



A SERMON,  
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AT THE OPENING OF THE SYNOD

OF

The Presbyterian Church of Canada in Connection with  
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BY

ALEXANDER MATHIESON, D. D.,

*Minister of St. Andrew's Church, Montreal.*

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# SERMON.

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ACTS IV. 19, 20.—Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye ; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

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Although the men whom Christ had selected to preach the glad tidings of salvation, through faith in his blood, possessed no external advantages—though they were poor and illiterate, and of a rank that gave them no influence, and could procure for them no respect, they were qualified for this important duty, by an unction from above, which enabled them to perform such wonderful works, as demonstrated that God was with them—that the work was God's, and that they were the instruments which he employed. As the sacred historian informs us, “many signs and wonders were done by the Apostles.” These miraculous gifts attracted the attention of all classes of men. They gave testimony to the heavenly origin of the doctrines which the Apostles preached. The consequence was, that “the word of God grew mightily and prevailed.”

The Apostles were not only qualified for their work by being endued with supernatural powers—the ordinary faculties and endowments of their minds were

all sanctified by the Spirit of God, regulated, and directed to proper objects. The benevolent spirit of their Master was manifest in all their actions. Forgetful of themselves, and regardless of their worldly interests, they were mainly concerned for the salvation of those who were perishing in their sins. The glorious work in which they were engaged, exposed them to many perils and sufferings. The doctrines of the cross were most offensive to the prejudiced Jew, and idolatrous Gentile. To hold forth to the world as a Saviour from guilt and sin, a man who had suffered an infamous death, for the imputed crimes of imposture and blasphemy, was only fitted to bring upon them the ridicule and contempt of the reputed wise men of the world. To publish doctrines, tending to subvert the long-established institutions of the country,—although wisely designed to promote the true glory and happiness of the people,—would only expose them to persecution. Men in authority, whose interests or whose prejudices bound them to uphold the existing order of things, however manifestly corrupt, would do all in their power to bear them down and suppress their teaching. But the Apostles were not terrified into silence by the menaces of their haughty superiors. Upon all occasions they showed themselves above fear. Conscious, that, whatever efforts might be made to suppress the truth, or with whatever success these efforts might for a time be attended, it would ultimately prevail, they fearlessly preached Christ crucified. They knew that in such a work they would be exposed to danger, subjected to cruel persecutions and sufferings, or

called to seal their testimony with their blood, but they shrunk not back from the fearful contest. Having a commission from heaven, and their authority avouched by the most unexceptionable evidence, they were not to be turned aside from their high purpose by the ridicule of the godless, or the persecutions of the powerful. Their "witness was in heaven," their "record was on high," and they continued to preach the word of God with boldness.

Sincerity and boldness in maintaining the doctrines of the gospel, will not fail to command respect. They may not be always successful in turning aside the arm of persecution, or convincing the mind that is encased in prejudice, but they will always more or less promote the object aimed at. In the case before us, the boldness of Peter and John disarmed the fury of their adversaries. The Apostles were plain, honest men, placed in the most embarrassing circumstances. For healing a lame man through faith in the name of Jesus, they were arraigned before the supreme court of the nation, whose decisions they had always been accustomed to revere—and before men invested with a sacred authority, which, within its legitimate sphere, they had ever been disposed to honour. But they were impressed with a higher authority than theirs. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and that they were commissioned by him to go forth and make disciples of all nations, by preaching to them the gospel of salvation, and confirming their doctrines by miraculous works performed in his name. In the execution of this trust, they had stated truths most offensive to their Rulers, and

when they were commanded neither to speak nor to preach any more in the name of Jesus, they calmly and respectfully refused to obey the mandate, and even charged the Council with crucifying their Master, as a sin of the deepest dye. They were threatened, that, if they persisted in their statements, they would be visited with the same punishment that had been inflicted on their Master. But no threatenings could make them retract their words, or change their purpose. Their whole hearts were filled with love to their kind and affectionate Master. The things which they had heard him utter, and seen him perform, engrossed their thoughts, and the important bearings which his doctrines and his works had on the welfare of the human race, constrained them to be faithful in the discharge of their duties. "Is it right," said they, "in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye ; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

