



***FREDERICK
WILLIAM
ROBERTSON***

***SERMONS
PREACHED
AT BRIGHTON***

Frederick William Robertson

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



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SERMONS.

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I.

Preached April 28, 1850.

THE TONGUE.

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“Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.”—St. James iii. 5-6.

In the development of Christian Truth a peculiar office was assigned to the Apostle James.

It was given to St. Paul to proclaim Christianity as the spiritual law of liberty, and to exhibit Faith as the most active principle within the breast of man. It was St. John's to say that the deepest quality in the bosom of Deity is Love; and to assert that the life of God in Man is Love. It was the office of St. James to assert the necessity of Moral Rectitude; his very name marked him out peculiarly for this office: he was emphatically called, “the Just:” integrity was his peculiar characteristic. A man singularly honest, earnest, real. Accordingly, if you read through his whole epistle, you will find it is, from first to last, one continued vindication of the first principles of morality against the *semblances* of religion.

He protested against the censoriousness which was found connected with peculiar claims of religious feelings. “If any man among you seem to be religious and bridleth

not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." He protested against that spirit which had crept into the Christian Brotherhood, truckling to the rich, and despising the poor. "If ye have respect of persons ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." He protested against that sentimental fatalism which induced men to throw the blame of their own passions upon God. "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot tempt to evil; neither tempteth He any man." He protested against that unreal religion of excitement which diluted the earnestness of real religion in the enjoyment of listening. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only; deceiving your own souls." He protested against that trust in the correctness of theological doctrine which neglected the cultivation of character. "What doth it profit, if a man *say* that he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?"

Read St. James's epistle through, this is the mind breathing through it all:—all this *talk* about religion, and spirituality—words, words, words—nay, let us have *realities*.

It is well known that Luther complained of this epistle, that it did not contain the Gospel; for men who are hampered by a system will say—even of an inspired Apostle—that he does not teach the Gospel if their own favourite doctrine be not the central subject of his discourse; but St. James's reply seems spontaneously to suggest itself to us. The Gospel! how can we speak of the Gospel, when the first principles of *morality* are forgotten? when Christians are excusing themselves, and slandering one another? How can the superstructure of Love and Faith be built, when the very foundations of human character—Justice, Mercy, Truth—have not been laid?

- 1st. The license of the tongue.
- 2nd. The guilt of that license.

The first license given to the tongue is slander. I am not of course, speaking now of that species of slander against which the law of libel provides a remedy, but of that of which the Gospel alone takes cognisance; for the worst injuries which man can do to man, are precisely those which are too delicate for *law* to deal with. We consider therefore not the calumny which is reckoned such by the moralities of an earthly court, but that which is found guilty by the spiritualities of the courts of heaven—that is, the mind of God.

Now observe, this slander is compared in the text to poison—“the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” The deadliest poisons are those for which no test is known: there are poisons so destructive that a single drop insinuated into the veins produces death in three seconds, and yet no chemical science can separate that virus from the contaminated blood, and show the metallic particles of poison glittering palpably, and say, “Behold, it is there!”

In the drop of venom which distils from the sting of the smallest insect, or the spikes of the nettle-leaf, there is concentrated the quintessence of a poison so subtle that the microscope cannot distinguish it, and yet so virulent that it can inflame the blood, irritate the whole constitution, and convert day and night into restless misery.

In St. James's day, as now, it would appear that there were idle men and idle women, who went about from house to house, dropping slander as they went, and yet you could not take up that slander and detect the falsehood there. You could not evaporate the truth in the slow process of the crucible, and then show the residuum of falsehood glittering

and visible. You could not fasten upon any word or sentence, and say that it was calumny; for in order to constitute slander it is not necessary that the word spoken should be false—half truths are often more calumnious than whole falsehoods. It is not even necessary that a word should be distinctly uttered; a dropped lip, an arched eyebrow, a shrugged shoulder, a significant look, an incredulous expression of countenance, nay, even an emphatic silence, may do the work: and when the light and trifling thing which has done the mischief has fluttered off, the venom is left behind, to work and rankle, to inflame hearts, to fever human existence, and to poison human society at the fountain springs of life. Very emphatically was it said by one whose whole being had smarted under such affliction, "Adder's poison is under their lips."

