

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE DEDICATION OF

THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH,

GREAT ST. JAMES STREET, MONTREAL,

ON SUNDAY, JULY 27, 1845.

AND OF

THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH,

RICHMOND STREET, TORONTO,

ON SUNDAY, JUNE 29, 1845.

BY

THE REV. MATTHEW RICHEY, A. M.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE TRUSTEES.

1845.

JOHN MASON, 14, CITY ROAD, LONDON.

WESLEYAN BOOK DEPOT, MONTREAL.

ROLLO CAMPBELL, PRINTER.

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THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCHES,

MONTREAL AND TORONTO,

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TO THE
TRUSTEES
OF
THE WESLEYAN CHURCH,
GREAT ST. JAMES STREET, MONTREAL;
AND,
TO THE TRUSTEES
OF
THE WESLEYAN CHURCH,
RICHMOND STREET, TORONTO;

This Sermon,

Preached at the Dedication of those places of Worship,

AND PUBLISHED BY THEIR UNITED REQUEST,

IS INSCRIBED,

WITH SENTIMENTS OF RESPECT AND ESTEEM,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

THE writer of this Sermon deems it proper to state that, not being in the habit, in his preparations for the pulpit, of committing to paper more than a *syllabus* of his discourses before preaching them, he does not profess to furnish the present one *verbatim*, as it was delivered either in TORONTO or MONTREAL. Its general outline, however, will, he apprehends, be readily recognized by all who heard it; and the illustrations, though in some instances perhaps more expanded than in the delivery, are substantially the same as were uttered on those occasions *viva voce*.

A SERMON, &c.

EPHESIANS V. 25-27.

—*Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it ; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

To all who are assembled within these walls, but more especially to you, my brethren, by whose piety and zeal they have been reared, and who have, doubtless, for months past, anticipated the important offices of this day, with profound and prayerful solicitude ; this cannot fail to be a moment of unwonted interest, solemnity, and joy. May it also be your happiness to register it in your grateful recollection, among the most propitious ‘times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord!’

As the gratifying result of the large increase God has granted to the word of his grace among you, — of the augmented means thus placed at your disposal for promoting the wider diffusion and efficiency of evangelical truth, — and of the spontaneous liberality with which you have contributed towards the erection of this noble and enduring structure ; you are now permitted to witness its completion, and to open its portals to the thousands who, in the true spirit of Christian catholicity, hasten to testify their benignant interest in your enterprise, by uniting with us in the

solemnities of this auspicious occasion. Amid so much to gladden and elevate, it behoves us to 'rejoice with trembling.' Let us vigilantly guard especially against the spirit of denominational pride and complacency,—a feeling too often invested by the deceitfulness of the human heart with the costume of devotion. The genius of Christianity, as it animates the discourses of our Lord, and the writings of his apostles, is equally remote, on the one hand, from that species of undistinguishing liberalism, which would prostrate the 'oracles of God' before the arrogant pretensions of human ignorance; and on the other, from party and proscriptive zeal. It rejoices in *the truth*. It glories in the triumphs of the gospel over ignorance, vice, and misery, whatever agency God may be pleased to honour in achieving them. An enlightened conviction that the section of the Christian church with which we may stand associated, accords more fully than any other in doctrine, discipline, and spirit, with the New Testament model, is, unquestionably, an adequate ground of the preference we practically award to it. But what has it done for the spiritual melioration of our character—what influence does it exercise over our moral feelings, worthy of a religion which teaches that 'the end of the commandment is CHARITY, out of a pure heart and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned,' if it has not taught our hearts to expand with the benevolent aspiration of the apostle—'Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity?'

Cherishing no other sentiments,—breathing no other spirit, towards any class of our fellow-Christians, we would solemnize the appropriation of this edifice to the purposes for which it has been reared; not to proselyte men to a certain system, but to 'save souls from death;' not to fortify the position, and build up the interests of a sect, but to 'feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.'

We solemnly dedicate it to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, blessed forever!—to the vindication of the supremacy of the Scriptures, and of the first right of human thought, the right to search them, and to bring all uninspired teaching to this divine touchstone—to the *unreserved* preaching, and uncompromising defence, of ‘the truth as it is in Jesus,’—and to the administration of the sacraments, the seals of the redeeming covenant. May He, whose we are and whom we serve, graciously accept our offering, and fulfil our desire! May the glory of the **ETERNAL WORD**, ‘the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,’ constantly irradiate this sanctuary! Here may God command his blessing, even life for evermore! And in the great decisive day, when the volume of life shall be unrolled by the hands that were pierced on Calvary, may it exhibit, inscribed by the finger of God, and emblazoned by the light of heaven, the name of many an heir of immortality, of whom it shall be said,—‘this man was born there!’

