

# WRITINGS OF JOHN KENNEDY

by John Kennedy

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*A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by John Kennedy, compiled for study and devotional reading.*

3 Chapters

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## **S. HYPER-EVANGELISM: ANOTHER GOSPEL, THOUGH A MIGHTY POWER**

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HYPER-EVANGELISM: ANOTHER GOSPEL, THOUGH A MIGHTY POWER: By John Kennedy (1819-1884) Historical Introduction by Sherman Isbell In Reformed circles in Scotland today, John Kennedy of Dingwall (1819-1884) is regarded as the greatest champion of the Reformed faith in the Highlands during the latter years of the nineteenth century. If Kennedy was outspoken about the dangers resulting from a superficial presentation of the gospel, he had reason to understand that saving faith can be lacking in a profession of faith made under the most orthodox of ministries. Kennedy himself had only been converted in 1841 while in his second year of academic preparation for the ministry, and after the death of his father, who had exercised a compelling preaching ministry at Killearnan. Licensed to preach soon after the Disruption, Kennedy was settled as pastor of the Free Church of Scotland charge in the county town of Dingwall, in Ross-shire, where he remained for his entire ministry. There he served a congregation of over one thousand, half of whom were Gaelic speaking.

Through the years Kennedy was a stalwart opponent of the drift in Scottish Presbyterianism away from the Westminster Confession, allying himself with Hugh Martin and James Begg to resist erosion of the doctrine of the particular design in Christ's atoning work, and to contend for the propriety of a cooperative association of church and state to promote the true religion. The essay here reprinted appeared in 1874 in the wake of an evangelistic campaign by Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey, whose 1873 tour wrought a revolution of sentiment in Scotland. Scottish pastors, wishing to think the best, and inattentive to the new trends of thought and practice, were caught up in the swell of excitement. Though Kennedy was temperamentally disinclined to controversy, he was constrained to raise his voice for a full-orbed proclamation of the biblical gospel.

Kennedy's words of warning have an undiminished relevance in our generation, when constitutionally sound Presbyterian churches hear voices calling them to a presentation of the gospel which abandons the characteristic traits of a biblical and Reformed piety. Methods of church growth and evangelism, and practices of worship which are alien to the historic Reformed faith, are offered as helps to overcome the offense which sinners feel, and the indifference which they display, toward the Scriptures and a godly life. The features of modern American revivalism brought to Scotland by Moody are traceable to a man whose influence over evangelistic practice in our time has been immense, the Presbyterian minister Charles G. Finney (1792-1875). For an exceptionally fine critique of Finney's message and method, Iain H. Murray's address on Finney at the 1992 Banner of Truth Minister's Conference is available on tape for \$6 postpaid, from Sound Word Associates, P.O. Box 2035, Mall Station, Michigan City, IN 46360. At Kennedy's death, his friend C. H. Spurgeon—who had journeyed to Dingwall in 1870 to preach at the opening of the Free Church's new building—wrote of him as one "whom I venerated as every inch a man of God. His death was a loss to the Highlands greater than could have befallen by the death of any other hundred men. True as steel and firm as a rock, he was also wonderfully tender and sympathetic."

Further information about Kennedy can be found in Maurice Roberts' address at the centenary of Kennedy's death: "Dr John Kennedy—A Memorial Sketch," Banner of Truth, Issue 251-252, Aug-Sept 1984. Two books in which Kennedy wrote of the history of the Reformed faith in the Highlands have been reprinted in Scotland in recent years: Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire, and The Apostle of the North.

#### Hyper-Evangelism:

Another Gospel, Though A Mighty Power When a movement is in progress in our land, during which many are awakened to thought and feeling as to eternal things who were utterly unthinking and insensate before, when thousands think that they have lately believed in Christ, and with the joy of assurance profess that they have found Him, when from the church are seen issuing many who have enlisted as recruits in a crusade against the ungodliness and unbelief of the world, when so many who have a high position and commanding influence in the church declare that it is a gracious work of God by which these results have been produced, and when many more, believing this, are exceeding glad and abound in thanksgiving, sad, yea strained to breaking, must be the heart of one who seeks the glory of God and the salvation of souls, if he cannot share in the prevalent hopefulness and joy. Being one of those to whom the present movement has hitherto yielded more grief than gladness, I feel constrained to tell why I am a mourner and apart.

