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SERMONS,
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THE DIVINE CHARITY.

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THE DIVINE CHARITY.

“This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.”—JOHN xv. 12.

WHEN I rise to preach, my brethren, I feel very much as I imagine the disciples to have felt, just before the miracle of the Loaves and Fishes. The multitude was gathered together. They were hungry; they were faint; they were wearied; they had come from afar, and had far to go; and all there was to satisfy the necessities of the craving thousands, was, perhaps, enough to make a meal for two or three, or for twenty or thirty, at the farthest. I can see our dear Lord, with that calm, sweet smile, blessing the scant repast, and bidding his disciples take it out, and distribute.

Now, to the sceptical intellect, the command would have seemed like the veriest mockery in the world; for there was not a shred of a meal—not a mouthful a-piece for the multitude. And thus it is with the text. The text is apparent to my mind. It is smaller than a loaf. It is smaller than a fish. And here you sit before me, and my Lord commands me, when he has blessed and broken it by his Spirit, to bear it out, and feed all of you. I cannot feed you with the text; but as my use goes on, as sentence after sentence flows adapted to your wants, I see that He is absolutely working a miracle; that He is dividing it, and multiplying it, and feeding you. And so the time runs by, and all are fed. And it seems to me that I have more left to garner up and carry away in my own heart, than would make twelve baskets full more of discourses.

I was to speak to you to-night of the Divine Charity, and I confess that I do not know where to begin, and I

also confess that I do not know where I shall end. I only know that I shall speak to you as of the fulness of the Spirit; and having felt the sweetness and the power of the Divine Charity exercised towards myself; and realising, as I do so intensely, that we are all made with the same hopes, with the same yearnings, the same aspirations, the same sorrows, the same fears, the same doubts, and the same misgivings, I know that if I can tell you how that Divine Charity has dealt in my own soul, it will reach your hearts, and leave those of you that stand in need of particular gifts and blessings from the Lord, to go as I have gone, and find that sweetness of communion with the Father that I so often and so continually experience. For after all a man can only preach from experience. If I take a book and read a description by Linnæus of a rose; if in Latin phraseology, or Latiuised English phraseology, I give you the analysis of the cup and leaf and seed vessel, it is a very dry thing. But if I can put my hand in my breast and take out a living rose, a queenly rose, just blossomed, that shall fill the very air with its aroma, and gladden your eyes, in this winter season, with its rich and blushing beauty,—the rose is the sermon, not the description of it. And so I would have every man who essays to preach Christ, to put his hand into the breast God has quickened, and take out the rose of piety which the Lord has planted there, all redolent with the dews of heaven, all fragrant with the blessed things of paradise, and just shake that over you until the ripe rich fragrance goes out, wafting forth a beauty and a joy, heavenly and everlasting, to every heart.

Christianity is the simplest thing in the world; simple because it is infinite; and infinite things are always simple. It is the love of God in Christ. Doubtless had our world not fallen, the incarnation of God would not have taken place. And yet, I can see a vast significance and a grand result, of evil over-ruled by good, as the consequence of the fall. If it had not been for the fall of man, the angels in the heavens, and the regenerate

spirits in the universe, might have known how God deals with his creatures who have never sinned; how, in the unbroken harmony of unceasing obedience, faculty buds from faculty, intelligence ripens from intelligence, and affections grow out of affections, and raptures spring from raptures; until the full-bloomed soul is translated bodily to its everlasting life. I say we might have known that side of God, and how God deals with a universe where all is one unmeasured harmony of obedience.

But man has fallen, and we now know a depth in God, in our loving God, that even the angels could not have guessed at, and would not have presumed to look into. We now know that God's love is not only one that looks with complaisance upon a universe of obedient creatures who have never sinned, and that delights to paint on the canvass of those universal hearts the glorious glowing picture of all His beauty and joy; but we know more than that. We know that he will stoop down to the lowest; that his sympathies will reach to gather in the vilest, if only they will hearken and return unto Him. Can we not take this to heart? What love have we this night for those poor miserable creatures—those wrecks of human nature—who are flaunting along the dark Manchester streets to the boiling ocean of the heart's perdition? Yet, dear friends, we are all,—in our fallen natures, and unless restored by God's loving grace—with just such seeds of evil in us as in those who perish in all this foul terrestrial depravity. And, it is the beings who, as to their interiors, are lost; who, as to their natures, are so polluted; who, as to their organisations, "are born in sin, and shapen in iniquity;" who, as to their hearts, are prone to evil as the sparks to fly upwards, and depraved, and desperately wicked; it is beings who have thus inherited a legacy of ancestral crime, and have taken that legacy and put it out to interest in the heart, and by acquired sins, have grown more and more fixed in that guilt which at first was plastic and could easily have been smoothed away; it is

beings like these that the Being of infinite purity, and sweetness, and excellence, stoops down to reach and save.