The second license given to the tongue is in the way of persecution: "therewith curse we men which are made after the similitude of God." "We!"—men who bear the name of Christ—curse our brethren! Christians persecuted Christians. Thus even in St. James's age that spirit had begun, the monstrous fact of Christian persecution; from that day it has continued, through long centuries, up to the present time. The Church of Christ assumed the office of denunciation, and except in the first council, whose object was not to strain, but to relax the bonds of brotherhood, not a council has met for eighteen centuries which has not guarded each profession of belief by the too customary formula, "If any man maintain otherwise than this, let him be accursed."

Myriad, countless curses have echoed through those long ages; the Church has forgotten her Master's spirit and called down fire from heaven. A fearful thought to consider this as the spectacle on which the eye of God has rested. He looks down upon the creatures He has made, and hears

everywhere the language of religious imprecations:—and after all, who is proved right by curses?

The Church of Rome hurls her thunders against Protestants of every denomination: the Calvinist scarcely recognises the Arminian as a Christian: he who considers himself as the true Anglican, excludes from the Church of Christ all but the adherents of his own orthodoxy; every minister and congregation has its small circle, beyond which all are heretics: nay even among that sect which is most lax as to the dogmatic forms of truth, we find the Unitarian of the old school denouncing the spiritualism of the new and rising school.

This is the state of things to which we are arrived. Sisters of Charity refuse to permit an act of charity to be done by a Samaritan; ministers of the Gospel fling the thunderbolts of the Lord; ignorant hearers catch and exaggerate the spirit—boys, girls, and women shudder as one goes by, perhaps more holy than themselves, who adores the same God, believes in the same Redeemer, struggles in the same life-battle, and all this because they have been taught to look upon him as an enemy of God.

There is a class of religious persons against whom this vehemence has been especially directed. No one who can read the signs of the times can help perceiving that we are on the eve of great changes, perhaps a disruption of the Church of England. Unquestionably there has been a large secession to the Church of Rome.

Now what has been the position of those who are about to take this step? They have been taunted with dishonest reception of the wages of the Church; a watch has been set over them: not a word they uttered in private, or in public, but was given to the world by some religious busy-body; there was not a visit which they paid, not a foolish dress

which they adopted, but became the subject of bitter scrutiny and malevolent gossip. For years the religious press has denounced them with a vehemence as virulent, but happily more impotent than that of the Inquisition. There has been an anguish and an inward struggle little suspected, endured by men who felt themselves outcasts in their own society, and naturally looked for a home elsewhere.

We congratulate ourselves that the days of persecution are gone by; but persecution is that which affixes penalties upon *views held*, instead of upon *life led*. Is persecution *only* fire and sword? But suppose a man of sensitive feeling says, The sword is less sharp to me than the slander: fire is less intolerable than the refusal of sympathy!

Now let us bring this home; you rejoice that the faggot and the stake are given up;—*you* never persecuted—you leave that to the wicked Church of Rome. Yes, you never burned a human being alive—you never clapped your hands as the death-shriek proclaimed that the lion's fang had gone home into the most vital part of the victim's frame; but did you never rob him of his friends?—gravely shake your head and oracularly insinuate that he was leading souls to hell?—chill the affections of his family?—take from him his good name? Did you never with delight see his Church placarded as the Man of Sin, and hear the platform denunciations which branded it with the spiritual abominations of the Apocalypse? Did you never find a malicious pleasure in repeating all the miserable gossip with which religious slander fastened upon his daily acts, his words, and even his uncommunicated thoughts? Did you never forget that for a man to “work out his own salvation with fear and trembling” is a matter difficult enough to be laid upon a human spirit, without intruding into the most sacred department of

another's life—that namely, which lies between himself and God? Did you never say that “it was to be wished he should go to Rome,” until at last life became intolerable—until he was thrown more and more in upon himself; found himself, like his Redeemer, in this world alone, but unable like his Redeemer, calmly to repose upon the thought that his Father was with him? Then a stern defiant spirit took possession of his soul, and there burst from his lips, or heart, the wish for *rest*—rest at any cost—peace anywhere, if even it is to be found only in the bosom of the Church of Rome!

II. The guilt of this license.

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The first evil consequence is the harm that a man does himself: “so is the tongue among the members, that it defiles the whole body.” It is not very obvious, in what way a man does himself harm by calumny. I will take the simplest form in which this injury is done; it effects a dissipation of spiritual energy. There are two ways in which the steam of machinery may find an outlet for its force: it may work, and if so it works silently; or it may escape, and that takes place loudly, in air and noise. There are two ways in which the spiritual energy of a man's soul may find its vent: it may express itself in action, silently; or in words, noisily: but just so much of force as is thrown into the one mode of expression, is taken from the other.