#### Preliminary Remarks

1. Those who, ere the movement had been developed into its abiding fruits, hastened to declare it to be a gracious work of God, must have laid claim to inspiration; and only if that claim is good can their judging be allowable. It may be legitimate to form an unfavorable judgment, even at the outset of a religious awakening, if the means employed in producing it are such as the Lord cannot be expected to bless; but a favorable verdict at that stage, no man, not a prophet, has any right to pronounce. Only He who "trieth the hearts and reins" can then judge. He allows His disciples to try to know men only by their fruits (Matthew 7:20). Not at the outset, and not by the immediate results, but by the fruits produced after the trial, does He allow them to form a favorable judgment regarding a religious movement (John 8:31). It is not enough to justify such a verdict, that souls are anxious, that anxious souls attain to a faith that is assured, and to a joy that is exceeding, and that a change of conduct and zealous service are for a season the result. All this was, once and again, under the ministry of Jesus Himself, without any lasting and saving result; and men are sadly forgetful and madly bold, who in the face of such a fact venture to trace similar appearances at once to a gracious work of God (John 6:6, John 6:8 and John 6:12).

2. One is not compelled to affirm that a religious movement is not a work of grace, if he refrains from saying that it is. This is a position into which some men, more zealous than discerning, seek to drive those who do not share their own blind sanguineness. I am not to judge, at the outset, except of the means employed, and if these are unscriptural, I am forbidden to expect a good result (Isaiah 8:20). If the means employed and the agents are unexceptionable, I can legitimately form no decided opinion of the work, till its fruits are in due time developed.

3. There is no necessity for regarding it as the great Deceiver's work, if it is considered not to be a gracious work of God. There are impressions, which are not saving, produced by Divine influence in connection with the gospel (Hebrews 6:4-6). The temporary impressions produced by the

preaching of Christ are instances of this. But that Satan can produce counterfeit, as surely as the Lord can make real, converts, I firmly believe. And when he is at work as "an angel of light," he best succeeds when men blindly accept, instead of wisely testing the results. There is surely some reason to fear that his hand is on the agents as well as on the subjects of the work, when neither are careful to apply the test of truth (John 3:20-21; 1 John 4:1).

4. If I regard with little hopefulness a movement over which so many are chanting songs of joy, till all Christendom bends its ear to the voice of gladness that thrills from our land, my saying so will suffice to make some men decry me as opposed to a revival of the work of the Lord. To this I lay my account. If the Lord knows that I am not, I feel not very anxious as to the judgment of men. But which of us incurs the greatest responsibility—you, who proclaim this movement to be a work of grace, or I, who cannot say that I as yet do so regard it? You commit the credit of true religion to cases which have not been proved—you point the attention of the ungodly to individuals whom you declare to be converts, and you call on them to judge of godliness by these; you tell those, who are suddenly impressed, that they have been born again, when you know not whether they were or not; you tell the Church to count on a great accession to her strength, when, so far as you know, only traitors may be added to her ranks; you say, with the voice of thanksgiving to God, that He has done a work which you cannot know that He will acknowledge to be His. Yours, at any rate, is a tremendous responsibility. And if your estimate is false—and you cannot as yet prove it to be true—how fearful the results must be! You will have hardened in ungodliness an unbelieving world; you will have flattered into delusive security precious perishing souls; you will have cheated the Church by inducing her to form a false estimate of her strength; and you will have dishonored God by ascribing to Him work which His hand had never wrought. I merely refrain from judging anything "before the time." What I judge now, I am required to judge. I form an opinion, as one bound to "try the spirits" of the doctrines and modes of service which are the means of advancing the movement. If I do so fairly, I am so far free from blame. If my estimate is proved to be false as well as unfavorable, I am guilty, and if I formed it under the influence of prejudice, I am very guilty; I suffer in the lack of the hope and gladness by which the hearts of others are so greatly stirred; and I incur a woe, if, under the influence of a biased opinion of the work, I refuse to take part in it, though called to do so by the Lord (Judges 5:23).