We cannot dwell too much upon the thought, that the infinite charity of the Lord our God is not shewn, upon this orb, to beings who are growing up, all sweetly as the rose, from the little germ of positive good, through higher forms of good, progressing and developing, having goodness evolved from goodness, and truth from truth, and beauty from beauty, and virtue from virtue,—until at last the whole composite man becomes a glorious and exalted angel. It is not to beings like those that the Lord has come down and shewn his goodness, but to beings who were the reverse—who, had not this especial divine mercy been exhibited to them, would have grown downwards instead of upwards,—would have put their roots, not into the subsoil of the Divine nature, but into the subsoil of the hells themselves; and who would have borne fruits, not of sweetness, not of virtue, not of human beauty and angelic tenderness, and Divine affection and loveliness, but fruits of wrath, and misery, and crime, and desperation. Look wherever the divine influences of our Lord do not extensively and thoroughly permeate,—look where those divine influences are rejected, and see what kind of fruit human nature bears,—cannibalism, infanticide, polygamy, unchastity, fraud, theft, idolatry, murder, blasphemy, the desecration of the body, the pollution of the intellect, the corruption of the soul. That is the kind of fruit that human nature bears,—left without the grace of God working in it and working for it.

Man comes, after all, into a splendid inheritance. He finds in himself the germs which, were they quickened by God's spirit, would unfold and make the soul a "thing of beauty and a joy for ever" in the heavens. The germs of the faculties that would grow up into angelhood have not been plucked out of man. Sin has had no power to rob us of a single root of Paradise, Sin has mown down the plants, has overturned the

trees, has scattered the harvest, has broken up the ground, has poured rivers of sand where rivers of sweet and cooling waters once ran, has choked up the fountains, has broken the glorious windows of the temple there that opened towards the morning sun, has allowed the wild beasts of the passions to cranch its vines. Sin has done all this ; but the roots are left. The roots of every good thing that goes to make up unpolluted and virgin human nature on some unfallen paradise, sovereign and immortal in the skies—are left in us. They are diseased. The plants that will grow from those roots will bear diseased fruit. But the roots are there ; and if we will only open ourselves to the Divine Spirit, the Divine life will so flow into us, that although the plants may have been mown down, and burnt over, and seemingly rooted up, there will come a new paradise in every man—an Eden of God to bloom for ever in the heavens.

For instance, the root of the love of God is in each of us. The root of the love of living for others is in each of us. But they will not grow : that is the difficulty. They will not grow unless we allow the Divine Spirit to inflow into them, and make them grow. We must conspire with the Divine Spirit, that they may unfold to immortal beauty and sweetness. We must, as it were, throw ourselves open for the operation of the Divine Spirit. We can close ourselves up, and the roots of goodness will rot within us. We can close ourselves up after they have begun to vegetate, and they will wither and die down within us and cumber the ground, and bear no fruit. But the forms are in the organisation. The roots are there.

Christianity, in itself, as I said, is a very simple thing. The Lord says,—“ My son, give me thine heart. If thou wilt allow me, I will come into that heart ; and by My Divine Power, I will make My sun to shine upon it ; will cause My rain to fall upon it ; by the various providences of life, I will dig it up and re-make the walks and garden beds. I will rebuild the arbours ;

I will sweep away those sand masses that have gathered over it ; I will replace those statues of beauty that once shone glowingly amid the tender leaves ; I will make it a place wherein I can walk at the cool of the day ; and there, in the midst of the regenerate and transformed affections of the understanding and the will, lovingly I will reveal myself as the Father and as the Friend. The Comforter shall brood over it for a new sky ; the Comforter shall flow through it for a new atmosphere ; the Comforter shall smile over it for a new spring ; the Comforter shall beam ardently in upon it for a new summer. If the fountains are dry, I will strike my heart and fill them ; if the storms that gather are wild, I will interpose my own Spirit between the heart and those destructions. If there are enemies who gather together to come in upon it, to burn it with fire, or consume it with the sword ; or, who would send in upon it the locust, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, to eat the growing fruits, the green leaves, and the springing tendrils, I myself will breathe upon them, and they shall perish before the brightness of my coming. I, the Lord, will do all this thing." This is the promise in the Word ; and this is the promise that, whenever we read the Word lovingly and prayerfully, God iterates and reiterates in sweet and secret confirmations in the heart of hearts.