Occasions like the present afford a convenient opportunity to a superstitious priesthood,—an opportunity which they well understand how to improve—to strengthen their domination over the conscience, by filling the minds of the credulous with dismaying apprehensions of the mysterious powers, which they claim to possess by continuous and authoritative transmission, from Christ himself. To illustrate and support these extravagant pretensions, an imposing ceremonial of ‘will worship’—really indicative of apostacy from the faith, and destitute of the recommendation of even ‘a show of wisdom’—is instituted. Priestly lustrations are substituted for the celestial ablution of the Holy Spirit,—the Sacrifice of the Mass for the propitiation of Calvary,—the shrines of saints for the throne of God and the Lamb! From such a prostitution of the awful name and sanctions of Christianity, we recoil with mingled emotions of horror

and surprise. And hence there has been generated, in some minds, a repugnance to the practice of attaching any particular importance at all to the *dedication* of a building to the service of God. This prejudice may, however, be carried too far. It is, indeed, palpably absurd to imagine that any peculiar sanctity can be conferred upon an insensate pile of architecture. Yet when an edifice is erected and exclusively destined for sacred purposes, it certainly seems appropriate, not to say imperative, to set it apart to the Divine service with becoming solemnities. Who can question the propriety, or doubt the obligation, of our uniting, at this eventful season, in special and faithful supplication to Him, who alone can crown our enterprise with success, that his word may be signally glorified in this new scene of its ministration? And if, while we this morning gather round the footstool of his throne, our hearts are instinct with this desire; if the grand distinction we covet for this sanctuary—of all the distinctions that can be conferred upon a place of worship the most enviable—is, that in it the work of the Lord may appear unto his servants, and his glory to their children, what encouragement may not our faith elicit from contemplating the love of Christ to the Church, confidently to anticipate such a consummation.

Would you then, my brethren, justly appreciate the intensity of that love; would you ‘comprehend with all saints’ what is its ‘length and breadth,’ its ‘depth and height;’ let your meditations expatiate amidst its glories as they are evolved by the apostle in the text:—‘Even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it unto himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.’

In this equally sublime and consoling passage you behold the love of Christ exhibited in its divinest aspect, and issuing in the achievement of the most magnificent results. It suggests three leading views of this attractive subject, which will form so many appropriate topics for our present meditation:—The *object* towards which the Saviour's love is pre-eminently exercised—the *mode* of its *manifestation*—and its *efficiency* as exemplified in saving his people from all sin in the present life, and in crowning them with glory and honour in his presence for ever. Our attention is drawn

I. TO THE OBJECT OF THE REDEEMER'S LOVE SPECIFIED IN THE TEXT.

This is THE CHURCH,—so denominated in contradistinction to the *world*, out of which the people of God are called by his word and Spirit, to bear his image, to reflect his glory, and to inherit the promises.

It may facilitate the elucidation of this branch of our subject to remark at the outset, that whatever the speciality of Christ's regard to the Church may involve, it cannot contravene the revelations of *general* grace with which the Scriptures abound. Commissioned to 'preach the gospel to every creature,' the apostles of our Lord did not fail to exhibit redeeming love in all the amplitude of its universality. They proclaimed Christ as the one Mediator between God and men 'who gave himself a ransom for all'—as the propitiation 'for the sins of the whole world'—as having 'by the grace of God tasted death for every man.' So absorbed and transported was the mind of Paul by this view of the wide, the unbounded efficacy of the atonement, that he adduces it as at once the impelling motive, and triumphant vindication, of that disinterested and self-immolating zeal in the cause of Christ, which exposed him to the stigma of infatuation.—'For whether we be beside our-

selves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.*

In this aspect, then, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is as diffusive as it is unmerited. Its object is universal man. It is not enough to say that the blood of the cross is intrinsically adequate to procure salvation for all. It has actually done so. And sprinkling now the mercy-seat on high as an accepted propitiation for our revolted race, it has consecrated a living way into the holiest, whereby every sinner may approach to God, and taste the bliss of reconciliation.

It is, however, to the Church as the sphere of the special exercise and the highest manifestations of the Saviour's love, —as the object not merely of his compassion, but of his *complacency*, that the text invites our attention. And it is only necessary to glance at the connection in which it stands, to discover how peculiarly apposite to the apostle's immediate purpose is this allusion in the present instance. Having, in the preceding verses, addressed to the members of the Church at Ephesus, various practical counsels of general application, he is here inculcating the duties appropriate to the conjugal relation. The intimate and endearing union that subsists between Christ and his people, so frequently represented in the Scriptures under the figure of a matrimonial alliance, is naturally suggested to his mind; and in order to enforce the precept, 'Husbands love your wives,' he reminds them of the ineffable love Christ has exemplified to the Church—'the bride, the Lamb's wife'—in identifying her interests with his own, and in counting no sacrifices too great to secure her happiness and promote her honour.

* 2 Cor. v. 13, 14.

In proportion to our admiration of the ‘manner of love’ Christ has bestowed upon his Church, and the importance we attach to the inestimable benefits that flow from it, must of course be our solicitude to belong to the sacred community which is thus highly favoured of the Lord. Whither then shall we go in quest of it? By what distinguishing characteristics may it be identified? What *is* the Church? Recognizing as we do the Bible as the legitimate,—the *only* divinely-authorized source of appeal on all such questions, the just and satisfactory solution of this inquiry must be sought, neither from unwritten tradition, nor from the recorded opinions of the Fathers, but in the *scriptural* interpretation of the term *church*, as it occurs in the passage under consideration. I say emphatically, its *scriptural* interpretation; for, probably, of no single word has the import been more egregiously misapprehended by ignorance, or lamentably perverted by men of corrupt minds. What then is its meaning—not in the vocabulary of ecclesiastical ambition—of sectarian zealotry, or of modern Pharisaism, but—in the oracles of God? Let us endeavour to ascertain.