There is great nobleness in the fearless answer that Peter and John returned to the mandates of their Rulers, as well as the explicit assertion of the grand principle of moral conduct, viz., that God, and God alone, is to be served. Their language is respectful, yet firm and decisive. "Is it right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." We appeal to your own consciences for the correctness of this principle. We feel no disposition to disobey you in anything that is lawful. We have no desire to set up our own opinion as the right rule of conduct, and set aside the just exercise of legiti-

mate authority. We have not merely our own conscientious convictions that we are acting in strict accordance with the will of God, but you have before you a plain and palpable demonstration, in the perfect cure of the lame man, that God is with us, and that God hath sent us to work his work. You, no less than we, are bound to submit to the authority of God. Any injunction that is contrary to his will, so clearly manifested as it now is, would be unlawful in you to impose, as it would be unlawful in us to obey. God's law is paramount. He hath commanded us, as eye and ear witnesses, to bear testimony to the supreme authority and divine power of Jesus of Nazareth. We cannot on your interdict refrain from delivering his messages to mankind. We are urged to this by the highest motives that can affect the heart. Our duty to God calls us—gratitude to our heavenly Master calls us—compassion to our fellow-men calls us—a regard to our own eternal interests calls us, and we will do our duty. Obedience to you would involve the sacrifice of our principles, and disobedience to Him who rules over all. You have threatened to punish us: well, let punishment be inflicted; that does not move us. We will obey God rather than you, and take the consequences. We know our duty; our determination is fixed. We look unto God for grace and strength to perform it.

The Rulers had the will and the power, instantly to inflict punishment on the Apostles, but were deterred by their slavish fears. "They feared the people," whose minds were deeply impressed with the wonderful cure effected on the lame man. After conferring



together, they deemed it expedient to dismiss them, threatening summary vengeance if they persisted to speak, or preach in the name of Jesus.

When dismissed from the council chamber, did the Apostles obey the injunction of their Rulers? Alarmed by their threatenings, did they suppress their testimony? Did they retire to solitudes where their voices would never have been heard proclaiming the tidings of salvation? No. They went to "those of their own company"—to those who held the same faith, and were employed in the same benevolent work with themselves, to tell what had occurred, and take counsel with them on what was to be done in the emergency. After due deliberation and prayer, they came to the conclusion,—no doubt an unanimous conclusion,—that the great work which God had commissioned the Apostles to execute, was to bear their testimony to the divine power and authority of Jesus, and to make disciples of all nations.—That this work was paramount, and they were to address themselves to its accomplishment, regardless of menaces and interdictions. Conscious of their own weakness, and exposed to dangers fitted to deter the boldest who in his own strength ventured into the contest, they agreed to commit their cause unto God, who had promised to give them wisdom to guide them unto all truth, and spiritual strength to enable them to go forward in the discharge of their important duties, in the face of all the dangers that threatened them. "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

and, by stretching forth thine hand to heal, that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.”

The conduct of the Apostles before the Sanhedrim furnishes us with many important lessons, to which it would be well that we take heed, especially as ministers of the gospel of salvation. But at present I will only call your attention, and that very briefly, to two, so intimately connected with the narrative that they can hardly be overlooked.

In the first place, the Apostles were animated with a sincere regard to the will of God.

And secondly, this principle of action was sustained by fervent prayer.

I.—Brethren, although Christianity has effected the liberation of the human mind, and, at least, in that kingdom in which we have the happiness to live, we may work the work which God hath given each one of us to do, without any judicial restriction, and give free expression to our religious opinions without being dragged before our rulers to account for our conduct ; still, we are not without discouragements in making a sincere and honest confession of our belief in the doctrines of Christianity, and will not be without discouragements, so long as sin reigns in the hearts of men. From ten thousand inlets, strife and animosity flow into the Christian Church, alarming the fears of some, and exciting the apprehensions of others, and making them shrink from an honest, manly, and open expression of their sentiments. The discussions and controversies to which a diversity of opinions gives rise, too often awaken