Oh ! friends, God loves this world. God loves the men and the women of this world, and the babes in it. Oh ! that I could tell you how much He loves it. We had a revelation of it in Jesus Christ. And were He again to clothe Himself in visible form, and walk these Manchester streets this night, before morning there would be such a thrill, and such a tumult, and such a terrific feeling, on the one side, and such a wild, overwhelming, upleaping extacy, on the other side, as has not been seen since this earth was earth.

He would come, perhaps, in the first place, to some poor girl in these dark streets who was going down to perdition, and he would cast out of her more than seven

devils, and she would fall at his feet and worship him. She would rise with the Saviour's spirit brooding upon the heart, and with a seven-starred crown of angelic chastity restored to the faded, fallen brow, and white robed ones would gather in vestal purity to welcome her, as the stars, mourning a lost Pleiad, might greet it re-plumed, re-quickened, an orb of hymning sweetness, virginal and immortal, restored to all the kindred constellations. He would go to meet a man who perhaps, with moody brow, was meditating suicide, heart-broken, wretched, with home made desolate, and the soul made most unhappy. He would touch him on the shoulder, and the man would turn round. He would not know his God. He would think he was some stranger, seeking perhaps to arrest him. And Jesus would say to him, "Brother"—for God always says "Brother" to the fallen man;—it is a strange thing, a wondrous thing, that God always says "Brother" and "Sister" to the most abandoned and vile;—He would say to the man, "Brother, why mournest thou?" The man, perhaps with some sudden gush of feeling in his heart, would look upon him and say, "Ah! if you knew!" And the answer would be "I do know." The man would reply, "You may know what sorrow is, but no sorrow was ever like my sorrow. My wife has become dissolute; my children are growing up wretched and degraded; and my heart is all broken. I once had singing birds in my breast, but they have gone, and vipers are left. I once had violets and roses growing here, but thorns and thistles have taken their place. There was once a sweet music of hope and happiness, but now the cold untempered blast of melancholy and despair goes through it, cutting and freezing me, and I cannot endure it any longer; I must die." The Lord lays his hand upon the man's shoulder and says, "Stop a minute, there is hope yet." "Hope! hope for others,—not for me." "But I love you! I love you! I love you!" "Nobody loves me. I once believed in love in childish days, but a bitter experience has taught me that there is no love in the world. Stay,

there is love of a seeming sort. There is love for the prosperous, there is love for the fortunate, there is love for the gay; there is love for those on whom pleasure smiles and to whom luxury is minister;—there is no love for such a poor heart-broken fellow as I am. What is there about me to love? My garment? It is coarse, and foul, and worn, and tattered. My face? It is seamed with agony. My hands? They are hard with toil. My bosom? Ah! stranger, could you look into it you would see there is something more here than I told you about. There is remorse. Can you love me with remorse in me? Can you love me with vice in me? Can you love me with crime in me? Perhaps if you restored me to the wealth that I had once, to the friends that I had once, and to the youth that I had once, I should play the fool with them over again. No! let me die!” Christ turns to the man and says to him, “My Brother, I love thee! I love thee!” “Who are you, sir?” “Me; hast thou not known me? Look at me and see if thou knowest me?” And then;—(it is by love that God is known;—it is by love that we discriminate between the divine and the infernal; between that which seems and that which is;—then,—as the love breaks out from the face, and lights it up, and breaks out from the voice, and kindles the very air with the music-strain that goes forth, you see the man, feeling the power of this divine love, falling to his knees and crying, “My Lord and my God.”

And so, my friends, I verily believe, that if God were again to embody himself in some visible substance crystallised from the atoms of the air, the first thing he would do in Manchester would be to go out in this way,—he would go out to find our brethren and sisters in their most fallen and degraded states. And this is the illustration of what the Lord God, in his incarnation, did, and has been doing, and is doing, and will keep on doing,—broadly, not narrowly,—generously, not with niggardliness, to all the manhood, and all the womanhood, of this fallen world.

Preaching in these days has grown so professional, that I am almost ashamed to preach. The talk of the love of Christ is so iterated mechanically,—so droned out technically,—that people do not believe it. And yet there are some here who do believe it, because they know it; and there are some here who are going to believe it a great deal more, because they are going to know it more; and there are some here who do not yet know it, but they are going to know it. I have the promise in my heart of that very thing, and I am going to talk to you about it.