Few men suspect how much mere talk fritters away spiritual energy—that which should be spent in action, spends itself in words. The fluent boaster is not the man who is steadiest before the enemy; it is well said to him that

his courage is better kept till it is wanted. Loud utterance of virtuous indignation against evil from the platform, or in the drawing-room, do not characterize the spiritual giant: so much indignation as is expressed, has found vent, is wasted, is taken away from the work of coping with evil; the man has so much less left. And hence he who restrains that love of talk, lays up a fund of spiritual strength.

With large significance, St. James declares, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body." He is entire, powerful, because he has not spent his strength. In these days of loud profession, and bitter, fluent condemnation, it is well for us to learn the divine force of silence. Remember Christ in the Judgment Hall, the very Symbol and Incarnation of spiritual strength; and yet when revilings were loud around Him and charges multiplied, "He held His peace."

2. The next feature in the guilt of calumny is its uncontrollable character: "the tongue can no man tame." You cannot arrest a calumnious tongue, you cannot arrest the calumny itself; you may refute a slanderer, you may trace home a slander to its source, you may expose the author of it, you may by that exposure give a lesson so severe as to make the repetition of the offence appear impossible; but the fatal habit is incorrigible: to-morrow the tongue is at work again.

Neither can you stop the consequences of a slander; you may publicly prove its falsehood, you may sift every atom, explain and annihilate it, and yet, years after you had thought that all had been disposed of for ever, the mention of a name wakes up associations in the mind of some one who heard the calumny, but never heard or never attended to the refutation, or who has only a vague and confused recollection of the whole, and he asks the question

doubtfully, "But were there not some suspicious circumstances connected with him?"

It is like the Greek fire used in ancient warfare, which burnt unquenched beneath the water, or like the weeds which when you have extirpated them in one place are sprouting forth vigorously in another spot, at the distance of many hundred yards; or, to use the metaphor of St. James himself, it is like the wheel which catches fire as it goes, and burns with a fiercer conflagration as its own speed increases; "it sets on fire the whole course of nature" (literally, the wheel of nature). You may tame the wild beast, the conflagration of the American forest will cease when all the timber and the dry underwood is consumed; but you cannot arrest the progress of that cruel word which you uttered carelessly yesterday or this morning—which you will utter perhaps, before you have passed from this church one hundred yards: that will go on slaying, poisoning, burning beyond your own control, now and for ever.

3. The third element of guilt lies in the unnaturalness of calumny. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be;" *ought not*—that is, they are unnatural. That this is St. James's meaning is evident from the second illustration which follows: "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place, sweet water and bitter?" "Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries, or a vine, figs?"

There is apparently in these metaphors little that affords an argument against slander; the motive which they suggest would appear to many far-fetched and of small cogency; but to one who looks on this world as a vast whole, and who has recognised the moral law as only a part of the great law of the universe, harmoniously blending with the whole, illustrations such as these are the most powerful of all arguments. The truest definition of evil is that which

represents it as something contrary to nature: evil is evil, because it is unnatural; a vine which should bear olive berries, an eye to which blue seems yellow, would be diseased: an unnatural mother, an unnatural son, an unnatural act, are the strongest terms of condemnation. It is this view which Christianity gives of moral evil: the teaching of Christ was the recall of man to nature, not an infusion of something new into Humanity. Christ came to call out all the principles and powers of human nature, to restore the natural equilibrium of all our faculties; not to call us back to our own individual selfish nature, but to human nature as it is in God's ideal—the perfect type which is to be realised in us. Christianity is the regeneration of our whole nature, not the destruction of one atom of it.

Now the nature of man is to adore God and to love what is god-like in man. The office of the tongue is to bless. Slander is guilty because it contradicts this; yet even in slander itself, perversion as it is, the interest of man in man is still distinguishable. What is it but perverted interest which makes the acts, and words, and thoughts of his brethren, even in their evil, a matter of such strange delight? Remember therefore, this contradicts your nature and your destiny; to speak ill of others makes you a monster in God's world: get the habit of slander, and then there is not a stream which bubbles fresh from the heart of nature—there is not a tree that silently brings forth its genial fruit in its appointed season—which does not rebuke and proclaim you to be a monstrous anomaly in God's world.