the angry passions of the disputants, and rend the church into innumerable sects and parties, regarding each other with feelings of intense jealousy, and holding to each other the language of bitter invective and scorn. Good men mourn over these hopeless differences of opinion, and despairingly exclaim, If the gospel be the regenerating power of the living God, why is it thus? Why is the self-sacrificing, loving spirit of Jesus forgotten, or lost sight of, among his followers? Is there no remedy for an evil so prevalent, so destructive, so criminal? Is there nothing that will restore to the distracted church, the simple faith and ardent brotherly love, which characterized all its members in the first and purest period of its history? and they are apt to fall in with any scheme that promises to harmonize the discordant elements which agitate and weaken it, however vague or impracticable that scheme may be. The Utopian Reformer, forgetful that the only union which the word of God sanctions, and declares fitted for the condition of the church on earth, is a union that is entirely spiritual—not political and external—is the fusion into fellowship of faith and love, by the Spirit of God, of all human hearts, the whole Christian community “being of one heart and of one soul,”—in his heart-hatred of sects and schisms, and with an exuberance of liberality, that would compromise truth, and sacrifice every conscientious conviction at the shrine of a wide catholicity, would agglutinate the incoherent particles of religious opinion,—would attempt, but attempt in vain, to fuse into one homogeneous mass, the repellant elements of earth and hea-

ven.—And the Zealot and the Bigot, assuming a sacred regard for the truth, and holding that uniformity in sentiment and action is essential to the idea of a visible church, would crib and confine the views of every man into the narrow dimensions of their own fields of vision, and, on pretence of maintaining unity, would unchurch all, and persecute and shun all as heretics, who will not conform to their canons of faith and practice. Union is a blessed thing, and the great object and aim of the Christian Church is to bring all “to the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God ;” and unity is the distinguishing quality of the glorified church in heaven. There, they all see eye to eye, all are “of one heart and of one soul,” all are devoted to the same thing. We should therefore shun everything like division in the church as a very great sin. We should avoid even the appearance of this evil, as repugnant to the distinguishing qualities of the heavenly worshippers. But perfect unity of sentiment and action, is not to be expected in the church in the present imperfect state of humanity. The diversity of mental endowments, and of intellectual vigour and perspicacity, that exists in the human family; the varied influences of education, of national habits, and of early associations, render it impossible to find any two men, who, in the exercise of free inquiry, hold precisely the same views of the same subject. But this permitted evil may, in the providence of God, lead to the most desirable results. It must be confessed that differences of opinion and free discussion, when conducted in a spirit of mutual love and forbearance, are peculiarly

favourable to the cultivation of many of the graces of the Spirit, as well as to purity of doctrine and discipline. Meekness, gentleness, brotherly affection, are thereby called forth, and strengthened by frequent exercise. But it must also be admitted, that both from the importance of the subjects of religious discussion, and the spirit of rivalry that is awakened, there is a stronger tendency to envyings, animosities, "and all uncharitableness," than to forbearance in love; and "where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." A party-spirit may call forth a jealous regard for truth and holiness; but it also propagates and strengthens error, and mad contendings for mastery. It may elicit those great principles, and fix them upon an immovable foundation, on which liberty of thought, and freedom in expressing our conscientious convictions of truth, rest; but it may also give rise to the most licentious opinions, and offer a plausible excuse to spiritual despotism, to crush and destroy both civil and religious liberty.

But, brethren, if these contendings in the Church be earnest contendings "for the faith once delivered to the saints," and the ultimate appeal be unto God himself, as his will is revealed in the sacred oracles, good upon the whole will be the result. Though, alas! many earthly passions and feelings may enter into the struggle, if yet they commingle with a sincere love for truth and godliness, and are diluted by a large infusion of Christian sympathy and love, good will spring out of the evil. Though there may be divisions—unseemly divisions and strife,—still, if the