Human life, as civilisation advances, becomes more and more unhappy, more and more dangerous. I will tell you why. The savage has few tastes and wants; and those quickly and easily gratified. He lives mainly a life of instinct, whether for pain or pleasure, and his instincts have their satisfactions near at hand. Life is with him principally sensation, not sentiment. Now, as you advance in civilisation, and as the world ripens, this condition of affairs is changed: life becomes sentiment—feeling, instead of mere sensation. Sensation exists, but by degrees it is overtopped, and overpowered, and overwhelmed, by sentiments that come rolling in upon it. A savage mother looks at her babe; her heart is small, and the feeling she has for it is chiefly of instinctive, animalised love. But in civilisation, under Christian influences, the heart of the mother yearns over the babe with a deeper affection than the savage mother feels for her little one. Love between the sexes in savage life is chiefly superficial: it is instinctive: it belongs to youth. It is like the attraction that knits together the wedded flowers. It is like the impulse and the influence that move in the glad song of birds in the early mating season of spring. But as we are thrown into the focus where spiritual influences in civilisation, from the preaching of the Word, and all the arts, and all the graces, most intensely coöperate and coöact together, there begins to be a deeper sentiment taking the place of mere surface emotion. It is not the out-

ward charm—it is not the beauty of person, which, although it is the glory of womanhood, is yet its most evanescent and ephemeral flower,—it is not that which the true man craves in woman,—but the heart.

I appeal to you, men and women, if it is not an affection of the life,—if it is not the deep, soul-satisfying love that shall have its root in honour, that shall have its shaft in principle, that shall have its essence in purity, and from honour, and from principle, and from purity,—which the mere savage does not deal with,—unfold Eden flowers, rain down Eden perfumes,—bend at last with Eden clusters, and so trained up, as on some Jacob's ladder above the earth, bear fruits triumphant and immortal in the everlasting paradise of God. I ask if, after all, this is not the deep bass, and the high tenor, and the sweet melody, and the overwhelming and consummate harmony of the sentiment that binds heart to heart; that binds the good woman to the good man, and the good man to the good woman; that founds the home, that rears the family, that sanctifies it with religion, and that seeks to perfect it to immortality? And I ask,—for after all, the most deep, interior voices and revelations of the Word find their triumphant echo in human breasts, and, trumpet-tongued, out-leap from universal experience,—I ask if there is not a deep and latent sentiment within you that responds to this great love, that it is perennial, that it is divine, unearthly, angelic, and immortal? Well, now, it is through Christian civilisation that this latent love is unfolded; that its demands, its askings, its yearnings, its expectations, become more deep, more full, and more importunate. Again:—it is almost always a failure;—Ah! if I touched the joy note in the hidden heart before, I touch the sorrow note in experience now,—it is almost always a failure.

I tell you, young man, looking forward to a sweet Eden with the loved one,—I tell you that unless you have something more than mere love of intellect, than the mere love of sense, of nature, and of surface civilisation

in you, it will fade, and that transcendent flower, as you grasp the blossoms, will fall; and by-and-bye you will grow to consider the sweet romance of courtship an hallucination and a dream. I tell you, young woman, though the dear lover of your heart is so precious to you,—I tell you that unless there is something deeper in you and in him than that which you get from books, or manners, or customs, or in society, the blossom of your marriage will rain down its petals all golden-starred in dust beneath your feet, and life shall be to you a long succession of wearisome tasks and melancholy days. We must have more of Christ in civilisation, to satisfy this greater unfolding of our interior desires, than men matured in barbarism. If it was a very hard thing in the early days to do without Christ, if it was a very hard thing for the Peguan or the Sandwich Islander to do without Christ, it is ten thousand times harder for us here. It is a very hard thing for a garden with a few plants in it to do without sunshine, and air, and rain; but when that garden has become an exotic garden, where thousands of plants of every clime are beginning to spring up, unless there is a very special providence in that good gardener who waters it and watches over it, unless there is some especial sweetness in the air, unless there is some especial protection against the blast, and mildew, and the ruin that seeks to lay waste green leaf and tender blossom, and to destroy the fruitage before its maturity; unless there is a warmer and more cheery sunshine, a softer and more delicious shade, the garden is in danger. It will suffer more than the rude aboriginal and desert-compassed oasis that we spoke of in the former case. And God is beginning to unfold in your gardens the vast germs that lie buried within, and he makes use of civilisation, with all its ten thousand times ten thousand opportunities, for the purpose of gradually unfolding man from a merely simplistic to a vast comprehensive and composite affectional condition. The heart-germs are springing up within you; God has watered this garden of England now, that He reclaimed more than a thou-