5. Of the means employed in promoting such a work, one is bound to judge. I am not to be blinded by dazzling results. A worthy end does not sanctify all the means that may be used in attaining it, nor does a seemingly good result justify all the means employed in producing it. Many seem to think that if they choose to call a religious movement a work of grace, no fault should be found with any instrumentality employed in advancing it. All must be right, they think, if the result is to be regarded as a revival of the work of God. To censure any doctrine preached or any mode of worship practiced, seems to them to be opposition to the good work, and to tend to mar its progress. They may be of the same opinion, as to the impropriety of some of the means which are employed, with those who do not refrain from condemning them, but for the work's sake they tolerate them. As if the Lord's work could receive aid from ought that was unscriptural! An enemy's hand is surely here. May it not be, that under cover such as this, the deceiver is introducing into the creed and worship of the Church what shall be statedly obstructive to a real work of grace? Some there are who have this fear. It were well if all were careful lest this should be the result of acquiescence in unscriptural teaching and practices.

6. Some ministers, who took part with hesitation in the movement, justify their having done so by declaring their object to have been to check irregular tendencies, and to shape the development of the work. And what has been the issue of their prudence? They merely serve to swell the volume, while utterly powerless to control the force, of the current. Hundreds of ministers have I seen, sitting as disciples at the feet of one, whose teaching only showed his ignorance even of "the principles of the doctrine of Christ"; who, to their face, called the churches, which they represented, "first-class mobs"; was organizing before their eyes an association, for religious objects, outside the churches, which may yet prove as troublesome as the naked forces of the world; was casting ridicule on their old forms of worship, which they were sworn to uphold; and was proposing to convert prayer meetings into occasions of religious amusement, a change he certainly did not ask them to approve, without giving them a specimen, which excited the laughter of thousands, and gave to themselves a sensation of merry making in the house of the Lord.

7. I carefully refrain from forming an estimate of the results of this work, as these are to be found in individual cases. I confine myself to the general character of the movement, in so far as that is determined by the more prominent teaching under which it has advanced, and in connection with its bearing on the religious condition of the country. I most persistently continue to hope that good has been done; for even were I persuaded that Satan was busy in forging counterfeits, I cannot conceive what would induce him to do so, unless he was provoked by a genuine work of grace which he was anxious to discredit and to mar.

There are two reasons why I cannot regard the present religious movement hopefully. 1. Because the doctrine which is the means of impression seems to me to be "another gospel," though a mighty influence. Hyper-Evangelism I call it, because of the loud professions of evangelism made by those who preach it; and because it is just an extreme application of some truths, to the neglect of others which are equally important parts of the great system of evangelic doctrine. 2. Because unscriptural practices are resorted to in order to advance the movement. In forming an estimate of the doctrine that was mainly effective in advancing the movement, I had sufficient materials at hand. I heard the leading teacher repeatedly, and I perused with care published specimens of his addresses. I have before me as I write what appears to me amply to justify all that I venture to affirm. Those who were present to hear, will recollect enough to enable them to judge of the correctness of my account of the kind of instruction by which such marked and frequent impressions were produced. My objection to the teaching to which I refer, is, that it ignores the supreme end of the gospel, which is the manifestation of the Divine glory; and misrepresents it as merely unfolding a scheme of salvation adapted to man's convenience. It drops the first note of the angel's song, in which the gospel is described as "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." This objection has grown and has been confirmed in my mind, by considering, 1. That no pains are taken to present the character and claims of God as Lawgiver and Judge, and no indication given of a desire to bring souls, in self-condemnation, to "accept the punishment of their iniquity." 2. That it ignores the sovereignty and power of God in the dispensation of His grace. 3. That it affords no help to discover, in the light of the doctrine of the cross, how God is glorified in the salvation of the sinner that believeth in Jesus. 4. That it offers no precaution against tendencies to antinomianism on the part of those who profess to have believed.