Our word ‘church,’ derived from the Greek *Κυριακόν*, signifies ‘the house of the Lord’*—a designation which, whether we understand it as denoting the *habitation*, or the *family*, of God, beautifully accords with inspired delineations of the character and privileges of his people:—‘Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom

* Some indeed think the term *Church* is from the German *Küren*, to *elect*, to *choose*; thus corresponding to the Greek *ἐκκλησία*. But should philologists abandon the Greek derivation, which is not at all likely, the ingenious conjecture of Archbishop Whately, is, to say the least, much more specious. “The word ‘*Congregation*,’” he observes, “as it stands in our Version of the Old Testament, (and it is one of very frequent occurrence in the Books of Moses,) is found to correspond in the Septuagint, which was familiar to the New Testament Writers, to *Ecclesia*; the word which in our Version of these last is always rendered—not ‘*Congregation*,’ but ‘*Church*.’ This, or its equivalent ‘*Kirk*,’ is probably no other than ‘*Circle*;’ *i. e.* *Assembly*, *Ecclesia*.”—*Kingdom of Christ*, p. 78.

all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* The Church which St. Paul in this passage describes as the hallowed mansion of Jehovah's presence, he represents, in the third chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, as the Lord's household. 'Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, * * but Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we'—of whose family we form a part—'if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.' But in order to apprehend the true *ideal* of a Christian church as indicated by our Lord and his apostles, it is necessary to advert to the proper meaning of the term which *they* employ to designate it, and to mark its varied applications. The word ἐκκλησία, (*ecclesia*,) which, when used in a spiritual reference, is uniformly translated 'church' in the New Testament, denotes *an assembly* of any kind, *sacred* or *civil*, but especially one legitimately convoked. Thus the town-clerk of Ephesus told the tumultuous assemblage in that city that the law was open, by which any matters in dispute might be determined 'in a lawful (*ecclesia*) assembly.' Among the Grecians, this appellation was distinctively assigned to those assemblies of the people that were called together by a public herald, for the transaction of important business; and in the Septuagint, it corresponds to the word עֵבֶר (*edah*) in the Hebrew scriptures, denoting the whole assembly or *congregation* of Israel, which was convened at stated seasons to celebrate the solemn festivals. It is apparent from these considerations, that whilst the Gentile convert of the apostolic age, would, without difficulty, appreciate the significance of this term as appropriated to the Christian community, the believing Jew could not fail at once to recognize it as the well known designation of the Church of God,—

* Ephes. ii. 20, 21.

unaffected in its identity, though unspeakably elevated in point of privilege, by the introduction of ‘the ministration of the Spirit.’

On a careful examination of all the places in the New Testament in which the designation ‘church’ occurs, four distinct applications of it,—and we apprehend only four—may be observed :—

It is applied to particular congregations, or local societies of Christians ; as ‘the church at Jerusalem’—‘the church of God at Corinth’—‘the church of the Thessalonians’—‘the seven churches of Asia.’ ‘When I departed from Macedonia,’ says Paul to the Philippians, ‘no church communicated with me concerning giving and receiving but ye only.’ And he thus expresses his expansive solicitude for the cause of Christ ; ‘Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of ALL THE CHURCHES.’*

It is applied to a small association of believers meeting together in a private house :—‘Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.’† ‘Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.’‡ It is worthy of remark that Aquila, wherever he for a time took up his abode, whether at Rome, at Corinth, or at Ephesus, always had a church in his house ; whence the inference seems unavoidable, that such domestic churches were not isolated communions, separating themselves from the general body of their brethren, but continued identified with them, though in the habit of meeting at the residence of a particular person, most probably on account of the benefit they derived from his instructions.

* 2 Cor. xi. 28. † 1 Cor. xvi. 19. ‡ Col. iv. 15.

In its largest sense, the term church includes the whole visible community of Christians,—all, in every time and place, who believe the doctrines, assume the profession, and observe the institutions of Christianity. To this class of passages must be referred the first in which the word occurs :—‘ He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am ? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven. And I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’* Again :—‘ And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.’† The same view of the church is exhibited in the sublime passage,—‘ Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.’‡

It is applied to designate the whole body of the redeemed ; —‘ the church of the first-born ’ now enrolled in heaven, with all who, at the coming of the Lord, shall be found meet to be partakers of the celestial inheritance. These, and these alone, properly constitute ‘ the church which is Christ’s body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all,’—the church, which, as the consummation of his mediatorial undertaking, we are told in the text, he will ultimately

* Matt. xvi. 15-18. † 1 Cor. xii. 28. ‡ Ephes. iii. 8-10.

present unto himself, gloriously exempt alike from every taint of pollution and every principle of decay.—Such are the different, but obviously related senses, in which we find this term employed in the New Testament. And it will be readily perceived that, while they embrace the various aspects in which the church of God naturally falls under our contemplation, they resolve themselves into two leading views of its character and constitution; the one relating to its *visible* organization, and the other to its *spiritual* life, which is ‘hid with Christ in God,’—the one embracing all who make a credible *profession* of Christianity, and the other, those only, who, in addition to such profession, have received the renewing Spirit of Christ, without which, whatever be a man’s pretensions or reputation, *he is none of his*.