4. The fourth point of guilt is the diabolical character of slander; the tongue “is set on fire of hell.” Now, this is no mere strong expression—no mere indignant vituperation—it contains deep and emphatic meaning.

The apostle means literally what he says, slander is diabolical. The first illustration we give of this is contained in the very meaning of the word devil. "Devil," in the original, means traducer or slanderer. The first introduction of a demon spirit is found connected with a slanderous insinuation against the Almighty, implying that His command had been given in envy of His creature: "for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

In the magnificent imagery of the book of Job, the accuser is introduced with a demoniacal and malignant sneer, attributing the excellence of a good man to interested motives; "Doth Job serve God for naught?" There is another mode in which the fearful accuracy of St. James's charge may be demonstrated. There is one state only from which there is said to be no recovery—there is but one sin that is called unpardonable. The Pharisees beheld the works of Jesus. They could not deny that they were good works, they could not deny that they were miracles of beneficence, but rather than acknowledge that they were done by a good man through the co-operation of a Divine spirit, they preferred to account for them by the wildest and most incredible hypothesis; they said they were done by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. It was upon this occasion that our Redeemer said with solemn meaning, "For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment." It was then that He said, for a word spoken against the Holy Ghost there is no forgiveness in this world, or in the world to come.

Our own hearts respond to the truth of this—to call evil, good, and good, evil—to see the Divinest good, and call it Satanic evil—below this lowest deep there is *not* a lower

still. There is no cure for mortification of the flesh—there is no remedy for ossification of the heart. Oh! that miserable state, when to the jaundiced eye all good transforms itself into evil, and the very instruments of health become the poison of disease. Beware of every approach of this!—Beware of that spirit which controversy fosters, of watching only for the evil in the character of an antagonist!—Beware of that habit which becomes the slanderer's life, of magnifying every speck of evil and closing the eye to goodness!—till at last men arrive at the state in which generous, universal love (which is heaven) becomes impossible, and a suspicious, universal hate takes possession of the heart, and *that* is hell!

There is one peculiar manifestation of this spirit to which I desire specially to direct your attention.

The politics of the community are guided by the political press. The religious views of a vast number are formed by that portion of the press which is called religious; it becomes, therefore, a matter of deepest interest to inquire what is the spirit of that “religious press.” I am not asking you what are the views maintained—whether Evangelical, Anglican, or Romish—but what is the *spirit* of that fountain from which the religious life of so many is nourished?

Let any man cast his eye over the pages of this portion of the press—it matters little to which party the newspaper or the journal may belong—he will be startled to find the characters of those whom he has most deeply revered, whose hearts he knows, whose integrity and life are above suspicion, held up to scorn and hatred: the organ of one party is established against the organ of another, and it is the recognised office of each to point out with microscopic care the names of those whose views are to be shunned; and in order that these may be the more shrunk from, the

characters of those who hold such opinions are traduced and vilified. There is no personality too mean—there is no insinuation too audacious or too false for the recklessness of these daring slanderers. I do not like to use the expression, lest it should appear to be merely one of theatrical vehemence; but I say it in all seriousness, adopting the inspired language of the Bible, and using it advisedly and with accurate meaning, the spirit which guides the “religious press” of this country, which dictates those personalities, which prevents controversialists from seeing what is good in their opponents, which attributes low motives to account for excellent lives, and teaches men whom to suspect, and shun, rather than point out where it is possible to admire and love—is a spirit “set on fire of hell.”

Before we conclude, let us get at the root of the matter. “Man,” says the Apostle James, “was made in the image of God:” to slander man is to slander God: to love what is good in man is to love it in God. Love is the only remedy for slander: no set of rules or restrictions can stop it; we may denounce, but we shall denounce in vain. The radical cure of it is Charity—“out of a pure heart and faith unfeigned,” to feel what is great in the human character; to recognise with delight all high, and generous, and beautiful actions; to find a joy even in seeing the good qualities of your bitterest opponents, and to admire those qualities even in those with whom you have least sympathy—be it either the Romanist or the Unitarian—this is the only spirit which can heal the love of slander and of calumny. If we would bless God, we must *first* learn to bless man, who is made in the image of God.

II.

Preached May 5, 1850.

THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

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“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”—1 John v. 4-5.