battle-cry of all be, "To the law and to the testimony,"—if there be unity on this great fundamental principle of Christianity, and the truths of that blessed book be permitted to leave even something of their legitimate influence on the hearts of the combatants, the cause of righteousness and truth will be advanced. God will over-rule the mad passions and wicked actings of men, to his own glory, and the development of his own gracious plans. Like a noble tree, its tall stem shooting up towards the heavens, and branching into innumerable boughs, that in the storm may rub and chafe each other; so the Christian Church, enjoying the freedom with which Christ maketh free, notwithstanding the contendings of rival sects (which are the natural fruits of a spirit of free inquiry) will exhibit, in all that is really essential to the visible church, unity, and life, and glorious beauty. The very luxuriance of the twigs and foliage may impair its fruitfulness; but that is the surest indication of its hale and vigorous condition—is the very efflorescence of its freedom. Its fruits may neither be so rich nor so abundant as they might have been, had the pruning-knife been unsparingly and judiciously applied, and the sun-light and the air been permitted to play more freely among the superabounding branches; but there is enough, and of a rich quality, to indicate its fruitfulness, and to what it may be brought under a higher state of cultivation.

But, let me not be misunderstood, brethren! I mean not that the exterminating power of Spiritual Despotism be employed to lop and prune the crowding branches; but that the mild and scriptural ex-

ercise of ecclesiastical authority, together with calm reasoning, and earnest affectionate persuasion, be applied to check the restless spirit of innovation, which it would be unwise to encourage, but would presumptuously infringe on individual liberty, to attempt forcibly to repress. Had men been actuated by a supreme regard to the will of God, and permitted their good sense, and a sincere love for the peace and unity of the church, to predominate over their party feelings, and love of personal distinction,—if there would not now be perfect unity, there at least would be fewer of those divisions, to which the infidel points the finger of scorn, and by which those of the Romish communion fortify themselves in their dislike to the free use and private interpretation of the Scriptures, and think it a blessed thing, that, amidst the conflict of opinions, they can safely commit their consciences to the keeping of the priest. There may be greater *seeming* unity in the mind of a church or nation, that has been lopped of its freedom, and denuded of all its natural rights by an intolerant despotism, but it is the unity of a branchless, rotten trunk, that rears its unlovely form amid the wide waste of mental desolation—a unity that is the true type of spiritual bondage, of corruption, and death.

It appears to be necessary to the full development of the Christian Church, that there be divisions in the visible body, so that those whose faith and practice are approved by God, may be made manifest.\* The revelations of the gospel, also, which

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\* 1 Cor. xi. 19.

must be absolutely received as matters of faith, on the sole and sovereign authority of the living God, are yet submitted to close examination, and free discussion, that the views of men of different mental capacities and temperaments may be fully and fairly elicited respecting them, and God's own truth, from out the variety of human opinions, may appear distinct, and divested of all individual bias or obliquity.

But though divisions are wisely permitted and over-ruled for the general good of the church, and every attempt that has hitherto been made to gather into one community the discordant and repellant elements of humanity, has utterly failed; are we to encourage religious dissensions, and sanction the bitter strifes and animosities that flow out of them? Are we, despairingly, to set aside the idea of the unity of the church, even in external forms and ceremonies, as chimerical, and in different sections and divisions to fight the battles of the Lord, each party adopting exclusively their own plans, and following what seems to themselves to be most expedient? Far from it; we deplore ecclesiastical dissensions as an enormous evil,—an evil that impedes the progress of genuine christianity—an evil that exhausts the energies of the church, in internecine strife—an evil that neutralizes the principles of true Christian fellowship, and puts to an almost hopeless distance, the prospect of the universal church “walking by the same rule and minding the same thing.” Although there be little scriptural unity now, it is attainable, but progressive. The great business of



the church is "to edify the body of Christ, until all come to the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man in Christ." Even in external forms and ceremonies, union is an object most desirable—an object to be kept constantly in view, and its attainment aimed at, in the pure spirit of brotherly love. But visible unity, though a secondary attainment, is put forward as the very essential element of christian communion; and a diversity of opinion as to its constituent parts, awakens all the bitterness of sectarian strife; and those who should have loved each other as brethren, and borne with each other's infirmities in love, have been ranged in hostile ranks, and thundered forth against each other the most fearful anathemas.