The divided state of the visible church, which, unhappily, so little resembles the emblems of concord, mutual sympathy and co-operation, by which Christian unity is so beautifully illustrated and powerfully enforced in the word of God, has long been a source of poignant regret to the truly devout, a topic of unhallowed exultation to the infidel, and the most formidable obstacle in the way of the world’s conversion. I refer not to the lines of sectional demarcation—unnecessarily multiplied though it must on all hands be admitted they are—by which those who compose the great Christian commonwealth are distinguished from each other; nor to the shades of difference that mark their distinctive views, whether as to doctrine, ministerial order, or ecclesiastical economy. In these respects, perfect *uniformity* among those who ‘hold the Head,’ however devoutly to be wished, is by no means essential to *unity*. But the spirit of schism, losing the *substance* of religion in its *shadow*,—the *power* of godliness in its *form*, institutes other tests of Christian communion than the Bible exhibits, and then clothing them with the assumed sanction of divine authority, stigmatizes

and proscribes all who refuse to bow to its impositions; in other words, to sacrifice conscience at the shrine of spiritual despotism. Such attempts to lord it over God's heritage, we naturally expect from that corrupt and anathematizing church, which, claiming infallibility, assumes it as an incontrovertible axiom that, *beyond her own pale there is no salvation*; but how preposterous the maintenance of similar claims by any who profess to have entered into the labours of the Reformers, whose first and most needful work it was 'to pierce the veil, to divest the Church of the MYSTERY in which it had been shrouded, and to disclose it to the world in its true and Scriptural form as THE COMPANY OF BELIEVERS'! * Studiously omitting such 'casual and variable accidents' as are not essential to its being, *they* have defined it 'A congregation of faithful men (*fidelium*, believers) in which the word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all things that of necessity are requisite to the same.' And it would be extremely difficult either to find or frame a definition of the visible church of Christ, more accordant with the spirit and letter of all that relates to this subject in the oracles of God. We are naturally reminded by it of the comprehensive delineation which the sacred historian has furnished of the *first* church founded by the apostles, the fruit of the effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost:—'And they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.' Here we are presented with the *notes* of a true church under the seal of divine authority. And what, according to this criterion, constitutes the basis of Christian communion? Not the *office*, but the *doctrine*, of the apostles. The believing reception

* Charge of the Bishop of Chester, 1841, p. 31.

of this prepared the first converts for initiation into the visible church by baptism: their steadfast continuance in this, which they had experienced to be the power of God unto their salvation, was the grand and decisive evidence of their fidelity. To the building of them up on their *most holy faith*, every thing else by which they were distinguished as a Christian society—the ministrations by which they were warned and instructed—the code of discipline that guarded and promoted their moral purity—the religious services in which they engaged—the sacraments they received—were all collateral and subservient. Assigning then to *the faith once delivered to the saints*, the pre-eminent rank it justly claims among the characteristics of a true church of God, wherever I behold this in a collective body of Christians, in connexion with a ministry, whose call to the sacred office is accredited, not merely by documentary evidence, in whatever way obtained, but by ‘living epistles known and read of all men,’—with a reverent observance of the institutions of Christ,—and with evidence of spiritual vitality, exhibited not only in the personal piety of its members, but by their aggressive efforts to extend the empire of grace in our fallen world—there I am bound to recognize a part of God’s sacramental host, a section of the Catholic church of Christ. By repudiating their claim to fraternal recognition as members of his family, I place myself in an attitude of hostility to him ‘of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,’—I incur the fearful responsibility of *disowning* those whom *God has received*.

Be it at the same time remembered, that to whatever portion of the visible church we may be attached,—and the obligation to connect ourselves with some section of it is clear and imperative—however orthodox its creed, however pure and apostolic its communion, we may yet be viewed by him who searcheth the hearts, as having nothing more

than 'a name to live;' as possessing neither lot nor part in the inheritance of his redeemed people. The church of Christ is something more elevated and spiritual than a mere external organization. It is a temple constructed of living stones,—each one instinct with the life flowing from Christ, on whom, by faith, all are built up a spiritual house. 'If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.' 'For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God.' The same principle applies with equal force to those who are visibly associated with the evangelical church. 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.' And they only *are* his, who are renewed after his image in righteousness and true holiness,—who are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the heavenly inheritance—whose faith is not a mere intellectual assent to revealed truth, but 'the evidence' (ελεγχος, demonstration, certain persuasion) 'of things not seen,'—working by love, overcoming the world, purifying their hearts, and adorning their lives with the fruits of righteousness. Thrice blessed they, who, thus imbued with an experimental knowledge of the things of the Spirit of God, have passed the veil of outward Christianity, and entering into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, have tasted that the Lord is gracious! These, wherever found, are emphatically, *the circumcision*, the true church of the living God, who 'worship' him 'in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.'

' Scattered o'er all the earth they lie,
Till he collect them with his eye;
Draw by the music of his Name,
And charm into a beauteous frame.'

