hell." By that expression we are to understand the power of the devil! The history of Christ's true Church has always been one of conflict and war. It has been constantly assailed by a deadly enemy, Satan, the prince of this world. The devil hates the true Church of Christ with an undying hatred. He is ever stirring up opposition against all its members. He is ever urging the children of this world to do his will, and injure and harass the people of God. If he cannot bruise the *head*, he will bruise the *heel*. If he cannot rob believers of heaven, he will *aggravate* them as they travel the road to heaven.

For six thousand years this hostility has gone on. Millions of the ungodly have been the devil's agents, and done the devil's work, though they did not know it. The Pharaohs, the Herods, the Neros, the Julians, the Diocletians, the bloody Marys—were Satan's tools, when they persecuted the disciples of Jesus Christ. Warfare with the powers of hell has been the experience of the whole body of Christ. It has always been a bush *burning*, though not *consumed*—a woman *fleeing* into the wilderness, but not *swallowed* up. The visible Churches have their times of prosperity and seasons of peace, but never has there been a time of peace for the true Church. Its conflict is perpetual. Its battle never ends.

Warfare with the powers of hell is the experience of every individual member of the true Church. Each has to fight. What are the lives of all the saints, but records of battles? What were such men as Paul, and James, and Peter, and John, and Polycarp, and Ignatius, and Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin, and Latimer, and Baxter—but soldiers engaged in a constant warfare? Sometimes their persons have been assailed, and sometimes their property. Sometimes they have been harassed by slander, and sometimes by open persecution. But in one way or another the devil has been continually warring against the Church. The "gates of hell" have been continually assaulting the people of Christ.

Men and brethren, we who preach the Gospel can hold out to all who come to Christ, exceeding great and precious promises. We can offer boldly to you in our Master's name, the peace of God which passes all understanding. Mercy, free grace, and full salvation, are offered to everyone who will come to Christ, and believe on Him. But we promise

you no peace with the world, or with the devil. We warn you, on the contrary, that there must be warfare, so long as you are in the body. We would not keep you back, or deter you from Christ's service. But we would have you count the cost, and fully understand what Christ's service entails. Hell is behind you. Heaven is before you. Home lies on the other side of a troubled sea.

Thousands, tens of thousands have crossed these stormy waters, and in spite of all opposition, have reached the haven where they would be. Hell has assailed them, but has not prevailed. Go forward, beloved brethren, and fear not the adversary. Only abide in Christ, and the victory is sure. Marvel not at the hatred of the gates of hell. "If you were of the world, the world would love as its own." So long as the world is the world, and the devil the devil—there must be warfare, and believers in Christ must be soldiers! The world hated Christ, and the world will hate true Christians, as long as the earth stands. As the great reformer, Luther, said, "Cain will go on murdering Abel so long as the Church is on earth."

Be prepared for the hostility of the gates of hell. Put on the whole armor of God. The tower of David contains a thousand shields, all ready for the use of God's people. The weapons of our warfare have been tried by millions of poor sinners like ourselves, and have never been found to fail. Be patient under the bitterness of the gates of hell. It is all working together for your good. It tends to sanctify. It keeps you awake. It makes you humble. It drives you nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ. It weans you from the world. It helps to make you pray more. Above all, it makes you long for heaven, and say with heart as well as lips, "Come, Lord Jesus."

Do not be cast down by the hatred of hell. The warfare of the true child of God is as much a mark of grace as the inward peace which he enjoys. No cross, no crown! No conflict, no saving Christianity! "Blessed are you," said our Lord Jesus Christ, "when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me." There remains one thing more to be considered—

5. The SECURITY of the true Church of Christ. There is a glorious promise given by the mighty Builder, "The gates of Hades will not overcome it." He who cannot lie, has pledged His royal word, that all the

powers of hell shall never overthrow His Church. It shall continue, and stand, in spite of every assault. It shall never be overcome.

All other created things perish and pass away, but not the Church of Christ. The hand of outward violence, or the moth of inward decay, prevail over everything else, but not over the church that Christ builds. Empires have risen and fallen in rapid succession. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Tyre, Carthage, Rome, Greece, Venice—where are all these now? They were all the creations of man's hand, and have passed away. But the Church of Christ lives on. The mightiest cities have become heaps of ruins.

The broad walls of Babylon are sunk to the ground. The palaces of Nineveh are mounds of dust. The hundred gates of Thebes are only matters of history. Tyre is a place where fishermen hang their nets. Carthage is a desolation. Yet all this time the true Church stands. The gates of hell do not prevail against it.

The earliest visible Churches have in many cases decayed and perished. Where is the Church of Ephesus and the Church of Antioch? Where is the Church of Alexandria and the Church of Constantinople? Where are the Corinthian, and Philippian, and Thessalonian Churches? Where, indeed, are they all? They departed from the Word of God. They were proud of their bishops, and synods, and ceremonies, and learning, and antiquity. They did not glory in the true cross of Christ. They did not hold fast the Gospel. They did not give Jesus His rightful office, or faith its rightful place. They are now among the things that have been. Their candlestick has been taken away. But all this time the true Church has lived on.

Has the true Church been oppressed in one country? It has fled to another. Has it been trampled on and oppressed in one soil? It has taken root and flourished in some other climate. Fire, sword, prisons, fines, punishments—have never been able to destroy its vitality. Its persecutors have died and gone to their own place, but the Word of God has lived, and grown and multiplied.

Weak as this true Church may appear to the eye of man, it is an anvil which has broken many a hammer in times past, and perhaps will break

many more before the end. He who lays hands on it, is touching the apple of God's eye!

The promise of our text is true of the whole body of the true Church. Christ will never be without a witness in the world. He has had a people in the worst of times. He had seven thousand in Israel even in the days of Ahab. The devil may rage horribly. The Church may in some countries be brought exceedingly low. But the gates of hell shall never entirely prevail. The promise of our text is true of every individual member of the Church.

Some of God's people have been brought very low, so that they despaired of their safety. Some have fallen sadly, as David and Peter did. Some have departed from the faith for a time. Many have been tried by cruel doubts and fears. But all have gotten safely home at last, the youngest as well as the oldest, the weakest as well as the strongest. And so it will be to the end. Can you prevent tomorrow's sun from rising? Can you prevent the tide in the channel from ebbing and flowing? Can you prevent the planets moving in their respective orbits? Then, and then alone, can you prevent the salvation of any believer, however feeble—of any living stone in that Church which is built on the rock, however small or insignificant that stone may appear.

The true Church is Christ's *body*. Not one bone in that mystical body shall ever be broken. The true Church is Christ's *bride*. They whom God has joined in everlasting covenant, shall never be put asunder. The true Church is Christ's *flock*. When the lion came and took a lamb out of David's flock, David arose and delivered the lamb from his mouth. Christ will do the same. He is David's greater son. Not a single sick lamb in Christ's flock shall perish! He will say to His Father in the last day, "I have not lost one of those you gave me!" The true Church is the *wheat* of the earth. It may be sifted, winnowed, buffeted, tossed to and fro. But not one grain shall be lost. The tares and chaff shall be burned. The wheat shall be gathered into the barn.

The true Church is Christ's *army*. The Captain of our salvation loses none of his soldiers. His plans are never defeated. His supplies never fail. His roll call is the same at the end—as it was at the beginning! Of the men that marched gallantly out of England a few years ago in the Crimean

war, how many never came back! Regiments that went forth, strong and cheerful, with bands playing and banners flying, laid their bones in a foreign land, and never returned to their native country. But it is not so with Christ's army. Not one of His soldiers shall be missing at last. He Himself declares "They shall never perish."

The devil may cast some of the members of the true Church into prison. He may kill, and burn, and torture, and hang. But after he has killed the body, there is nothing more that he can do. He cannot hurt the soul. When the French troops took Rome a few years ago, they found on the walls of a prison cell, under the Inquisition, the words of a prisoner. Who he was, we do not know. But his words are worthy of remembrance. Though dead, he still speaks. He had written on the walls, very likely after an unjust trial, and a still more unjust excommunication, the following striking words, "*Blessed Jesus, they cannot cast me out of Your true Church!*" That record is true. Not all the power of Satan can cast out of Christ's true Church one single believer! The children of this world may wage fierce warfare against the Church, but they cannot stop the work of conversion.

What did the sneering Emperor Julian say, in the early ages of the Church, "What is the carpenter's son doing now?" An aged Christian made answer, "He is making a coffin for Julian himself." But a few months passed away, when Julian, with all his pomp and power, died in battle. Where was Christ when the fires of Smithfield were lighted, and when Latimer and Ridley were burnt at the stake? What was Christ doing then? He was still carrying on His work of building. That work will ever go on, even in troublesome times.

Fear not, beloved brethren, to begin serving Christ. He to whom you commit your souls has all power in heaven and earth, and He will keep you. He will never let you be cast away. *Relatives* may oppose. *Neighbors* may mock. The *world* may slander and sneer. Fear not! Fear not! The powers of hell shall never prevail against your soul. Greater is He who is for you—than all those who are against you.

Fear not for the Church of Christ, my brethren, when ministers die, and saints are taken away. Christ can ever maintain His own cause, He will

raise up better and brighter stars. The stars are all in His right hand. Leave off all anxious thought about the future. Cease to be cast down by the measures of statesmen, or the plots of wolves in sheep's clothing. Christ will ever provide for His Own Church! Christ will take care that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it! All is going on well—though our eyes may not see it. The kingdoms of this world shall yet become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.

Allow me now to say a few words of **PRACTICAL APPLICATION** of this sermon. I speak to many, whom I speak to for the first time. I speak, perhaps, to many whom I speak to for the last time. Let not this service conclude without an effort to press home the sermon on each heart.

1. My first word of application shall be a QUESTION. What shall that question be? How shall I approach you? What shall I ask? I ask you, whether you are a member of the one true Church of Christ? Are you a member of the Church built upon the rock. I ask you, with all solemnity—Are you a member of that one Church of Christ? Are you joined to the great Foundation? Have you received the Holy Spirit? Does the Spirit witness with your spirit, that you are one with Christ, and Christ with you? I beseech you, in the name of God, to lay to heart this question, and to ponder it well. Take heed to yourselves, dear brethren, if you cannot give a satisfactory answer to my inquiry. Take heed, take heed, that you do not make shipwreck of faith. Take heed, lest at last the gates of hell prevail against you, the devil claim you as his own, and you be cast away forever. Take heed, lest you go down to the pit from the land of Bibles, and in the full light of Christ's Gospel.

2. My second word of application shall be an INVITATION. I address it to all who are not yet true believers. I say to you—Come and join the one true Church without delay. Come and join yourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ in an everlasting covenant not to be forgotten. Come to Christ and be saved. The day of decision must come some time. Why not this very evening? Why not today, while it is called today? Why not this very night, before the sun rises tomorrow morning? Come to my Master, Jesus Christ. Come, I say, for all things are now ready. Mercy is ready for you, heaven is ready for you, angels are ready to rejoice over you, Christ is ready to receive you. Christ will receive you gladly, and welcome you

among His children. Come into the ark, the flood of God's wrath will soon break upon the earth, come into the ark and be safe. Come into the life-boat. The old world will soon break into pieces! Do you not hear the tremblings of it? The world is but a wreck stuck on the sandbar. The night is far spent—the waves are beginning to rise—the winds are rising—the storm will soon shatter the old wreck! But the life-boat is launched, and we, the ministers of the Gospel, beseech you to come into the life-boat and be saved.

Do you ask—How can I come, my sins are so many? Do you ask how you shall come? Hear the words of that beautiful hymn: "Just as I am: without one plea, But that Your blood was shed for me, And that You bid me come to Thee, O Lamb of God I come." That is the way to come to Christ. You should come, waiting for nothing, and tarrying for nothing. You should come, as a hungry sinner, to be filled; as a poor sinner to be enriched; as a vile, undeserving sinner to be clothed with righteousness. So coming, Christ would receive you. "Him that comes" to Christ, He "will not cast out." Oh! come, come to Jesus Christ!!

3. Last of all, let me given a word of EXHORTATION to my believing hearers. Live a holy life, my brethren. Walk worthy of the Church to which you belong. Live like citizens of heaven. Let your light shine before men, so that the world may profit by your conduct. Let them know whose you are, and whom you serve. Be epistles of Christ, known and read by all men; written in such clear letters, that none can say—we do not know whether he is a member of Christ or not. Live a courageous life, my brethren. Confess Christ before men. Whatever station you occupy, in that station confess Christ. Why should you be ashamed of Him? He was not ashamed of you on the cross. He is ready to confess you now before His Father in heaven. Why should you be ashamed of Him? Be bold. Be very bold. The good soldier is not ashamed of his uniform. The true believer ought never to be ashamed of Christ.

Live a joyful life, my brethren. Live like men who look for that blessed hope—the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is the prospect to which we should all look forward. It is not so much the thought of going to heaven, as of heaven coming to us, which should fill our minds. There is a good time coming for all the people of God—a good time for all the

Church of Christ—a good time for all believers. But there is a bad time coming for the impenitent and unbelieving—a bad time for those who serve their own lusts, and turn their backs on the Lord—but a good time for true Christians. For that good time, let us wait, and watch, and pray. The scaffolding will soon be taken down—the last stone will soon be brought out—the top-stone will be placed upon the edifice. In a little while, and the full beauty of the building shall be clearly seen. The great master Builder will soon come himself. A building shall be shown to assembled worlds, in which there shall be no imperfection. The *Savior* and the *saved* shall rejoice together. The whole universe shall acknowledge, that in the building of Christ's Church all was well done!

Not Corrupting the Word

"Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God." 2 Corinthians 2:17

It is no light matter to speak to any assembly of immortal souls about the things of God. But the most serious of all responsibilities is, to speak to a gathering of ministers, such as that which I now see before me. The awful feeling will come across my mind, that one single word said wrong, sinking into some heart, and bearing fruit at some future time, in some pulpit, may lead to harm, of which we cannot know the extent. But there are occasions when true humility is to be seen, not so much in loud professions of our weakness, as in forgetting ourselves altogether. I desire to forget *self* at this time, in turning my attention to this portion of Scripture. If I say little about my own sense of insufficiency, do me the justice to believe, that it is not because I am not well aware of it.

The Greek expression, which we have translated, "peddle," either means a tradesman who does his business dishonestly, or a wine maker, who adulterates the wine which he offers for sale. Tyndale renders it, "We are not of those who chop and change the Word of God." Another version of

the Bible says, "We are not as many, who adulterate the Word of God." In our margin we read, "We are not as many, who deal deceitfully with the Word of God."

In the construction of the sentence, the Holy Spirit has inspired Paul to use both the negative and the positive way of stating the truth. This mode of construction adds clearness and unmistakableness to the meaning of the words, and intensity and strength to the assertion, which they contain. It will be found, therefore, that there are contained in the text both negative and positive lessons for the instruction of the ministers of Christ. Some things we ought to **avoid**. Others we ought to **follow**.

The first of the negative lessons is, a plain warning against corrupting or dealing deceitfully with the Word of God. The Apostle says, "*Unlike so many*" who do it, pointing out to us that even in his time there were those who did not deal faithfully and honestly with God's truth. Here is a complete answer to those who assert that the early Church was one of unmixed purity. The mystery of iniquity had already begun to work. The lesson which we are taught is—to beware of all dishonest statements of that Word of God, which we are commissioned to preach. We are to add nothing to it. We are to take nothing away.

When can it be said of us, that we corrupt the Word of God in the present day? What are the rocks and reefs which we ought to avoid, if we would not be of the "many" who deal deceitfully with God's truth? A few suggestions on this would be useful.

1. We corrupt the Word of God most dangerously, when we throw any doubt on the absolute inspiration of any part of Holy Scripture. This is not merely corrupting the *cup*—but the whole *fountain*! This is not merely corrupting the *bucket* of living water, which we profess to present to our people, but poisoning the whole *well*. Once wrong on this point, the whole substance of our religion is in danger. It is a flaw in the foundation. It is a worm at the root of our theology. Once we allow this worm to gnaw the root, then we will not be surprised if the branches, the leaves, and the fruit, decay little by little. The whole subject of the *inspiration of Scripture*, I am well aware, is surrounded with difficulty. All I would say is, that, in my humble judgment,

notwithstanding some difficulties which we may not be able now to solve, the only safe and tenable ground to maintain is this—that every chapter, and every verse, and every word in the Bible has been "given by the inspiration of God."

We should never desert a great principle in theology, any more than in science, because of *apparent difficulties* which we are not able at present to remove.

Permit me to mention an illustration of this important axiom. Those conversant with astronomy know, that before the discovery of the planet Neptune there were difficulties, which greatly troubled the most scientific astronomers, respecting certain aberrations of the planet Uranus. These aberrations puzzled the minds of astronomers, and some of them suggested that they might possibly prove the whole Newtonian system to be untrue. But at that time a well-known French astronomer, named Leverrier, read before the Academy of Science a paper, in which he laid down this great axiom—that *it was wrong for a scientist to give up a principle, because of difficulties which could not be explained*. He said in effect, "We cannot explain the aberrations of Uranus now; but we may be sure that the Newtonian system will be proved to be right, sooner or later. Something may be discovered one day, which will prove that these aberrations may be accounted for, and the Newtonian system will remain true and unshaken." A few years later, the anxious eyes of astronomers discovered the last great planet, Neptune. The planet was shown to be the true cause of all the aberrations of Uranus; and what the French astronomer had laid down as a principle in science, was proved to be wise and true.

The application of the story is obvious. Let us beware of giving up any first principle in theology. Let us not give up the great principle of absolute inspiration because of difficulties. The day may come when they will all be solved. In the mean time, we may rest assured that the difficulties which beset any other theory of inspiration, are ten times greater than any which beset our own.

2. Secondly, we corrupt the Word of God when we make defective statements of doctrine. We do so when we add to the Bible

—the opinions of the Church, or of the Church Fathers, as if they were of equal authority. We do so when we take away from the Bible, for the sake of pleasing men. We do so when from a feeling of false liberality, keep back any statement which seems narrow, and harsh, or hard. We do so when we try to soften down anything that is taught about eternal punishment, or the reality of hell. We do so when we bring forward doctrines in their wrong proportions. We all have our *favorite doctrines*, and our minds are so constituted that it is hard to see one truth very clearly without forgetting that there are other truths equally important. We must not forget the exhortation of Paul, to minister "according to the *proportion* of faith."

We do so when we exhibit an excessive concern to fence, and guard, and qualify such doctrines as justification by faith without the deeds of the law, for fear of the charge of antinomianism; or when we flinch from strong statements about holiness, for fear of being thought legal. We also do this when we shrink back from the use of Bible language in giving an account of doctrines. We are apt to keep back such expressions as "born again," "election," "adoption," "conversion," "assurance," and to use a roundabout phraseology, as if we were ashamed of plain Bible words. I cannot expand these statements because we are short of time. I am content with mentioning them and leave them to your private thought.

3. In the third place, we corrupt the Word of God when we make a defective practical application of it. We do so when we do not discriminate between classes in our congregations—when we address everyone as being possessed of grace, because of their baptism or church-membership, and do not draw the line between those who have the Spirit and those who have not. Are we not apt to keep back clear, direct appeals to the unconverted? When we have eighteen hundred or two thousand persons before our pulpits, a vast proportion of whom we must know are unconverted, are we not apt to say, "Now if there is any *one* of you who does not know the things that are necessary for eternal peace" — when we ought rather to say, "If there are any of you who has not received the grace of God?"

Are we not in danger of defective handling of the Word in our practical exhortations, by not bringing home the statements of the Bible to the

various classes in our congregations? We speak plainly to the poor; but do we also speak plainly to the rich? Do we speak plainly in our dealings with the upper classes? This is a point on which, I fear, we need to search our consciences.

I now turn to the POSITIVE lessons which the text contains. "In Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God." A few words on each point must suffice.

1. We should aim to speak "with sincerity." Sincerity of aim, heart, and motive; to speak as those who are thoroughly convinced of the truth of what they speak; as those who have a deep feeling and tender love for those whom we address.

2. We should aim to speak "like men sent from God." We ought to strive to feel like men commissioned to speak for God, and on His behalf. In our dread of running into Roman Catholicism, we too often forget the language of the Apostle, "I make much of my ministry." We forget how great is the responsibility of the New Testament minister, and how awful the sin of those who when a real messenger of Christ addresses them, refuse to receive his message, and harden their hearts against it.

3. We should aim to speak "before God." We are to ask ourselves, not, What did the people think of me? but, What was I in the sight of God? O that this may be the spirit in which we may always express from our pulpits—not caring whether men are pleased or displeased—not caring whether men say we were eloquent or feeble; but going away with the witness of our conscience—I have spoken as standing before God's sight.

4. Finally, we should aim to speak "as in Christ." The meaning of this phrase is doubtful. Grotius says, "We are to speak as in His name, as ambassadors." Beza says, "We are to speak about Christ, concerning Christ." This is good doctrine, but hardly the full meaning of the words. Others say, We are to speak as ourselves joined to Christ, as those who have received mercy from Christ, and whose only title to address others is from Christ alone. Others say, We should speak as through Christ, in the strength of Christ. No meaning, perhaps, is better than this. The

expression in the Greek exactly answers to Philippians 4:13, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Whatever sense we ascribe to these words, one thing is clear: we should speak in Christ, as those who have themselves received mercy; as those who desire to exalt, not themselves, but the Savior; and as those who care nothing what men think of them, so long as Christ is magnified in their ministry.

In conclusion, we should all ask, Do we ever handle the Word of God deceitfully? Do we realize what it is to speak as of God, as in the sight of God, and in Christ?

Let me put to everyone one searching question—Is there any text in God's Word which we shrink from expounding? Is there any statement in the Bible which we avoid speaking about to our people, not because we do not understand it, but because it contradicts some pet notion of ours as to what is truth? If this is true, let us ask our consciences whether this is very much like handling the Word of God deceitfully. Is there anything in the Bible we keep back for fear of seeming harsh, and of giving offense to some of our hearers? Is there any statement, either doctrinal or practical, which we mangle, mutilate or dismember? If so, are we dealing honestly with God's Word? Let us pray to be kept from corrupting God's Word. Let neither fear nor the favor of man induce us to keep back, or avoid, or change, or mutilate, or qualify any text in the Bible. Surely we ought to have holy boldness when we speak as ambassadors of God. We have no reason to be ashamed of any statement we make in our pulpits, so long as it is Scriptural.

I have often thought that one great secret of the marvelous honor which God has put on a man who is not in our denomination (I allude to Mr. Charles Spurgeon) is, the extraordinary boldness and confidence with which he stands up in the pulpit to speak to people about their sins and their souls. It cannot be said he does it from fear of any, or to please any. He seems to give every class of hearers its portion—to the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the king and the peasant, the learned and the illiterate. He gives to every one the plain message, according to God's Word. I believe that very boldness has much to do with the success which God is pleased to give to his ministry. Let us not be ashamed to learn a lesson from him in this respect. Let us go and do likewise.

Give Yourself Wholly to Them

"Give yourself wholly to them." 1 Timothy 4:15

When the Apostle says, "Give yourself wholly to these things," he seems to look at the "things" of which he had been speaking in the preceding verses, beginning with the words, "Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." We have here a target set before the ministers of the New Testament, at which we are all to aim—and of which we must all feel we fall short. Yet it is an old saying, "He who aims high is the most likely to strike high; and he who shoots at the moon will shoot further than the man who shoots at the bush."