There are two words in the system of Christianity which have received a meaning so new, and so emphatic, as to be in a way peculiar to it, and to distinguish it from all other systems of morality and religion; these two words are—the World, and Faith. We find it written in Scripture that to have the friendship of the world is to be the enemy of God—whereupon the question arises—The world?—did not God make the world? Did He not place us in the world? Are we not to love what God has made? And yet meeting this distinctly we have the inspired record, “Love not the World.”

The object of the Statesman is, or ought to be, to produce as much worldly prosperity as possible—but Christianity, that is Christ, speaks little of this world's prosperity, underrates it—nay, speaks of it at times as infinitely dangerous.

The legislator prohibits crime—the moralist transgression—the religionist sin. To these Christianity superadds a new enemy—the world and the things of the world. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

The other word used in a peculiar sense is Faith. It is impossible for any one to have read his Bible ever so negligently, and not to be aware that the word Faith, or the grace of Faith, forms a large element in the Christian system. It is said to work miracles, remove mountains, justify the soul, trample upon impossibilities. Every apostle, in his way, assigns to faith a primary importance. Jude tells us to “build up ourselves in our most holy faith.” John tells us that—“he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is the born of God;” and Paul tells us that, not by merit nor by works, but by trust or reliance only, can be formed that state of soul by which man is reckoned just before God. In these expressions, the apostles only develop their Master's meaning, when He uses such words as these, “All things are possible to him that believeth:” “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”

These two words are brought into diametrical opposition in the text, so that it branches into a two-fold line of thought

- I. The Christian's enemy, the World.
- II. The victory of Faith.

In endeavouring to understand first what is meant by the world, we shall feel that the mass of evil which is comprehended under this expression, cannot be told out in any one sermon; it is an expression used in various ways, sometimes meaning one thing, sometimes meaning another;—but we will endeavour to explain its general principles—and these we will divide into three heads; first, the tyranny of the present; secondly, the tyranny of the sensual; and lastly, the spirit of society.

1. The tyranny of the present.

“Christ,” says the Apostle Paul, “hath redeemed us from this present evil world;” and again, “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this, present world.”

Let a stress be laid on the word *present*. Worldliness is the attractive power of something present, in opposition to something to come. It is this rule and tyranny of the present that constitutes Demas a worldly man.

In this respect, worldliness is the spirit of childhood carried on into manhood. The child lives in the present hour—to-day to him is everything. The holiday promised at a distant interval is no holiday at all—it must be either now or never. Natural in the child, and therefore pardonable, this spirit, when carried on into manhood, is coarse—is worldliness. The most distinct illustration given us of this, is the case of Esau. Esau came from the hunting-field worn and hungry; the only means of procuring the tempting mess of his brother's pottage was the sacrifice of his father's blessing, which in those ages carried with it a substantial advantage; but that birthright could be enjoyed only after *years*—the pottage was *present*, near, and certain; therefore he sacrificed a future and higher blessing, for a present and lower pleasure. For this reason Esau is the Bible type of worldliness: he is called in Scripture a profane, that is, not a distinctly vicious, but a secular or worldly person—an overgrown child; impetuous, inconsistent, not without gleams of generosity and kindness, but ever accustomed to immediate gratification.

In this worldliness, moreover, is to be remarked the gamester's desperate play. There is a gambling spirit in human nature. Esau distinctly expresses this: “Behold I am at the point to die, and what shall my birthright profit me?” He might never live to enjoy his birthright; but the pottage was before him, present, certain, *there*.

Now, observe the utter powerlessness of mere preaching to cope with this tyrannical power of the present. Forty thousand pulpits throughout the land this day, will declaim against the vanity of riches, the uncertainty of life, the sin of worldliness—against the gambling spirit of human nature; I ask what *impression* will be produced by those forty thousand harangues? In every congregation it is reducible to a certainty that, before a year has passed, some will be numbered with the dead. Every man knows this, but he thinks the chances are that it will not be himself; he feels it a solemn thing for Humanity generally—but for himself there is more than a chance. Upon this chance he plays away life.