Meanwhile, amid all the forms of ecclesiastical administration under which they are ranged, and notwithstanding the

diversity of their sentiments on points of minor consideration, their views of *essential Christianity* perfectly coalesce; the cross of Christ is the common centre of attraction to them all; and, in virtue of their vital union with him, their Head, they are in the best and holiest sense, ONE IN CHRIST JESUS. ‘There is one body,’ of which all who truly believe are members;—‘One Spirit,’ diffusing divine life through every part of Christ’s mystical body, as the soul pervades and animates all the members of the human frame, invigorating each for the discharge of its appropriate functions;—‘One hope of your calling,’ the living, the blessed anticipation of the saints’ undecaying inheritance in light, produced and attested by the love of God shed abroad in our hearts;—‘One Lord,’ whom it delights his people to recognize as sole Head of his church, and whose redeeming love constrains them to devote themselves to his service;—‘One faith,’ that, namely, of which ‘the record that God gave of his Son,’ is the object, and his Spirit the producing agent, in the believing soul;—‘One baptism,’ by which we are dedicated to the triune God, assured of his covenant grace, and solemnly obligated to serve him in newness of life;—‘One God and Father of all,’ of whose pardoning and paternal love the Spirit of adoption assures the conscience;—and who though ‘above all, and through all,’ reigning supreme over all worlds, and pervading immensity with his presence, dwells in his church, as eminently his habitation, through the Spirit. Such, my brethren, are the evangelical principles and privileges which constitute the soul and cement, the ground and motives, of Christian union. In proportion as their true grandeur and transcendent importance is rightly apprehended, and their influence duly felt and exemplified by all who profess and call themselves Christians, will that charity which is the bond of perfectness shed its attractive lustre over the visible church,—a consummation of which, thanks be to God, ‘the sure word of prophecy’ is replete with the most refreshing anticipations.

From the object of the Saviour's love transfer your devout attention—

II. TO THE STUPENDOUS MODE OF ITS MANIFESTATION.

It becomes us to approach this solemn and endearing topic with trembling joy. Amid all the ranges of lofty and hallowed meditation upon which revelation has poured its marvellous light, there is no other equally momentous to us, or that wields so mighty an influence throughout the whole empire of mind. In contemplating the wonders of Calvary, 'the principalities and powers in heavenly places' deem it no act of humiliation to associate themselves with us as fellow-students. 'The cherubim of glory' still delight to bend over the mercy-seat, exploring with unabated interest and inextinguishable ardor, the sublime mystery of redemption. And what, my brethren, is the subject of unceasing rapture to the perfected spirits of the just? Pass by faith within the veil: behold them prostrate before the enthroned Lamb; mark the odours that rise from their golden vials;—hear their triumphant song,—'Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests.' The love of Christ is the engrossing theme of their contemplation, the most invigorating element in their worship and bliss. How powerful, my brethren, are the claims of a subject, whose overwhelming importance is attested by facts of so interesting an order, to our deepest attention!

'Christ loved the church and GAVE HIMSELF for it.' The profound significance of this declaration, allowing the Bible to be its own interpreter, demands our explicit recognition of the Saviour's *essential Deity*—the mystery of his *incarnation*—and the *sacrificial* character of his death.

Severed from its connection with these great doctrinal principles, there can exist no scriptural perception of the love of Christ, no experience of its saving benefits.

This enunciation involves his *essential Deity*. The love of Christ is infinitely depreciated by being regarded as the love of a mere *creature*, however exalted. It is not the philanthropy of an originated, dependent being, but of 'the Lord of glory.' Could we view it in any other light, it would immediately stand divested of its moral sublimity, and appear unworthy of the honours which it receives and is destined eternally to receive, from the mingled adorations of men and angels. On the Socinian hypothesis, Christ must himself be considered as incomparably the greatest gainer by his death; since it has issued in his exaltation to the throne of universal dominion. And wherein—let me ask—would consist the peculiar merit, or the disinterested benevolence of a creature, however distinguished in the scale of being, in submitting to death for the brief space of three days, when he knew that he would thereby not only achieve the felicity of unnumbered immortal spirits, but at the same time advance himself to a position of dignity and blessedness, unattainable by him in any other way, and unapproachably superior to that of every other creature in the universe? But the absurdity of this supposition, together with the hypothesis from which it is inseparable, are effectually precluded by the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. No ingenuity of criticism, can possibly conciliate the reception of the Scriptures as a revelation from God, with the denial of the proper Divinity of the Lord Jesus. This momentous truth is, in fact, the central luminary of the Christian system; and the effort to extinguish its splendour is not less vain than would be the attempt to pluck the sun from the heavens. What appellations, tell me, characteristic of the Supreme Being, are

too august to be applied to Jesus Christ?—are not actually applied to him in the volume of inspiration? Nor does he wear them as empty titles: he displays the glory they import, exercises the prerogatives they involve, and receives the honours they challenge. Is he who built all things, God? ‘Jesus Christ laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands.’ ‘For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him.’ Is it the inalienable prerogative of the Omniscient to search the hearts of the children of men? ‘All the churches,’ Jesus solemnly proclaims, ‘shall know that *I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts.*’ Is no power less than that which created the worlds adequate to sustain them? He is represented as ‘upholding all things by the word of his power.’ Is it among the most important objects contemplated by divine revelation, to purify the earth from idolatry? ‘When he bringeth his first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.’ Has the word irrevocably passed the lips of Jehovah, that unto ‘Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear’? ‘We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.’ For it is written, ‘As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ Our proofs are far from being exhausted; but even this sample is surely quite sufficient to evince, that to deny, in the face of evidence so luminous, our Lord’s essential Deity, is, in effect, to charge the Scriptures of truth with confounding all distinction between the creature and the Creator, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Away with the irreverent speculations of a vain philosophy! He who loved us, and gave himself for us, is ‘the great God, and our Saviour.’ And were he not infinite in dignity,—did not ‘all the fulness of the God-head dwell in him bodily,’ it could neither be said, with

truth, of his blood, that it 'cleanseth from all sin,' nor of the love by which he was prompted to shed it, that it 'passeth knowledge.'