What, then!—to put out of view this unseemly spectacle, and to give length and verge enough for the manifestation of the spirit of universal catholicity, would we sink all distinction of parties?—would we break up the present frame-work of the visible church, and remove these partition-walls by which it is now divided, as things of indifference, and injurious to the free play of our christian sympathies?—Would we sacrifice, at the shrine of expediency, our honest predilections for our own modes of discipline, and forms of worship, that all sects and parties may be amalgamated into one community—being called by one name—observing the same forms and religious rites,—alas! that we cannot say, in the present condition of human nature, "all being of one heart and of one soul."—Would we surrender, for the sake of external unity, our conscientious preference for the church of

our Fathers, and forgetful of her past history—forgetful of what Scotland, of what the world, owes to her, as the noblest champion of civil and religious liberty,—forgetful of her being the most honoured instrument in the hands of her Divine Master, for the successful accomplishment of his work—forgetful of the many benefits we have individually received from her hand, and ungrateful for her fostering care and kindness in our infantile weakness; and unthankful for her christian counsels, now, that we are rising into manhood; are we to repudiate her? Are we to deny all connection with her, and yet continue to batten on her bounty? Are we to renounce every peculiarity in her principles and constitution on which others may differ from us, and which we as her ministers, after careful examination, have come to a deliberate conviction of their scriptural origin, and solemnly sworn to maintain them—are we, in a word, to sacrifice truth, disregard conscience, cast honour and integrity to the winds, so that we may come into visible unity with those who have “fled from her as a pollution,” and deemed her so corrupt, as to warrant them to seek her utter overthrow?

“The Church of Scotland! ’tis an evil time  
 Methinks, when that long hallowed name inspires  
 Not veneration! Church! by which our sires  
 Stood like the mountains of their native clime  
 Unmoved, serene, and, if austere, sublime,  
 Amidst the raging tempest,—forked fires,  
 And crashing thunderbolts,—in flaming pyres,  
 Illumed the dark, and left their bones as lime  
 To fertilize her vineyard. Church of God!

God be thy guardian as in days of old,  
 When from the terrors of the tyrant's rod,  
 And Egypt's horrors, through the pathless wilds,  
 He led his people to the palmy bowers  
 Of lofty Lebanon, and Zion's holy towers.

To thee my country owes her virtuous fame,  
 For well-taught swains, and citizens refined ;  
 The rustic milkmaid, and the labouring hind,  
 And the acute artificer—the lame  
 And sightless poor—and orphans, who the name  
 Of a fond parent never knew ; all claim  
 Thy fostering care, and heavenly blessings, find,—  
 Instruction, and a home,—nor seldom shame  
 The proud philosopher, and the man of mind,  
 Less erudite in sacred mysteries.  
 Churches of kindred creed may merit praise,  
 For kindred zeal, and christian enterprise ;  
 And while in them, howe'er baptized, thy traits,  
 And lineaments I trace, I love thee more,  
 And in thy kin and offspring bless thee o'er and o'er."

And are we to blot from our memory these holy associations, and forego these conscientious predilections, merely to achieve an amalgamation of all sects and parties, without possessing the elements of true scriptural unity? Are we to take to our bosom, as friends and brothers, with the love of complacency, those who have cruelly mocked and derided us? The instinctive feelings of our nature recoil from the thought of it—and I know of no divine precept that commands me to receive them, otherwise than with the love of christian kindness, "not rendering railing for railing," but receiving their cruel mockings with forgiveness ; and when they return to a better spirit,

aiding their enlightened efforts to extend the kingdom of Christ with earnest prayers and personal influence.