sand years ago. He has added forms without, and his quickening life within ; germ after germ, faculty after faculty is springing and maturing ; but we want more of God ; and unless we have more of God we shall perish. England is dying for God. It is coming to a point when mere surface civilisation is going to break down unless something is added to it. It is like a tree that has had in itself a certain amount of sap distributed in the fibres below the ground, and in the trunk, and the branches, and the tendrils above the ground ; it has shot itself up to the very stars of heaven ; it has put out its branches over the wide world ; it has covered itself with leaves ; it is full of acorns ; it seems to have been a vast repository of lusty and abundant life. That is this great oak tree of England. But there is a consciousness everywhere among the most quickened hearts, that unless there comes a new supply of sap into the tree, it is destined, from the very abundance of its flowering, to become a ruin. And so with individuals,—the same comparison may be applied.

There are more demands on man in civilisation than there are in barbarism. He gives out more life. There is a certain amount of original life stored up in every human organisation, which the gracious Spirit of God pours into us before we are born. We draw on this in intellect ; we draw on it in passion ; we draw on it in competition ; we draw on it in the unfolding of the faculties upon the natural plane, or upon the scientific plane. We are continually taking from this store of vitality within us, forgetting all the while that we are not spending the interest, but that it is the capital we are continually expending ; and now, unless we have more of God, the time comes when we must collapse.

A man is a very strong man ; plethoric and ruddy in health. His friends say—“ My dear sir, you never looked better in all your life ; ” and he answers—“ I never felt better. It seems to me as if I had many years before me. So far from having gone past the meridian of life, I feel all buoyant, all youthful.” And

then the man breaks down all of a sudden. He is well to-day, apparently; he is dead to-morrow;—and his friends ask, in a few months—“Where is he?” It is answered—“He is dead!” “Mysterious Providence!” is the response; “why, I never saw him looking so well as the last time he was with us!”

A relative of mine cut down a pear-tree. It lay on the ground all the summer. His sons took it, sawed it off, made a post of it for the garden fence, and set it upright in the ground. There was so much sap remaining in the stock, that it began to put out young shoots; and leaves and blossoms appeared, and the blossoms bore pears. Nevertheless no pears grew there a second time. As soon as the pears dropped off, the twigs withered, the leaves shrivelled, and it was found to be a dead post fit only to be burned. The latent life within it was called out by the genial influences of the summer, by the rain, and by the dew; by the moist bosom of mother Earth beneath, and the loving touches of the heavens overhead; and so came the blossoms, and so came the fruit. And just so it is with many a man. Every natural man is just like that piece of a pear-tree. He is in the earth. He is placed upright. He has these deposits in him from his ancestry, and from the heavens, and he draws upon them; he shoots upwards and he puts forth his leaves, and his friends say of him—“You are a hearty pear-tree, to be sure.” His blossoms come forth, and people say—“You never looked so well since you stood in this place.” And then autumn is at hand; and it is discovered that it all came, not from the roots in the deep earth, but was simply the result of the stored vitality from which the man drew until he dropped down dead. I see men and women on every side of me as I walk these streets, who are just like that stock. Here is one that has put out a shoot, and bears the blossoms of a great artistic taste. Here is another that has put out the flowers of a religious formalism. Here is another that bears the leaves of an intense desire to pry into profound, abstruse, religious

doctrine. They would scorn to be vulgar, or mean, or uncharitable, or heathenish, or sceptical. Nevertheless, they have put out their shoots from a life that was stored up in them from the beginning. They are drawing from the capital of life. They are not rooted in God, and when the autumn of their state comes, and the blast tears along, they are overblown. People then find that they had no root; that all this appearance was a delusion,—a phantasm; that they were not pear-trees, but merely the stocks of pear-trees.

The problem of religion is re-union with God. We are told in the Word that we must be grafted into God, to bear much fruit. That is the figure;—grafted into God. Now we should not need to be grafted into God, if in our sinful and selfish states we had not been torn out of God—if we had not been plucked out of God. Christ is a generous vine; He grows invisibly over all the heavens, and bends, freighted with immortal clusters in his hands, over all the habitable earths; and angels bear the fruits of righteousness and immortality, because they are grafted into that great universal vine. And good people upon unfallen orbs of space bear fruit immortally, and become transparent and transcendent angels, because they are grafted in this great plant of immortal life. And the saints and the martyrs, and the faithful and the devoted of the earth, those in whom self is dead and the life of God begun, they have been grafted into Him as well. The life of the self-hood is dead, and they are hid, as the Apostle says,—“with Christ in God.”