To accomplish the designs of his grace, the Son of God descended from his throne: he 'whose goings forth were of old, even from everlasting,' became a babe in Bethlehem, 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' The nature of the undertaking to which he voluntarily committed himself, demanded the sacrifice. There existed moral reasons amounting to an absolute necessity, that he whose mediation was to fill the immeasurable chasm between an offended God and us, should unite in the constitution of his person, the human with the Divine nature. This ineffable union was effected by the wonderful expedient of the incarnation. Issuing forth at the appointed time, from the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, our Lord appropriated and fulfilled the prophetic oracle, 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. Then said I, Lo I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.' Then was THE WORD—the eternal LOGOS—'made flesh, and dwelt among us,' enshrining his uncreated glory in an earth-born tabernacle.

'Great'—confessedly, my brethren,—'great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh;' nor is it probable that the veil of awful sublimity that invests this subject will ever be penetrated by finite intelligence. But shall we, on that account, discredit a fact which prophets anticipated with transport, which evangelists have recorded with all its attesting circumstances, and which apostles proclaimed, not only as an essential part of the testimony wherewith they were charged, but as forming the grand doctrinal test by which we are directed to 'try the spirits whether they are of God?' Rather let us yield it more than

It has, not unfrequently, been asserted by the opponents of the doctrine of atonement, that it is not to be found in the personal teaching of our Lord. Were the objection based on truth, what would the cause which it is brought forward to support gain in consequence, unless indeed it be assumed that ‘all scripture is’ *not* ‘given by inspiration of God’? But the insidious allegation is utterly *untrue*. To what did our Lord allude,—what view of his death did he intend to suggest, when he said to the venerable Nicodemus, ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life’? * What meaning are we to attach to the solemn declaration, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit’? † What, to the words in the sequel of the same address, ‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me’? Spoke he not of his death as an atonement, when he said, ‘The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many’? ‡ when he announced himself as ‘the living bread which came down from heaven,’ adding, ‘and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life’? And then, what words are those I hear from his lips, at the memorable hour when, with the cross full in his view, he instituted that solemn rite, which he commanded his church perpetually to observe, in commemoration not merely of the *fact* of his death, but, as the terms of the institution sufficiently evince, of its *atoning character*? ‘This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins.’ Thus it appears that although it was reserved for the apostles fully to

* John iii. 14, 15. † John xii. 24–32. ‡ Mat. xx. 28.

develope under the guidance of the Spirit of truth, the doctrine of the propitiatory sacrifice of our great High Priest, in its various and important bearings, yet the elementary principles of all they ever taught concerning it, were anticipated in his own personal ministry.

Most impressive is the illustration, and overwhelming the evidence, supplied on this topic, by the sacred narrative of our Redeemer's sufferings ;—sufferings so mysteriously deep, awful, and unparalleled, that they admit of no imaginable solution, consistently with the innocence and dignity of his character, save on the principle that they were vicarious,—that he sustained the burden of the world's propitiation, and that by his stripes we are healed :—Behold him in the garden of Gethsemane on the fatal night on which he was betrayed! Often had he resorted to this consecrated spot for meditation and prayer: it was rich in associations the most tranquillizing and elevated. On this occasion, however, the charm of these associations has lost its power. A gloom of inconceivable distress and desolation overshadows his immaculate soul! He who had bound up so many broken hearts, faints beneath the pressure of the sorrow 'even unto death,' that now crushes his own! Explain to me this awful phenomenon, ye who deny the Lord that *bought* you! Here is no visible instrument or agent of the agony which the illustrious sufferer endures. No garland of thorns yet lacerates his sacred temples; his back is yet unfurrowed by the Roman scourge; nor are his hands and feet yet riven with the iron bolts. Yet such is the anguish of his soul that he sweats 'great drops of blood falling down to the ground,'—an effect of mental torture on the corporeal frame without a parallel in the records of human suffering. Oh! who, amid these preternatural scenes, does not hear appalled the voice of Eternal Justice, 'Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts; smite the

shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered.' Follow him to the mount of crucifixion. See him hanging on the tree of ignominy! Hear him utter in death the piercing and pathetic cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'—him, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,—him, who was all meek and un murmuring acquiescence in the will of the Father,—him, who came down from heaven, and was destined soon to enter in triumph its uplifted portals, laden with the spoils of death and hell! Mysterious dereliction! Totally inexplicable unless he died as a peculiar victim. Recognize him, then, my brethren, in his sacrificial character—contemplate the blood of his cross as your atonement and your peace—behold him as the LAMB OF GOD, *which taketh away the sins of the world*. This is the only admissible, the only truly rational, solution of the mystery: 'He loved the church, and gave himself for it.' And, perceive ye not, how richly fraught with promise to all who believe in his name, is this view of the manifestation of his love? If the thought is not to be entertained for a moment—as assuredly it is not—that the resources of the Deity would have been thus concentrated and displayed to achieve any other than objects of corresponding grandeur and importance;—if in the ordinary procedure of his providence effects that astonish by their magnitude, may generally be traced to the operation of very simple causes;—if in means he usually manifests *economy*, and in ends *magnificence*; who may imagine or portray the glory of the results we are authorized to anticipate, when, as in the case before us, we behold poured fourth

'Heaven's inexhaustible—exhausted fund!'