I. No pains are taken to present the character and claims of God as Lawgiver and Judge, and no indication given of a desire to bring souls in self-condemnation, to accept the punishment of their

iniquity. The law of God has its place in the book, and its use in the work of God. "By the law is the knowledge of sin"; and the Spirit, who convinces of sin, uses it in that department of His work. A due regard to the glory of God demands that it be so used. Sinners are not to be saved on a misunderstanding as to what they are, and as to what they merit. They must know Him against whom they have sinned. They must know what is justly due to Him from them as His creatures. They must be made acquainted with their iniquity as well as guilt, as sinners. And through the coming of the commandment sin must "revive" in their consciousness, so that they know that they are desperately wicked, as surely as that their persons are condemned to die. Without this they can have no conception of gospel grace. Any hope attained to without this, can only be based on a misunderstanding, and must involve dishonor to God. God is not to be conceived of as one who has to study man's convenience only, instead of supremely consulting his own glory. It should be an aim of preaching, therefore, to bring sinners to plead guilty before God; to feel themselves, in excuseless guilt, shut up to the sovereign mercy of Him against whom they have sinned. The attainment of this may be the result of a moment's working of the power of God, or it may be reached only after a protracted process; but to this all must come who are reconciled to God.

True, it cannot be expected that the operation of the applied law, on an unrenewed soul, can ever bring him to submit to God's claims as a Lawgiver, or to His terms as a Savior. Subjection of the will to the law, is as impossible as submission to "the righteousness of God," on the part of an unregenerate sinner. And this is one reason why this is not insisted on in ultra-evangelic teaching. To insist on God's claims—to consider what is due to God in the personal transaction between the sinner and Him as to peace—would bring the moral as well as the legal difficulty into view, and thus the necessity of the new birth would have to be faced as well as that of atonement. The latter cannot be passed over by any who profess to preach the gospel at all, though in the teaching referred to it is most perfunctorily dealt with; but the former, as shutting up souls to repentance, to which only the renewed can attain, is most persistently ignored. And this is done professedly in the interests of gospel grace. To require men to consider the claims of God as Lawgiver and Judge, in order that they may feel themselves shut up to His mercy as Sovereign, seems to such teachers to be raising an obstruction between sinners and the grace of the gospel. It seems hard to them that man's convenience should be interfered with by the claims of God. A call to repentance, therefore, never issues from their trumpet. In their view, there is no place for repentance either before or after conversion. A vague brief sense of danger is all that is required at the outset; and converts are taught that, once they have believed, they are not to remember and mourn for their sins. "Why raise up your sins again, to think of and to confess them?" their leading teacher said to them; "for were they not disposed of nearly two thousand years ago? Just believe this, and go home, and sing, and dance." It is no wonder, then that they decry as not evangelical the preaching that does not ignore repentance. But they forget that, on the same ground, they might bring this charge against the Word of God itself; and not only against the Book of Exodus, but against the Epistle to the Romans as well, the writer of which had not learned how to bring men to know the grace of the gospel, except by bringing them first to know God and His law, their sin and its demerit, and their hearts and their desperate wickedness. What a strange delusion men labor under who imagine that what is essential to any right appreciation of the grace of God and to an intelligent submission to it, must be dispensed with, in order to guard the freeness of the gospel! By a "free gospel" they can only intend to indicate a gospel that suits a sinner's disposition, instead of being adapted to his state, that dispenses with all humbling of the soul before God, and of which man, unaided, can