The Apostle appears to me to suggest that the minister must be a man of one thing: to use his own words, a "man of God." We hear of men of business, and men of pleasure, and men of science. The aim of the minister should be, to be "a man of God;" or to employ a phrase used in some countries, to be "Jesus Christ's man." This should be the aim which we should place before us; we should seek to be "every inch the minister of Jesus Christ." We should aim to be the same men at all times, in all positions, and places; not on Sunday only, but on week days also; not merely in the pulpit, but everywhere—in our living rooms, and in the house of the poor man.

There are those, of whom their congregations have said, that *when they were in the pulpit—they were so good, that never wished them to come out; and when they went out of the pulpit—they were so bad, they never wished them to go in!* May God give us all grace to take that to heart! May we seek so to live, so to preach, so to work, so to give ourselves wholly to the business of our calling, that this bitter remark may never be made about us.

Our profession is a very special one. Others have their seasons of relaxation, when they can completely lay aside their work. This can never be done by the faithful minister of Jesus Christ. Once put on, his office must never be put off. At home, abroad, relaxing, going to the sea side—he must always carry his business with him. A great lawyer could say of his official robes, "Lie there, Lord Chancellor." Such ought never to be the mind of the minister of Christ.

There are some things which the high demand of this text suggests, as needful to be followed after and practiced.

1. First, it demands ENTIRE DEVOTION to the great work to which we are ordained. When one was commanded by the Savior to follow Him, he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father;" but then there came that solemn saying, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family;" and to him there came the remarkable sentence, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back, is fit for service in the kingdom of God." "Do not greet anyone on the road," was Christ's charge to the seventy disciples. Surely these Scriptural expressions teach us, that in all our dealings in our ministry, we must have a high standard. We must strive to be men of one thing—that thing being the work of Jesus Christ.

2. Secondly, it demands a thorough separation from the things of the WORLD. I hold it to be of the greatest importance to keep the ministerial office, so far as we can, distinct and separate from everything that is secular. I trust we shall hear every year of fewer and fewer ministers of the Gospel who are magistrates, and fewer and fewer ministers who take part in agricultural meetings, and win prizes for fat pigs, enormous bulls, and large crops of turnips. There is no apostolical succession in such occupations.

Nor yet is this all. We should be separated from the *pleasures* of the world—as well as from its *business*. There are many innocent and indifferent amusements, for which the minister of Christ ought to have no time. He ought to say, "I have no time for these things! I am doing a great work—and I cannot come down!"

3. Thirdly, it demands a jealous watchfulness over our own SOCIAL conduct. We ought not to be always paying social functions, and dining out, as others do. It will not do to say, that our Lord went to a marriage feast, and sat at supper in the Pharisee's house, and therefore we may do the same. I only reply—Let us go in His spirit, with His faithfulness and boldness, to say a word in season, and to give the conversation a profitable turn—and then we may go with safety! Unless we do this, we should be careful where we go, with whom we sit down, and where we spend our evenings.

There was a quaint saying of John Wesley to his ministers, which contains the germ of much truth. "Don't aim at being thought gentlemen; you have no more to do with being gentlemen, than with being masters at dancing." Our aim should be not to be regarded as agreeable persons at the dinner table—but to be known everywhere as faithful, consistent ministers of Jesus Christ!

4. Fourthly, it demands a diligent redemption of TIME. We should give attention to reading, every day that we live. We should strive to bring all our reading to bear on our work. We ought to keep our eyes open continually, and be ever picking up ideas for our sermons—as we travel by the way, as we sit by the fireside, as we are standing on the platform at the railway station. We should be keeping in our mind's eye our Master's business—observing, noting, looking out, gathering up something that will throw fresh light on our work, and enable us to put the truth in a more striking way. He who looks out for something to learn will always be able to learn something.

Having suggested these things, I will next proceed to ask, **What will be the CONSEQUENCE of our giving ourselves wholly to these things?** Remember, we shall not receive the praise of men. We shall be thought extreme, and ascetic, and over-righteous. Those who want to serve God and serve money at the same time, will think our standard too high, our practice too stringent. They will say, that we are going too far and too fast for a world such as that in which we live. May we never care what men say of us, so long as we walk in the light of God's Word! May we strive and pray to be wholly independent of, and indifferent to man's opinion, so long as we please God! May we remember the woe

pronounced by our Master, when He said, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you," and the words of Paul, "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."

Though by "giving ourselves wholly to these things" we shall not win the praise of *men*—we shall attain the far more important end of *usefulness to souls*. I completely acknowledge the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners. I acknowledge that those who preach best, and live nearest to God, have not always been honored in their lives to the saving of many souls. But still, the man who is most entirely and wholly Jesus Christ's man—a man of one thing, who lives Sunday and weekday, everywhere, at home and abroad, as a man whose single endeavor is to give himself to the work of Jesus Christ—this is the man, this is the minister, who will generally, in the long run, do the most good.

The case of Mr. Simeon will apply here. You all know how he was persecuted when he began to testify for Christ, in Cambridge. You know how many there were who would not speak to him, how the finger of scorn was pointed at him continually. But we know how he went on persevering in the work, and how, when he died, all Cambridge came forth to give him honor, and how heads of houses, and fellows of colleges, and men who had scoffed at him while he lived, honored him at his death. They testified, that the life he had lived had had its effect, and that they had seen and known that God was with him.

I once saw in Dundee one who had known much of that godly man, Robert Murray McCheyne. She told me that those who read his letters and sermons had a very faint idea of what he was. She said to me, "If you have read all his works, you just know nothing at all about him. You must have seen the man, and heard him, and known him, and have been in company with him—to know what a man of God he was."

Furthermore, giving ourselves wholly to these things will bring happiness and peace to our consciences. I speak now among friends, and not among worldly people, where I should need to fence and guard and explain what I mean. I shall not be suspected of holding justification by works by those I see before me. I speak of such a clear conscience as the Apostle refers to. We trust we have a "clear conscience" (Hebrews 13:18). To have this clear

conscience is clearly bound up with high aims, high motives, a high standard of ministerial life, and practice. I am quite sure, that the more we give ourselves wholly to the work of the ministry, the more inward happiness, the greater sense of the light of God's countenance, are we likely to enjoy.

The subject is a deeply humbling one. Who does not feel, "My weakness, my weakness! my unprofitableness! How far short I come of this high standard?" What reason have we, having received mercy, not to faint! What reason have we, having been spared by God's great patience, to abound in the work of the Lord, and to give ourselves wholly to our business! The great secret is—to *be always looking to Jesus, and living a life of close communion with Him!*

At Cambridge, the other day, I saw a picture of Henry Martyn, bequeathed by Mr. Simeon to the public library. A friend informed me that that picture used to hang in Mr. Simeon's room, and that when he was disposed to trifle in the work of the ministry, he used to stand before it and say, "It seems to say to me, Charles Simeon, don't trifle, don't trifle; Charles Simeon, remember whose you are, and whom you serve." And then the worthy man, in his own strange way, would bow respectfully, and say, "I will not trifle, I will not trifle; I will not forget."

May we, in conclusion, look to a far higher pattern than any man—Martyn, McCheyne, or any other. May we look to the Great Chief Shepherd, the great pattern, in whose steps we are to walk! May we abide in Him, and never trifle! May we hold on our way, looking to Jesus, keeping clear of the world, its pleasures, and its follies—caring nothing for the world's frowns, and not much moved by the world's smiles—looking forward to that day when the Great Shepherd shall give to all who have done His work, and preached His Gospel, a crown of glory that does not fade away! The more we have the mind of Christ, the more we shall understand what it is to "give ourselves wholly to these things."

Pharisees and Sadducees

"Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!" Matthew 16:6

Every word spoken by the Lord Jesus is full of deep instruction for Christians. It is the voice of the Chief Shepherd. It is the Great Head of the Church speaking to all its members—the King of kings speaking to His subjects—the Master of the house speaking to His servants—the Captain of our salvation speaking to His soldiers. Above all, it is the voice of Him who said, "I did not speak of my own accord—but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it." (John 12:49) The heart of every believer in the Lord Jesus ought to burn within him—when he hears his Master's words, he ought to say, "Listen! It is the voice of My Beloved!" (Song of Solomon 2:8).

Every word spoken by the Lord Jesus, is of the greatest value. Precious as gold, are all His words of *doctrine* and *teaching*; precious are all His *parables* and *prophecies*; precious are all His words of *comfort* and of *consolation*; precious, the not least of which, are all His words of *caution* and of *warning*. We are not merely to hear Him when He says, "Come to me—all who are weary and heavy burdened;" we are to also hear Him when He says, "Be careful—and be on your guard."

I am going to direct attention to one of the most solemn and emphatic warnings which the Lord Jesus ever delivered: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." On this text I wish to erect a beacon for all who desire to be saved, and to preserve some souls, if possible, from making their lives a shipwreck. The times call loudly for such beacons: the spiritual shipwrecks of the last twenty-five years have been deplorably numerous. The watchmen of the Church ought to speak out plainly now, or forever hold their peace.

I. First of all, I ask my readers to observe WHO are those to whom the warning of the text was addressed.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was not speaking to men who were worldly, ungodly, and unsanctified—but to His own disciples, companions, and

friends. He addressed men who, with the exception of the apostate Judas Iscariot, were right-hearted in the sight of God. He spoke to the twelve Apostles, the first founders of the Church of Christ, and the first ministers of the Word of salvation. And yet even to them He addressed the solemn caution of our text: "Be careful and be on your guard!"

There is something very remarkable in this fact. We might have thought that these Apostles needed little warning of this kind. Had they not given up all for Christ's sake? They had. Had they not endured hardship for Christ's sake? They had. Had they not believed Jesus, followed Jesus, loved Jesus, when almost all the world was unbelieving? All these things are true; and yet to them the caution was addressed: "Be careful and be on your guard!" We might have imagined that at any rate the disciples had little to fear from the "yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." They were poor and unlearned men, most of them fishermen or tax collectors; they had no desire to follow the teachings of the Pharisees and the Sadducees; they were more likely to be prejudiced against them than to feel any drawing towards them. All this is perfectly true; yet even to them there comes the solemn warning: "Be careful and be on your guard!"

There is useful counsel here for all who profess to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. It tells us loudly that the most eminent servants of Christ are not beyond the need of warnings, and ought to be always on their guard. It shows us plainly that the holiest of believers ought to walk humbly with his God, and to watch and pray so that he won't fall into temptation, and be overtaken with sin. None is so *holy*, that he cannot fall—not ultimately, not hopelessly—but to his own discomfort, to the scandal of the Church, and to the triumph of the world. None is so *strong* that he cannot for a time be overcome. Chosen as believers are by God the Father, justified as they are by the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, sanctified as they are by the Holy Spirit—believers are still only men—they are still in the body, and still in the world. They are ever near temptation. They are ever liable to misjudge, both in doctrine and in practice. Their *hearts*, though renewed, are very feeble; their *understanding*, though enlightened, is still very dim. They ought to live like those who dwell in an enemy's land, and every day to put on the

armor of God. The devil is very busy: he never slumbers or sleeps. Let us remember the falls of Noah, and Abraham, and Lot, and Moses, and David, and Peter; and remembering them—be humble, and be careful so that we don't fall.

I may be allowed to say that none need warnings so much as the *ministers* of Christ's Gospel. Our office and our ordination are no security against errors and mistakes. It is true, that *the greatest heresies have crept into the Church of Christ by means of ordained men!* Ordination does not confer any immunity from error and false doctrine. Our very familiarity with the Gospel often creates in us a hardened state of mind. We are apt to read the Scriptures, and preach the Word, and conduct public worship, and carry on the service of God, in a dry, hard, formal, callous spirit. Our very familiarity with sacred things, unless we watch our hearts, is likely to lead us astray. "Nowhere," says an old writer, "is a man's soul in more danger—than in a minister's study." The history of the Church of Christ contains many dismal proofs that the most distinguished ministers may for a time fall away. Who has not heard of *Cranmer* recanting and going back from those opinions he had defended so stoutly; though, by God's mercy, raised again to witness a glorious confession at last? Who has not heard of *Jewell* signing documents that he most thoroughly disapproved, and of which signature he afterwards bitterly repented? Who does not know that many others might be named, who at one time or another, have been overtaken by faults, have fallen into errors, and been led astray? And who does not know the mournful fact that many of them never came back to the truth—but died in hardness of heart, and held their errors to the end!

These things ought to make us humble and cautious. They tell us to distrust our own hearts, and to pray to be kept from falling. In these days, when we are especially called upon to cleave firmly to the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation, let us be careful that our zeal for Protestantism does not puff us up, and make us proud. Let us never say in our self-conceit, "I shall never fall into the errors Roman Catholicism or any New Theology: those views will never suit me." Let us remember that many have *begun* well and run well for a season—and yet afterwards turned aside out of the right way. Let us be careful that we are *spiritual men*—as

well as Protestants, and *real friends of Christ*—as well as enemies of antichrist. Let us pray that we may be kept from error, and never forget that *the twelve Apostles themselves* were the men to whom the Great Head of the Church addressed these words: "Be careful and be on your guard!"

II. I propose, in the second place, to explain—what were those DANGERS against which our Lord warned the Apostles. "Be careful," He says, "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." The danger of which He warns them is *false doctrine*. He says nothing about the sword of persecution, or the love of money, or the love of pleasure. All these things no doubt were perils and snares to which the souls of the Apostles were exposed; but against these things our Lord raises no warning voice here. His warning is confined to one single point: "The yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." We are not left to conjecture what our Lord meant by that word "yeast." The Holy Spirit, a few verses after the very text on which I am now dwelling, tells us plainly that by yeast was meant the "doctrine" of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. Let us try to understand what we mean when we speak of the "doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

(a) The doctrine of the PHARISEES may be summed up in three words: they were *formalists, tradition-worshippers, and self-righteous*. They attached such weight to the traditions of men that they practically regarded them of more importance than the inspired writings of the Old Testament. They valued themselves on excessive strictness in their attention to all the ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic law. They thought much of being descended from Abraham, and said in their hearts, "We have Abraham for our father!" They imagined, because they had Abraham for their father—that they were not in danger of hell like other men, and that their descent from him was a kind of title to heaven. They attached great value to washings and ceremonial purifyings of the body, and believed that the very touching of the dead body of a fly or gnat would defile them. They made a great deal about the external parts of religion, and such things that could be seen by men. They made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the fringes of their garments. They prided themselves on paying great honor to dead saints, and garnishing

the graves of the righteous. They were very zealous to make converts. They prided themselves in having power, rank, and preeminence, and of being called by men, "Teacher, Teacher." These things, and many things like these, the Pharisees did. Every well-informed Christian can find these things in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark (See Matthew 15 and 23; Mark 7).

Remember, all this time, they did not formally deny any part of the Old Testament Scripture. But they brought in, over and above it, so much of *human invention*, that they virtually put Scripture aside, and buried it under their own traditions. This is the sort of religion, of which our Lord says to the Apostles, "Be careful and be on your guard."

(b) The doctrine of the SADDUCEES, on the other hand, may be summed up in three words: free-thinking, skepticism, and rationalism. Their creed was far less popular than that of the Pharisees, and, therefore, we find them mentioned less often in the New Testament Scriptures. So far as we can judge from the New Testament, they appear to have held the doctrine of degrees of inspiration; at all times they attached greater value to the Pentateuch [first five Books of the Old Testament] above all the other parts of the Old Testament, if indeed they did not altogether ignore the latter.

They believed that there was no resurrection, no angels, and no spirits, and tried to laugh men out of their belief in these things, by bringing forward difficult questions. We have an instance of their mode of argument, in the case which they propounded to our Lord of the woman who had had seven husbands, when they asked, "At the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven?" And in this way they probably hoped, by rendering religion absurd, and its chief doctrines ridiculous, to make men altogether give up the faith they had received from the Scriptures. Remember, all this time, we cannot say that the Sadducees were downright infidels—this they were not. We may not say they denied revelation altogether; this they did not do. They observed the law of Moses. Many of them were found among the priests in the times described in the Acts of the Apostles. Caiaphas who condemned our Lord, was a Sadducee. But the practical effect of their teaching was to shake men's faith in any revelation, and to throw a cloud of doubt over men's

minds, which was only one degree better than infidelity. And of all such kind of doctrine: free thinking, skepticism, rationalism, our Lord says, "Be careful and be on your guard!"

Now the question arises—Why did our Lord Jesus Christ deliver this warning? He knew, no doubt, that within forty years the schools of the Pharisees and the Sadducees would be completely overthrown. He who knew all things from the beginning, knew perfectly well that in forty years Jerusalem, with its magnificent temple, would be destroyed, and the Jews scattered over the face of the earth. Why then do we find Him giving this warning about "the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees"?

I believe that our Lord delivered this solemn warning for the perpetual benefit of that Church which He came to earth to establish. He spoke with a *prophetic* knowledge. He knew well the diseases to which human nature is always liable. He foresaw that the two great plagues of His Church on earth would always be the doctrine of the Pharisees and the doctrine of the Sadducees. He knew that these would like two large rocks, between which His truth would be perpetually crushed and bruised until He came the second time. He knew that there always would be Pharisees in spirit, and Sadducees in spirit, among professing Christians. He knew that their succession would never fail, and their generation never become extinct, and that though the *names* of Pharisees and Sadducees were no more, yet their *principles* would always exist. He knew that during the time that the Church existed, until His return, there would always be some who would *add* to the Word, and some who would *subtract* from it, some who would tone it down, by adding to it other things, and some who would bleed it to death, by subtracting from its principal truths. And this is the reason why we find Him delivering this solemn warning: "Be careful and be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees!"

And now comes the question, Did not our Lord Jesus Christ have good reason to give this warning? I appeal to all who know anything of Church history—was there indeed not a cause? I appeal to all who remember what took place soon after the apostles were dead. Do we not read that in the primitive Church of Christ, there rose up two distinct parties; one ever inclined to err, like the Arians, in holding less than the truth; the other ever inclined to err, like the relic worshipers and saint worshipers

of the Roman Catholic Church, in holding more than the truth as it is in Jesus? Do we not see the same thing coming out in later times, in the form of Roman Catholicism? These are ancient things. In a short paper like this it is impossible for me to enter more fully into them. They are things well known to all who are familiar with records of past days.

There always have been these two great parties—the party representing the principles of the Pharisee, and the party representing the principles of the Sadducee. Therefore our Lord had good cause to say of these two great principles, "Be careful and be on your guard."

But, I desire to bring the subject even nearer at the present moment. I ask my readers to consider whether warnings like this are not especially needed in our own times. We have, undoubtedly, much to be thankful for in England. We have made great advances in arts and sciences in the last three centuries, and have much of the *form* and *show* of morality and religion. But, I ask anybody who can see beyond his own door, or his own living room, whether we do not live in the midst of *dangers from false doctrine*?

We have among us, on the one side, a group of men who, wittingly or unwittingly, are paving the way to the Church of Rome—a school that professes to draw its principles from primitive tradition, the writings of the Fathers, and the voice of the Church—a teaching that talks and writes so much about the Church, the ministry, and the Sacraments, that it makes them like Aaron's rod which swallows up everything else in Christianity, a teaching that attaches vast importance to the *outward form* and *ceremony* of religion—to gestures, postures, bowings, crosses, holy water, seats of honor for the clergy, altar cloths, incense, statues, banners, processions, floral decorations, and many other like things, about which not a word is to be found in the Holy Scriptures as having any place in Christian worship. I refer, of course, to the school of Churchmen called *Ritualists*. When we examine the proceedings of that school, there can be but one conclusion concerning them. I believe whatever is the meaning and intention of its teachers, however devoted, zealous, and self-denying, many of them are, those whom has fallen *the cloak of the Pharisees*.

We have, on the other hand, a school of men who, wittingly or unwittingly, appear to pave the way to Socinianism—a school which holds strange views about the absolute inspiration of Holy Scripture, and stranger views about the doctrine of sacrifice, and the Atonement of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, strange views about the eternity of punishment, and God's love to man, a school strong in negatives—but very weak in positives, skillful in raising doubts—but impotent in removing them, clever in unsettling and unscrewing men's faith—but powerless to offer any firm rest for man. And, whether the leaders of this school mean it or not—I believe that on them has fallen *the cloak of the Sadducees*.

These things sound harsh. It saves a vast deal of trouble—to shut our eyes, and say, "I see no danger," and because it is not seen, therefore not to believe it. It is easy to cover our ears and say, "I hear nothing," and because we hear nothing, therefore to feel no alarm. But we know well who they are that rejoice over the state of things we have to deplore in some quarters of our own Church. We know what the Roman Catholic thinks: we know what the Socinian thinks. The Roman Catholic rejoices over the rise of the Catholicism: the Socinian rejoices over the rise of men who teach such views as those set forth in modern days about the atonement and inspiration. They would not rejoice as they do if they did not see their work being done, and their cause being helped forward.

The danger, I believe, is far greater than we are apt to suppose. The *books* that are read in many quarters are most mischievous, and the tone of thought on religious subjects, among many classes, and especially among the higher ranks, is deeply unsatisfactory. The *plague* is abroad! If we love life, we ought to search our own hearts, and try our own faith, and make sure that we stand on the right foundation. Above all, we ought to take heed that we ourselves do not drink the poison of false doctrine, and go back from our first love.

I feel deeply the painfulness of speaking out on these subjects. I know well that speaking plain about false doctrine is very unpopular, and that the speaker must be content to find himself being thought of as very uncharitable, very troublesome, and very narrow-minded. Most people can never distinguish *differences* in religion. To the bulk of men a

clergyman is a clergyman, and a *sermon* is a sermon, and as to any difference between one minister and another, or one doctrine and another, they are utterly unable to understand it. I cannot expect such people to approve of any warning against false doctrine. I must make up my mind to meet with their disapproval, and must bear it as I best can. But I will ask any honest-minded, unprejudiced Bible reader, to turn to the New Testament and see what he will find there. He will find many plain warnings against false doctrine:

"Watch out for false prophets!" (Matthew 7:15).

"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy!" (Colossians 2:8).

"Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings!" (Hebrews 13:9).

"Do not believe every spirit—but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." (1 John 4:1).

He will find a large part of several inspired epistles taken up with elaborate explanations of true doctrine, and warnings against false teaching. I ask whether it is possible for a minister who takes the Bible for his rule of faith—to avoid giving warnings against doctrinal error?

Finally, I ask any one to mark what is going on in England at this very day. I ask whether it is not true that hundreds have left the *Established Church* and joined the *Church of Rome* within the last thirty years? I ask whether it is not true that hundreds remain within our boundaries, who in heart are little better than Romanists? I ask again whether it is not true that scores of young men, both at Oxford and Cambridge, are spoiled and ruined by the withering influence of skepticism, and have lost all positive principles in religion? Sneers at religious newspapers, loud declarations of dislike to "denominations," high-sounding, vague phrases about "deep thinking, broad views, new light, free handling of Scripture, and the barren weakness of certain schools of theology," make up the whole Christianity of many of the rising generation. And yet, in the face of these notorious facts, men cry out, "Hold your peace about false doctrine. Let

false doctrine alone!" I cannot hold my peace. Faith in the Word of God, love to the souls of men, the vows I took when I was ordained, all alike constrain me to bear witness against the errors of the day. And I believe that the saying of our Lord is eminently a truth for the times: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees!"