So with us; we are all grafts that may be knit into that vine. We are all either putting out faculties, and unfolding affections and leaves of knowledges, from the life that flows into us from Christ our vine—Christ our head, or we are growing from our own self-derived affection and self-derived intelligence. In the one case, we are drawing from Christ,—not begging him; thank God, we cannot beggar him,—and growing to immortal excellence; but if not grafted in him, we are drawing

from the capital of our own organisation ; and, by-and-by, we shall be found empty and withered.

Now it is a very easy thing for a man to be grafted into Christ ; not by-and-by, when the graft has died, when it has put out its abortive and ineffectual blossom of mortal existence, drawn from itself, and not having any vitality from its infinite source ;—not then, but now ; while we live in this great present, now we can be grafted into Christ. I would not speak mystically,—I mean by this that we can be re-united to the Divine nature. We are not united in the self-hood to the Divine nature, though the Divine life flows into us in a certain sense, it is true, and keeps us alive ; yet, we are not grafted into God, and we do not grow out from God into the world, and so tend to God and immortality again ; we all may do so, but all do not. For instance, a man loves money above his God and above his fellow, he is like a little bud that may seem to be grafted into the vine, but the union has not taken place. The bud may open itself and begin to draw life from the vine, but if it draws any sap, it will be the sap of disinterestedness, and it does not want to be disinterested, it wants the sap of selfishness. Here is another man ; he may seem to be a good man ; he is making a good appearance among his fellows ; but he is not pure. He may be in the vine, if he will, but if he does he must open himself for an inflowing of purity. But he does not want to be pure ; he is willing to seem pure superficially, but he is not willing to have the Divine purity flowing into his inmost and outmost nature. And so he *seems* to be budding into it, and is not budding into it at all.

Christ has so placed every one of us,—so gathered us up,—that it is as if he had opened that Divine-human Vine, his own side, whence upon the cross flowed forth blood and water ; and as if he had taken human beings, little buds of life, and had grafted us into Himself, and bid us grow there, grafted, as it were, over his very breast, seeking to pour His great arterial tides of love and virtue and immortal purity into us. But the

difficulty is that, although He has placed us so that if we only open ourselves to Him his life will flow into us, we will not—oftentimes we dare not—open ourselves to Christ. First of all there is the Formalist. He is taught that any spiritual life is very dangerous,—that any excitement of the intellect or enthusiasm of the heart is a disorderly thing; how can he grow? He is taught that he can have as many leaves and blossoms and as much fruit as he wants by some external process; not by the internal coming of Christ in himself. How can he grow? He must get over his Formalism; he must resolve to be a living man; he must resolve to hold personal communion with the personal Christ, our God, and then he will begin to grow. Here is a man who believes that he gets all these things by a ceremonial,—that when he was baptised as a babe, at some sacred font, he was grafted into the Christian church, and into the Christian faith, and into Christ; and that, because he had baptismal regeneration—as wicked and as false a doctrine as ever heathenism uttered, or the lower world promulgated in this,—therefore, he is in Christ, and is growing in Christ, and Christ is pouring His great love into him, and making him all fragrant with the blossoms of life, and all juicy with the rich clusters of immortality.

Ah! friends, it must be a personal act. It cannot be done for us. No rain can wash a mass of disconnected sprouts into a vine, and make them grow there.

Then, again, some imagine—(and we have a great many of this kind in America;—it is a strange faith)—that the belief spoken of in the Bible is simply an external opinion of the intellect, an assent to certain truths; and that the baptism spoken of is merely to surface washing of the body; and that if they have the external belief in the brain, and the external washing of the body, they are angels ready to soar to the third heaven,—that they are finished,—they are complete, they are God's temples, and shall stand for ever. But ah! what a fallacy is this! As if Christ could ever come into any man's heart except

by love!—As if Christ could ever stay in our hearts, unless the arms of our love, the tendrils of our love, clasped and wound themselves around his dear form, and we said to him—“ Oh, blessed Lord ! live thou in us, our life, and make us more fruitful and more beautiful in thee for ever and for ever ! ”