make sure. Verily, for the defense of such a gospel, repentance must be excluded. The favorite doctrine of sudden conversion is practically a complete evasion of the necessity of repentance. Suddenness is regarded as the rule, and not the exception, in order to get rid of any process preliminary to faith. And on what ground do they establish this rule? Merely on the instances of sudden conversion recorded in Scripture. True, there are cases not a few of sudden conversion recorded in Scripture, and there have been such instances since the Book of God was sealed. There was a wise and gracious design in making them thus marked at the outset. They were intended, by their extraordinary suddenness, to show to all ages the wondrous power of God. But was their suddenness designed to indicate the rule of God's acting in all ages? This it will be as difficult to establish, as that the miraculous circumstances attending some of them were intended to be perpetual. The work of conversion includes what we might expect to find detailed in a process. There can be no faith in Christ without some sense of sin, some knowledge of Christ—such as never was possessed before—and willingness, resulting from renewal, to receive Him as a Savior from sin. If a hearty intelligent turning to God in Christ be the result of conversion, it is utterly unwarrantable to expect that, as a rule, conversion shall be sudden. Indeed, the suddenness is rather a ground of suspicion than a reason for concluding that the work is God's. The teaching of Christ, in the parable of the sower, warrants this suspicion. They who are represented as suddenly receiving the word with joy are those who, in time of temptation, fall away. Suddenness and superficiality are there associated, and with both ephemerality. In the experience of some, whose conversion was sudden, there was, as in the case of the Apostle of the Gentiles, an after-process, intended to prepare them for useful service in the church. And is it not the fact, that those, who were most remarkable, in latter times, for their godliness and their usefulness, were the subjects of a detailed and extended process, before attaining to "peace and joy in believing"? The extremely unguarded use of the statement, that it is through faith, and not through feeling, salvation is attained, tends to the same effect. True, there is a danger of hampering oneself by the idea that, unless there is a certain state of conscious feeling, an effort to believe is vain. There is a danger, too, of substituting feeling for faith, and of resting on a certain experience, instead of on what is objectively presented in the Word, as a ground of hope. All earnest souls are apt, at a certain stage, to search for the warrant of faith in their own state of feeling, rather than in the written Word. True, reception of Christ is the immediate duty of all who hear the gospel; and nought can excuse their not doing so. But is it not extremely dangerous even to appear to say that faith is the opposite of feeling? Does not faith itself express a state of feeling? Is it not an exercise of the heart as well as of the understanding? Those who so thoroughly separate faith and feeling, are led to regard faith as merely the assent of the understanding to certain statements regarding the way of salvation. And is it not the practice of some evangelists to press men to believe certain propositions, while telling them that their state of feeling is to be made no account of, that they are just to receive these as true, and that, if they do so, they are to regard that belief as faith, and at once to conclude that they are saved because they have so believed? It seems to be imagined that, in order to have in faith the opposite of works, it is necessary to reduce it to mere belief. But in reality this is but to place it on the same footing with works. Faith, as mere belief, is considered to be something within the power of all; and, by reducing it to a minimum of effort, both as to time and action, it is made to appear to be something different from protracted self-righteous labor. But it is only different as an easier thing for men to do. Never can faith be truly seen to be opposed to works, till it is considered as indicating a state of feeling—till it is seen to be

a "believing with the heart"; for it is only when it is regarded as a hearty reception of Christ Himself as "all in all," that salvation through faith can be recognized as salvation by grace. To some minds the facility and the suddenness seem essential to the graciousness of faith. They reduce it to mere belief, that men may appear able to do it, and it must be done at once, that there may be no room for repentance, and that it may appear to be something else than a work. But there never was more legal doctrine delivered, than that of those, who urge men to mere belief, in order to salvation.

II. It ignores the sovereignty and power of God in the dispensation of His grace. This omission is usually justified on the ground, that references to these are apt to be abused or to give needless offense. If men are to be told that salvation is entirely at the disposal of God's sovereign will, and that sinners are so utterly lost that only the working of God's power can move them either to will or to do what is required by the claims of the law and by the call of the gospel, then the result will be, that some will be offended and go away, others fold their hands and sleep, and others still sink down into despair. Am I therefore to refrain from proclaiming Jehovah as King? Am I to be silenced by fear of the result of telling that it is His right to regulate, by His own sovereign will, His own work of grace? Am I not rather very specially called to announce His sovereignty in connection with salvation? In no other sphere does he appear more gloriously kingly than in this. Did not the Divine preacher make the sovereignty of God the theme of His very first sermon, though His hearers were thereby so incensed, that only by a miracle could He preserve His life from their fury (Luke 4)? And did He not, in all His preaching, ascribe salvation to the sovereign will of the Father who sent Him?

Men, anxious to secure a certain result, and determined to produce it, do not like to think of a controlling will, to whose sovereign behests they must submit, and of the necessity of almighty power being at work, whose action must be regulated by another will than theirs. Certain processes must lead to certain results. This selfish earnestness, this proud resolve to make a manageable business of conversion work, is intolerant of any recognition of the sovereignty of God. "Go to the street," said the great American evangelist to a group of young ladies who were seated before him, "and lay your hand on the shoulder of every drunkard you meet, and tell him that God loves him, and that Christ died for him; and if you do so, I see no reason why there should be an unconverted drunkard in Edinburgh for forty-eight hours.