III. The third thing to which I wish to call attention is—the peculiar NAME by which our Lord Jesus Christ speaks of the doctrines of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

The words which our Lord used were always the wisest and the best that could be used. He might have said, "Be careful and be on your guard against the *doctrine*, or of the *teaching*, or of the *opinions* of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." But He does not say so: He uses a word of a peculiar nature—He says, "Be careful and be on your guard against the '**yeast**' of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." Now we all know what is the true meaning of the word "yeast." The yeast is added to the lump of dough in making a loaf of bread.

This yeast bears but a *small proportion* to the lump into which it is mixed; just so, our Lord would have us know, the first beginning of false doctrine is but small, compared to the body of Christianity. It works **quietly** and **silently**; just so, our Lord would have us know, false doctrine works secretly in the heart in which it is once planted. It insensibly changes the character of the whole mass with which it is mingled; just so, our Lord would have us know, the doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees turn everything upside down, when once admitted into a Church or into a man's heart. Let us mark these points: they throw light on many things that we see in the present day. It is of vast importance to receive the lessons of wisdom that this word "yeast" contains in itself.

False doctrine does not meet men face to face, and proclaim that it is false. It does not blow a trumpet before it, and endeavor openly to turn us away from the truth as it is in Jesus. It does not come before men in broad day, and summon them to surrender. It approaches us *secretly*, *quietly*, *insidiously*, *plausibly*, and in such a way as to disarm man's suspicion, and throw him off his guard. It is the *wolf in sheep's clothing*,

and *Satan in the garb of an angel of light*, who have always proved the most dangerous foes of the Church of Christ.

I believe the most powerful champion of the Pharisees is not the man who bids you openly and honestly come out and join the Church of Rome: it is the man who says that he agrees on all points with you in "doctrine." He would not take anything away from those evangelical views that you hold; would not have you make any changes at all; all he asks you to do is to "add" a little more to your belief, in order to make your Christianity perfect. "Believe me," he says, "We do not want you to give up anything. We only want you to hold a few more clear views about the Church and the sacraments. We want you to add to your present opinions, a little more about the office of the ministry, and a little more about the authority of Bishops, and a little more about the Prayer-book, and a little more about the necessity of order and of discipline. We only want you to add "a little more" of these things to your system of religion, and you will be quite right.

But when men speak to you in this way, then is the time to remember what our Lord said, and to "Be careful and be on your guard!" This is the yeast of the Pharisees, against which we are to stand upon our guard. Why do I say this? I say it because there is no security against the doctrine of the Pharisees—unless we resist its principles in their beginnings!

1. Beginning with a "little more about the Church"—You may one day put the Church in the place of Christ.
2. Beginning with a "little more about the ministry"—You may one day regard the minister as "the mediator between God and man."
3. Beginning with a "little more about the sacraments"—You may one day altogether give up the doctrine of justification by faith without the deeds of the law.
4. Beginning with a "little more reverence for the Prayer-book"—You may one day place it above the Holy Word of God itself.

5. Beginning with a "little more honor to Bishops"—You may at last refuse salvation to everyone who does not belong to an Episcopal Church.

I only tell an old story—I only mark out roads that have been trodden by hundreds of members of the Church of England in the last few years. They began by faultfinding at the Reformers, and have ended by swallowing the decrees of the Roman Catholic church. They began by crying about the way things were, and have ended by formally joining the Church of Rome. I believe that when we hear men asking us to "add a little more" to our good old plain Evangelical views, we should stand upon our guard. We should remember our Lord's caution: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees!"

I consider the most dangerous champion of the Sadducee school, is not the man who tells you openly that he wants you to lay aside any part of the truth, and to become a free-thinker and a skeptic. It is the man who begins with quietly insinuating doubts as to the position that we ought to take up about religion, doubts whether we ought to be so positive in saying "this is truth, and that falsehood," doubts whether we ought to think men wrong who differ from us on religious opinions, since they may after all be as much right as we are. It is the man who tells us we ought not to condemn anybody's views, lest we err on the side of the *lack of love*. It is the man who always begins talking in a vague way about God being a God of love, and hints that we ought to believe perhaps that all men, whatever doctrine they profess, will be saved. It is the man who is ever reminding us that we ought to take care how we think lightly of men of powerful minds, and great intellects (though they are deists and skeptics), who do not think as we do, and that, after all, "great minds are all more or less, taught of God!" It is the man who is ever harping on the difficulties of inspiration, and raising questions whether all men may not be found saved in the end, and whether all may not be right in the sight of God. It is the man who crowns this kind of talk by a few calm sneers against what he is pleased to call "old-fashioned views," and "narrow-minded theology," and "bigotry," and the "lack of liberality and love," in the present day. But when men begin to speak to us in this kind of way, then is the time to stand upon our guard. Then is the time to remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and "Be careful and be on your guard

against the yeast!"

Once more, why do I say this? I say it because there is no security against Sadduceeism, any more than against Phariseeism, unless we *resist its principles in the bud!* Beginning with a little vague talk about "love," you may end in the doctrine of universal salvation, fill heaven with a mixed multitude of *wicked* as well as godly, and deny the existence of hell. Beginning with a few high-sounding phrases about intellect and the inner light in man, you may end with denying the work of the Holy Spirit, and maintaining that Homer and Shakespeare were as truly inspired as Paul, and thus practically casting aside the Bible. Beginning with some dreamy, misty idea about "all religions containing more or less truth," you may end with utterly denying the necessity of missions, and maintaining that the best plan is to leave everybody alone. Beginning with dislike to "Evangelical religion," as old-fashioned, narrow, and exclusive—you may end by rejecting every leading doctrine of Christianity—the atonement, the need of divine grace, and the divinity of Christ.

Again I repeat that I only tell an old story—I only give a sketch of a path which scores have trodden in the last few years. They were once satisfied with such divinity as that of Newton, Scott, Cecil, and Romaine; they are now fancying they have found a more excellent way in the principles which have been propounded by theologians of the *Broad* school! I believe there is no safety for a man's soul—unless he remembers the lesson involved in those solemn words, "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Sadducees!"

Let us be on our guard against the "insidiousness" of false doctrine. Like the fruit of which Eve and Adam ate, at first sight it looks pleasant and good, and a thing to be desired. "Poison" is not written upon it, and so people are not afraid. Like counterfeit coin, it is not stamped "bad." It passes for the real thing, because of the very likeness it bears to the truth. Let us be on our guard against the "very small beginnings" of false doctrine. Every heresy began at one time, with some little departure from the truth. There is only "a little seed of error" needed to create a great tree of heresy. It is the *little stones* which make up the mighty building. It was the *little pieces of lumber*, which made the great ark that carried Noah and his family over a deluged world. It is the *little leaven* which the whole

lump. It is the *little flaw* in one link of the chain cable which wrecks the gallant ship, and drowns the crew. It is the omission or addition of one little item in the doctor's prescription, which spoils the whole medicine, and turns it into poison. We do not tolerate quietly a little dishonesty, or a little cheating, or a little lying. Just so, let us never allow a little false doctrine to ruin us, by thinking it is but a "little one," and can do no harm. The Galatians seemed to be doing nothing very dangerous when they "were observing special days and months and seasons and years;" yet Paul says, "I fear for you" (Galatians 4:10, 11).

Finally, let us be on our guard against supposing that "we at any rate are not in danger." "Our views are sound; our feet stand firm. Others may fall away—but we are safe!" Hundreds have thought the same, and have come to a dreadful end. In their self-confidence they tampered with *little temptations* and little forms of *false doctrine*; in their self-conceit they went near the *brink* of danger; and now they seem lost forever! They appear given over to a strong delusion, so as to believe a lie. Some of them are praying to the Virgin Mary, and bowing down to images. Others of them are casting overboard one doctrine after another, and are stripping themselves of every sort of religion, but a few scraps of Deism. Very striking is the vision in Pilgrim's Progress, which describes the *hill Error* as "very steep on the farthest side;" and "when Christian and Hopeful looked down they saw at the bottom, several men dashed all to pieces by a fall they had from the top." Never, never let us forget the caution to beware of "yeast;" and if we think we stand, let us "be careful that we don't fall!"

IV. I propose in the fourth and last place, to suggest some SAFEGUARDS and treatment against the dangers of the present day—the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of the Sadducees.

I feel that we all need more and more, the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, to guide, to teach, and to keep us sound in the faith. We all need to watch more, and to pray to be held up, and preserved from falling away. But still, there are certain great truths, which, in a day like this, we are specially bound to keep in mind. There are times when some common epidemic invades a land, when medicines, at all times valuable, become

of *special* value. There are places where a uncommon malaria prevails, in which remedies, in every place valuable, are more than ever valuable in consequence of it.

So I believe there are times and seasons in the Church of Christ when we are bound to tighten our hold upon certain great leading truths, to grasp them with more than ordinary firmness in our hands, to press them to our hearts, and not to let them go. Such doctrines I desire to set forth in order, as the great prescription against the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. When Saul and Jonathan were slain by the *archers*, David ordered the children of Israel to be taught the use of the *bow*.

(a) For one thing, if we would be kept sound in the faith, we must take heed to our doctrine about the "total corruption of human nature." The *corruption of human nature* is no slight thing. It is no partial, skin-deep disease—but a radical and universal corruption of man's will, intellect, affections, and conscience. We are not merely *poor* and *pitiable* sinners in God's sight—we are *guilty* sinners; we are *blameworthy* sinners: we deserve justly God's wrath and God's condemnation. I believe there are very few errors and false doctrines of which the beginning may not be traced up to unsound views about the corruption of human nature. Wrong views of a *disease* will always bring with them wrong views of the *remedy*. Wrong views of the corruption of human nature will always carry with them wrong views of the grand treatment and cure of that corruption.

(b) For another thing, we must take heed to our doctrine about "the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures." Let us boldly maintain, in the face of all the opposers, that the whole of the Bible is given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that all is inspired completely, not one part more than another, and that there is an entire gulf between the Word of God and any other book in the world. We need not be afraid of difficulties in the way of the doctrine of *absolute inspiration*. There may be many things about it, which are far too high for us to comprehend. Scripture inspiration is a miracle, and all miracles are necessarily mysterious. But if we are not to believe anything until we can entirely explain it, there are very few things indeed that we shall believe.

We need not be afraid of all the assaults which *criticism* brings to bear upon the Bible. From the days of the apostles the Word of the Lord has been incessantly "tried," and has never failed to come forth as gold, uninjured, and spotless.

We need not be afraid of the discoveries of *science*. Astronomers may sweep the heavens with telescopes, and geologists may dig down into the heart of the earth—and never shake the authority of the Bible! "The *voice* of God, and the *work* of God's hands—never will be found to contradict one another." We need not be afraid of the researches of travelers. They will never discover anything which contradicts God's Bible. I believe that if a man were to go over all the earth and dig up a hundred buried Ninevehs, there would not be found a single inscription which would contradict a single fact in the Word of God.

Furthermore, we must boldly maintain that this *Word of God is the only rule of faith and of practice*—that whatever is not written in it— cannot be required of any man as needful of salvation; and that however plausibly new doctrines may be defended, if they are not in the Word of God—they cannot be worth our attention. It matters nothing *who* says a thing, whether he be bishop or minister; pastor or pope. It matters nothing that the thing is *well said*, eloquently, attractively, forcibly, and in such a way as to turn the laugh against you. We are not to believe it except it is proved to us by Holy Scripture.

Last—but not least, **we must use the Bible as if we believed it was given by inspiration.** We must use it with reverence, and read it with all the tenderness with which we would read the words of an absent father. We must not expect to find *no mysteries* in a book inspired by the Spirit of God. We must rather remember that in *nature* there are many things we cannot understand; and that as it is in the *book of nature*, so it will always be in the *book of Revelation*.

We should draw near to the Word of God in that spirit of piety recommended by Lord Bacon many years ago. "Remember," he says, speaking of the book of nature, "that man is not the master of that book—but the interpreter of that book." And as we deal with the book of nature, so we must deal with the Book of God. We must draw near to it, not to

teach—but to *learn*; not like the *master* of it—but like a *humble scholar*, seeking to understand it.

(c) For another thing, we must take heed to our doctrine respecting "the atonement and priestly office of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." We must boldly maintain that the death of our Lord on the cross was no common death. It was not the death of a *martyr*. It was not the death of one who only died to give us a mighty *example* of self-sacrifice and self-denial. The death of Christ was an offering up to God of Christ's own body and blood, to make an atoning sacrifice for man's sin and transgression. This sacrifice was typified in every offering of the Mosaic law—a sacrifice of the mightiest influence on all mankind. Without the shedding of *that* blood there could not be, there never was to be—any remission of sin.

Furthermore, we must boldly maintain that this crucified Savior evermore sits at the right hand of God, to make intercession for all who come to God by Him; that He there represents and pleads for those who put their trust in Him; and that He has delegated His office of Priest and Mediator to no *man*, or *set of men* on the face of the earth. We need none besides. We need no Virgin Mary, no angels, no saint, no priest, no person ordained or unordained—to stand between us and God—but the one Mediator, Christ Jesus.

Furthermore, we must boldly maintain that peace of conscience is not to be bought by confession to a priest, and by receiving a man's absolution from sin. It is to be had only by going to the great High Priest, Christ Jesus; by confession before Him, not before man. Absolution can come from Him who alone can say, "Your sins are forgiven! Go in peace."

Last—but not least, we must boldly maintain that peace with God, once obtained by faith in Christ, is to be kept up, not by mere *outward ceremonial acts* of worship, not by receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper every day—but by the daily habit of looking to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, eating by faith His body, and drinking by faith His blood; that eating and drinking of which our Lord says that he who eats and drinks shall find His "body to be food indeed—and His blood to be drink indeed."

Godly John Owen declared, long ago, that if there was any one point more than another that Satan wished to overthrow, it was the Priestly office of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "Satan knew well," he said, that it was the "principal foundation of faith and consolation of the Church." Right views about Christ's office, are of essential importance in the present day, if men would not fall into error.

(d) One more remedy I must mention. We must take heed to our doctrine about "the work of God the Holy Spirit." Let us settle it in our minds, that His work is no uncertain invisible operation on the heart—and that where He is, He is not hidden, not unfelt, not unobserved. We believe that the *rain*, when it falls, can be felt. We believe that where there is *life* in a man—it can be seen and observed by his breath. So is it with the influence of the Holy Spirit. No man has any right to lay claim to it—except its *fruits*, its experimental *effects*, can be *seen* in his life. Where He is, there will ever be a new creation, and a new man. Where He is, there will ever be new knowledge, new faith, new holiness, new fruits in the life, in the family, in the world, in the church. And where these new things are not seen, we may well say, with confidence, that there is no work of the Holy Spirit in that person. These are times in which we all need to be on our guard about the doctrine of the work of the Spirit. One said, long ago, that the time would perhaps come when men might have to be martyrs for the work of the Holy Spirit. That time seems not far distant. At any rate, if there is one truth in religion which seems to have more *contempt* showered upon it than another, it is the work of the Spirit.

I desire to impress the immense importance of these four points upon all who read this paper:

- (a) clear views of the sinfulness of human nature.
- (b) clear views of the inspiration of Scripture.
- (c) clear views of the Atonement and Priestly office of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- (d) clear views of the work of the Holy Spirit.

I believe that false doctrines about the church, the ministry, and the Sacraments, about the love of God, the death of Christ, and the eternity of punishment—will find no foothold in the heart which is sound on these four points. I believe that they are *four great safeguards* against the yeast of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

I will now conclude this paper with a few remarks by way of **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**. My desire is to make the whole subject useful, to those into whose hands these pages may fall, and to supply an answer to the questions which may possibly arise in some hearts. What are we to *do*? What *advice* have you got to offer for these times?

(1) In the first place, I will ask every reader of this paper to find out whether he has "saving personal religion for his own soul."

This is the principal thing, after all. It will profit no man to belong to a sound visible church—if he does not himself belong to Christ. It will avail a man nothing to be intellectually sound in the faith, and to approve sound doctrine—if he is not himself *sound at heart*. Is this the case with you? Can you say that your heart is right in the sight of God? Is it renewed by the Holy Spirit? Does Christ dwell in it by faith? O, rest not, rest not—until you can give a satisfactory answer to these questions! The man who dies unconverted, however sound his views—is as truly lost forever as the worst Pharisee or Sadducee that ever lived!

(2) In the next place, let me entreat every reader of this paper who desires to be sound in the faith—to study the Bible diligently. That blessed book is given to be a light to our feet, and a lantern to our path. No man who reads it reverently, prayerfully, humbly, and regularly—shall ever be allowed to miss the way to heaven! By it every sermon, and every religious book, and every ministry ought to be weighed and proved.

Would you know what is truth? Do you feel confused and puzzled by the war of words which you hear on every side about religion? Do you want to know what you ought to believe, and what you ought to be and do, in order to be saved? Take down your *Bible*—and cease listening to *man*! Read your Bible with earnest prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit; read it with honest determination to obey its lessons. Do so steadily and

perseveringly, and you shall see light—you shall be kept from the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and be guided to eternal life. The way to *do* a thing is to *do* it. Act upon this advice without delay!

(3) In the next place, let me advise every reader of this paper who has reason to hope that he is sound in faith and heart, to "take heed to the PROPORTION of truths." I mean by that, to impress the importance of giving each truth of Christianity the same place and position in our hearts—which is given to it in God's Word. The *first* things must not be put second—and the *second* things must not be put first in our religion. The *church* must not be put above *Christ*. *Ministers* must not be exalted above the place assigned to them by Christ. Means of grace must not be regarded as an *end* instead of a *means*. Attention to this point is of great consequence: the mistakes which arise from neglecting it are neither few nor small. Here lies the immense importance of *studying the whole Word of God*, omitting nothing, and avoiding partiality in reading one part more than another. Here again lies the value of having *a clear system of Christianity* in our minds.

(4) In the next place, let me entreat every true hearted servant of Christ "not to be deceived by the superficial disguise" under which false doctrines often approach our souls in the present day. Beware of supposing that a teacher of religion is to be trusted, because although he holds some unsound views—that he yet "teaches a great deal of truth." Such a teacher is precisely the man to do you harm! Poison is always most dangerous when it is given in small doses and mixed with wholesome food. Beware of being taken in by the apparent *earnestness* of many of the teachers and upholders of false doctrine. Remember that *zeal* and *sincerity* and *fervor*—are no proof whatever, that a man is working for Christ, and ought to be believed.

Peter no doubt was in earnest—when he told our Lord to spare Himself, and not go to the cross; yet our Lord said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan." *Saul* no doubt was in earnest—when he went to and fro persecuting Christians; yet he did it ignorantly, and his zeal was not according to knowledge. The founders of the *Spanish Inquisition* no doubt were in earnest—in the burning alive of God's people. They thought they were doing God's service—yet they were actually persecuting Christ's members

and walking in the steps of Cain!

It is an dreadful fact, that "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). Of all the delusions prevalent in these latter days, there is none greater than the common notion that "if a man is in serious about his religion—he must be a good man!" Beware of being carried away by this delusion; beware of being led astray by "serious-minded men!" Seriousness is in itself an excellent thing; but it must be seriousness in behalf of Christ and His whole truth—or else it is worth nothing at all. The things that are highly esteemed among men—are often abominable in the sight of God.

(5) In the next place, let me counsel every true servant of Christ—to "examine his own heart" frequently and carefully as to his state before God. This is a practice which is useful at all times—it is especially desirable at the present day. When the great plague of London was at its height, people marked the least symptoms that appeared on their bodies in a way that they never marked them before. A spot here, or a spot there, which in time of health men thought nothing of, received close attention when the plague was decimating families, and striking down one after another! So it ought to be with ourselves, in the times in which we live. We ought to watch our hearts with double watchfulness. We ought to give more time to meditation, self-examination, and reflection. It is a hurrying, bustling age—if we would be kept from falling, we must make time for being frequently alone with God.

(6) Last of all, let me urge all true believers "to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." We have no cause to be ashamed of that faith. I am firmly persuaded that there is no system so life-giving, so calculated to awaken the sleeping, lead on the inquiring, and build up the saints—as that system which is called the *Evangelical system of Christianity*. Wherever it is faithfully preached, and efficiently carried out, and consistently adorned by the lives of its professors—it is the power of God. It may be spoken against and mocked by some; but so it was in the days of the Apostles. It may be weakly set forth and defended by many of its advocates; but, after all, its *fruits* and its *results* are its highest praise.

No other system of religion can point to such fruits. Nowhere are so many souls converted to God—as in those congregations where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached in all its fullness, without any mixture of the Pharisee or Sadducee doctrine. We are not called upon to be nothing but controversialists; but we never ought to be ashamed to testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, and to stand up boldly for Evangelical religion. We have the truth, and we need not be afraid to say so. The judgment-day will prove who is right—and to that day we may boldly appeal!

All Kinds of Strange Teachings

"Do not be carried away by *all kinds of strange teachings!* It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them." Hebrews 13:9

The text which heads this paper is *an apostolic caution against false doctrine*. It forms part of a warning which Paul addressed to Hebrew Christians. It is a caution just as much needed now—as it was eighteen hundred years ago. Never, I think, was it so important for Christian ministers to cry aloud continually, "Do not be carried away by *all kinds of strange teachings!*"

That old enemy of mankind, the devil, has no more subtle instrument for ruining souls, than that of spreading false doctrine. "A murderer and a liar from the beginning!" "Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour!"

Outside the Church, he is ever persuading men to maintain sinful lives, and destructive superstitions. Human sacrifice to idols, gross revolting, cruel, worship of disgusting and abominable false deities, persecution, slavery, cannibalism, child murder, devastating religious wars—all these are a part of Satan's handiwork, and the fruit of his suggestions! Like a pirate, his object is to "sink, burn, and destroy!"

Inside the Church he is ever laboring to sow heresies, to propagate errors, to foster departures from the faith. If he cannot *prevent* the waters flowing from the Fountain of Life, he tries hard to *poison* them. If he cannot destroy the remedy of the Gospel, he strives to adulterate and corrupt it. No wonder that he is called "Apollyon, the destroyer."

The Divine Comforter of the Church, the Holy Spirit—has always employed one great weapon to oppose Satan's plans. That weapon is the *Word of God*. The Word expounded and unfolded, the Word explained and opened up, the Word made clear to the head—and applied to the heart. The Word is the chosen weapon by which the devil must be confronted and confounded. The Word was the *sword* which the Lord Jesus wielded in His temptations. To every assault of the Tempter, He replied, "It is written!" The Word is the sword which His ministers must use in the present day, if they would successfully resist the devil. The Bible, faithfully and freely expounded—is the safeguard of Christ's true Church.

I desire to remember this lesson, and to invite attention to the text which stands at the head of this paper. We live in an age when men profess to dislike dogmas and creeds, and are filled with a morbid dislike to controversial theology. He who dares to say of one doctrine that "it is true," and of another that "it is false," must expect to be called *narrow-minded* and *uncharitable*, and to lose the praise of men. Nevertheless, the Scripture was not written in vain. Let us examine the mighty lessons contained in Paul's words to the Hebrews. They are lessons for *us*—as well as for them.