We have no sympathy with that excess of liberality, so lauded in these days, which would embrace as friends and brothers, men of all classes and distinctions, let their principles and opinions be what they may. We do not approve of that laxity of sentiment which leads some men to symbolize with all sects and parties, and dignify their morbid indifference to their own avowed principles, with the name of christian catholicity. We do not claim for the Church of Scotland infallibility, or assert that she is absolutely without blame; but as faithful members of that church, we would not extend the right hand of fellowship to every one who may call himself a Presbyterian, unless he holds the true principles of that denomination. We would deplore every interference with the rights of conscience—we would unqualifiedly condemn every attempt to force the opinions of men into an unnatural channel; but while liberty of conscience should be protected with sacred care, and all meekness, and gentleness, and christian kindness shown to those who differ from us, we ought, with the utmost diligence and attention, to seek to have our own views clear and scriptural, and, when once we have calmly and conscientiously formed our opinions, to maintain them with the utmost fidelity, “and not be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness wherewith they lie in wait to deceive;”—nor give any cause to those whom

we deem to be in error, to suppose, that by our compliance with their forms, we countenance them in their departure from the principles of the oracles of God.

Brethren! the will of God is the only foundation of all true religion. This is the principle on which you must act. Your first and earnest enquiry should be, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" and more especially when "the fear of man which bringeth a snare," would deter you from the straight onward path of truth, or, amidst the conflicts of opinion, you are tempted to put the dogmas of human wisdom in the room of God's word,—and your object is to triumph, not to convince—to shew your dexterity in argument, rather than in winning souls to Christ. A supreme regard to the will of God would at once quell the turbulent uprisings of selfishness, and impart to Christian conscientiousness a larger share of benevolence and brotherly love.

If a supreme regard to the will of God,—which implies a heartfelt love for all mankind, especially "those who are of the household of faith,"—was the predominating principle of conduct among the followers of Christ, there would at least be unity of aim, and co-operation in achievement, in the different sections of the church. Instead of entering the field like a tumultuous rabble, jostling, and jarring, and impeding each other's movements, and often thrown into positions, where, instead of being directed against the common enemy, their cross-fires mow down whole ranks of their confederates, and spread confusion and dismay over the whole body—like different sections

of the same grand army under the command of an able and experienced general, they would take up in regular order their respective stations, both for defence and attack, and so concentrate their energies to one ultimate object, that their divisions, instead of being a source of weakness, would be the strongest element of their power.

While, therefore, brethren, I would impress on your convictions this grand truth, that the will of God is the fundamental principle of all moral and religious action, and affectionately exhort you to spare no pains in ascertaining what that will is, let me at the same time remind you, that we are all apt to be deceived by specious appearances, and plausible perversions of truth. Let me caution you against being the dupes of your own selfish feelings and passions, or victims to the sophistries of others, and think that you are speaking in God's name, and acting in his cause, whilst (under this fatal delusion) you are in the darkness of spiritual ignorance, and propagating destructive error. Let me remind you, that it is a fearful thing—even when it is not done designedly—to speak in God's name what he hath not spoken, and say “that God has sent you, when he has not sent you.” The evils that have resulted from such delusions are innumerable. And the fanatical victim of error has thought he was doing God a service, while he was violating every principle of honour, honesty, and justice, and outraging the sacred authority of the Divine Law. Let us take great care, that, while we plead the authority of heaven for what we say, or what we do, that we have God's

sanction to our words—that we have his warrant for our conduct. Let us take care, that what we hold forth as the will of God, stands not in the assertions of any man ; nor of any body of men ; but are the unerring dictates of his own Spirit. We have a revelation of the will of God, given to us in the sacred scriptures, and we have the Spirit of God given, to guide us unto all truth—to guide us to a true and spiritual understanding of the written record. That book contains the message of God unto all men, to the lowest, as well as to the most exalted ; to the unlearned, as well as the most learned. It is the distinguishing characteristic of the religion of Jesus, that it is needed by all—that it is free unto all—and may be understood by all. The only infallible Teacher of that religion—or of the Bible, is God's Spirit. One man's mind is just as susceptible to the influences of the Spirit as another's. There is no inherent aptitude in one mind above another, for spiritually comprehending the sacred oracles. Whatever mental acuteness, or learning, we may bring to the interpretation of the oracles of God—and we are under the most solemn obligations to employ every power and faculty which God hath given us in the investigation of sacred truth—yet, we can only be guided to its true spiritual import by the Spirit of God—all must be taught of God. The Great Teacher is not confined to one individual, or one class of men. A small body of believers, assembled, with one accord, in one place, to implore God's blessing on the reading of His word—as well as an assembly of Priests and Dignitaries of the Church,