There is of course frequent reference to the Spirit, and an acknowledgment of the necessity of His work, but there is, after all, very little allowed to Him to do; and bustling men feel and act as if somehow His power was under their control. There is a prevalent notion, only in a few utterances assuming definite shape, that there is a pervading gracious presence of the Holy Spirit, requiring only, in order to its effective influence, a certain state of feeling and certain amount of effort. There is prayer, but many who engage in it look around them for an overflowing, rather than upward for an outpouring, of the Spirit of promise. There is prayer, but it is rather to constitute a ground of hope, than the result of reaching that which is set before us in the gospel. Faith in the efficacy of prayer is far more common than faith in the Hearer of prayer. Prayer, in order to produce expectation, may seem to be followed by an answer, when the susceptibility, caused by the hopefulness it engendered, accounts for all the result.

It is true that it is quite as unwarrantable to expect the outpouring of the Spirit, without prayer for His coming, as it is to hope for His coming because this has been asked. There is a call and encouragement to ask, and those who ask in faith shall never ask in vain; but the asking is under the sovereign control of God as surely as the giving. I believe, too, that men professing to ask for the coming of the Comforter, may really be asking something else, and may, in answer to their cry, be receiving as a judgment what they regard as a mercy. It is also true that to pray for the Spirit's coming, and not to employ, in all earnestness, the means which He has been wont to acknowledge and to use, is nothing short of presumption. To wait for His coming is not to be idle till He comes. But it is also true, that those, who are blindly craving some excitement, may be preparing instruments to be used by some other power than that of the Spirit of the Lord. The prayers and the efforts, the asking and the preparation, may correspond, but the one may be directed towards something else than that which is presented in the promise of the Lord, and the other adapted for another hand than that by which the promise is fulfilled. It is true, besides, that the withholding of the Spirit, in His gracious influences, is a token of the Lord's anger provoked by iniquity, but it is terrible to think of an impenitent people, regarding as a gracious work of God that which is really not so, that, under covert of an imagined mercy, they may remain at ease in their sins, and congratulate themselves on having been favored by the Lord, without having to part with their idols. In the present movement, at any rate, there seems to be little that is allowed of work to the Spirit of the Lord. In the prominent teaching, there is no exposure of the total depravity and the utter spiritual impotence of souls "dead in trespasses and sins." To face this reality in the light of God's word, would be to discover the necessity of the Almighty agency of the Holy Ghost. This cannot be endured. But another reason must be assigned for avoiding the doctrine of total depravity. To preach it is decried as treating men as inert matter, to be wrought upon, but never to be active. This must not be preached to sinners, it is said, lest they fold their hands and sleep. They are intelligent and responsible beings, and must be differently dealt with. And how do you propose to treat them? Are you to hide from them what they must know, ere they can ever act as intelligent beings in dealing with their souls' condition? Are you to set them to work, as if they were what they are not? Is this your way of urging them to act as becomes responsible beings? You would hoodwink their understandings, and misdirect the movements to which their sense of responsibility urges them! But you hide the true state of things from yourselves as well as from them. You do so that you may have hope of success. You have no faith in the Spirit of God. You cannot bear, therefore, to discover that there is a great work for Him to do; and you cannot endure to feel dependent on His love, for you cannot trust in it as the love of God; and if you think of it as Divine, you know that you must also think of it as sovereign. And you would fain account the work to be done as not too much for your own power of persuasion; for you are ambitious of having it to do yourselves, as well as hopeless of having it done by the Lord. And yet, forsooth, you are the men who have faith, and those who differ from you are the dupes of unbelief. Yes, you are men of faith, but yours is faith in men. The man who can cry in faith for life, with a valley of dry bones before him, is the man who has faith in God.