I. First, we have here a *broad warning*: "Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings."

II. Secondly, we have here a *valuable prescription*: "It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods."

III. Lastly, we have here an *instructive fact*: "Ceremonial foods are of no value to those who eat them."

On each of these points I have something to say. If we patiently plow up

this *field of truth*, we shall find that there is *precious treasure* hidden in it!

1. First, we have here a BROAD WARNING. "Do not be not carried away by all kinds of strange teachings." The meaning of these words is not a hard thing to understand. "Be not tossed back and forth," the Apostle seems to say, "by every blast of false teaching, like ships without compass or rudder. False doctrines will arise as long as the world lasts, in many numbers, with varying minor details—in one point alone always the same—strange, new, foreign, and departing from the Gospel of Christ. They do exist now. They will always be found within the visible Church. Remember this, and do not be carried away." Such is Paul's warning.

The Apostle's warning does not stand alone. Even in the midst of the Sermon on the Mount, there fell from the loving lips of our Savior, a solemn caution: "Watch out for false prophets! They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves!" (Matthew 7:15). Even in Paul's last address to the Ephesian elders, he finds time to warn his friends against false doctrine: "Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30).

Note what the Second Epistle to the Corinthians says: "I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Note what the Epistle to the Galatians says: "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel." "Who has bewitched you?" "After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" "How is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles?" "You are observing special days and months and seasons and years!" "I fear for you." "Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 1:6; 3:1, 3; 4:9, 10, 11; 5:1).

Note what the Epistle to the Ephesians says: "No longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful

scheming" (Ephesians 4:14). Note what the Epistle to the Colossians says: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ" (Colossians 2:8). Note what the First Epistle to Timothy says: "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith" (1 Timothy 4:1). Note what the Second Epistle of Peter says: "There will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies" (2 Peter 2:1). Note what the First Epistle of John says: "Do not believe every spirit. Many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Note what the Epistle of Jude says: "Contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men have secretly slipped in among you" (Jude 1:3, 4).

These things were written for our learning. What shall we say about these texts? How they may strike *others* I cannot say. I only know how they strike me. To tell us, as some do, in the face of these texts, that *the early Churches were a model of perfection and purity*—is absurd. Even in Apostolic days, it appears, there were abundant errors both in doctrine and practice. To tell us, as others do, that pastors ought never to handle controversial subjects, and never to warn their people against erroneous views—is senseless and unreasonable. If we did this then we would have to ignore most of the New Testament. Surely the *dumb dog* and the *sleeping shepherd* are the best allies of the wolf, the thief, and the robber! It is not for nothing that Paul says, "If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 4:6).

A plain warning against false doctrine is especially needed in the present day. The school of the *Pharisees*, and the school of the *Sadducees*, those ancient mothers of all mischief, were never more active than they are now! Between those who bury truth under additions—and those who mutilate it by subtractions; between superstition—and infidelity; between Roman Catholicism—and New Theology; between Ritualism—and Rationalism; between these upper and lower millstones the Gospel is near being crushed to death!

Strange views are continually propounded by pastors about subjects of the deepest importance. About the atonement, the divinity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, the reality of miracles, the eternity of future

punishment, about the Church, the ministerial office, the Lord's Supper, Baptism, the confessional, the honor due to the Virgin Mary, prayers for the dead. About all these things there is nothing too outrageous to be taught by some ministers in these latter days. By the *pen* and by the *tongue*, by the *press* and by the *pulpit*, the country is incessantly deluged with a flood of erroneous opinions. To ignore the fact is mere blindness! Others see it, even if we pretend to be ignorant of it. The danger is real, great, and unmistakable! Never was it so needful to say, "Do not be carried away by *all kinds of strange teachings!*"

Many things combine to make the present inroad of false doctrine peculiarly dangerous. There is an undeniable *zeal* in some of the teachers of error—and their "earnestness" makes many think they must be right. There is a great appearance of *learning* and *theological* knowledge—and many imagine that such clever and intellectual men must surely be safe guides. There is a general tendency to *free thought* and *free inquiry* in these latter days—and many like to prove their independence of judgment, by believing novelties. There is a wide-spread desire to appear *charitable* and *liberal-minded*—and many seem half ashamed of saying that anybody can be in the wrong. There is a great quantity of *half-truth* taught by the modern false teachers—and they are incessantly using Scriptural terms and phrases in an unscriptural sense. There is a morbid craving in the public mind for a more sensuous, ceremonial, sensational, showy worship—and men are impatient of inward, invisible heart-work. There is a silly readiness in every direction—to believe everybody who talks cleverly, lovingly, and earnestly—and a determination to forget that Satan often masquerades himself "as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). There is a wide-spread "gullibility" among professing Christians—and every heretic who tells his story plausibly is sure to be believed—and everybody who doubts him is called a bigot and a narrow-minded man.

All these things are peculiar symptoms of our times. I defy any observing person to deny them. They tend to make the assaults of false doctrine in our day peculiarly dangerous. They make it more than ever needful to cry aloud, "Do not be carried away by *all kinds of strange teachings!*"

If any one should ask me, What is the best safeguard against false doctrine? I answer in one word, "The Bible—the Bible regularly read,

regularly prayed over, regularly studied." We must go back to the old prescription of our Master: "Diligently study the Scriptures" (John 5:39). If we want a weapon to wield against the plans of Satan, there is nothing like "the sword of the Spirit—the Word of God." But to wield it successfully, we must read it habitually, diligently, intelligently, and prayerfully. This is a point on which, I fear, many fail. In an age of hurry and activity, few read their Bibles as much as they should. More books perhaps are read than ever—but less of the one Book which makes man wise to salvation!

The Roman Catholic Church and new theology, could never have made such havoc in the Church in the last fifty years—if there had not been a most superficial knowledge of the Scriptures throughout the land. A Bible-reading congregation is the strength of a Church. "Diligently study the Scriptures!"

Great are the *difficulties of unbelief*—it requires more faith to be an unbeliever than a Christian. But greater still are the difficulties of Rationalism. Free handling of Scripture—results of modern criticism—broad and liberal theology—all these are fine, swelling, high-sounding phrases, which please some minds, and look very grand at a distance. But the man who looks below the surface of things will soon find that there is no sure standing-ground between ultra-Rationalism and Atheism.

"Diligently study the Scriptures." Mark what a conspicuous absence there is in the New Testament of what may be called the *Sacramental* system, and the whole circle of *Ritualistic* theology. Mark how extremely little there is said about the effects of *Baptism*. Mark how very seldom the *Lord's Supper* is mentioned in the Epistles. Find, if you can, a single text in which New Testament ministers are called *sacrificing priests*, or the Lord's Supper is called a *sacrifice*, or private confession to ministers is recommended and practiced. Turn, if you can, to one single verse in which sacrificial *vestments* are named as desirable, or in which lighted candles, and pots of flowers on the Lord's Table, or processions, and incense, and flags, and banners, and bowing down to the bread and wine, or prayer to the Virgin Mary and the angels, are sanctioned. Mark these things well, and you will find it very hard to be a Ritualist! You may find your authority for Ritualism in garbled quotations from the Fathers, in

long extracts from monkish mystics, or from Popes—but you certainly will not find it in the Bible! Between the plain Bible, honestly and fairly interpreted, and extreme Ritualism—there is gulf which cannot be passed.

"If we would not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings," we must remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Diligently study the Scriptures." **Ignorance of the Bible is the root of all error. Knowledge of the Bible is the best antidote against modern heresies.**

II. I now proceed to examine Paul's VALUABLE PRESCRIPTION: "It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods." There are two words in this prescription which require a little explanation. A right understanding of them is absolutely essential to a proper use of the Apostle's advice. One of these words is "foods," and the other is "grace."

To see the full force of the word "foods" we must remember the immense importance attached by many Jewish Christians to the distinctions of the ceremonial law about food. The flesh of some animals and birds, according to Leviticus, might be eaten—and that of others might not be eaten. Some foods were, consequently, called "clean," and others were called "unclean." To eat certain kinds of flesh made a Jew ceremonially unholy before God, and no strict Jew would touch and eat such food on any account. Now were these distinctions still to be kept up, after Christ ascended into heaven—or were they done away by the Gospel? Were *heathen converts* under any obligation to attend to the *ceremonial* of the *Levitical law* about food? Were *Jewish Christians* obliged to be as strict about the foods they ate—as they were before Christ died, and the veil of the temple was torn in two? Was the *ceremonial law* about foods entirely done away—or was it not? Was the conscience of a believer in the Lord Jesus to be troubled with fear, lest his food should defile him?

Questions like these appear to have formed one of the great subjects of controversy in the Apostolic times. As is often the case, they assumed a place entirely out of proportion to their real importance. The Apostle Paul found it needful to handle the subject in no less than three of his Epistles

to the Churches. "Food," he says, "does not bring us near to God." "The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking." "Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink." (1 Corinthians 8:8; Romans 14:17; Colossians 2:16). Nothing shows the fallen nature of man so clearly—as the readiness of morbid and scrupulous consciences to turn *trifles* into *serious* things. At last the controversy seems to have spread so far and obtained such dimensions, that "foods" became an expression to denote *anything ceremonial added to the Gospel as a thing of primary importance*, any Ritual trifle thrust out of its lawful place and magnified into an essential of religion. In this sense, I believe, the word must be taken in the text now before us.

By "**foods**" Paul means "ceremonial observances," either wholly invented by man, or else built on Mosaic precepts which have been abrogated and superseded by the Gospel. It is an expression which was well understood in the Apostolic days. The word "**grace**" on the other hand, seems to be employed as a comprehensive description of the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ. Of that glorious Gospel, grace is the main feature, grace in the original scheme, grace in the execution, grace in the application to man's soul. Grace is the fountain of life from which our salvation flows. Grace is the agency through which our spiritual life is kept up.

Are we justified? It is by grace.

Are we called? It is by grace.

Have we forgiveness? It is through the riches of grace.

Have we good hope? It is through grace.

Do we believe? It is through grace.

Are we elect? It is by the election of grace.

Are we saved? It is by grace.

Why should I say more? The time would fail me to exhibit fully the part which grace does in the whole work of redemption. No wonder that Paul

says to the Romans, "We are not under the law, but under grace!" And tells Titus, "The grace of God which brings salvation has appeared to all men." (Romans 3:24; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2Thessalonians 2:16; Acts 18:27; Romans 1:15; Ephesians 2:5; Romans 6:15; Titus 2:11).

Such are the two great principles which Paul puts in strong contrast in the prescription we are now considering. He places opposite to one another "foods" and "grace"; Ceremonialism and the Gospel; Ritualism and the free love of God in Christ Jesus. And then he lays down the great principle that it is by "grace," and "not foods," that the heart is strengthened.

Now "strengthening of the heart" is one of the great wants of many professing Christians. Especially is it longed after by those whose knowledge is imperfect, and whose conscience is half enlightened. Such people often feel in themselves much indwelling sin, and at the same time see very indistinctly God's remedy and Christ's fullness. Their faith is feeble, their hope dim, and their consolations small. They want to realize more tangible comfort. They fancy they ought to feel more and see more. They are not at ease. They cannot attain to joy and peace in believing. Where shall they turn? What shall set their consciences at rest? Then comes the enemy of souls, and suggests some *shortcut road* to establishment. He hints at the value of some addition to the simple plan of the Gospel, some man-made gimmick, some exaggeration of a truth, some flesh-satisfying invention, some improvement on the old path—and whispers, "Only use this, and you shall be strengthened." Plausible offers flow in at the same time from every quarter, like *quack* medicines. Each has its own patrons and advocates. On every side the poor unstable soul hears invitations to move in some particular direction, and then shall come perfect strength.

"Come to us!" says the Roman Catholic. "Join the Catholic Church, the Church on the Rock, the one, true, holy Church; the Church that cannot err. Come to her bosom, and rest your soul in her protection. Come to us, and you will find strength!"

"Come to us!" says the extreme Ritualist. "You need higher and fuller views of the priesthood and the Sacraments, of the Real Presence in the

Lord's Supper, of the soothing influence of daily service, daily masses, confession to priests, and priestly absolution. Come and take up sound Church views, and you will find strength!"

"Come to us," says the violent Liberationist. "Cast off the traditions and rules of established Churches. Enjoy religious liberty. Throw away forms and Prayer-books. Join our party. Cast in your lot with us, and you will soon be strengthened."

"Come to us!" say the Plymouth Brethren. "Shake off all the bondage of creeds and Churches and systems. We will soon show you higher, deeper, more exalting, more enlightened views of truth. Join the brethren, and you will soon be strengthened!"

"Come to us!" says the Rationalist. "Lay aside the old worn-out clothes of unfruitful schemes of Christianity. Give your reason free scope and play. Begin a freer mode of handling Scripture. Be no more a slave to an ancient old book. Break your chains—and you shall be strengthened!"

Every experienced Christian knows well, that such appeals are constantly made to *unsettled minds* in the present day. Who has not seen that, when boldly and confidently made, they produce a painful effect on some people? Who has not observed that they often beguile unstable souls—and lead them into misery for years?

"What does the Scripture say?" This is the only sure guide. Hear what Paul says. Heart strength is not to be obtained by joining this party or that. It comes "by grace, and not by foods." Other things have a "show of wisdom" perhaps, and give a temporary satisfaction "to the flesh." (Colossians 2:23). But they have no healing power about them in reality, and leave the unhappy man who trusts them nothing bettered—but rather worse.

A clearer knowledge of the Divine scheme of grace, its eternal purposes, its application to man by Christ's redeeming work; a firmer grasp of the doctrine of grace, of God's free love in Christ, of Christ's full and complete satisfaction for sin, of justification by simple faith, a more intimate acquaintance with Christ the Giver and Fountain of grace, His offices, His

sympathy, His power; a more thorough experience of the inward work of grace in the heart—this, this, this is the grand secret of heart strength. This is the old path of peace. This is the *true panacea* for restless consciences. It may seem at first too simple, too easy, too cheap, too commonplace, too plain. But all the wisdom of man will never show the heavy-laden a better road to heart-rest.

Secret pride and self-righteousness, I fear, are too often the reason why this good old road is not used. I believe there never was a time when it was more needful to uphold the old Apostolic prescription than it is in the present day. Never were there so many weak and worried Christians wandering about, and tossed to and fro, from lack of knowledge. Never was it so important for faithful ministers to set the trumpet to their mouths and proclaim everywhere, "Grace, grace, grace, not foods, establishes the heart."

From the days of the Apostles there have never been a lack of *quack spiritual doctors*, who have professed to heal the wounds of conscience with *man-made* remedies. In our own beloved Church there have always been some who have in heart turned back to Egypt, and, not content with the simplicity of our worship, have hankered after the ceremonial fleshpots of the Catholic Church. To hear the Sacraments incessantly exalted, and preaching played down; to see the Lord's Supper turned into an idol, under the pretext of making it more honorable; to find plain worship overlaid with so many newfangled ornaments and ceremonies that its essentials are quite buried—how common is all this! These things were once a pestilence which walked in darkness. They are now a destruction which wastes in noonday. They are the joy of our enemies, the sorrow of the Church's best children, the damage of English Christianity, the plague of our times. And to what may they all be traced? The neglect and the forgetfulness of Paul's simple prescription: "*Grace, and not foods, strengthens the heart.*"

Let us take heed that in our own personal religion, grace is all. Let us have clear systematic views of the Gospel of the grace of God. Nothing else will do good in the hour of sickness, in the day of trial, on the bed of death—in the swellings of Jordan. Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, Christ's free grace the only foundation under the soles of our feet—this

alone will give peace. Once let in *self*, and *forms*, and *man's inventions*, as a necessary part of our religion—and we are on a quicksand! We may be amused, excited, or kept quiet for a time, like children with toys, by a religion of "foods." Such a religion has "a show of wisdom." But unless our religion is one in which "grace" is all—we shall never feel strengthened.

III. In the last place, I proceed to examine the INSTRUCTIVE FACT which Paul records. He says, "Ceremonial foods are of no value to those who eat them."

We have no means of knowing whether the Apostle, in using this language, referred to any particular Churches, or individuals. Of course it is possible that he had in view the Judaizing Christians of Antioch and Galatia, or the Ephesians of whom he speaks to Timothy in his pastoral Epistle; or the Colossians who caused him so much inward conflict; or the Hebrew believers in every Church, without exception. It seems to me far more probable, however, that he had no particular Church or Churches in view. I rather think that he makes a broad, general, sweeping statement about all who in any place had exalted *ceremonies* at the expense of the doctrines of "grace." And he makes a wide declaration about them all. They have gotten no good from their favorite notions. They have not been more inwardly happy, more outwardly holy, or more generally useful. Their religion has been most unprofitable to them.

Man-made alterations of God's precious medicine for sinners; man-made additions to Christ's glorious Gospel, however greatly defended and plausibly supported, do no real good to those who adopt them. They confer no increased inward comfort; they bring no growth of real holiness; they give no enlarged usefulness to the Church and the world.

Calmly, quietly, and mildly—but firmly, decidedly, and unflinchingly, the assertion is made, "Ceremonial foods are of no value to those who eat them." The whole stream of Church history abundantly confirms the truth of the Apostle's position. Who has not heard of the hermits and ascetics of the early centuries? Who has not heard of the monks and nuns and recluses of the Roman Catholic Church in the middle ages? Who has not heard of the burning zeal, the devoted self-denial of Romanists like Xavier, and Ignatius Loyola? The earnestness, the fervor, the self-sacrifice of all these classes, are matters beyond dispute. But none who read the records of their lives carefully and intelligently, can fail to see that they had no solid peace or inward rest of soul. Their very feverish restlessness is enough to show that their consciences were not at ease. None can fail to see that, with all their furious zeal and self-denial, they never did much good to the world. They gathered round themselves admiring partisans. They left a high reputation for self-denial and sincerity. They made men wonder at them while they lived, and sometimes canonize them when they died. But they did nothing to convert souls.

And what is the reason of this? They attached an overweening importance to man-made ritual and ceremonies, and made less than they ought to have done of the Gospel of the grace of God. Their principle was to make much of "ceremony," and little of "grace." Hence they verified the words of Paul, "Ceremonial foods are of no value to those who eat them."

The very history of our own times bears a striking testimony to the truth of Paul's assertion. In the last twenty-five years, scores of clergymen have seceded from the Church of England, and joined the Church of Rome. They wanted more of what they called Catholic doctrine and Catholic ceremonial. They honestly acted up to their principles, and went over to Rome. They were not all weak, and illiterate, and second-rate, and inferior men; several of them were men of commanding talents, whose gifts would have won for them a high position in any profession. Yet what have they gained by the step they have taken? What profit have they found in leaving "grace" for "ceremonies," in exchanging Protestantism for Catholicism? Have they attained a higher standard of holiness? Have they procured for themselves a greater degree of usefulness? The

religious system which exalts ceremonies and man-made ritual, does no real good to its adherents, compared to the simple old Gospel of the grace of God.

Let us turn now, for a few moments, to the other side of the picture, and see what "grace" has done. Let us hear how profitable the doctrines of the Gospel have proved to those who have clung firmly to them, and have not tried to mend and improve and patch them up by adding, as essentials, the "foods" of man-made ceremonies.

It was "grace, and not foods," which made Martin Luther do the work that he did in the world. The key to all his success was his constant declaration of justification by faith, without the deeds of the law. This was the truth which enabled him to break the chains of Rome, and let light into Europe.

It was "grace, and not ceremonial foods," which made our English martyrs, Latimer and Hooper, exercise so mighty an influence in life, and shine so brightly in death. They saw clearly, and taught plainly, the true priesthood of Christ, and salvation only by grace. They honored God's grace—and God put honor on them.

It was "grace, and not ceremonial foods," that made Romaine and Venn, and their companions, turn the world upside down in England, one hundred years ago. In themselves they were not men of extraordinary learning or intellectual power. But they revived and brought out again the real pure doctrines of grace.

It was "grace, and not ceremonial foods," that made Simeon and Daniel Wilson and Bickersteth such striking instruments of usefulness in the first half of the present century. God's free grace was the great truth on which they relied, and continually brought forward. For so doing God put honor on them. They made much of God's grace—and the God of grace made much of them.

The list of ministerial biographies tells a striking tale. Who are those who have shaken the world, and left their mark on their generation, and aroused consciences, and converted sinners, and edified saints? Not those who have made asceticism, and ceremonials, and sacraments, and

services, and ordinances the main thing; but those who have made most of God's free grace! In a day of strife, and controversy, and doubt, and perplexity, men forget this.

Facts are stubborn things. Let us look calmly at them, and be not moved by those who tell us that daily services, processions, incense, bowings, crossings, confessions, absolutions, and the like, are the secret of a prosperous Christianity. Let us look at plain facts. Facts in old history, and facts in modern days, facts in every part of England, support the assertion of Paul. The religion of "ceremonial foods" does "not profit those that are occupied therein." It is the religion of grace which brings inward peace, outward holiness, and general usefulness.

Let me wind up this paper with a few words of **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**. We are living in an age of peculiar religious danger. I am quite sure that the advice I am going to offer deserves serious attention.

(1) In the first place, let us not be surprised at the rise and progress of false doctrine. It is a thing as old as the old Apostles. It began before they died. They predicted that there would be plenty of it before the end of the world. It is wisely ordered by God, for the testing of our grace, and to prove who has real faith. If there were no such thing as false doctrine or heresy upon earth—I would begin to think the Bible was not true.

(2) In the next place, let us make up our minds to resist false doctrine, and not to be carried away by fashion and bad example. Let us not flinch, because all around us, high and low, rich and poor, are swept away, like geese in a flood, before a torrent of Catholicism. Let us be firm and stand our ground.

Let us resist false doctrine, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Let us not be ashamed of showing our colors and standing out for New Testament truth. Let us not be stopped by the alarm cry of "controversy." The thief likes dogs which do not bark, and watchmen which give no alarm. The devil is a thief and a robber. If we

hold our peace, and do not resist false doctrine—we please him and displease God.

(3) In the next place, let us try to preserve the old Protestant principles of the Church, and to hand them down uninjured to our children's children. Let us not listen to those faint-hearted Churchmen who would have us forsake the ship, and desert the Church in her time of need.

(4) In the last place, let us make sure work of our own personal salvation. Let us seek to know and feel that we ourselves are "saved." The day of controversy is always a day of spiritual peril. Men are apt to confound *orthodoxy* with *conversion*, and to fancy that they must go to heaven if they know how to answer Catholic Priests. Yet mere earnestness without knowledge, and mere head-knowledge of true doctrine, alike save none. Let us never forget this.

Let us not rest until we feel the blood of Christ sprinkled on our consciences, and have the witness of the Spirit within us that we are born again. This is reality. This is true religion. This will last. This will never fail us. It is the possession of grace in the heart, and not the intellectual knowledge of doctrine, which alone profits and saves the soul.

The Fallibility of Ministers

"When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish

customs?" We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified." Galatians 2:11-16

Have we ever considered what the Apostle *Peter* did at Antioch? It is a question that deserves serious consideration.

What the Apostle Peter did at *Rome* we are often told, although we have hardly a jot of authentic information about it. Legends, traditions, and fables abound on the subject. But unhappily for these writers, Scripture is utterly silent upon the point. There is nothing in Scripture to show that the Apostle Peter *ever* was at Rome at all!