taking counsel together how they may best order her affairs, may equally experience the effusion of the Spirit from on high. The king upon his throne, and the lowest of his subjects in his mud-walled cottage, are equally susceptible of the influences of the Spirit—may attain to an equal knowledge of the things of God, and be equally strengthened for the performance of every duty. Now we are told, that the Spirit is given to those who ask for it, and is efficient to those who cherish His influences.

II.—To be earnest in our application at the throne of grace for the communications of the Spirit to guide, enlighten, and strengthen us, is another lesson taught us by the Apostles Peter and John.

Brethren! it is only by acting on the principle of a supreme regard to the will of God, that we can reasonably expect to be animated with Christian fortitude, in a time of difficulty or danger. It is only by committing in prayer our cause unto God, that we can confidently hope for his assisting grace, to bring home to the mind the communications of his word, in their Divine simplicity and purity. Prayer is the breathings of the soul, giving utterance to its wants and wishes.—It is the cry of faith out of the depths of perplexity and trouble, imploring relief from Almighty God.—It is the utter abnegation of self, before the throne of Jehovah; and the surrendering of the whole man, “soul, body, and spirit,” to be guided into all truth, by the word and Spirit of God. Breathing, as it were, the pure air of heaven, earthly things are lost sight of—the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus



absorbs the soul—the union of the Father and the Son, is the type and model of the union of believers with each other, and of there all being one in Him.—A holy unction from on high is poured out upon them.—By brotherly kindness and charity they are drawn together—their chafed and inflamed wounds are mollified and healed by Divine love—and that by abounding in the fruits of the Spirit, the world may know that Christ dwelleth in them. But men in their folly would reverse this procedure. Instead of cultivating the graces of the Spirit—which of necessity would constrain them visibly to unite, at least as far as it is desirable and practicable—with canting whine they mourn over their withered and blighted aspect, and would substitute in their room, their own rough-hewn idols of compromise, conformity, and comprehension, or one more odious and unsightly still, a political combination of parties, for effectuating their own selfish and worldly ends. Need we wonder that such schemes have always proved abortive; and that the rejection by these builders, of the materials, prepared and fashioned by the Holy Spirit, for the Temple of the Lord, should be attended with disappointment, confusion, and disgrace. Whenever the grand object of a church is to become “large and respectable” in the eye of the world, merely to influence and control by numbers the ever-shifting politics of the nation, her efficiency for spiritual good is impaired—her glory is departed.

Let us cultivate the spirit of prayer, as the best interpreter of God’s word, and the surest guide to

the true knowledge of his will ; then, in whatever circumstances we may be placed, we will feel that we act by an authority higher than that of man, and are guided by a wisdom which no power can suppress, and no discouragements can alarm. If then, at any time, like the Apostles Peter and John, you are in danger of being borne down, through the outward pressure of unduly exercised authority, by men of exalted rank,—or by popular violence—generally more unreasonable and arrogant in its demands than unrestrained tyranny,—shew that you are actuated by the fear of God, and not by a turbulent and factious spirit. Many have pretended—and some of them no doubt have ignorantly persuaded themselves—that they were fearlessly contending for religious liberty, and boldly doing their duty, when they were factiously resisting the lawful commands of justly-constituted authority. “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind,” but let every man take care that he is rightly persuaded. Let him take care, that, when he pleads the rights of conscience for what he does, that his conscience is duly enlightened by the word of God, and with prayer. To God we must at all times commit our way, lest we deceive ourselves; but more especially, when our minds are distracted by apprehensions and fears, and we are in perplexity and doubt, we must have recourse “to God and the word of his grace which is able to build us up,”—to “strengthen and stablish us.”