On this subject, happily, we are not left to conjecture. The text, in addition to the light it sheds on the topics already discussed, presents an animated delineation of those results, which, embracing both worlds, combining the riches of glory with those of grace, strikingly exhibits—

III. THE EFFICIENCY OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN ACCOMPLISHING PURPOSES WORTHY OF HIS REDEEMING INTERPOSITION.

What were those purposes? That in the present life, 'he might sanctify and cleanse the church with the washing of water by the word'; and, at his second coming, 'present it' thus fitted for its immortal destination, 'to himself, a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.' In the phraseology here employed, there is evidently an allusion to a royal bridal celebration, and to the previous process of purification, by which, according to ancient oriental custom, those who were to be united in marriage to monarchs, were prepared for that envied honour.

It is the desire of Christ—a desire pathetically expressed in one of the last petitions he uttered on earth—that his people should be with him where he is, to behold his glory and partake his joy. But before they can be promoted to that honour they must be the subjects of a moral preparation for it. Purity cannot embrace pollution. He who is 'glorious in holiness' cannot take into intimate and eternal alliance with himself, those who are not assimilated to his image. In his kingdom, holiness is the grand preliminary to advancement. The primary object of the Saviour, therefore, in giving himself for the church, was *to sanctify and cleanse it*. These terms are equivalent, and import the production and evangelical perfection of internal purity—the destruction of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, by the expulsive power of his love—the emptying the heart of sin, and filling it *with all the fulness of God*. Of this great salvation, every soul whom the Spirit of God has awakened, feels its need; and the importunate cry of all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and who are

going on to perfection, is, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God!' And must they cry in vain? or wait in quiescent expectancy the approach of death, as the only signal of their complete emancipation from sin? Where is this melancholy doctrine taught in the word of life? If for *this purpose* the Son of God was manifested, that he might *destroy the works of the devil*—of which death is unquestionably one—we may neither despair of a perfect deliverance from sin in the present life, nor regard death, even when we are enabled to triumph over its fear, but as a conquered enemy. And then—if the express design of Christ in giving himself for us, was, that he might redeem us *from all iniquity*, and *purify* unto himself *a peculiar* people—that he might *sanctify* and *cleanse* his church; must his holy and benevolent intention be frustrated? Why should it? Is his propitiatory sacrifice deficient in merit? his blood, in cleansing virtue? or his Almighty Spirit, in sanctifying energy? Reason recoils at the thought:—Revelation attests that *he is able to save to the uttermost*, and therefore from *all* indwelling sin. Nor can we till conscious that this full salvation is ours, adopt in all the comprehension and depth of its import, the exultant ascription—'Giving thanks to the Father, who *hath made us meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;' since that meetness is obviously imperfect while any root of bitterness infests our hearts, while any unhallowed temper or principle remains undestroyed within us.

In 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God' we are not left to our own resources. The moral transformation of the soul is, alike in its origin, progress, and consummation, the work of a superior agent; it is 'the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Yet is not our responsibility hereby superseded, nor our unceasing co-operation dispensed with. The grand result aimed at is attained by means adapted to intelligent

and accountable beings, in vital connection with the immediate influence of the Lord the Spirit, in the use of those means.

Christ sanctifies and cleanses his church *through the washing of water by the word*. The advocates of baptismal regeneration confidently appeal to these expressions as demonstrative of the justness of their theory. Nor are there wanting in these ominous days of the depreciation of that *word* which God has magnified above all his name, and of the undue elevation of the sacraments, those, who contend that by the washing of water by the *word*, we are to understand, not the purifying influence of the truths of the Gospel, apprehended by faith, but the power of Christ in the baptismal *formula!** I will not insult your understanding by attempting a refutation of this figment of the Papacy. Whether the apostle alludes here to baptism at all admits a doubt. It is, to say the least, quite as probable that the intended reference is to the methods of purification which, as we have seen, were wont, in Asiatic countries, to be observed by brides. Besides, the washing of the body with water has been immemorially regarded as a significant emblem of spiritual ablution. Neither the admonition, ‘Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes,’—nor the precious promise, ‘Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you,’—though delivered ages anterior to the institution of Christian baptism, would require any laboured exposition to elicit its meaning. But, assuming that the words under examination denote baptism, what then? Does it follow that, legitimately interpreted, they teach the essential regenerating efficacy of that sacrament? Most certainly not. To an unprejudiced view their plain and unsophisticated meaning

* Tracts for the Times, LXVII, page 160.

is, that Christ cleanses his people *emblematically*, by the washing of water, but *really* and *efficiently*, by *the word*. As a significant memento of our native pollution—as a *symbol* of our regeneration—as a *sealing* and *covenanting* ordinance—an *initiatorij* rite—and a *badge* of Christian discipleship, baptism answers highly important purposes. It stands in the Christian church like the laver at the entrance of the ancient temple, forcibly reminding all who seek admission that, *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. But we are expressly guarded against confounding it with, or deeming it inseparable from, that holiness:—‘The like figure whereunto’—says St. Peter, alluding to the preservation of Noah and his family in the ark from perishing in the deluge—‘the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (*not the putting away of the filth of the flesh*, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.)’ It is not the *opus operatum*, the mere administration of baptism, by whatever hands the symbol of the covenant may be poured upon us, that can constitute us authorized expectants of heaven: if we are not *personally* holy—if our *conscience* is not sprinkled with atoning blood—does not attest our pardon and our purity—utterly unavailing will any or all outward ordinances prove, to exempt us from the coming wrath.