But what did the Apostle Peter do at Antioch? This is the point to which I want to direct attention. This is the subject from the passage from the Epistle to the Galatians, which heads this paper. On this point, at any rate, the Scripture speaks clearly and unmistakably.

The six verses of the passage before us are striking on many accounts. They are striking, if we consider the *event* which they describe: here is one Apostle rebuking another! They are striking, when we consider who the two men are: Paul, the younger, rebukes Peter the elder! They are striking, when we remark the occasion: this was no glaring fault, no flagrant sin, at first sight, that Peter had committed! Yet the Apostle Paul says, "I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong." He does more than this—he reproveth Peter publicly for his error before all the Church at Antioch. He goes even further—he writes an *account* of the matter, which is now read in two hundred languages all over the world!

It is my firm conviction that the Holy Spirit wants us to take particular notice of this passage of Scripture. If Christianity had been an invention of man, these things would never have been recorded. An *impostor* would have hushed up the difference between two Apostles. The Spirit of truth has caused these verses to be written for our learning, and we shall do well to take heed to their contents.

There are three great lessons from Antioch, which I think we ought to learn from this passage.

I. The first lesson is, "That great ministers may make great mistakes."

II. The second is, "That to keep the *truth* of Christ in His Church is even more important than to keep *peace*."

III. The third is, "That there is no doctrine about which we ought to be so protective about, as *justification by faith* without the deeds of the law."

I. The first great lesson we learn from Antioch is, "That great ministers may make great mistakes." What clearer proof can we have, than that which is set before us in this place? Peter, without doubt, was one of the greatest in the company of the Apostles. He was an old disciple. He was a disciple who had had peculiar advantages and privileges. He had been a constant companion of the Lord Jesus. He had heard the Lord preach, seen the Lord work miracles, enjoyed the benefit of the Lord's private teaching, been numbered among the Lord's intimate friends, and gone out and come in with Him all the time He ministered upon earth. He was the Apostle to whom the *keys of the kingdom* of heaven were given, and by whose hand those keys were first used. He was the first who opened the door of faith to the *Jews*, by preaching to them on the day of Pentecost. He was the first who opened the door of faith to the *Gentiles*, by going to the house of Cornelius, and receiving him into the Church. He was the first to rise up in the Council of the fifteenth of Acts, and say, "Why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?" And yet here this very Peter, this same Apostle, plainly falls into a great mistake!

The Apostle Paul tells us, "I opposed him to his face." He tells us "because he was clearly in the wrong." He says "he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group." He says of him and his companions, that "they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel." He speaks of their "hypocrisy." He tells us that by this hypocrisy even Barnabas, his old companion in missionary labors, "was led astray." What a striking fact this is. This is Simon Peter! This is the third great error of his, which the

Holy Spirit has thought fit to record! Once we find him trying to keep back our Lord, as far as he could, from the great work of the cross, and severely rebuked Him. Then we find him denying the Lord three times—and with an oath! Here again we find him endangering the leading truth of Christ's Gospel. Surely we may say, "Lord, what is man!" Let us note, that of all the Apostles there is not one, excepting, of course, Judas Iscariot, of whom we have so many proofs that he was a fallible man.

(Note: It is curious to observe the shifts to which some writers have been reduced, in order to explain away the plain meaning of the verses which head this paper. Some have maintained that Paul did not really rebuke Peter, but only faked it, for show and appearance sake! Others have maintained that it was not Peter the Apostle who was rebuked, but another Peter—one of the seventy! Such interpretations need no remark. They are simply absurd. The truth is that the plain honest meaning of the verses strikes a heavy blow at the favorite Roman Catholic doctrine of the *primacy* and *superiority* of Peter over the rest of the Apostles.)

But it is all meant to teach us that even the Apostles themselves, when not writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, were at times *liable to err*. It is meant to teach us that the best men are weak and fallible, so long as they are in the body. Unless the grace of God holds them up, any one of them may go astray at any time. It is very humbling, but it is very true. True Christians are converted, justified, and sanctified. They are living members of Christ, beloved children of God, and heirs of eternal life. They are elect, chosen, called, and kept unto salvation. They have the Spirit. But they are *not infallible!*

Will not ecclesiastical rank and dignity confer infallibility? No—they will not! It matters nothing what a man is called. He may be a Preacher, Minister, or Deacon. He is still a fallible man! Neither the education, nor the anointing oil, nor the laying on of hands, can prevent a man making mistakes.

Will not *numbers* confer infallibility? No—they will not! You may gather together princes by the score, and ministers by the hundred; but, when gathered together, they are still liable to err. You may call them a council, or an assembly, or a conference, or whatever you please. It matters

nothing. Their conclusions are still the conclusions of fallible men. Their collective wisdom is still capable of making enormous mistakes.

The example of the Apostle Peter at Antioch is one that does not stand alone. It is only a parallel of many a case that we find written for our learning, in Holy Scripture. Do we not remember *Abraham*, the father of the faithful, following the advice of Sarah, and taking Hagar for a wife? Do we not remember *Aaron*, the first high priest, listening to the *children* of Israel, and making a golden calf? Do we not remember Solomon, the wisest of men, allowing his wives to build their high places of false worship? Do we not remember *Jehosaphat*, the good king, going down to help wicked Ahab? Do we not remember *Hezekiah*, the good king, receiving the ambassadors of Babylon? Do we not remember *Josiah*, the last of Judah's good kings, going forth to fight with Pharaoh? Do we not remember *James* and *John*, wanting fire to come down from heaven? These things deserve to be remembered. They were not written without cause. They cry aloud, "No infallibility!"

And who does not see, when he reads the history of the Church of Christ, repeated proofs that the best of men can err? The *early fathers* were zealous according to their knowledge, and ready to die for Christ. But many of them advocated ritualism, and nearly all sowed the seeds of many superstitions. The *Reformers* were honored instruments in the hand of God for reviving the cause of truth on earth. Yet hardly one of them can be named who did not make some great mistake. *Luther* held tightly to the doctrine of consubstantiation. *Melancthon* was often timid and undecided. *Calvin* permitted Servetus to be burned. *Cranmer* recanted and fell away for a time from his first faith. *Jewell* subscribed to Roman Catholic Church doctrines for fear of death. *Hooper* disturbed the Church of England by demanding the need to wear *ceremonial vestments* when ministering. The *Puritans*, in later times, denounced Christian liberty and freedoms as doctrines from the pit of Hell. *Wesley* and *Toplady*, last century, abused each other in most shameful language. *Irving*, in our own day, gave way to the delusion of speaking in unknown tongues.

All these things speak with a loud voice. They all lift up a beacon to the Church of Christ. They all say, "Do not trust man; call no man *master*;

call no man *father* on earth; let no man glory in man. "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." They all cry—"No infallibility!" The lesson is one that we all need. We are all naturally inclined to *lean upon man* whom we can see, rather than upon God whom we cannot see. We naturally love to lean upon the *ministers* of the visible Church, rather than upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd and High Priest, who is invisible. We need to be continually warned and set on our guard.

I see this tendency to lean on man everywhere. I know no branch of the Protestant Church of Christ which does not require to be cautioned upon the point. It is a snare to the Scottish Christians to pin their faith on John Knox. It is a snare to the Methodists in our day to worship the memory of John Wesley. All these are snares, and into these snares how many fall!

We all naturally love to have a *pope* of our own. We are far too ready to think, that because some great minister or some learned man says a thing, or because our own minister, whom we love, says a thing—that it must be right, without examining whether it is in Scripture or not. Most men dislike the trouble of thinking for themselves. They like following a leader. They are like sheep, when one goes over the hill all the rest follow. Here at Antioch even Barnabas was carried away. We can well fancy that good man saying, "An old Apostle, like Peter, surely cannot be wrong. Following him, I cannot err."

And now let us see what **PRACTICAL LESSONS** we may learn from this part of our subject.

(a) For one thing, let us learn not to put implicit confidence in any man's opinion, merely because he lived many hundred years ago. "When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong." Galatians 2:11. Peter was a man who lived in the time of Christ Himself, and yet he could err. There are many who talk much in the present day about the voice of the early Church. They would have us believe that those who lived nearest the time of the Apostles, must of course know more about truth than we can. There is no foundation for any such opinion. It is a fact, that the most ancient writers in the true Church of Christ are often at variance with one another. It is a fact that they often changed their own minds, and

retracted their own former opinions. It is a fact that they often wrote foolish and weak things, and often showed great ignorance in their explanations of Scripture. It is vain to expect to find them free from mistakes. Infallibility is not to be found in the early fathers—but in the Bible alone!

(b) For another thing, let us learn not to put implicit confidence in any man's opinion, merely because of his office as a minister. Peter was one of the very chief Apostles—and yet he could err. This is a point on which men have continually gone astray. It is the rock on which the early Church struck. Men soon took up the saying, "Do nothing contrary to the mind of the minister!" But what are ministers, preachers, and deacons? What are the best of ministers but men—dust, ashes, and clay—men of like passions with ourselves, men exposed to temptations, men liable to weaknesses and infirmities? What does the Scripture say? "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task" (1 Corinthians 3:5).

Ministers have often driven the truth into the wilderness, and decreed that to be true, which was false. The greatest errors have been begun by ministers! Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of the high-priest, made religion to be abhorred by the children of Israel. Annas and Caiaphas, though in the direct line of descent from Aaron, crucified the Lord. It is absurd to suppose that ordained men cannot go wrong. We should follow them so far as they teach according to the Bible, but no further. We should believe them so long as they can say, "Thus it is written, thus says the Lord," but further than this we are not to go. Infallibility is not to be found in ordained men, but in the Bible alone!

(c) For another thing, let us learn not to place implicit confidence in any man's opinion, merely because of his learning. Peter was a man who had miraculous gifts, and could speak with the (then valid) gift of tongues—and yet he could err!

This is a point again on which many go wrong. This is the rock on which men struck in the middle ages. Men looked on Thomas Aquinas, and Peter Lombard, and many of their companions, as almost inspired. They

gave epithets to some of them in token of their admiration. They talked of "the indisputable" preacher, "the angelic" minister, "the incomparable" pastor, and seemed to think that *whatever these ministers said—must be true!* But what is the most learned of men, if he is not taught by the Holy Spirit? What is the most learned of all divines—but a mere fallible child of Adam at his very best? Vast knowledge of books—and great ignorance of God's truth—may go side by side! They have done so, they may do so, and they will do so in all times.

I do not doubt that the one volume of *Pilgrim's Progress*, written by a man who knew hardly any book but his Bible, and was ignorant of Greek and Latin, will prove in the last day to have done more for the benefit of the world, than all the works of the schoolmen put together. Learning is a gift that ought not to be despised. It is an evil day when books are not valued in the Church. But it is amazing to observe how vast a man's intellectual attainments may be—and yet how little he may know of the grace of God! I have no doubt the Authorities of Oxford in the last century, knew more of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, than Wesley or Whitefield. But they knew little of the Gospel of Christ. Infallibility is not to be found among learned men—but in the Bible alone!

(d) For another thing, let us take care that we do not place implicit confidence on our own minister's opinion, however godly he may be. Peter was a man of mighty grace, and yet he could err. Your minister may be a man of God indeed, and worthy of all honor for his preaching and example; but do not make a *pope* of him! Do not place his word side by side with the Word of God. Do not spoil him by flattery. Do not let him suppose he can make no mistakes. Do not lean your whole weight on his opinion—or you may find to your cost that he can err. It is written of Joash, King of Judah, that he "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the years of Jehoiada the priest" (2 Chronicles 24:2). Jehoiada died, and then the religion of Joash died! Just so your minister may die, and then your religion may die too. He may change, and your religion may change. He may go away, and your religion may go. Oh, do not be satisfied with *a religion built on man!*

Do not be content with saying, "I have hope, because my own minister has told me such and such things." Seek to be able to say, "I have hope,

because I find it thus and thus written in the Word of God." If your peace is to be solid, you must go yourself to the fountain of all truth. If your comforts are to be lasting, you must visit the well of life yourself, and draw fresh water for your own soul. Ministers may depart from the faith. The visible Church may be broken up. But he who has the Word of God written in his heart, has a foundation beneath his feet which will never fail him. Honor your minister as a faithful ambassador of Christ. Esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake. But never forget that infallibility is not to be found in godly ministers—but in the Bible alone!

The things I have mentioned are worth remembering. Let us bear them in mind, and we shall have learned one lesson from Antioch.

II. I now pass on to the second lesson that we learn from Antioch. That lesson is, "That to keep Gospel *truth* in the Church—is of even greater importance than to keep *peace*." I suppose no man knew better the value of peace and unity than the Apostle Paul. He was the Apostle who wrote to the Corinthians about love. He was the Apostle who said, "Live in harmony with one another; live in peace with each other; the Lord's servant must not quarrel; There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism." He was the Apostle who said, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (Romans 12:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; Philemon 3:16; Ephesians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 9:22).

Yet see how he acts here! He withstands Peter to the face. He publicly rebukes him. He runs the risk of all the consequences which might follow. He takes the chance of everything that might be said by the enemies of the Church at Antioch. Above all, he writes it down for a perpetual memorial, that it never might be forgotten, that, wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the world, this public rebuke of an erring Apostle might be known and read by all men.

Now, why did he do this? Because he dreaded false doctrine; because he knew that a little leaven leavens the whole lump, because he would teach us that we ought to contend for the truth jealously, and to fear the loss of

truth more than the loss of *peace*.

Paul's example is one we shall do well to remember in the present day. Many people will put up with anything in religion, if they may only have a quiet life. They have a morbid dread of what they call "controversy." They are filled with a morbid fear of what they style, in a vague way, "party spirit," though they never define clearly what party spirit is. They are possessed with a morbid desire to keep peace, and make all things smooth and pleasant, even though it is at the expense of *truth*.

So long as they have outward calm, smoothness, stillness, and order, they seem content to give up everything else. I believe they would have thought with Ahab—that Elijah was a troubler of Israel; and would have helped the princes of Judah when they put Jeremiah in prison, to stop his mouth. I have no doubt that many of these men of whom I speak, would have thought that Paul at Antioch was a very imprudent man, and that he went too far! I believe this is all wrong.

We have no right to expect anything but the pure Gospel of Christ, unmixed and unadulterated; the same Gospel that was taught by the Apostles; to do good to the souls of men. I believe that to maintain this pure truth in the Church—men should be ready to make any sacrifice, to hazard peace, to risk dissension, and run the chance of division. They should no more tolerate false doctrine—than they would tolerate sin. They should withstand any adding to or taking away from the simple message of the Gospel of Christ.

For the truth's sake, our Lord Jesus Christ denounced the Pharisees, though they sat in Moses' seat, and were the appointed and authorized teachers of men. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!" He says, eight times over, in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. And who shall dare to breathe a suspicion that our Lord was wrong? For the truth's sake, Paul withstood and blamed Peter, though a brother. What was the use of unity—when pure doctrine is gone? And who shall dare to say he was wrong? For the truth's sake, Athanasius stood out against the world to maintain the pure doctrine about the divinity of Christ, and waged a controversy with the great majority of the professing Church. And who shall dare to say he was wrong? For the

truth's sake, Luther broke the unity of the Church in which he was born, denounced the Pope and all his ways, and laid the foundation of a new teaching. And who shall dare to say that Luther was wrong? For the truth's sake, Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, the English Reformers, counseled Henry VIII and Edward VI to separate from Rome, and to risk the consequences of division. And who shall dare to say that they were wrong? For the truth's sake, Whitefield and Wesley, a hundred years ago, denounced the mere barren moral preaching of the clergy of their day, and went out into the highways and byways to save souls, knowing well that they would be cast out from the Church's communion. And who shall dare to say that they were wrong?

Yes! peace without truth—is a false peace; it is the very peace of the devil. Unity without the Gospel is a worthless unity; it is the very unity of hell. Let us never be ensnared by those who speak kindly of it. Let us remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34) Let us remember the praise He gives to one of the Churches in Revelation, "I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false" (Revelation 2:2). Let us remember the blame He casts on another, "You *tolerate* that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess" (Revelation 2:20). Never let us be guilty of sacrificing any portion of truth—on the altar of peace. Let us rather be like the Jews, who, if they found any manuscript copy of the Old Testament Scriptures incorrect in a single letter, burned the whole copy, rather than run the risk of losing one jot or tittle of the Word of God. Let us be content with nothing short of the whole Gospel of Christ.

In what way are we to make **PRACTICAL USE** of the general principles which I have just laid down? I will give my readers one simple piece of advice. I believe it is advice which deserves serious consideration. I warn then every one who loves his soul—to be very selective as to the preaching he regularly hears, and the place of worship he regularly attends. He who deliberately settles down under any ministry which is unsound, is a very unwise man. I will never hesitate to speak my mind on this point. I know well that many think it a shocking thing, for a man to forsake his local

church. I cannot see with the eyes of such people. I draw a wide distinction between teaching which is *defective* and teaching which is *thoroughly false*; teaching which is unscriptural. But I do believe, if false doctrine is preached in a local church, a Christian who loves his soul is quite right in not going to that local church. To hear unscriptural teaching fifty-two Sundays in every year is a serious thing. It is a continual dropping of *slow poison* into the mind! I think it almost impossible for a man willfully to submit himself to it, and not be harmed.

I see in the New Testament we are plainly told to "Test everything" and "Hold on to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). I see in the Book of Proverbs that we are commanded to "Stop listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge" (Proverbs 19:27). If these words do not justify a man in ceasing to worship at a church, if positively false doctrine is preached in it, I do not know what words can.

Does any one mean to tell us, that to attend your local denominational church is absolutely needful to a person's salvation? If there is such a one, let him speak out, and give us his name. Does any one mean to tell us that going to the denominational church will save any man's soul, if he dies unconverted and ignorant of Christ? If there is such a one, let him speak out, and give us his name. Does any one mean to tell us that going to the denominational church will teach a man anything about Christ, or conversion, or faith, or repentance, if these subjects are hardly ever named in the denomination church, and never properly explained? If there is such a one, let him speak out, and give us his name. Does any one mean to say that a man who repents, believes in Christ, is converted and holy, will lose his soul, because he has forsaken his denomination and learned his religion elsewhere? If there is such a one, let him speak out, and give us his name.

For my part, I abhor such monstrous and extravagant ideas. I do not see a speck of foundation for them in the Word of God. I trust that the number of those who deliberately hold them is exceedingly small. There are many churches where the religious teaching is little better than *Roman Catholicism*. Ought the congregation of such churches to sit still, be content, and take it quietly? They ought not. And why? Because, like Paul, they ought to prefer truth to peace.

There are many churches where the religious teaching is little better than *morality*. The distinctive doctrines of Christianity are never clearly proclaimed. Plato, or Seneca, or Confucius, could have taught almost as much. Ought the congregation in such churches to sit still, be content, and take it quietly? They ought not. And why? Because, like Paul, they ought to prefer truth to peace.

I am using strong language in dealing with this part of my subject—I know it. I am treading on delicate ground—I know it. I am handling matters which are generally let alone, and passed over in silence—I know it.

I say what I say from a sense of duty to the Church of which I am a minister. I believe the state of the times, and the position of the congregation require plain speaking. Souls are perishing, in many churches, in ignorance. Honest members of the church are confused and perplexed. This is no time for smooth words. I am not ignorant of those magic expressions, "division, schism, controversy," and the like. I know the cramping, silencing influence which they seem to exercise on some minds. I too have considered those expressions calmly and deliberately, and on each of them I am prepared to speak my mind.

(a) The denominational church is an admirable thing in theory.

Let it only be well administered, and worked by truly spiritual ministers, and it is calculated to confer the greatest blessings on the nation. But it is useless to expect attachment to the denomination, when the minister of the denominational church is ignorant of the Gospel, or a lover of the world. In such a case we must never be surprised if men forsake their denomination, and seek truth wherever truth is to be found. If the denominational minister does not *preach* the Gospel and *live* the Gospel, the conditions on which he claims the attention of his congregation are virtually violated, and his claim to be heard is at an end. It is absurd to expect the head of a family to endanger the souls of his children, as well as his own—for the sake of "the denomination." There is no mention of *denominations* in the Bible, and we have no right to require men to live and die in ignorance, in order that they may be able to say at last, "I always attended my local denominational church."

(b) Divisions and separations in religion, are most objectionable. They weaken the cause of true Christianity. They give occasion to the enemies of all godliness to blaspheme. But before we blame people for them, we must be careful that we lay the blame where it is deserved. *False doctrine and heresy are even worse than schism.* If people separate themselves from teaching which is positively false and unscriptural, they ought to be praised rather than reprov'd. In such cases separation is a virtue—and not a sin. It is easy to make sneering remarks about "itching ears," and "love of excitement;" but it is not so easy to convince a plain reader of the Bible that it is his duty to hear false doctrine every Sunday, when by a little exertion he can hear truth.

(c) Unity, quiet, and order among professing Christians are mighty blessings. They give strength, beauty, and efficiency to the cause of Christ. But even gold may be bought too dear. Unity which is obtained by the sacrifice of truth, is worth nothing. It is not the unity which pleases God. The Church of Rome boasts loudly of a unity which does not deserve the name. It is *unity* which is obtained by taking away the Bible from the people, by gagging private judgment, by encouraging ignorance, by forbidding men to think for themselves. There is quiet and stillness enough in the grave, but it is not the quiet of health, but of death. It was the false prophets who cried "Peace!" when there was no peace.

(d) Controversy in religion is a hateful thing. It is hard enough to fight the *devil*, the *world* and the *flesh*, without private differences in our own camp. But there is one thing which is even worse than controversy, and that is *false doctrine tolerated, allowed, and permitted* without protest or challenge. It was controversy that won the battle of Protestant Reformation. If the views that some men hold were correct, it is plain we never ought to have had any Reformation at all! For the sake of peace, we ought to have gone on worshiping the Virgin Mary, and bowing down to images and relics to this very day! Away with such trifling! There are times when controversy is not only a *duty*—but a *benefit*. Give me the *mighty thunderstorm*, rather than the *deadly malaria*. The one walks in darkness and poisons us in silence, and we are never safe. The other frightens and alarms for a little while. But it is soon over, and it clears the air. It is a plain Scriptural duty to "contend for the faith that was once for

all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 1:3).

I am quite aware that the things I have said are exceedingly distasteful to many minds. I believe many are content with teaching which is not the whole truth, and fancy it will be "all the same" in the end. I am sorry for them. I am convinced that nothing but the whole truth is likely, as a general rule, to do good to souls. I am satisfied that those who willfully put up with anything short of the whole truth, will find at last that their souls have received much damage. **There are three things which men never ought to trifle with: a little poison, a little false doctrine, and a little sin.**

I am quite aware that when a man expresses such opinions as those I have just brought forward, there are many who are ready to say, "He is not faithful to the Church." I hear such accusations unmoved. The day of judgment will show who were the true friends of the Church and who were not. I have learned in the last thirty-two years that if a minister leads a quiet life, leaves alone the unconverted part of the world, and preaches so as to offend none and edify none—that he will be called by many "a good pastor." And I have also learned that if a man studies Scriptures, labors continually for the conversion of souls, adheres closely to the great principals of the Reformation, bears a faithful testimony against Romanism, and preaches powerful, convicting sermons—he will probably be thought a firebrand and "troubler of Israel." Let men say what they will. They are the truest friends of the Church, who labor most for the preservation of truth.