If at any time you should tremble for the Ark of God—for the preservation and progress of genuine

religion—put your hope and confidence in God, “and he will bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noontide.” It may be a lamentable consideration, that many of the professed friends, as well as the open enemies of revelation, are confederated against you—that several, who, mistaking a sinful indifference to many important, though minor matters, for a catholic spirit, would have you surrender your conscientious convictions of ecclesiastical order and government, for the sake of a theoretical visible union with all sects and parties, and sacrifice honour, truth, and justice, at the polluted shrine of worldly expediency. Let the will of God, as revealed in the books of nature and revelation, guide you.—Let the honest Spirit-enlightened instincts of your nature, in answer to prayer, teach you, and fearlessly go forward in the discharge of your duty. You may be a little flock. Let that teach you humility—teach you to be diffident of your own opinions—teach you to rest with more entire confidence on the instructions of God’s Word; but let it not lead you to surrender at the bidding of man, or of any class of men, your conscientious convictions of the Christian utility, and scriptural functions of the Church to which you belong.—A Church nourished by the prayers, and the deep scriptural researches of many a God-fearing man—a Church, blessed of heaven, as an instrument for spreading Christian light and liberty abroad over the world—“A light shining in a dark place.” The God who hath blessed her, will continue to bless her still. “A man’s foes,” said our blessed Lord,

“shall be those of his own household.” Led astray by false theories of ecclesiastical government, and puffed up by their own vain conceits, some who have been nursed in her bosom would tamper with her constitutional principles, and try so to modify them as to adapt them to the multifarious and ever-changing sentiments of the public mind, and, failing of success, they would turn and rend her. The apparent weakness, occasioned by such schisms, is her strength. “God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved.” Driven from human aid, she clings more earnestly to her Divine Helper, until, in his own good time, “he shall make wars to cease unto the end of the earth.” Many of her children, swayed by fashion, or caprice, or ambition to shine as great men in the world, may leave her communion, and thus impair her influence for good. But few have left her because the word of God was not faithfully preached from her pulpits—or the seeds of virtue and godliness were not carefully sown and nourished in her vineyards. Let her loving—her true-hearted children, fear not. God has yet a great work for them to do upon the earth. He can effect his purposes with few, as well as with many. Let them shew to the world by a living faith—by purity of doctrine and discipline—by a faithful discharge of every duty, that Her Great Head has not yet forsaken her. Let them shew, by Christian forbearance and evangelical love, to those who differ from them, that they are united to the Church of the living God. Let them shew, by receiving, in brotherly love and

fellowship in the Spirit, every one whom Christ receiveth, that they are in fellowship with the household of Saints. With the brethren of other denominations let there be no strife—no rivalry, but to promote each other's welfare, and in winning souls, by preaching with fervor and simplicity the truth as it is in Jesus. "Let not Ephraim envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim." "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." The prosperity of the Church, will in a great measure depend, under the blessing of God, on a zealous, faithful ministry. Great responsibility rests upon you, brethren! Let the world see that Christ dwelleth in you and you in him, that it may know that he hath sent you to publish his gospel of salvation to those who are perishing in their sins. Let not the beauty of Zion be tarnished by a character or conduct unbecoming your profession. Let not the Church of your Fathers, which, as a lamp suspended in the deep vaults of heaven, has shed the light of the glorious gospel on the kingdoms whence you have come, ever cease to inspire veneration, or fail to attract the hearts, or charm by her apostolic zeal and the scriptural purity and simplicity of her worship, the minds of her children amidst the forests of Canada. Let not her glory fade from your remembrance as a lovely but vain dream. A blessing, which of all earthly blessings we may truly appreciate as the richest and the best that God has bestowed on us, let us transmit unimpaired to our children, so that, in the same Temple where our Fathers appeared as the sons of God to

receive his blessing, our children and children's children may also appear, to receive the "blessing God commands, even life for evermore."

"Long be our Fathers' temple ours;  
 Wo to the hand by which it falls;  
 A thousand spirits watch its towers,  
 A cloud of angels guards its walls.

And be *their* shield by us possessed:  
 Lord, rear around thy blest abode,  
 The buttress of a holy breast,  
 The rampart of a present God."

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one body; and be ye thankful." Amen.