



SUNDAY READING

MORNING SERVICE.

MORNING.

O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts.

The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

A Prayer.

Our Heavenly Father, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to Thee. We leave this place but we cannot go away from Thee; we part from each other, but from Thee we cannot part. Thy presence is ever with us, and we are ever in Thy merciful and faithful care. Help us ever to live as children of the light; upright, simple, pure, free from all evil, just and kind to all. May we ever hear our Shepherd's voice, and follow Him always and in all things, that the life we live here on earth may be full of blessing to Thy children, and that we may love and serve Thee in joy and peace for ever. Amen.

HYMN.

God of heaven! hear our singing;
Only little ones are we,
Yet a great petition bringing,
Father, now we come to Thee.

Let Thy kingdom come, we pray Thee,
Let the world in Thee find rest;
Let all know Thee, and obey Thee,
Loving, praising, blessing, blessed.

Let the sweet and joyful story
Of the Saviour's wondrous love,
Wake on earth a song of glory,
Like the angels' song above.

Father, send the glorious hour,
Every heart be Thine alone!
For the kingdom, and the power,
And the glory are Thine own.

Of the Profit of Adversity.

It is good that we have sometimes some troubles and crosses: for they often make a man enter into himself, and consider that he is here in banishment, and ought not to place his trust in any worldly thing.

It is good that we be sometimes contradicted, and that men think ill or inadequately; and this, although we do and intend well.

These things help often to the attaining of humility, and defend us from vain glory: for then we are more inclined to seek God for our inward witness, when outwardly we are condemned by men, and when there is no credit given unto us.

And therefore a man should settle himself so fully in God, that he need not to seek many comforts of men.

When a good man is afflicted, tempted, or troubled with evil thoughts: then he understandeth better the great need he hath of God, without whom he perceiveth he can do nothing that is good.

Then also he sorroweth, lamenteth, and prayeth, by reason of the miseries he suffereth.

Then he is weary of living longer, and wisheth that death would come, that he might depart and be with Christ.

Then also he will perceive, that perfect security and full peace cannot be had in this world.

SERMON.

Wisdom With Simplicity.

BY REV. JAMES STARK, OF ABERDEEN.

Preached in Elgin-place Congregational Church, Glasgow.

"Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."—Matt. x. 16.

The serpent has from the earliest times been used as an emblem of mental acuteness and sagacity, and the dove has been used as an emblem of innocence and guileless purity. It is interesting to notice how many of the lower creatures are made the types or symbols of properties of mind and traits of character belonging to man.

The wolf and the sheep, the tiger and the bear and the lion, in their nature and appearance and habits reflect features of human character and conduct. You have all seen the human bear, the human fox, the human sheep, the human lion. When you look upon the eagle and hawk and dove you have certain types of men forcibly suggested to the mind. Man finds himself mirrored in all his phases and moods of creation, and nowhere more than in the lower creatures, authority over which has been given to man by his Maker. But there is this noticeable circumstance in connection with these comparisons of men with the beasts, that they usually represent and shadow forth only a single quality or characteristic. Such a combination as this suggested in our text does not exist in nature. May we not add that it does not exist in the natural disposition or character of man? How few there are who naturally and without any special Divine aid can blend acute discernment with gentle childlike simplicity. Do we not generally find the serpents by themselves and the doves by themselves amongst men, as well as in the animal creation? Each property is found by itself, without the order in sufficient degree to qualify it, and it is consequently exaggerated. In such circumstances the danger is of the wisdom becoming cunning, and the harmlessness weakness. The tendency of the vigorous nature is to become masterful and harsh, or crafty and over-reaching, and the simplicity to be honored becomes the simplicity that is despised. Man who is sturdily reasonable neglects to cultivate childlike humility, and in his self-assertion and bold ingenuity is very frequently rationalistic: and woman, trustful, clinging woman, if she does not seek to admit the light, becomes superstitious and priest-

thralled. France at the present time exemplifies this very abundantly. God grant that the exemplification may not come to this side of the channel.

The Claims of Intellect.