I lay these things before the readers of this paper, and invite their serious attention to them. I charge them never to forget that *truth* is of more importance to a Church than *peace*. I ask them to be ready to carry out the principles I have laid down, and to contend zealously, if needs be, for the truth. If we do this, we shall have learned something from Antioch.

III. But I pass on to the third lesson from Antioch. That lesson is, that "There is no doctrine about which we ought to be so jealous as justification by faith and not by observing the law."

The proof of this lesson stands out most prominently in the passage of Scripture which heads this paper. What one article of the faith had the Apostle Peter denied at Antioch? None. What doctrine had he publicly preached which was false? None. What, then, had he done? He had done this. After once keeping company with the believing Gentiles as "heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 3:6), he suddenly became shy of them and withdrew himself. He seemed to think they were less holy and acceptable to God, than the circumcised Jews. He seemed to imply, that the believing Gentiles were in a lower state than those who had kept the ceremonies of the law of Moses. He seemed, in a word, to add something to *simple faith* as needful to give a man an interest in Jesus Christ. He seemed to reply to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" not merely "Believe in the Lord Jesus," but "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and be circumcised, and keep the ceremonies of the law." Such conduct as this, the Apostle Paul would not endure for a moment. Nothing so moved him as the idea of adding anything to the Gospel of Christ. "I opposed him," he says, "to his face." He not only *rebuked* him, but he *recorded* the whole transaction fully, when by inspiration of the Spirit he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians.

I invite special attention to this point. I ask men to observe the remarkable jealousy which the Apostle Paul shows about this doctrine, and to consider the point about which such a stir was made. Let us mark in this passage of Scripture, the immense importance of justification by faith and not by keeping the law.

(a) This is the doctrine which is essentially necessary to our own personal comfort. No man on earth is a real child of God, and a saved soul, until he sees and receives salvation by faith in Christ Jesus. No man will ever have solid peace and true assurance, until he embraces with all his heart the doctrine that "we are counted righteous before God because of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, by faith, and not for our own works and goodness." One reason, I believe, why so many professors in this day are tossed to and fro, enjoy little comfort, and feel little peace—is their ignorance on this point. They do not see clearly justification by faith without their own "good works."

(b) This is the doctrine which the great enemy of souls hates, and labors to overthrow. He knows that it turned the world upside down at the first beginning of the Gospel, in the days of the Apostles. He knows that it turned the world upside down again at the time of the Reformation. He is therefore always tempting men to reject it. He is always trying to seduce Churches and ministers to deny or obscure its truth. No wonder that the Council of Trent [Roman Catholic Council that established their present doctrines] directed its chief attack against this doctrine, and pronounced it accursed and heretical. No wonder that many who think themselves learned in these days, denounce the doctrine as theological jargon, and say that all "serious minded people" are justified by Christ, whether they have faith or not! The plain truth is that the doctrine is all bitterness and poison to unconverted hearts. It just meets the wants of the awakened soul. But the proud unhumiliated man who knows not his own sin, and sees not his own weakness, cannot receive its truth.

(c) This is the doctrine, the absence of which accounts for half the errors of the Roman Catholic Church. The beginning of half the unscriptural doctrines of Catholicism may be traced up to rejection of *justification by faith*. No Catholic teacher, if he is faithful to his Church, can say to an anxious sinner, "Believe in the Lord Jesus—and you will be saved." He cannot do it without additions and explanations, which completely destroy the good news. He dare not give the *Gospel medicine*, without adding something which destroys its effectiveness, and neutralizes its power. Purgatory, penance, priestly absolution, the intercession of saints, the worship of the Virgin, and many other man-made services of Roman Catholicism, all spring from this source. They are all rotten props to support weary consciences. But they are rendered necessary by the denial of justification by faith.

(d) This is the doctrine which is absolutely essential to a minister's success among his people. Obscurity on this point spoils all. Absence of clear statements about justification will prevent the utmost zeal doing good. There may be much that is pleasing and nice in a minister's sermons, much about Christ and union with Him, much about self-denial, much about humility, much about love. But all this will profit

little, if his trumpet gives an uncertain sound about justification by faith.

(e) This is the doctrine which is absolutely essential to the prosperity of a Church. No Church is really in a healthy state, in which this doctrine is not prominently brought forward. A denomination or church may have good forms and regularly ordained ministers, but a denomination or church will not see conversion of souls going on under its pulpits, when this doctrine is not plainly preached. Its schools may be found in every town. Its church buildings may strike the eye all over the land. But there will be no blessing from God on that denomination or church—unless justification by faith is proclaimed from its pulpits. Sooner or later its candlestick will be taken away. Why have the Churches of Africa and the East fallen to their present state? Did they not have ministers? They had. Did they not have forms and ceremony? They had. Did they not have councils? They had. But they cast away the doctrine of justification by faith. They lost sight of that mighty truth, and so they fell.

Why did our own Church (Church of England) do so little in the last century, and why did the Independents and Baptists do so much more? Was it that their system was better than ours? No. Was it that our Church was not so well adapted to meet the wants of lost souls? No. But their ministers preached justification by faith, and our ministers, in too many cases, did not preach the doctrine at all.

Why do so many English people go to dissenting churches in the present day? Why do we so often see a splendid Gothic local church as empty of worshipers as a barn in July, and a little plain brick building, called a Meeting House, filled to suffocation? Is it that people in general have any abstract dislike of formal worship, the Prayer-book, and the establishment? Not at all! The simple reason is, in the vast majority of cases, that people do not like preaching in which justification by faith is not fully proclaimed. When they cannot hear it in the local church—they will seek it elsewhere. No doubt there are exceptions. No doubt there are places where a long course of neglect has thoroughly disgusted people with the Church, so that they will not even hear truth from its ministers. But I believe, as a general rule, when the local church is empty and the meeting-house full, it will be found on inquiry that there is a cause.

If these things be so, the Apostle Paul might well be jealous for the truth, and oppose Peter to his face. He might well maintain that anything ought to be sacrificed, rather than endanger the doctrine of justification in the Church of Christ. He saw with a prophetic eye coming things. He left us all an example that we should do well to follow. Whatever we tolerate, let us never allow any injury to be done to that blessed doctrine—that we are justified by faith without any of our own "good works."

Let us always beware of any teaching which either directly or indirectly obscures justification by faith. All religious systems which put anything between the heavy burdened sinner and Jesus Christ the Savior, except simple faith, are dangerous and unscriptural. All systems which make out faith to be anything complicated, anything but a simple, childlike dependence, the hand which receives the soul's medicine from the physician, are unsafe and poisonous systems. All systems which cast discredit on the simple Protestant doctrine which broke the power of Roman Catholicism, carry about with them a plague-spot, and are dangerous to souls!

Baptism is a sacrament ordained by Christ Himself, and to be used with reverence and respect by all professing Christians. When it is used rightly, worthily and with faith, it is capable of being the instrument of mighty blessings to the soul. But when people are taught that all who are baptized are as a matter of course born again, and that all baptized persons should be addressed as "children of God," I believe their souls are in great danger. Such teaching about baptism appears to me to overthrow the doctrine of justification by faith. They only are children of God—who have faith in Christ Jesus. And all men do not have faith.

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament ordained by Christ Himself, and intended for the edification and refreshment of true believers. But when people are taught that all persons ought to come to the Lord's table, whether they have faith or not; and that all alike receive Christ's body and blood who receive the bread and wine, I believe their souls are in great danger. Such teaching appears to me to darken the doctrine of justification by faith. No man eats Christ's body and drinks Christ's blood, except the justified man. And none are justified until they believe.

Membership in the local church is a great privilege. But when people are taught that because they are members of a church, they are as a matter of course members of Christ, I believe their souls are in great danger. Such teaching appears to me to overthrow the doctrine of justification by faith. They only are joined to Christ who believe. And all men do not believe.

Whenever we hear teaching which obscures or contradicts justification by faith, we may be sure there is a screw loose somewhere. We should watch against such teaching, and be upon our guard. Once let a man turn away from justification by faith alone, and he will bid a long farewell to comfort, to peace, to lively hope, to anything like assurance in his Christianity. An error here is decay at the root.

(1) In conclusion, let me first of all ask every one who reads this paper, to arm himself with a thorough knowledge of the written Word of God. Unless we do this we are at the mercy of any false teacher. We shall not see through the mistakes of an erring Peter. We shall not be able to imitate the faithfulness of a courageous Paul. An ignorant congregation will always be the curse of a Church. A Bible reading congregation may save a Church from ruin. Let us read the Bible regularly, daily, and with fervent prayer, and become familiar with its contents. Let us receive nothing, believe nothing, follow nothing, which is not in the Bible, nor can be proved by the Bible. Let our rule of faith, our touchstone of all teaching, be the written Word of God.

(2) In the next place, let me entreat all who read this paper to be always ready to contend for the faith of Christ, if needful. I recommend no one to foster a controversial spirit. I want no man to be like Goliath, going up and down, saying, "Give me a man to fight with!" Always feeding upon controversy, is poor work indeed. It is like feeding upon bones! But I do say that no love of false peace should prevent us striving jealously against false doctrine, and seeking to promote true doctrine wherever we possibly can. True Gospel in the pulpit, true Gospel in the books we read, true Gospel in the friends we keep company with—let this be our aim, and never let us be ashamed to let men see that it is so.

(3) In the next place, let me entreat all who read this paper to

keep a jealous watch over their own hearts in these controversial times. There is much need of this caution. In the heat of the battle we are apt to forget our own inner man. Victory in argument—is not always victory over the *world* or victory over the *devil*. Let the meekness of Peter in taking a reproof, be as much our example as the boldness of Paul in reproof. Happy is the Christian who can call the person who rebukes him faithfully, a "dear brother" (2 Peter 3:15). Let us strive to be holy in all our life, and not least in our tempers. Let us labor to maintain an uninterrupted communion with the Father and with the Son, and to keep up constant habits of private prayer and Bible-reading. Thus we shall be armed for the battle of life, and have the sword of the Spirit well fitted to our hand when the day of temptation comes.

(4) In the last place, let me entreat all members of a church who know what real praying is, to pray daily for the Church to which they belong. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit may be poured out upon it, and that its candlestick may not be taken away. Let us pray for those churches in which the Gospel is now not preached, that the darkness may pass away, and the true light shine in them. Let us pray for those ministers who now neither know nor preach the truth, that God may take away the veil from their hearts, and show them a more excellent way. Nothing is impossible. The Apostle Paul was once a persecuting Pharisee; Luther was once an unenlightened monk; Latimer was once a bigoted Catholic; Thomas Scott was once thoroughly opposed to evangelical truth. Nothing, I repeat, is impossible. The Spirit can make ministers preach that Gospel—which they now labor to destroy. Let us therefore be urgent in prayer.

I commend the matters contained in this paper to serious attention. Let us ponder them well in our hearts. Let us carry them out in our daily practice. Let us do this, and we shall have learned something from the story of Peter at Antioch.

Apostolic Fears

"I am *afraid* that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ." 2 Corinthians 11:3

The text which heads this page, contains one part of the experience of a very famous Christian. No servant of Christ perhaps has left such a mark for good on the world, as the Apostle Paul. When he was born, the whole Roman Empire, excepting one little corner, was sunk in the darkest heathenism; when he died the mighty fabric of heathenism was shaken to its very center and ready to fall. And none of the agents whom God used to produce this marvelous change did more than Saul of Tarsus, after his conversion. Yet even in the midst of his successes and usefulness we find him crying out, "I am afraid."

There is a melancholy ring about these words which demands our attention. They show a man of many cares and anxieties. He who supposes that Paul lived a life of ease, because he was a chosen Apostle, worked miracles, founded Churches, and wrote inspired Epistles—has yet much to learn. Nothing can be more unlike the truth! The eleventh chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians tells a very different tale. It is a chapter which deserves attentive study. Partly from the opposition of the heathen philosophers and priests, whose craft was in danger—partly from the bitter hatred of his own unbelieving countrymen—partly from false or weak brethren—partly from his own thorn in the flesh—the great Apostle of the Gentiles was like his Master—"a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering" (Isaiah 53:3).

But of all the burdens which Paul had to carry, none seems to have weighed him down so much as that to which he refers, when he writes to the Corinthians, "my concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28). The scanty knowledge of many early Christians, their weak faith, their shallow experience, their dim hope, their low standard of holiness—all these things made them peculiarly liable to be led astray by false teachers, and to depart from the faith. Like little children, hardly able to walk, they required to be treated with immense patience. Like exotic plants in a hothouse, they had to be watched with incessant care. Can we doubt that they kept their Apostolic founder in a state of constant tender concern?

Can we wonder that he says to the Colossians, "How much I am struggling for you," and to the Galatians, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel." "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" (Colossians 2:1; Galatians 1:6; 3:1).

No attentive reader can study the Epistles without seeing this subject repeatedly cropping up. And the text I have placed at the head of this paper is a sample of what I mean: "I am *afraid* that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ." That text contains three important lessons, which I wish to press on the attention of all my readers. I believe in my conscience they are lessons for the times.

I. First, the text shows us a spiritual "disease to which we are all susceptible, and which we ought to fear." That disease is corruption of our minds: "I am afraid your minds may somehow be led astray."

II. Secondly, the text shows us an "example which we ought to remember, as a beacon:" "Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning."

III. Thirdly, the text shows us "a point about which we ought to be especially on our guard." That point is being led astray "from sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

The text is a deep mine, and is not without difficulty. But let us go down into it boldly, and we shall find it contains much precious metal.

I. First, then, there is "a spiritual disease, which we ought to fear:" "Minds that are led astray."

I take "Minds that are led astray" to mean injury of our minds by the reception of false and unscriptural doctrines in religion. And I believe the sense of the Apostle to be, "I am afraid that your minds would partake of erroneous and unsound views about Christianity. I am afraid that you should receive as truths, principles which are not the truth. I am afraid that you would depart from the faith once delivered to the saints, and embrace views which are intrinsically destructive of the Gospel of Christ."

The fear expressed by the Apostle is painfully instructive, and at first sight, may create surprise. Who would have thought that under the very eyes of Christ's own chosen disciples—while the blood of Calvary was hardly yet dry, while the age of miracles had not yet passed away—who would have thought that in a day like this there was any danger of Christians departing from the faith? Yet nothing is more certain than that "the secret power of lawlessness" began already to work before the Apostles were dead (2 Thessalonians 2:7). "Even now," says John, "Many antichrists have come" (1 John 2:18). And no fact in Church history is more clearly proved than this—that false doctrine has never ceased to be the plague of Christendom for the last eighteen centuries.

Looking forward with the eye of a prophet, Paul might well say "I am afraid:" "I am not only afraid of the corruption of your morals, but of your minds." The plain truth is that "false doctrine" has been the chosen device which Satan has employed in every age to stop the progress of the Gospel of Christ. Finding himself unable to prevent the Fountain of Life from being *opened*, he has labored incessantly to *poison* the streams which flow from it. If he could not destroy it, he has too often neutralized its usefulness by addition, subtraction, or substitution. In a word he has "led astray men's minds."

(a) False doctrine soon spread throughout the Early Church after the death of the Apostles, despite what some may wish to say of the Early Church's purity. Partly by strange teaching about the Trinity and the Person of Christ, partly by an absurd multiplication of newfangled rituals, partly by the introduction of monasticism and a man-made asceticism, the light of the Church was soon dimmed and its usefulness destroyed. Even in Augustine's time rituals grew to such a number that the state of the church was in a worse case concerning this matter than were the Jews. Here was the leading astray of men's minds.

(b) False doctrine in the middle ages so completely spread throughout the Church, that the truth as it is in Jesus was nearly buried or drowned. During the last three centuries before the Reformation, it is probable that very few Christians in Europe could have answered the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Popes and Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Monks and

Nuns, were, with a few rare exceptions, steeped in ignorance and superstition. They were sunk into a deep sleep, from which they were only partially roused by the earthquake of the Reformation. Here, again, was the leading astray of men's minds.

(c) False doctrine, since the days of the Reformation, has continually been rising up again, and marring the work which the Reformers began. Neologianism in some districts of Europe, Socinianism in others, formalism and indifferentism in others, have withered blossoms which once promised to bear good fruit, and made Protestantism a mere barren form. Here, again, has been the "leading astray of the mind."

(d) False doctrine, even in our own day and under our own eyes, is eating out the heart of the Church and endangering her existence. One school of professors does not hesitate to avow its dislike to the principles of the Reformation, and travels over the sea and the land to Romanize the Establishment. Another school, with equal boldness, speaks lightly of inspiration, sneers at the very idea of a supernatural religion, and tries hard to cast overboard miracles as being useless extra weight. Another school proclaims liberty to every shade and form of religious opinion, and tells us that all teachers are equally deserving our confidence, however heterogeneous and contradictory their opinions—so long as they are only clever, earnest, and sincere. To each and all the same remark applies. They illustrate the "leading astray of men's minds." In the face of such facts as these, we may well remember the words of the Apostle in the text which heads the paper. Like him we have abundant cause to feel afraid. Never, I think, was there such need for English Christians to stand on their guard. Never was there such need for faithful ministers to proclaim a loud warning. "If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:8).

I charge every loyal member of the Church to open his eyes to the peril in which his own Church stands, and to beware lest it is damaged through apathy and a morbid love of peace. Controversy is an odious thing; but there are days when it is a positive element. Peace is an excellent thing; but, like gold, it may be gotten too dear. Unity is a mighty blessing; but it is worthless if it is purchased at the cost of truth. Once more I say, Open

your eyes and be on your guard!

The nation that rests satisfied with its commercial prosperity, and neglects its national defenses, because they are troublesome or expensive, is likely to become a prey to the first Napoleon, who chooses to attack it. The Church which is "rich; and has acquired wealth," may think it, "does not need a thing," because of its antiquity, traditions, and endowments. It may cry "Peace, peace," and flatter itself that it sees no evil. But if it is not careful about the maintenance of sound doctrine among its ministers and members, it may be surprised someday when its light is taken away.

I denounce, from the bottom of my heart, despondency or cowardice at this crisis. All I say is, let us exercise a godly fear. I do not see the slightest necessity for forsaking the old ship, and giving it up for lost. Bad as things look inside our ark, they are not one bit better outside. But I do protest against that careless spirit of slumber which seems to seal the eyes of many Christians, and to blind them to the enormous peril in which we are placed by the rise and progress of false doctrine in these days. I protest against the common notion so often proclaimed by men in high places, that "unity" is of more importance than sound doctrine, and peace more valuable than *truth*. I call on every reader who really loves the Church to recognize the dangers of the times, and to do his duty, courageously and energetically, in resisting them by united action and by prayer. Let us not forget Paul's words, "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

Our noble Reformers bought the truth at the price of their own blood, and handed it down to us. Let us be careful that we do not cheaply sell it for some bread and stew, under the seeming names of unity and peace.

II. Secondly, the text shows us an "example we ought to remember, as a beacon:" "Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning."

I need hardly remind my readers that Paul in this place refers to the story of the fall in the third chapter of Genesis, as a simple historical fact. He does not afford the least appearance to the modern notion that the book of Genesis is nothing more than a pleasing collection of myths and fables.

He does not hint that there is no such being as the devil, and that there was not any literal eating of the forbidden fruit, and that it was not really in this way that sin entered into the world. On the contrary, he narrates the story of the third chapter of Genesis as a truthful history of a thing that really took place.

You should remember, also, that this reference does not stand alone. It is a noteworthy fact that several of the most remarkable histories and miracles of the Pentateuch are expressly mentioned in the New Testament, and always as historical facts. Cain and Abel, Noah's ark, the destruction of Sodom, Esau's selling his birthright, the destruction of the first-born in Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the brazen serpent, the manna, the water flowing from the rock, Balaam's donkey speaking—all these things are named by the writers of the New Testament, and named as matters of fact and not as fables. Let that never be forgotten.

Those who are fond of pouring contempt on Old Testament miracles, and making light of the authority of the Pentateuch, would do well to consider whether they know better than our Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles. To my mind, to talk of Genesis as a collection of myths and fables, in the face of such a text of Scripture as we have before us in this paper, is unreasonable and profane. Was Paul mistaken or not, when he narrated the story of the temptation and the fall? If he was, he was a weak-minded naive person, and may have been mistaken on fifty other subjects. At this rate, that would be the end of all his authority as a writer! From such a monstrous conclusion we may well turn away with scorn. But it is well to remember that much infidelity begins with irreverent contempt of the Old Testament.

The point, after all, which the Apostle would have us mark in the history of Eve's fall, is the "cunning" with which the devil led her into sin. He did not tell her flatly that he wished to deceive her and do her harm. On the contrary, he told her that the thing forbidden was a thing that "was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom" (Genesis 3:6). He did not hesitate to assert that she could eat the forbidden fruit and yet "not die." He blinded her eyes to the sinfulness and danger of sin. He persuaded her to believe that to depart from God's plain command was for her benefit and not for her ruin. In short, "he

deceived her by his cunningness."

Now this "cunningness," Paul tells us, is precisely what we have to fear in false doctrine. We are not to expect it to approach our minds in the garment of error, but in the form of truth. Counterfeit money would never become currency if it did not appear like the real thing. The wolf would seldom get into the fold, if he did not enter it in sheep's clothing. Catholicism and liberalism would do little harm if they went about the world under their true names. Satan is far too wise a general, to manage a campaign in such a fashion as this. He employs fine words and high-sounding phrases, such as "Catholicity, Apostolicity, Unity, Church order, sound Church views, Ecumenicalism, free thought, broad sense, kindly judgment, liberal interpretation of Scripture," and the like, and thus effects a lodging place in unwary minds. And this is precisely the "cunningness" which Paul refers to in the text.

We need not doubt that he had read his Master's solemn words in the Sermon on the mount: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves!" (Matthew 7:15). I ask your special attention to this point. Such is the naivety of many Christians in this day, that they actually expect false doctrine to look false, and will not understand that the very essence of its mischievousness, as a rule, is its resemblance to God's truth. A young Christian, for instance, brought up from his cradle to hear nothing but Evangelical teaching, is suddenly invited some day to hear a sermon preached by some eminent teacher of semi-Catholic, or semi-skeptical opinions. He goes into the church, expecting in his simplicity to hear nothing but heresy from the beginning to the end. To his amazement he hears a clever, eloquent sermon, containing a vast amount of truth, and only a few drops of error. Too often a violent reaction takes place in his unsuspecting mind. He begins to think his former teachers were narrow, and uncharitable, and his confidence in them is shaken, perhaps forever. Too often, it ends with his entire perversion, and at last he is enrolled in the ranks of the Legalist, Ritualists, or the liberals! And what is the history of the whole case? Why, a foolish forgetfulness of the lesson Paul puts forward in this text.

"As Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning," so Satan charms unwary

souls in the our century by approaching them under the garb of truth. I beg every reader of this paper to remember this part of my subject, and to stand on his guard. What is more common than to hear it said of some false teacher in this day, "He is so good, so devoted, so kind, so zealous, so laborious, so humble, so self-denying, so charitable, so earnest, so fervent, so clever, so evidently sincere—there can be no danger and no harm in hearing him. Besides he preaches such a real Gospel: no one can preach a better sermon than he does sometimes! I never can and never will believe he is unsound." Who does not hear continually such talk as this? What discerning eye can fail to see that Christians expect unsound teachers to be open vendors of poison, and cannot realize that they often appear as "angels of light," and are far too wise to be always saying all they think, and showing their whole hand and mind. But so it is. Never was it so needful to remember the words, "Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning."