It is so with the child: you tell him of the consequences of to-day's idleness—but the sun is shining brightly, and he cannot sacrifice to-day's pleasure, although he knows the disgrace it will bring to-morrow. So it is with the intemperate man: he says—"Sufficient unto the day is the evil, and the good thereof; let me have my portion now." So that one great secret of the world's victory lies in the mighty power of saying "*Now.*"

2. The tyranny of the sensual.

I call it *tyranny*, because the evidences of the senses are all powerful, in spite of the protestations of the reason. In vain you try to persuade the child that *he* is moving, and not the trees which seem to flit past the carriage—in vain we remind ourselves that this apparently solid earth on which we stand, and which seems so immoveable, is in reality flying through the regions of space with an inconceivable rapidity—in vain philosophers would persuade us that the colour which the eye beholds, resides not in the object itself,

but in our own perception; we are victims of the apparent, and the verdict of the senses is taken instead of the verdict of the reason.

Precisely so is it with the enjoyments of the world. The man who died yesterday, and whom the world called a successful man—for what did he live?—He lived for this world—he gained this world. Houses, lands, name, position in society—all that earth could give of enjoyments—he had: he was the man of whom the Redeemer said that his thoughts were occupied in planning how to pull down his barns and build greater. We hear men complain of the sordid love of gold, but gold is merely a medium of exchange for other things: gold is land, titles, name, comfort—all that the world can give. If the world be *all*, it is *wise* to live for gold. There may be some little difference in the degree of degradation in different forms of worldliness; it is possible that the ambitious man who lives for power is somewhat higher than he who merely lives for applause, and he again may be a trifle higher than the mere seeker after gold—but after all, looking closely at the matter, you will find that, in respect of the objects of their idolatry, they agree in this, that all belong to the present. Therefore, says the Apostle, all that is in the world—“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world,” and are only various forms of one great tyranny. And then when such a man is at the brink of death, the words said to the man in our Lord's parable must be said to him. “Thou fool, the houses thou hast built, the enjoyments thou hast prepared; and all those things which have formed thy life for years—when thy soul is taken from them, what shall they profit thee?”

3. The spirit of society.

The *World* has various meanings in Scripture; it does not always mean the Visible, as opposed to the Invisible; nor the Present, as opposed to the Future: it sometimes stands for the secular spirit of the day—the Voice of Society.

Our Saviour says, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own.” The apostle says, “Be not conformed to this world;” and to the Gentiles he writes, “In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience.” In these verses, a tone, a temper, a spirit is spoken of. There are two things—the Church and the World—two spirits pervading different bodies of men, brought before us in these verses—those called the Spirit-born, and those called the World, which is to be overcome by the Spirit-born, as in the text, “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.”

Let us understand what is meant by the Church of God. When we speak of the Church we generally mean a society to aid men in their progress God-wards; but the Church of God is by no means co-extensive in any age with that organized institution which we *call* the Church; sometimes it is nearly co-extensive—that is, nearly all on earth who are born of God are found within its pale, nearly all who are of the world are extraneous to it—but sometimes the born of God have been found distinct from the Institution called the Church, opposed to it—persecuted by it. The Institution of the Church is a blessed ordinance of God, organized on earth for the purpose of representing the Eternal Church and of extending its limits, but still ever subordinate to it.

The Eternal Church is “the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven;” the selected spirits of the most High, who are struggling with the evil of their day; sometimes alone, like Elijah, and like him, longing that their work was done; sometimes conscious of their

union with each other. God is for ever raising up a succession of these—His brave, His true, His good. Apostolical succession, as taught sometimes, means simply this—a succession of miraculous powers flowing in a certain line. The true apostolic succession is—not a succession in an hereditary line, or line marked by visible signs which men can always identify, but a succession emphatically spiritual.

The Jews looked for an hereditary succession; they thought that because they were Abraham's seed, the spiritual succession was preserved; the Redeemer told them that "God was able of those stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Therefore is this ever a spiritual succession—in the hands of God alone; and they are here called the God-born, coming into the world variously qualified; sometimes baptized with the spirit which makes them, like James and John, the "Sons of Thunder," sometimes with a milder spirit, as Barnabas, which makes them "Sons of Consolation," sometimes having their souls indurated into an adamantine hardness, which makes them living stones—rocks like Peter, against which the billows of this world dash themselves in vain, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. But whether as apostles, or visitors of the poor, or parents of a family, born to do a work on earth, to speak a word, to discharge a mission which they themselves perhaps do not know till it is accomplished—these are the Church of God—the children of the Most High—the noble army of the Spirit-born! Opposed to this stands the mighty confederacy called the World. But beware of fixing on individual men in order to stigmatize *them* as the world. You may not draw a line and say—"We are the sons of God, ye are of the world." The world is not so much individual as it is a certain spirit; the course of this world is "the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience." The world and the Church are

annexed as inseparably as the elements which compose the atmosphere. Take the smallest portion of this that you will, in a cubic inch the same proportions are found as in a temple. In the ark there was a Ham; in the small band of the twelve apostles there was a Judas.