It is a very hard thing for the senses to believe that man is a spirit ;—and yet we know that we are spirits, though clothed in veils. It is a very hard thing for the senses to believe that within these pent-up houses of the body, built of this common clay, are spiritual bodies, which, if we are reformed in Christ, are temples of God to stand for ever in the heavens. And if some dearest friend from heaven could strike one of you with a shining rod, star-tipped from God's hand, with some Aaron's rod of the angelic church above, and then the mortal form should open like an egg, and the soul, plumed for immortality, gemmed as with the stars of morning, and crowned as with the glory of the noontide sun, should come out visibly fluttering, an airy and immortal creature in this room, and then pass away upwards, throwing as it left us, a smile to fill the heart with light, and with its shining hand waving and beckoning for us to follow in that immortal pilgrimage,—we should wonder, we should not believe our own senses even when the thing was done. The world would not believe us ; they would say, though all present might bear testimony to it that it actually took place, and we had the record of the body that the spirit had left, that we were all deceiving in a common plot together. And yet, dear friends something like this has taken place among us this night, though not visible to the outward sight. Souls within these bodies, looking up to God, and fluttering as it were in faith and aspiration to the Father's throne, have gazed for themselves into that intense and central brightness ; and those who have thus arisen in spirit, above the body, and tried their immortality, and shaken the bars, and found that they could issue out, and looked through the windows and found that they

could gaze out, have asked for themselves for a witness of the immortal newness of the regenerate man in Christ, and have found it.

There are some among you who will never forget this night. The white snows of age will fall upon the head; the wearied tenement will begin to totter like a bowing wall; you will lie by-and-by on dim couches, in the pallid light of a departing life, and in the falling shadows of this outer world, but the thought of this evening will be with you even then. I see you are changing here to-night. I feel in my own mind that there is a great current of the love of God setting through us;—I know there is;—not as an outward thunder; I know it not as the keen and corruscating lightning,—I know it as the still small voice; as the wind that goeth were it listeth; as the dove that, rosy-plumed, radiant with morning, scatters the incense of affection on us from its bright and dewy wings.

Friends, the Lord does love us. Friends, the Divine charity is infinite and everlasting. Friends, if we do not have it in our very blood, in our very bone, in our very muscle, in the beating brain, in the thrilling heart, in the glowing life, it is our fault, not God's. If any of you doubt immortality, it is your fault, not the Father's. If any of you are bowed down with sins that you think you cannot shake off, it is your fault, not the Saviour's. If any of you are encumbered and overwhelmed with sorrows, that flowing from a cup of despair, fill you with a sullen and secret bitterness, until the salt sea seems pouring itself into the shrunk channels of the veins, it is not the fault of the Spirit, the Holy Comforter;—dear brethren, dear sisters, it is yours. If any of you here to-night feel that there are great sins within you that rise up and bar out God, it is not the fault of the Saviour, who would overcome those sins if you would let him; it is your fault. I know, in God, that there are some here this night who have sins in their hearts that prevent Christ taking up his abode with them. It is the sin that is a thickly-woven, impenetrable form, between the living

germ that would be grafted into Christ and the great Vine. And I tell you more,—now mark it!—carry it home with you;—do not try to shake it off! Think of it by night. Ponder over it by day;—on your knees, with the Bible open; with the thought of the immortality that soon with its wings shall cover us, and bear us all away; with the thought of the death-river rolling before you; with the thought of the volumes of the Everlasting One open before you; with the thought of shining friends in Paradise who call and beckon to you; with the thought of Christ the Lord, who woos you to His sweet embrace; bear this truth in mind, that unless you rise in the deep interior soul, and open a passage by the moral power of that great faith-act of the will that resolves to give itself to Christ;—unless you force away these obstructions,—you will perish.

I spoke a little while ago of a fruit tree that was not a fruit tree, though it seemed one. Do not trust surface morality. A man may be in seeming a moral man, and yet these things be but a scanty bloom, called out by the heat and friction of society, upon the surface of his nature. Take a Parisian, brought up in the very centre of European civilisation, in seeming a perfect gentleman;—but, if he is unregenerate, you know what he is. You know what vice triumphs there; you know what fair yet shameless iniquity reigns and riots and makes its hot-bed in that death-in-life, under the graceful exterior. And so it is; the intense civilisation in which we live, among all persons who are above the lowest class, calls out a dress of morality,—not the reality of morality. I have seen in the southern states of America vast pools, vast tracts of land flooded all over with surface water. I have seen the sun shine there, and then plants have sprung up thick and beautiful, and twined themselves over the lagoon. There are the Nile lily, the crimson lily, and the white and the blue lily, lovely upon the waters; and yet, right under those sweet blossoms, so delicious to the senses, right under those blossoms, coiled round the roots, are terrific water-serpents; there moving

or basking in the summer sun, those monstrous and uncouth alligators, whose chiefest delight is, rousing themselves, in their fierce brute impulse, to tear in pieces the unsuspecting bather or diver in the stream.