I leave this part of my subject with the sorrowful remark that we have fallen upon times when suspicion on the subject of sound doctrine is not only a duty—but a virtue. It is not the avowed Pharisee and Sadducee that we have to fear, but the *leaven* of the Pharisees and Sadducees. It is the "show of wisdom" with which Ritualism is invested, that makes it so dangerous to many minds (Colossians 2:23). It seems so good, and fair, and zealous, and holy, and reverential, and devout, and kind, that it carries away many well-meaning people like a flood. He who would be safe, must cultivate the spirit of a sentinel at a critical post. He must not mind being laughed at and ridiculed, as one who "has a keen nose for heresy." In days like these he must not be ashamed to suspect danger. And if anyone scoffs at him for doing so, he may well be content to reply, "Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning."

III. The third and last lesson of the text remains yet to be considered. It shows us **"a point about which we ought to be especially on our guard." That point is being led astray from "Sincere and pure devotion to Christ."**

Now the expression before us is somewhat remarkable, and stands alone in the New Testament. One thing at any rate is abundantly clear: the words "sincere and pure" means that which is single and unmixed, in

contradistinction to that which is mixed and double. Following out that idea, some have held that the expression means "singleness of affection towards Christ;" we are to fear lest we should divide our affections between Christ and any other. This is no doubt very good theology; but I question whether it is the true sense of the text. I prefer the opinion that the expression means the simple, unmixed, unadulterated, unaltered doctrine of Christ—the simple "truth as it is in Jesus," on all points—without addition, subtraction, or substitution. Departure from the simple genuine prescription of the Gospel, either by leaving out any part or adding any part, was the thing Paul would have the Corinthians especially to fear.

The expression is full of meaning, and seems especially written for our learning in these last days. We are to be ever jealously on our guard, lest we depart from and corrupt the simple Gospel which Christ once delivered to the saints.

The expression before us is exceedingly instructive. The principle it contains is of unspeakable importance. If we love our souls and would keep them in a healthy state, we must endeavor to adhere closely to the simple doctrine of Christ—in every jot, tittle, and particular. Once we add to it or take away anything from it, and we risk spoiling the Divine medicine, and may even turn it into poison. Let your ruling principle be, "No other doctrine but that of Christ, nothing less, and nothing more!" Lay firm hold on that principle, and never let it go. Write it on the tablet of your heart, and never forget it!

(1) Let us settle it, for example, firmly in our minds, that there is "no way of peace with God" but the simple way marked out by Christ. True rest of conscience and inward peace of soul will never come from anything but direct faith in Christ Himself and His finished work. Peace by confession to a priest, or bodily asceticism, or incessant attendance at Church services, or frequent reception of the Communion as a ritual—is a delusion and a snare! It is only by coming straight to Jesus Himself, laboring and heavy laden, and by believing, trusting communion with Him, that souls find rest. In this matter let us stand firm in "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(2) Let us settle it next in our minds that there is "no other priest" who can be in any way a mediator between yourself and God but Jesus Christ. He Himself has said, and His word shall not pass away, "No one comes to the Father—except through me" (John 14:6). No sinful child of Adam, whatever be his office, and however high his ecclesiastical title—can ever occupy Christ's place, or do what Christ alone is appointed to do. The priesthood is Christ's peculiar office, and it is one which He has never delegated to another. In this matter also let us stand firm in "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(3) Let us settle it next in our minds that there is "no sacrifice for sin" except the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. Do not listen for a moment to those who tell you that there is any sacrifice in the Lord's Supper, any repetition of Christ's offering on the cross, or any oblation of His body and blood, under the form of *consecrated bread and wine*. The one sacrifice for sins which Christ offered was a perfect and complete sacrifice, and it is nothing short of blasphemy to attempt to repeat it. "By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever, those who are being made holy" (Hebrews 10:14). In this matter also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(4) Let us settle it next in our minds that there is "no other rule of faith, and judge of controversies," but that simple one to which Christ always referred—the written Word of God. Let no man disturb our souls by such vague expressions as "the voice of the Church, primitive antiquity, the judgment of the early Fathers," and the like tall talk. Let our only standard of truth be the Bible, God's Word written. "What does the Scripture say?" "What is written?" "To the law and to the testimony!" "Diligently study the Scriptures." (Romans 4:3; Luke 10:26; Isaiah 8:20; John 5:39). In this matter also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(5) Let us settle it next in our minds that there are "no other means of grace" in the Church which have any binding authority, except those well known and simple ones which Christ and the Apostles have sanctioned. Let us regard with a jealous suspicion all ceremonies and forms of man's invention, when they are invested with such exaggerated importance as to thrust into the

background God's own appointments. It is the invariable tendency of man's inventions, to supersede God's ordinances. Let us beware of making the Word of God of no effect, by human devices. In this matter also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(6) Let us settle it next in our minds that "no teaching about the Ordinances" is sound, which gives them a power of which Christ says nothing. Let us beware of admitting that either baptism or the Lord's Supper can confer grace "ex opere operato," that is, by their mere outward administration, independently of the state of heart of those who receive them. Let us remember that the only proof that baptized people and communicants have grace—is the *exhibition* of grace in their lives. The *fruits* of the Spirit are the only evidences that we are born of the Spirit and one with Christ, and not the mere reception of the Ordinances. In this matter also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(7) Let us settle it next in our minds that "no teaching about the Holy Spirit" is safe which cannot be reconciled with the simple teaching of Christ. They are not to be heard who assert that the Holy Spirit actually dwells in all baptized people, without exception, by virtue of their baptism, and that this grace within such people only needs to be "stirred up." The simple teaching of our Lord is, that He dwells only in those who are His believing disciples, and that "the world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him" (John 14:17). His indwelling is the special privilege of Christ's people, and where He *is*—He will be *seen*. On this point also let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

(8) Finally let us settle it in our minds that no teaching can be thoroughly sound, in which truth is not set forth in "the proportion of Christ and the Apostles." Let us beware of any teaching in which the main thing is an incessant exaltation of the Church, the ministry, or the ordinances, while such grand truths as repentance, faith, conversion, holiness, are comparatively left in a subordinate and inferior place. Place such teaching side by side with the teaching of the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles. Count up texts. Make a calculation. Mark how "comparatively" little is said in the New Testament about baptism, the

Lord's Supper, the Church, and the ministry; and then judge for yourself what is the proportion of truth. In this matter also, I say once more, let us stand firm in the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

The simple doctrine and rule of Christ then—nothing added, nothing taken away, nothing substituted—this is the mark at which we ought to aim. This is the point from which departure ought to be dreaded. Can we improve on His teaching? Are we wiser than He? Can we suppose that He left anything of real vital importance unwritten, or liable to the vague reports of human traditions? Shall we take on ourselves to say that we can mend or change for the better any ordinance of His appointment? Can we doubt that in matters about which He is silent—we have need to act very cautiously, very gently, very moderately, and must beware of pressing them on those who do not see with our eyes? Above all we must beware of asserting anything to be needful to salvation of which Christ has said nothing at all? I only see one answer to such questions as these. We must beware of anything which has even the appearance of departure from the "sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

The plain truth is—that we cannot sufficiently exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as the great Head of the Church, and Lord of all ordinances, no less than as the Savior of sinners. I take it we all fail here. We do not realize how high and great and glorious a King the Son of God is, and what undivided loyalty we owe to One who has not delegated any of His offices, or given His glory to another. The solemn words which John Owen addressed to the House of Commons, in a sermon on the "Greatness of Christ," deserve to be remembered. I fear the House of Commons hears few such sermons in the present day.

Christ is the "Way"—men without Him are Cains, wanderers, vagabonds. He is the "Truth"—men without Him are liars, like the devil of old. He is the "Life"—men without Him are dead in trespasses and sins. He is the "Light"—men without Him are in darkness, and do not know where they go. He is the "Vine"—men that are not in Him are withered branches prepared for the fire. He is the "Rock"—men not built on Him are carried away with a flood. He is the "Alpha and Omega," the first and the last, the founder and finisher of our salvation. Oh, blessed Jesus, how much better it would be not to exist than to exist without You! Never to be born than

not to die in You! A thousand hells is nothing compared to eternally without Jesus Christ!" This witness is true. If we can say Amen to the spirit of this passage—it will be well with our souls.

And now let me *conclude* this paper by offering a few parting words of **COUNSEL** to any one into whose hands it may fall. I offer them not as one who has any authority, but one who is affectionately desirous to do good to his brethren. I offer them especially to all Christians. And I offer them as counsels which I find helpful to my own soul, and as such I venture to think they will be helpful to others.

(1) In the first place, if we would be kept from falling into false doctrine, "let us arm our minds with a thorough knowledge of God's Word." Let us read our Bibles from beginning to end with daily diligence, and constant prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and so strive to become thoroughly familiar with their contents. **Ignorance of the Bible is the root of all error**, and a superficial acquaintance with it accounts for many of the sad perversions and defections of the present day. In a hurrying age of travel and communication, I am firmly persuaded that many Christians do not give time enough to private reading of the Scriptures. I believe seriously that English people knew their Bibles better two hundred years ago than they do now. The consequence is, that they are "tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching," and fall an easy prey to the first clever teacher of error who tries to influence their minds. I entreat my readers to remember this counsel, and take heed to their ways.

It is as true now as ever, that the person who is versed in, or adheres strictly to, the text of the Bible, is the only good theologian, and that a familiarity with great Scriptures, is, as our Lord proved in the temptation, one of the best safeguards against error. Arm yourself then, with the sword of the Spirit—and let your hand become used to it. I am well aware that there is no royal road to Bible-knowledge. Without diligence and pains no one ever becomes "mighty in the Scriptures." "Justification," said Charles Simeon, with his characteristic quaintness, "is by faith, but knowledge of the Bible comes by works," But of one thing I am certain: there is no labor which will be so richly repaid as laborious regular daily

study of God's Word.

(2) The second and last counsel which I venture to offer is this. "Let us make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with the history of the Reformation." My reason for offering this counsel is my firm conviction that this highly important part of history has of late years been undeservedly neglected. Thousands of Christians nowadays have a most inadequate notion of the amount of our debt to our martyred Reformers. They have no distinct conception of the state of darkness and superstition in which our fathers lived, and of the light and liberty which the Reformation brought in. And the consequence is that they see no great harm in the Roman Catholic movement of the present day, and have very indistinct ideas of the real nature and work of Catholicism. It is high time that a better state of things should begin.

Of one thing I am thoroughly convinced: a vast amount of the prevailing apathy about the Romanizing movement of the day may be traced up to gross ignorance, both of the true nature of Catholicism and of the Protestant Reformation. *Ignorance, after all, is one of the best friends of false doctrine.* More Scriptural light is one of the great needs of the day, even in our century. Thousands are led astray by Catholicism or infidelity, from sheer lack of reading and information. Once more I repeat, if men would only study with attention the Bible and the History of the Reformation, I should have little fear of their "minds being led astray from their sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

Idolatry

**"Flee from idolatry"
(1 Corinthians 10:14)**

Our text for today may seem at first to be hardly needed in our country. In an age of education and intelligence, we might almost fancy it is waste of time to tell us to "flee from idolatry."

I am bold to say that this is a great mistake. I believe that we have come

to a time when the subject of idolatry demands a thorough and searching investigation. I believe that idolatry is near us, all around us, and in the midst of us, to a very fearful extent. The second commandment, in one word, is in danger. "The plague is begun."

Without further preface, I propose to consider the following four points:

I. The definition of idolatry. WHAT IS IT?

II. The cause of idolatry. WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

III. The form idolatry assumes in the visible Church of Christ. WHERE IS IT

IV. The ultimate termination of idolatry. WHAT WILL END IT?

I feel that the subject is encompassed with many difficulties. Our lot is cast in an age when truth is constantly in danger of being sacrificed to "toleration," "love," and "peace," falsely so-called. Nevertheless, I cannot forget, as a minister, that the Church has given little or no warnings on the subject of idolatry; and, unless I am greatly mistaken, truth about idolatry is, in the highest sense, truth for the times.

I. Let me, then, first of all supply a definition of idolatry. Let me show WHAT IT IS.

It is of the utmost importance that we should understand this. Unless I make this clear, I can do nothing with the subject. Vagueness and indistinctness prevail upon this point, as upon almost every other in religion. The Christian who desires not be continually running aground in his spiritual voyage, must have his channel well buoyed, and his mind well stored with clear definitions.

I say then, that Idolatry is a worship, in which the honor due to the Triune God, and to God only, is given to some of His creatures, or to some invention of His creatures.

It may vary. It may assume different forms, according to the ignorance or the knowledge—the civilization or the barbarism, of those who offer it. It

may be grossly absurd and ludicrous, or it may closely border on truth, and being most superficially defended. But whether in the adoration of the idol of Juggernaut, or in the adoration of the Pope in St. Peter's at Rome, the principle of idolatry is in reality the same. In either case the honor due to God is turned aside from Him, and bestowed on that which is not God. And whenever this is done, whether in heathen temples or in professedly Christian Churches, there is an act of idolatry.

It is not necessary, for a man to formally deny God and Christ, in order to be an idolater. Far from it. Professed reverence for the God of the Bible and actual idolatry, are perfectly compatible. They have often been done side by side, and they still do so. The children of Israel never thought of renouncing God when they persuaded Aaron to make the golden calf. "Here are your gods," they said, "who brought you up out of Egypt." And the feast in honor of the calf was kept as a "festival to the LORD (Jehovah)" (Exodus 32:4, 5).

Jeroboam, again, never pretended to ask the ten tribes to cast off their allegiance to the God of David and Solomon. When he set up the calves of gold in Dan and Bethel, he only said, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:28).

In both instances, we should observe, the idol was not set up as a rival to God, but under the pretense of being a help—a steppingstone to His service. But, in both instances, a great sin was committed. The honor due to God was given to a visible representation of Him. The majesty of Jehovah was offended. The second commandment was broken. There was, in the eyes of God, a flagrant act of idolatry.

Let us mark this well. It is high time to dismiss from our minds those loose ideas about idolatry, which are common in this day. We must not think, as many do, that there are only two sorts of idolatry—the spiritual idolatry of the man who loves his wife, or child, or money more than God; and the open, gross idolatry of the man who bows down to an image of wood, or metal, or stone, because he knows no better. We may rest assured that idolatry is a sin, which occupies a far wider field than this. It is not merely a thing in pagan lands, that we may hear of and pity at

missionary meetings; nor yet is it a thing confined to our own hearts, that we may confess before the mercy-seat upon our knees. It is a pestilence that walks in the Church of the Living Christ to a much greater extent than many suppose. It is an evil that, like the man of sin, "that sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

It is a sin that we all need to watch and pray against continually. It creeps into our religious worship unnoticed, and is upon us before we are aware. Those are tremendous words which Isaiah spoke to the faithful Jew—not to the worshiper of Baal, remember, to the man who actually came to the temple (Isaiah 66:3): "Whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a man, and whoever offers a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig's blood, and whoever burns memorial incense, like one who worships an idol."

This is that sin which God has especially denounced in His Word. One commandment out of ten is devoted to the prohibition of it. Not one of all the ten contains such a solemn declaration of God's character, and of His judgments against the disobedient: "I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me" (Exodus 20:5). Not one, perhaps, of all the ten is so emphatically repeated and amplified, and especially in the fourth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy. This is the sin, of all others, to which the Jews seem to have been most inclined to commit before the destruction of Solomon's temple. What is the history of Israel under their judges and kings but a sorrowful record of repeated falling away into idolatry? Again and again we read of "high places" and "false gods." Again and again we read of captivities and chastisements on account of idolatry. Again and again we read of a return to the old sin. It seems as if the love of idols among the Jews was naturally bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. The besetting sin of the Old Testament Church, in one word, was idolatry. In the face of the most elaborate ceremonial ordinances that God ever gave to His people, Israel was incessantly turning aside after idols, and worshipping the work of men's hands.

This is the sin, of all others, which has brought down the heaviest

judgments on the visible Church. It brought on Israel the armies of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. It scattered the ten tribes, burned up Jerusalem, and carried Judah and Benjamin into captivity. It brought on the Eastern Churches, in later days, the overwhelming flood of the Muslim invasion, and turned many a spiritual garden into a wilderness. The desolation which reigns where Cyprian and Augustine once preached, the living death in which the Churches of Asia Minor and Syria are buried, are all attributable to this sin. All testify to the same great truth which the Lord proclaims in Isaiah: "I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols" (Isaiah 42:8).

Let us gather up these things in our minds, and ponder them well. Idolatry is a subject which, in every Christian Church, that wants to keep herself pure, should be thoroughly examined, understood, and known. It is not for nothing that Paul lays down the stern command, "Flee from idolatry."

II. Let me show, in the second place, the cause to which idolatry may be traced. WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

To the man who takes an extravagant and exalted view of human intellect and reason, idolatry may seem absurd. He fancies it too irrational for any but weak minds to be endangered by it.

To a mere superficial thinker about Christianity, the peril of idolatry may seem very small. Whatever commandments are broken, such a man will tell us, professing Christians are not very likely to transgress the second.

Now, both these persons betray a woeful ignorance of human nature. They do not see that there are secret roots of idolatry within us all. The prevalence of idolatry in all ages among the heathen must necessarily puzzle the one—the warnings of Protestant ministers against idolatry in the Church must necessarily appear uncalled for to the other. Both are alike blind to its cause.

The cause of all idolatry is the natural corruption of man's heart. That great family disease, with which all the children of Adam are infected from their birth, shows itself in this, as it does in a thousand other ways.

Out of the same fountain from which "come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly" (Mark 7:21, 22)—out of that same fountain arise false views of God, and false views of the worship due to Him, and, therefore, when the Apostle Paul tells the Galatians (Galatians 5:20) what are the "works of the flesh," he places prominently among them "idolatry."

Man will have some kind of a religion. God has not left Himself without a witness in us all, fallen as we are. Like old inscriptions hidden under mounds of rubbish, there is a dim something—engraved at the bottom of man's heart, however faint and half-erased—a something which makes him feel he must have a religion and a worship of some kind. The proof of this is to be found in the history of voyages and travels in every part of the globe. The exceptions to the rule are so few, if indeed there are any, that they only confirm its truth. Man's worship in some dark corner of the earth may rise no higher than a vague fear of an evil spirit, and a desire to appease him; but a worship of some kind man will have.

But then comes in the effect of the fall. Ignorance of God, carnal and low conceptions of His nature and attributes, earthly and sensual notions of the service, which is acceptable to Him, all characterize the religion of the natural man. There is a craving in his mind after something he can see, and feel, and touch. He is eager to bring his God down to his own crawling level. He would make his religion a thing of sense and sight. He has no idea of the religion of heart, and faith, and spirit. In short, just as he is willing to live on God's earth, until renewed by grace, a fallen and degraded life, so he has no objection to the worship of idols, until renewed, by the Holy Spirit. In one word, idolatry is a natural product of man's heart. It is a weed, which like the uncultivated earth, the heart is always ready to bring forth.

And now does it surprise us, when we read of the constantly recurring idolatries of the Old Testament Church, of Baal, and Moloch, and Ashtaroath—of high places and hill altars, and groves and images—and this in the full light of the Mosaic ceremonial? Let us cease to be surprised. It can be accounted for. There is a cause.

Does it surprise us when we read in history, how idolatry crept in by degrees into the Christian Church, how little by little it thrust out Gospel truth, until, in Canterbury, men offered more at the shrine of Thomas a'Becket, than they did at the shrine of the Virgin Mary, and more at the shrine of Virgin Mary, than at the shrine of Christ? Let us cease to be surprised. It is all intelligible. There is a cause.

Does it surprise us when we hear of men going over from Protestant Churches to the Roman Catholic Church, in the present day? Do we think it impossible, and feel as if we ourselves could never forsake a pure form of worship for one like that of the Roman Catholic Church? Let us cease to be surprised. There is a solution for the problem. There is a cause.

That cause is nothing else but the corruption of man's heart. There is a natural proneness and tendency in us all, to give God a sensual, carnal worship, and not that, which is commanded in His Word. We are always ready, by reason of our laziness and unbelief, to devise visible helps and stepping-stones in our approaches to Him, and ultimately to give these inventions of our own the honor due to Him. In fact, idolatry is all natural, downhill, easy, like the broad way. Spiritual worship is all of grace, all uphill, and all against the grain. Any worship whatsoever is more pleasing to the natural heart, than worshipping God in the way, which our Lord Christ describes, "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23).

I, for one, am not surprised at the quantity of idolatry existing, both in the world and in the visible Church. I believe it perfectly possible that we may yet live to see far more of it than some have ever dreamed of. It would never surprise me if some mighty personal Antichrist were to arise before the end—mighty in intellect, mighty in talents for government, yes, and mighty, perhaps, in miraculous gifts too. It would never surprise me to see such a one as him setting up himself in opposition to Christ, and forming an Agnostic conspiracy against the Gospel.

I believe that many would rejoice to do him honor, who now glory in saying, "We will not have this Christ to reign over us." I believe that many would make a god of him, and reverence him as an incarnation of truth, and concentrate their idea of hero-worship on his person. I advance it as a possibility, and no more. But of this at least I am certain, that no man is

less safe from danger of idolatry than the man who now sneers at every form of religion; and that from belief to unbelief, from Atheism to the grossest idolatry, there is but a single step. Let us not think, that idolatry is an old-fashioned sin, into which we are never likely to fall. "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" We shall do well to look into our own hearts: the seeds of idolatry are all there. We should remember the words of Paul, "Flee from idolatry."

III. Let me show, in the third place, the forms which idolatry has assumed, and does assume in the visible Church. WHERE IS IT?

I believe there never was a more baseless fabric than the theory, which obtains favor with many—that the promises of perpetuity and preservation from apostasy, belong to the visible Church of Jesus Christ. It is a theory supported neither by Scripture nor by facts. The Church against which "the gates of Hades will not overcome," is not the visible Church, but the whole body of the elect, the company of true believers out of every nation and people. The greater part of the visible Church has frequently maintained gross heresies. The particular branches of it are never secure against deadly error, both in faith and practice. A departure from the faith—a falling away—a leaving of first love in any branch of the visible Church, need never surprise a careful reader of the New Testament.

That idolatry would arise, seems to have been the expectation of the Apostles, even before the canon of the New Testament was closed. It is remarkable to observe how Paul dwells on this subject in his Epistle to the Corinthians. If any Corinthian called a brother an idolater, with such a man the members of the Church were not to even eat with (1 Corinthians 5:11). "Do not be idolaters, as some of them were" (1 Corinthians 10:7). He says again, in our text for today, "My dear friends, flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:14). When he writes to the Colossians, he warns them against the "worshipping of angels" (Colossians 2:18). And John closes his first Epistle with the solemn injunction, "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). It is impossible not to feel that all these passages imply an expectation that idolatry would soon arise, among professing Christians.