But Christ, who seeks our well-ordered perfection, would have us to unite with the serpent and the dove portray. Moreover they can be united in more or less perfect proportions, and, indeed, to be without this combination is not only to be ill-proportioned, but also to be an endless cause of mischief and suffering to ourselves or others. No man who has Christ in him has any right to have the one without the other, to have the wisdom without the harmlessness, or the harmlessness without the wisdom. His intellect is not given to him that he may do violence to his heart, or conscience, and the moral nature is not intended to dull or deaden his understanding. He should feel bound to cultivate clearness of perception and purity of motive—the one with the other. He is not to be an evil designer, nor yet the helpless victim of imposition, neither the hawk nor the dove. He should have an unquestioning and unflinching devotion to principle, and yet he must be careful, lest his good be evil spoken of, or weakened, or dimmed by his ignorance, fanaticism or indiscretion. He is to be righteous, but wholesomely and intelligently righteous—"a child in malice, a man in understanding." So Christ said to his disciples, "Beloved I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore as wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves." Do not go recklessly, thoughtlessly, needlessly into danger. Use your intelligence to insure your safety. While you are ready, when shut up to it, to suffer for the sake of the truth it need be, be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

The law of proportion, which includes the combination of opposites, the balance and the counterbalance of diverse forces should be brought into play in our character as well as in other parts of the domain of God. In order to attain that, what we need is not something less than what we have, but something more. Sinfulness error, whether moral or intellectual, is a negation. It arrives from a defect. Cunning or craft is not too much ingenuity or skill, but too little moral principle or purpose to use it. Credulity is not too much trustfulness—we cannot have too much trustfulness—but too little intelligence to guide it. The artful man has not too much nimbleness of mind, only too little of honesty of purpose. The politic man is not too judicious and shrewd, only too weak in his attachment to unchanging principle. The fanatic is not overburdened with zeal, but zeal without knowledge. Each of these, wisdom or harmlessness by itself, is sure to err. There cannot fail to be excess of the one when unaccompanied by the other, but the excess of the one is owing to deficiency in the other. There have been pietists in all ages that denied the intelligence its due. The Scriptures never do that. On the contrary, they exhort us to be "men in understanding," to let our love abound more and more in knowledge in all judgment, "to prove all things," to be diligent, discerning, sober-minded. The wisdom of this world that the New Testament warns us against is not scholarship, is not sound research. It is Greek philosophies, Rabbinical follies, traditions, attempts to explain what revelation was alone competent to explain, man's imaginings taking the place of sound intelligence. The New Testament has ever been the friend of light, the ally of sound intelligence. It brightens the intellect. It delivers the mind from pettiness and prejudice, it trains us to largeness of view. As a matter of fact, history shows that experimental religion of New Testament pattern, not of the mere ecclesiastical order, exerts a liberating and stimulating effect upon the intellect.

Light and Love in the Home.

Let me speak of knowledge and sincerity; light as well as love in social and domestic life. As God has given us eyes, it is impossible for us to see too well, and the same may be said of the intellectual vision. Our gaze may be intrusive, impertinent, and then we see too well and know too much, but so long as the attention is turned not to forbidden but to legitimate objects, that attention should be thorough and searching. If faults and shortcomings are there, let them be recognized as such, whether in ourselves or in others; Christian charity shows itself not in being blind to faults of others, but is graciously bearing with them and with the gentle tact of the loving heart dealing with them. Much that goes under the name of amiability or good nature, is owing sometimes to dullness of perception as much as to enlightenment and active goodness. Obtuseness is not magnanimity. Bluntness or sensibility is not generous patience. It is the penetrating who are called to most long-suffering, as they perceive most occasion suffering, as they perceive most occasion for it, and it is only such who can be relied on in the hour of need. Who was it who world 1800 years ago? It was He who knew what was in man, who had an eye for every spot and blemish in the inner as well as outer life, and had a perfect holiness to recoil from what He saw, yet without that led Him to associate with sinners, to receive them, to be the de- upon what was good in them for the destruction of the evil. The self-righteous Pharisees fancied that ignorance was for all excuse that could be offered for allowing a certain person of unholy and unlovely life to touch Him. Little did they know of the clear burning light brought to bear upon the woman's sin, and therefore they were poorly qualified to judge on the goodness of Christ. It is the presence of the light that magnifies the love just as it is the absolute rectitude of God that exalts His mercy. You are not, therefore,

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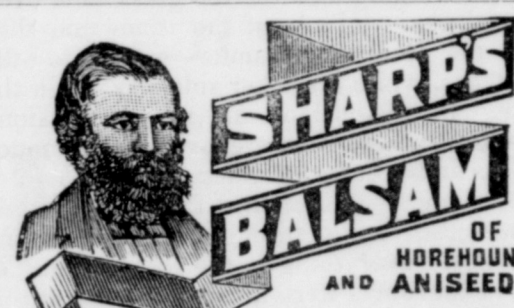
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