Do you institute the enquiry, Who then shall be saved? The response uttered by the lively oracles is,—They, who being *born again*, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by *the word of God*, which liveth and abideth forever, purify their souls in obeying *the truth*, through the Spirit; they who are cleansed, being washed with water *by the word*. ‘The TRUTH as it is in Jesus,’ is the great instrument by which the Holy Spirit operates in saving souls from the power and pollution of sin. Correctly speaking, it is, in point of fact, the *only* instrument: detached from it, no Christian ordinances, no species of moral discipline, can

exercise a hallowing influence. ‘Sanctify them *through thy truth*, thy word is truth,’ is the comprehensive petition of the Great Intercessor. And that word ingrafted, received with meekness, *is able to save the soul*. It is adequate to our every spiritual exigency. Need we to be renewed in the spirit of our minds? ‘Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth.’—To possess a standard of holy rectitude? ‘The perfect law of liberty’ holds up a celestial mirror, by looking into which we may discover every beauty and blemish of our souls.—Encouragement to rise to all the life of God? There ‘are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we might be partakers of the Divine nature.’ Washed thus with water by the word, we are prepared to join the spirits before the throne, and await with them the final presentation of the church to her heavenly Bridegroom. The long-expected,—the illustrious morn *will break*; it draws on apace! From the excellent glory the Holy One utters his voice, ‘Behold I come quickly!’ And shall not his church respond with transport—‘Even so, come Lord Jesus!’

Then will he present her to himself a glorious church: *Glorious*—in a complete and final triumph over the adversaries that sought her overthrow. Hail thou highly favoured of the Lord!—Where are now the ‘sons of them that afflicted thee’? Behold, ‘they come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.’ The accuser of the brethren, too, is cast down, and shall stain thy lustre with the breath of his calumny no more. Even ‘death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’

Glorious—in the position assigned her amid the unshaded splendours of God and the Lamb.—‘And I saw no

temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.'

Glorious—especially in her perfect resemblance to Christ. Now is the high anticipation realized,—‘When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.’ ‘And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.’ She has exchanged forever the spots of sin for the beauties of holiness; the wrinkles of disease and decay for the bloom and vigor of immortal youth. To the all-piercing eye of Christ himself she appears *holy and without blemish*. He surveys her with infinite complacency. In the presence of his Father, and before admiring angels, he claims her as the meed of his sufferings, and honours her with a participation of his throne!

Dark must that mind be, and insensible the heart, that can dwell in meditation on the subject that has now engaged our thoughts, and remain unimpressed with the grandeur of redemption;—a plan laid in the councils of eternity—whose completion demanded the humiliation, personal struggles, and atoning death of Messiah the Prince; and which is destined to issue in the most signal evolution of the divine glory, and the unimaginable felicity of redeemed myriads! O when will the sons of men cease to contemn that which fills angelic minds with supreme wonder, and wakes to ecstasy all the harps of heaven! Tell me not of the treasures of human learning—of the creations of genius—the pleasures of science—or

the lessons of philosophy. These meet not my wants as a sinner, on my way to the judgment-seat; they disclose not to me the glory of God. Those things that were gain to me, I count loss for Christ; yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the EXCELLENCY of *the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*. O brethren—to be found *in Him* in that day! to rank with them that *love his appearing*, and who shall receive from his hands a crown of righteousness! Compared with this, the highest objects of human ambition—the most envied pleasures or possessions, of which earth is the scene, and time the limit, are dust upon the scale. ‘Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.’

This subject, while it teaches us highly to appreciate the privilege of being members of the visible church, solemnly admonishes us not to rest in a *form* of godliness while destitute of its *power*. Vain is the boast—‘The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are *we*’—if we worship not the Father in spirit and in truth. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Is your soul the sanctuary of the Holy Ghost? Has the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, *purged your conscience* from dead works to serve the living God? And, are you perfecting holiness in his fear? If not—call yourself an Episcopalian, a Presbyterian, an Independent, a *Roman* or an *Anglo-Catholic*; but do not, whatever else you pretend, do not set up for a member of the *household of faith*; do not deceive your own soul by imagining that you have either lot or part in this matter. The Lord Jesus rebukes your pretensions, and repudiates your claim—‘If I *wash thee not*, thou hast no part with me.’

To conclude :—Jehovah has graciously promised—‘ In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.’ Henceforth will His name be recorded in *this* place. And you possess the best guarantee that human precaution could suggest or legal guards afford, that by the succession of Ministers whom the British Conference may appoint to fill this pulpit, *the faith once delivered to the saints* shall be continuously exhibited, defended, and enforced,—unmutilated by human tradition, unobscured by the dogmas of superstition. Be it however remembered that, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase. Without him, even under the most favoring auspices, we can do nothing. It is not by human might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord, that the living trophies of the Cross are multiplied, that the true interests of the church advanced. How monitory is the prophetic announcement—‘ Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers ; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city ; because the palaces shall be forsaken ; the multitude of the city shall be left ; the forts and towers shall be dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks, *until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high*, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.’ O! then brethren, pray for us—pray for *yourselves*—that in this new sanctuary the word of the Lord—attended with a special unction, may have free course and be glorified.—‘ Now, my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and let thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place : let thy Ministers, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness!’