The last passage I will call attention to, is the conclusion of the ninth chapter of Revelation. We read there, in the twentieth verse: "The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk." Now, I am not going to offer any comment on the chapter in which this verse occurs. I know well there is a difference of opinion as to the true interpretation of the plagues predicted in it. I only venture to assert, that it is the highest probability these plagues are to fall upon the visible Church of Jesus Christ; and the highest improbability, that John was here prophesying about the heathen, who never heard the Gospel. And this once conceded, the fact that idolatry is a predicted sin of the visible Church, does seem most conclusively and forever established.

And now, if we turn from the Bible to facts, what do we see? I reply, without a second thought, that there is unmistakable proof that Scripture warnings and predictions were not spoken without cause, and that idolatry has actually arisen in the visible Church of Christ, and does still exist.

The rise and progress of the evil in former days, we shall find well summed up in the sermon "Peril of Idolatry." To that I beg to refer all Christians, reminding them once for all, how, even in the fourth century, Jerome complains, "that the false doctrine of images have come in, and passed to the Christians from the Gentiles;" and Eusebius says, "We do see, that images of Peter and Paul, and of our Savior Himself are made, which I think to have been derived and kept indifferently by an heathenish custom." There we may also read,

1. How Pontius Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, in the fifth century, caused the walls of the temples to be painted with stories taken out of the Old Testament; that the people looking at and considering these pictures might the better abstain from too much excess in their lives. But from learning by painted stories, it came little by little to become idolatry.
2. How Gregory the first, Bishop of Rome, in the beginning of the seventh century, allowed images in the churches.

3. How Irene, mother of Constantine the Sixth, in the eighth century, assembled a Council at Nicaea, and procured a decree that images should be put up in all the churches of Greece, and that honor and worship should be given to the images.

And there we may read the conclusion with which the sermon winds up its historical summary, "that the congregation and the clergy, learned and unlearned, all ages, sorts, and degrees of men, women and children of whole Christendom, have been at once drowned in abominable idolatry, of all other vices most detested by God, and most damnable to man, and that in the space of 800 years."

This is a mournful account, but it is only too true. There can be little doubt the evil began even before the time just mentioned by the sermon writer. No man, I think, need wonder at the rise of idolatry in the Early Church who considers calmly the excessive reverence which it paid, from the very first, to the visible parts of religion. I believe that no impartial man can read the language used by nearly all the Fathers about the Church, the bishops, the ministry, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the martyrs, and the dead saints, generally—no man can read it without being struck with the wide difference between their language and the language of Scripture on such subjects. You seem at once to be in a new atmosphere. You feel that you are no longer treading on holy ground. You find that things, which in the Bible are evidently of second-rate importance, are here made of first-rate importance.

You find the things of sense and sight exalted to a position in which Paul, and Peter, and James, and John, speaking by the Holy Spirit, never for a moment placed them. It is not merely the weakness of uninspired writings that you have to complain of; it is something worse; it is a new system. And what is the explanation of all this? It is, in one word, that you have gotten into a region where the malaria of idolatry has begun to arise. You perceive the first workings of the mystery of iniquity. You detect the buds of that huge system of idolatry which, as the sermon describes, was afterwards formally acknowledged, and ultimately blossomed in every part of Christendom.

But let us now turn from the past to the present. Let us examine the

question which most concerns ourselves. Let us consider in what form idolatry presents itself to us, as a sin of the visible Church of Christ in our own time.

I find no difficulty in answering this question. I feel no hesitation in affirming that idolatry never yet assumed a more glaring form than it does in the Roman Catholic Church in this present day.

And here I come to a subject on which it is hard to speak, because of the times we live in. But the whole truth ought to be spoken by ministers of Christ, without respect of times and prejudices. And I could not lie down in peace, after preaching on idolatry, if I did not declare my solemn conviction that idolatry is one of the crying sins of which the Roman Catholic Church is guilty. I say this in all sadness. I say it, acknowledging fully that we have our faults in the Protestant Church; and practically, perhaps, in some quarters, a little idolatry. But from formal, recognized, systematic idolatry, I believe we are almost entirely free. While, as for the Roman Catholic Church, if there is not in her worship, an enormous quantity of systematic, organized idolatry, I frankly confess then I do not know what idolatry is.

(a) To my mind, it is idolatry to have images and pictures of saints in churches, and to give them a reverence for which there is no warrant or precedent in Scripture. And if this is so, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

(b) To my mind, it is idolatry to invoke the Virgin Mary and the saints in glory, and to address them in language never addressed in Scripture except to the Holy Trinity. And if this be so, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

(c) To my mind, it is idolatry to bow down to mere material things, and attribute to them a power and sanctity far exceeding that attached to the ark or altar of the Old Testament dispensation; and a power and sanctity, too, for which there is not a speck of foundation in the Word of God. And if this be so, with the holy coat of Treves, and the wonderfully-multiplied wood of the true cross, and a thousand other so-called relics in my mind's eye, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

(d) To my mind, it is idolatry to worship that which man's hands have made—to call it God, and adore it when lifted up before our eyes. And if this be so, with the notorious doctrine of transubstantiation, and the elevation of the host in my recollection, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

(e) To my mind, it is idolatry to make ordained men mediators between ourselves and God, robbing, as it were, our Lord Jesus Christ of His office, and giving them an honor which even Apostles and angels in Scripture flatly repudiate. And if this is so, with the honor paid to Popes and Priests before my eyes, I say there is idolatry in the Roman Catholic Church.

I know well that language like this jars the minds of many. Men love to shut their eyes against evils which is disagreeable. They will not see things which involve unpleasant consequences. That the Roman Catholic Church is an erring church, they will acknowledge. That she is idolatrous, they will deny.

They tell us that the reverence which the Roman Catholic Church gives to saints and images does not amount to idolatry. They inform us that there are distinctions between the kinds of worship—that God deserves the "strong worship" and the saints and images get a lesser worship. That there is a distinction between a mediator of redemption, and a mediator of intercession, which clear the church of the charge of idolatry. My answer is, that the Bible knows nothing of such distinctions; and that, in the actual practice of the great bulk of Roman Catholics, there is no distinction at all.

They tell us, that it is a mistake to suppose that Roman Catholics really worship the images and pictures before which they perform acts of adoration; that they only use them as helps to devotion, and in reality look far beyond them. My answer is, that many a heathen could say just as much for his idolatry—that it is well-known, in former days, they did say so—and that in Hindu religion many idol-worshippers do say the same even in the present day. But the apology does not help. The terms of the second commandment are too stringent. It prohibits "bowing down," as well as worshipping. And the very anxiety which the Roman Catholic

Church has often displayed to exclude that second commandment from her catechisms, is of itself a great fact which speaks volumes to a candid observer.

They tell us that we have no evidence for the assertions we make on this subject; that we found our charges on the abuses which prevail among the ignorant members of the Roman Catholic Church; and that it is absurd to say that a Church containing so many wise and learned men, is guilty of idolatry. My answer is, that the devotional books in common use among Roman Catholics supply us with unmistakable evidence. Let any one examine that well known Catholic book, "The Garden of the Soul," if he doubts my assertion, and read the language there addressed to the Virgin Mary. Let him remember that this language is addressed to a woman, who, though highly favored, and the mother of our Lord, was yet one of our fellow-sinners—to a woman, who actually confesses her need of a Savior for herself. She says, "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:47).

Let him examine this language in the light of the New Testament, and then let him tell us fairly, whether the charge of idolatry is not correctly made. But I answer, beside this, that we need no better evidence than that which is supplied in the city of Rome itself. What do men and women do under the light of the Pope's own countenance? What is the religion that prevails around St. Peter's and under the walls of the Vatican? What is Romanism at Rome, unfettered, unshackled, and free to develop itself in full perfection? Let a man honestly answer these questions, and I ask no more. Let him read such a book as Seymour's "Pilgrimage to Rome," or "Alford's Letters," and ask any visitor to Rome if the picture is too highly colored. Let him do this, I say, and I believe he cannot avoid the conclusion, that Romanism in perfection is a gigantic system of Church-worship, Sacrament-worship, Mary-worship, saint-worship,

image-worship, relic-worship, and priest-worship—that it is, in one word, a huge organized idolatry.

I know how painful these things sound to many ears. To me it is no pleasure to dwell on the shortcomings of any who profess and call themselves Christians. I can truly say, that I have said what I have said

with pain and sorrow.

I draw a wide distinction between the accredited dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church and the private opinions of many of her members. I believe and hope that many a Roman Catholic is in his heart inconsistent with his profession, and is better than the Church to which he belongs. I believe that many a poor Italian at this day is worshipping with an idolatrous worship, simply because he knows no better. He has no Bible to instruct him. He has no faithful minister to teach him. He has the fear of the priest before his eyes, if he dares to think for himself. He has no money to enable him to get away from the bondage he lives under, even if he feels a desire. I remember all this, and I say that the Italian eminently deserves our sympathy and compassion. But all this must not prevent my saying that the Roman Catholic Church is an idolatrous Church.

I would not be faithful if I said less. The Church of which I am a minister has spoken out most strongly on the subject. The sermon on the "Perils of Idolatry," and the solemn protest in our own Church of England writings, which denounces the adoration of the Sacramental bread and wine as "idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians," are plain evidences that I have said no more than the mind of my own Church. And in a day like this, when some are disposed to break away to the Roman Catholic Church, and many are shutting their eyes to her real character, and wanting us to be reunited to her, in a day like this, my own conscience would rebuke me if I did not warn men plainly that the Roman Catholic Church is an idolatrous Church, and that if they will join her they are "joining themselves to idols."

But I will not dwell any longer on this part of my subject. The main point I wish to impress on men's minds is this—that idolatry has decidedly manifested itself in the visible Church of Christ, and nowhere so decidedly as in the Roman Catholic Church.

IV. And now let me show, in the last place, the ultimate termination of all idolatry. WHAT WILL END IT?

I consider that man's soul must be in an unhealthy state who does not long for the time when idolatry shall be no more. That heart can hardly be

right with God which can think of the millions who are sunk in heathenism, or honor the false prophet Mohammed, or daily offer up prayers to the Virgin Mary, and not cry, "O my God, when shall the end come of these things? How long, O Lord, how long?"

Here, as in other subjects, the sure word of prophecy comes to our aid. The end of all idolatry shall one day come. Its doom is fixed. Its overthrow is certain. Whether in heathen temples, or in so-called Christian Churches, idolatry shall be destroyed at the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then shall the prophecies be fulfilled:

"The idols will totally disappear" (Isaiah 2:18).

"I will destroy your carved images and your sacred stones from among you; you will no longer bow down to the work of your hands" (Micah 5:13).

"The LORD will be awesome to them when he destroys all the gods of the land. The nations on every shore will worship him, every one in its own land" (Zephaniah 2:11).

"On that day, I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more," declares the LORD Almighty. I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity from the land" (Zechariah 13:2).

In a word the 97th Psalm will then receive its fulfillment: "The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice. Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side. His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory. All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols—worship him, all you gods!"

The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is that blessed hope which should always comfort the children of God under the present dispensation. It is the guiding star by which we must journey. It is the one point on which all our expectations should be concentrated. "For in just a very little while, 'He who is coming will come and will not delay'" (Hebrews 10:37). Our David shall no longer dwell in Adullam, followed by a despised few, and rejected by the many. He shall take to Himself His great power, and reign, and cause every knee to bow before Him.

Till then our redemption is not perfectly enjoyed; as Paul tells the Ephesians, "You were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). Till then our salvation is not completed; as Peter says of Christians, "who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5). Till then our knowledge is still defective; as Paul tells the Corinthians: "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). In short, our best things are yet to come.

But in the day of our Lord's return every desire shall receive its fulfillment. We shall no more be pressed down and worn out with the sense of constant failure, feebleness, and disappointment. In His presence we shall find there is a fullness of joy; and when we awake we will be satisfied with seeing His likeness (Psalm 16:11; 17:15).

There are many abominations now in the visible Church, over which we can only sigh and cry, like the faithful in Ezekiel's day (Ezekiel 9:4). We cannot remove them. The wheat and the weeds will grow together until the harvest. But a day comes when the Lord Jesus shall once more purify His temple, and cast forth everything that defiles. He shall do that work of which the doing of Hezekiah and Josiah were a faint type long ago. He shall cast forth the images, and purge out idolatry in every shape.

Who is there now that longs for the conversion of the heathen world? You will not see it in its fullness until the Lord's appearing. Then, and not till then, will that often misapplied text be fulfilled: "In that day men will throw away to the rodents and bats their idols of silver and idols of gold, which they made to worship" (Isaiah 2:20).

Who is there now that longs for the redemption of Israel? You will never see it in its perfection till the Redeemer comes to Zion. Idolatry in the professing Church of Jesus Christ has been one of the mightiest stumbling blocks in the Jew's way. When it begins to fall, the veil over the heart of Israel shall begin to be taken away (Psalm 102:16).

Who is there now that longs for the fall of Antichrist, and the purification of the Roman Catholic Church? I believe that will never be until the winding up of this dispensation. That vast system of idolatry may be consumed and wasted by the Spirit of the Lord's mouth, but it shall never be destroyed excepting by the brightness of His coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

Who is there now that longs for a perfect Church—a Church in which there shall not be the slightest taint of idolatry? You must wait for the Lord's return. Then, and not till then, shall we see a perfect Church—a Church having neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing (Ephesians 5:27)—a Church of which all the members shall be regenerate, and every one a child of God.

If these things be so, men need not wonder that we urge on them the study of prophecy, and that we charge them above all to grasp firmly the glorious doctrine of Christ's second appearing and kingdom. This is the "light shining in a dark place" to which we shall do well to take heed. Let others indulge their fancy if they will, with the vision of an imaginary "Church of the future." Let the children of this world dream of some "coming man," who is to understand everything, and set everything right. They are only sowing to themselves bitter disappointment. They will awake to find their visions baseless and empty as a dream. It is to such as these that the Prophet's words may be well applied: "But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment" (Isaiah 50:11).

But let your eyes look onward to the day of Christ's second advent. That is the only day when every abuse shall be rectified, and every corruption and source of sorrow completely purged away. Waiting for that day, let us each work on and serve our generation; not idle, as if nothing could be

done to check evil, but not disheartened because we do not yet see all things put under our Lord. After all, the night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Let us wait, I say, on the Lord.

If these things be so, men need not wonder that we warn them to beware of all leanings towards the Roman Catholic Church. Surely, when the mind of God about idolatry is so plainly revealed to us in His Word, it seems the height of infatuation in anyone to join a Church so steeped in idolatries as the Roman Catholic Church. To enter into communion with her, when God is saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4)—to seek her when the Lord is warning us to leave her—to become her subjects when the Lord's voice is crying, "Escape for your life, flee from the wrath to come;" all this is mental blindness indeed, a blindness like that of him, who, though forewarned, embarks in a sinking ship—a blindness which would be almost incredible, if our own eyes did not see examples of it continually.

We must all be on our guard. We must take nothing for granted. We must not hastily suppose that we are too wise to be ensnared. Those who preach must cry aloud and spare not, and allow no false tenderness to make them hold their peace about the heresies of the day. Those who hear must have the belt of truth buckled around their waist, and their minds stored with clear prophetic views of the end to which all idol-worshippers must come. Let us all try to realize that the last days of the world are upon us, and that the termination of all idolatry is hurrying on. Is this a time for a man to draw nearer to the Roman Catholic Church? Is it not rather a time to draw further back and stand clear, lest we be involved in her downfall?

Is this a time to whitewash Rome's manifold corruptions, and refuse to see the reality of her sins? Surely we ought rather to be doubly jealous of everything of a Roman Catholic tendency in religion—doubly careful that we do not hint at any treason against our Lord Christ—and doubly ready to protest against unscriptural worship of every description. Once more, then, I say, let us remember that the destruction of all idolatry is certain, and remembering that, beware of the Roman Catholic Church.

The subject I now touch upon is of deep and pressing importance, and demands the serious attention of all Protestants. It is vain to deny that a large party of clergy and laity in the present day are moving heaven and earth to reunite the Protestant Church with the idolatrous Roman Catholic Church. The publication of that monstrous book, Dr. Pusey's "Eirenicon" and the formation of a "Society for Promoting the Union of Christendom," are plain evidence of what I mean.

The existence of such a movement as this will not surprise any one who has carefully watched the history of the Church during the last forty years. The tendency of Ritualism has been steadily moving towards Rome. Hundreds of men and women have fairly and honestly left our ranks, and become Catholics. But many hundreds more have stayed behind, and are yet nominal Christians within our midst. The pompous semi-Roman Catholic ceremonies, which has been introduced into many churches, has prepared men's minds for changes. An lavishly theatrical and idolatrous mode of celebrating the Lord's Supper has paved the way for transubstantiation. A regular process of unprotestantizing has been long and successfully at work. The poor old Church stands on an inclined plane. Her very existence, as a Protestant Church, is in peril.

I hold, for one, that this Roman Catholic movement ought to be steadily and firmly resisted. Notwithstanding the rank, the learning, and the devotedness of some of its advocates, I regard it as a most mischievous, soul-ruining and unscriptural movement. To say that reunion with Rome would be an insult to our martyred Reformers, is a very light thing, it is far more than this: it would be a sin and an offense against God! Rather than be reunited with the idolatrous Roman Catholic Church, I would willingly see my own beloved Church perish and go to pieces. Rather than become Roman Catholic once more, she would be better dead!

Unity in the abstract is no doubt an excellent thing: but unity without truth is useless. Peace and uniformity are beautiful and valuable: but peace without the Gospel—peace based on a common church government, and not on a common faith—is a worthless peace, not deserving of the name. When Rome has repealed the decrees of Trent, and her additions to the Creed—when Rome has recanted her false and unscriptural doctrines—when Rome has formally renounced image-

worship, Mary-worship, and transubstantiation—then, and not till then, will it be time to talk of reunion with her. Till then there is a gulf between us which cannot be honestly bridged. Till then I call on all Christians to resist to the death this idea of reunion with Rome. Till then let our watchwords be "No peace with the Roman Catholic Church! No communion with idolaters!"

Jewell well says in his Apology, "We do not decline concord and peace with men; but we will not continue in a state of war with God that we might have peace with men! If the Pope does indeed desire we should be reconciled to him, he ought first to reconcile himself to God." This witness is true! Well would it be for the Church, if all her leaders had been like Jewell!

I write these things with sorrow. But the circumstances of the times make it absolutely necessary to speak out. To whatever quarter of the horizon I turn, I see grave reason for alarm. For the true Church of Jesus Christ I have no fears at all. But for the Established Protestant Churches, I have very grave fears indeed. The tide of events seems running strongly against Protestantism and in favor of Rome. It looks as if God had a controversy with us, as a nation, and was about to punish us for our sins.

I am no prophet. I do not know where we are drifting. But at the rate we are going, I think it quite within the verge of possibility that in a few years the Protestant Church may be reunited to the Roman Catholic Church. Protestantism may be formally repudiated. A Roman Catholic Archbishop may once more preside over the former Protestant Churches. Mass may be once more said at Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's. And one result will be that all Bible-reading Christians must either leave the Established Protestant Church, or else sanction idol-worship and become idolaters! God grant we may never come to this state of things! But at the rate we are going, it seems to me quite possible.

And now it only remains for me to conclude what I have been saying, by mentioning some safeguards for the souls of all who hear this message. We live in a time when the Roman Catholic Church is walking amongst us with renewed strength, and loudly boasting that she will soon win back the ground that she has lost. False doctrines of every kind are continually

set before us in the most subtle forms. It cannot be thought unreasonable if I offer some practical safeguards against idolatry. What it is, where it comes from, where it is, what will end it—all this we have seen. Let me point out how we may be safe from it, and I will say no more.

(1) Let us arm ourselves, then, for one thing, with a thorough knowledge of the Word of God.

Let us read our Bibles more diligently than ever, and become familiar with every part of them. Let the Word dwell in us richly. Let us beware of anything which would make us give less time, and less heart, to the perusal of its sacred pages. The Bible is the sword of the Spirit; let it never be laid aside. The Bible is the true lantern for a dark and cloudy time; let us beware of traveling without its light. I strongly suspect, if we knew the secret history of the numerous secessions from our Church to that of Rome, which we deplore—I strongly suspect that in almost every case one of the most important steps in the downward road would be found to have been a neglected Bible—more attention to forms, sacraments, daily services, primitive Christianity, and so forth, and diminished attention to the written Word of God. The Bible is the King's highway. If we once leave that for any side road, however beautiful, and old, and frequented it may seem, we must never be surprised if we end with worshipping images and relics, and going regularly to a confessional.

(2) Let us arm ourselves, in the second place, with a godly jealousy about the least portion of the Gospel.

Let us beware of sanctioning the slightest attempt to keep back any jot or tittle of it, or to throw any part of it into the shade by exalting subordinate matters in religion. When Peter withdrew himself from eating with the Gentiles, it seemed but a little thing; yet Paul tells the Galatians, "I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong" (Galatians 2:11). Let us count nothing little that concerns our souls. Let us be very particular whom we hear, where we go, and what we do, in all the matters of our own particular worship. We live in days when great principles are involved in little acts, and things in religion, which fifty years ago were utterly indifferent, are now by circumstances rendered indifferent no longer. Let us beware of tampering with anything of a Romanizing

tendency. It is foolishness to play with fire. I believe that many of our perverts and seceders began with thinking there could be no mighty harm in attaching a little more importance to certain outward things than they once did. But once launched on the downward course, they went on from one thing to another. They provoked God, and He left them to themselves! They were given over to strong delusion, and allowed to believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11). They tempted the devil, and he came to them! They started with trifles, as many foolishly call them. They have ended with downright idolatry.

(3) Let us arm ourselves, last of all, with clear, sound views of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the salvation that is in Him.

He is the "image of the invisible God," the "exact representation of His being," and the true preservative against all idolatry, when truly known. Let us build ourselves deep down on the strong foundation of His finished work upon the cross. Let us settle it firmly in our minds, that Christ Jesus has done everything needful in order to present us without spot before the throne of God, and that simple, childlike faith on our part is the only thing required to give us an entire interest in the work of Christ. Let us not doubt that having this faith, we are completely justified in the sight of God—will never be more justified if we live to the age of Methuselah and do the works of the Apostle Paul—and can add nothing to that complete justification by any acts, deeds, words, performances, fastings, prayers, attendance on ordinances, or anything else of our own.

(4) Above all let us keep up continual communion with the person of the Lord Jesus!

Let us abide in Him daily, feed on Him daily, look to Him daily, lean on Him daily, live upon Him daily, draw from His fullness daily. Let us realize this, and the idea of other mediators, other comforters, other intercessors, will seem utterly absurd. "What need is there?" we shall reply: "I have Christ, and in Him I have everything. What have I to do with idols? I have Jesus in my heart, Jesus in the Bible, and Jesus in heaven, and I want nothing more."

Once let the Lord Christ have His rightful place in our hearts, and all

other things in our religion will soon fall into their right places—Church, ministers, ordinances, all will go down, and take the second place.

Except Christ sits as Priest and King upon the throne of our hearts, that little kingdom within will be in perpetual confusion. But only let Him be "all in all" there, and all will be well, Before Him every idol, every Dagon shall fall down. CHRIST RIGHTLY KNOWN, CHRIST TRULY BELIEVED, AND CHRIST HEARTILY LOVED, IS THE TRUE PRESERVATIVE AGAINST RITUALISM, ROMANISM, AND EVERY FORM OF IDOLATRY. AMEN.

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