Sometimes, an address may be heard, in which the necessity of regeneration is very strongly urged, but this is sure to be followed by some statement that blunts the edge of all that was said before. After some strong sayings about the necessity of regeneration, in one of the leader's addresses, the question was put, "How is this change to be attained?" And the speaker answered the question by saying, "You believe, and then you are regenerated"; and in confirmation, he

referred to John 1:12, forgetting the verse which follows! Faith regenerates! If it does so, as the act of a living soul, then the soul could not have been dead in sins. If it was, whence came the life put forth in believing? If that regenerating faith was the act of a dead soul, then a dead man, by his own act, brings himself alive! The same teacher said on another occasion, "God would not call men to believe, unless they had the power to do so." I would like to hear his answer to the question, Can natural men "love God with all their heart, and soul, and mind, and strength," who yet are required by God to do so? And how would he expound the words, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"; and the words of Jesus, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him."

There is a faith which can be exercised without the gracious aid of the Holy Ghost, but it cannot be the faith that is "to the saving of the soul." That is expressly declared to be "of the operation of God," and to require for its production "the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." That faith stakes the eternal all of an immortal being, who is a lost sinner, on the truth of Divine testimony. Can one do so who does not regard the testimony as Divine? Can one so regard it who does not realize that God is, and that He speaks in that testimony to him? Can a dead soul thus believe? As well expect a sense of your presence, and a response to your words, from the bones that lie mouldering in the grave, beside which you stand and speak. True, there may be a persuasion of the truth, arising from its correspondence to the dictates of conscience, and because of evidence which has led to a rational conviction of its divinity; for in the grave, in which lie the spiritually dead, there is still intellectual life and a moral faculty that may occasionally be very active. But this is something very different from the faith in God, which is the gift of God. That faith, too, respects the person of Christ. It does so, not merely as looking to the historical personage who appears in the inspired record, nearly two thousand years apart in the hazy past from us, who has left a gospel and a salvation with us, with which, apart from His person, we can deal by faith. It not only realizes Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ and the Son of God, but it apprehends Him as a living present Savior in the testimony of God regarding Him. It actually receives Him as He is actually presented by God. It embraces Himself in order to finding all in Him. It is not merely belief in testimony, it is also trust in the person who is presented therein. It is the homage of confidence in and submission to the Son of God as Jesus the Christ of God. That faith, besides, implies unreserved dependence on the grace of God. It is not merely taking advantage of a convenient ground of hope. It is an acknowledgement, at the foot stool of the Divine throne, of being justly condemned and of being utterly helpless,—It is the acceptance of salvation from the hands of the Sovereign in order "to the praise of His grace." That faith is, moreover, the cordial reception of Christ in order to salvation from all sin. It is not the mere appropriation of the boon of deliverance from death. This is all that is desired by those who allow themselves to be hurried vaguely to believe in the love of God, and the substitutionary death of Jesus. True faith is the act of a soul who, up to that hour, was a lover of sin and an enemy to holiness, but who now cordially receives the Savior in order to the destruction of what he loved, and to the attainment of what he hated before. Can a man thus believe who has not been regenerated by the Holy Ghost? And why hide from sinners that they cannot? Surely this cannot be wisely done in order to make the gospel more manifest. Which knows best about the grace of the gospel—the man who thinks he is saved by grace through a faith which he owes to himself alone, or the man who has also learned that the faith, through which he is saved, is not of himself,

but "is the gift of God"? Did Jesus hide this in His preaching from His hearers? Did He do so in His first sermon (Luke 4)? Did He do so in His first recorded dealing with an inquirer (John 3)? Did He not openly proclaim this in His great gospel sermon addressed to a multitude by the sea of Galilee (John 6)? It was while preaching that sermon He said, "No man can come unto me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw Him."

It does raise one's indignation to hear some men speak of what would conserve, to the Spirit of God, His place and His work, as a mere obscuration of the grace of the gospel, and a fettering of souls in bondage. But it grieves one's heart to know that this is tolerated, and even approved of, by some who ought to be more zealous for the grace and glory of the Lord, than to be able to endure it.