The spirit of the world is for ever altering—impalpable; for ever eluding, in fresh forms, your attempts to seize it. In the days of Noah, the spirit of the world was *violence*. In Elijah's day it was *idolatry*. In the day of Christ it was *power* concentrated and condensed in the government of Rome. In ours, perhaps, it is the *love of money*. It enters in different proportions into different bosoms; it is found in a different form in contiguous towns; in the fashionable watering place, and in the commercial city: it is this thing at Athens, and another in Corinth. This is the spirit of the world—a thing in my heart and yours: to be struggled against, not so much in the case of others, as in the silent battle to be done within our own souls. Pass we on now to consider—

II. The victory of faith.

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Faith is a theological expression; we are apt to forget that it has any other than a theological import; yet it is the commonest principle of man's daily life, called in that region prudence, enterprise, or some such name. It is in effect the principle on which alone any human superiority can be gained. Faith, in religion, is the same principle as faith in worldly matters, differing only in its object: it rises through successive stages. When, in reliance upon your promise, your child gives up the half-hour's idleness of to-day for the holiday of to-morrow, he lives by faith; a future supersedes

the present pleasure. When he abstains from over-indulgence of the appetite, in reliance upon your word that the result will be pain and sickness, sacrificing the present pleasure for fear of future punishment, he acts on faith: I do not say that this is a high exercise of faith—it is a very low one—but it *is* faith.

Once more: the same motive of action may be carried on into manhood; in our own times two religious principles have been exemplified in the subjugation of a vice. The habit of intoxication has been broken by an appeal to the principle of combination, and the principle of belief. Men were taught to feel that they were not solitary stragglers against the vice; they were enrolled in a mighty army, identified in principles and interests. Here was the principle of the Church—association for reciprocated strength; they were thus taught the inevitable result of the indulgence of the vice. The missionaries of temperance went through the country contrasting the wretchedness and the degradation and the filth of drunkenness with the domestic comfort, and the health, and the regular employment of those who were masters of themselves. So far as men believed this, and gave up the tyranny of the present for the hope of the future—so far they lived by faith.

Brethren, I do not say that this was a high triumph for the principle of faith; it was in fact, little more than selfishness; it was a high future balanced against a low present; only the preference of a future and higher physical enjoyment to a mean and lower one. Yet still to be ruled by this influence raises a man in the scale of being: it is a low virtue, prudence, a form of selfishness; yet prudence *is* a virtue. The merchant, who forecasts, saves, denies himself systematically through years, to amass a fortune, is not a very lofty being, yet he is higher, as a man, than he who is

sunk in mere bodily gratifications. You would not say that the intemperate man—who has become temperate in order, merely to gain by that temperance honour and happiness—is a great man, but you would say he was a higher and a better man than he who is enslaved by his passions, or than the gambler who improvidently stakes all upon a moment's throw. The worldly mother who plans for the advancement of a family, and sacrifices solid enjoyments for a splendid alliance, is only *worldly* wise, yet in that manœuvring and worldly prudence there is the exercise of a self-control which raises her above the mere giddy pleasure-hunter of the hour; for want of self-control is the weakness of our nature—to restrain, to wait, to control present feeling with a large foresight, is human strength.

Once more, instead of a faith like that of the child, which over-leaps a few hours, or that of the worldly man, which over-passes years, there may be a faith which transcends the whole span of life, and, instead of looking for temporal enjoyments, looks for rewards in a future beyond the grave, instead of a future limited to time.

This is again a step. The child has sacrificed a day; the man has sacrificed a little more. Faith has now reached a stage which deserves to be called religious; not that this however, is very grand; it does but prefer a happiness hereafter to a happiness enjoyed here—an eternal well-being instead of a temporal well-being; it is but prudence on a grand scale—another form of selfishness—an anticipation of infinite rewards instead of finite, and not the more noble because of the infinitude of the gain: and yet this is what is often taught as religion in books and sermons. We are told that sin is wrong, because it will make us miserable hereafter. Guilt is represented as the short-sightedness which barter for a home on earth—a home in heaven.