And so it is with every unregenerate man, and every unregenerate woman. What though the lilies are fair and specious over the surface of character?—the serpents of self-love, the foul cranching monsters of appetite are couched beneath that smiling stream. Oh! friends! bear these truths in mind. Surface morality never saved any man;—surface morality never will save any man. God makes inquisition for the heart; and God this night asks and says—“Give me that heart?” We say—“Lord! it is not worth having!” True, it is not worth *our* having as it is; it is more perilous to us than powder magazines are to a man upon the grounds of his estate, when the train is laid and the match smoking and hissing, and ready, by-and-by, to cause explosion and ruin to the fair domain. Human hearts, unsanctified, are the most dangerous property that man can possess in all this world. Why, I would rather sleep in a room in which I knew there was a wild beast from a menagerie hungry for blood,—I would rather sleep in my room with the consciousness of an assassin couched under the bed, and waiting but for the thick midnight darkness to stab me to the heart,—I would rather trust to the wild man or the wild beast in their moment of hunger or desperation, than I would go home this night, and sleep with the consciousness of an unregenerate heart within my breast: it is the most dangerous thing in all the world.

Dear friends, I do believe this: I do believe it;—from the very inmost of my being,—I do believe it. And, therefore, in this sacred use and function of a teacher of God’s Word, I declare to you that, unless you give your hearts to the Lord Christ, to overcome the love of self and the love of the world, that the divine charity may dwell and reign within them, you will, at last, perish. Oh! it seems to me, sometimes, as if the very

paving-stones on which men tread, could burst out with a shriek and say—"We have seen men and women walking over us who have perished!" It seems to me as if, gleaming in their cold and marble whiteness, the sepulchres might find a voice and wail at Manchester, and say—"We bear lying and golden inscriptions commemorating the names and, oftentimes, the virtues of those who, because they were self-lovers and self-servers, have perished, have perished! Oh! friends, it seems to me, sometimes, as if those burning stars that have shone down upon so many sinners' deathbeds, and that gleam now upon so many sinners' graves,—it seems to me as if they, echoing this awful declaration of the gospel, tuneful, but fiery, in their trumpet tones, might wail from night to night, and so, through all the hollow centuries give forth this cry,—“We saw men strong, and hale, and ruddy; we saw women gay, and smiling, and voluptuous; where are they now?” And the angels come out upon their golden shores in the high heavens, and they cry,—“Not with us, not with us!” And the four continents, each awful and gigantic, looming by turns above the shadow of the rolling globe,—they cry,—“Not with us! not with us! not with us!” And the solemn temples wherein men worship on the Sabbath day, they, as the doors are opened, respond from all the vacant silence, the music all still, and the adoration died away,—“Not with us! not with us!” And then at last, when the voice again rolls forth in that tremendous call—“Where are ye?”—there is a stir;—it is as in the ancient book of Job, when Eliphaz declared that in the midnight hours, in the shadows and visions of the night, a spirit passed before his face, and the hair of his flesh stood up, and there was silence, and then—a voice. There comes a voice—from the hollow Orcus and the nether world. There comes a voice from amidst the grisly tyrants and voluptuaries and sorcerers of immemorial time,—there comes a voice from where the kings of ancient generations have gone down in all their power and their wrath together,—there comes a voice from where the sinful

warriors, with the banner furled, lie slain beneath a mightier one than all the champions of the world. There comes a voice,—Hark! it is deep, and nature shudders,—it is keen, and nature tingles to her core,—it is melancholy, and the wail that is wafted upon it makes the angels turn away,—“Where are ye?” Loath to reveal themselves, because pride lingers even in these gloomy sepulchres, they stand apart, wrecks of loveless and of murdered being, with the scorpion crown upon the brow, and the horrors of the burnings of the sinful lusts for a shroud that takes the place of the dainty garment in which they wantoned here in earthly summer pride. The cry comes forth—“We are here! We are here! We are here!” And there they are, and there they shall remain.

Lord Jesus! when Thou openest the books, and judgest every man from his Book of Life, may we be found in life with Thee for ever! AMEN.



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