III. No care is taken to show, in the light of the doctrine of the cross, how God is glorified in the salvation of a sinner. The designed overliness with which the doctrine of sin is stated, necessarily leads to this. The omission of any definite unfolding of the law's claims, and of any distinct tracing of the sinner's relation to it and to God—the lack of all that would raise the question, "How can God be just in justifying the ungodly?"—leaves the anxious in such a state of mind and feeling, that all they require, to satisfy them, is to discover that they have a convenient warrant to hope. Neither teacher nor disciple seems to desiderate aught besides the assurance, that salvation can be reached through faith. The gospel seems convenient for man, and that suffices. How salvation is to the praise of God's glory the one is not careful to show, the other is not anxious to know. To any unprejudiced observer, this must have appeared a marked feature of revival teaching.

True, much use is made of Christ's substitutionary death. But it is usually referred to only as disposing of sin, so that it no longer endangers him who believes that Christ died for him—who accepts Christ as his substitute. This use of the doctrine of substitution has been very frequent and very effective. Christ, as the substitute of sinners, is declared to be the object of faith. But it is His substitution rather than Himself. To believe in the substitution is what produces the peace. This serves to remove the sense of danger. There is no direct dealing with the person who was the substitute. There is no appreciation of the merit of His sacrifice because of the Divine glory of Him by whom it was offered. Faith, in the convenient arrangement for deliverance from danger, is substituted for trust in the Person who glorified God on the earth, and "in whom" alone we can "have redemption through his blood." The blood of Jesus was referred to, and there was an oft-repeated "Bible reading" on the subject of "the blood"; but what approximation to any right idea regarding it could there be in the mind, and what but misleading in the teaching, of one who could say, "Jesus left His blood on earth to cleanse you, but He brought His flesh and bones to heaven"?

Souls who have a vague sense of danger excited by the sensational, instead of an intelligent conviction of sin, produced by the light and power of applied truth, are quite ready to be satisfied with such teaching as this. To these, such doctrine will bring all the peace they are anxious to obtain. But what is the value of that peace? It is no more than the quiet of a dead soul, from whom has been removed an unintelligent sense of danger. A true sense of peace with God there cannot be, unless a sinner, assured that God was glorified by Him who died on the cross, can, with reverence of His glorious name, approach Him in the right of the crucified and exalted Jesus, having hope of acceptance in His sight. To this he cannot attain till, in the light of the Son's glory, he appreciates the merit of Jesus' blood, comes to Christ Himself to appropriate His blood in Him,

approaches through Him to God, and receives, by the application of the promise of peace, a persuasion of acceptance, in faith, from the throne. Where there is no wounding, there can be no healing, of the conscience. The doctrine that can do neither can only do deceiver's work. A sinner having peace without knowing, or caring to know, how the law which he has transgressed hath been magnified, how the justice that demanded his death hath been satisfied, how the name of God which was by him dishonored has by Christ been glorified, and how what availed for these ends can be a ground of hope to him in the presence of the God with whom he hath to do, may have enjoyment, may be zealous, may be active, but cannot have "a good hope through grace."

IV. No precaution is offered against a tendency to antinomianism in those who profess to have believed.

Yea, this tendency must be fostered by the teaching given to them. If the law of God has not its own place accorded to it, in connection with the sinner's natural relation to God, and in order to conviction of sin, it is not likely to get it at a later stage. The man, who is disposed to think of his sin, as a great calamity, rather than as a heinous crime, is not likely either to reverence God or to respect His law. To his view, salvation is something which it would not be fair to withhold from him, rather than a gracious gift which a sovereign God is glorified in bestowing. The government under which he ventures to claim his salvation presents nothing venerable to his mind. He thinks of an easy reign of mercy, under which he can be as imperious as if his own will were law. In his altered position, it is easy for him to ignore the law of God. He never had to face it; and, if he has faith without life, there is nothing in him to incline him to do so now. Not having respect to the standard of God's law, it is easy for him to imagine that he is without sin. He is taught that now he has nothing to do with confession of sin, because his sins were long ago disposed of, and that he should not now remember them. As for "the corruption of his whole nature," it never was a trouble to him, and is less likely to be so now than before, since a delusive peace has drugged his soul to sleep. Antinomianism leading, in the first instance, to perfectionism, must be the result of the teaching under which he has been trained. In his leader's prayers he never hears any confession of sin, and he is apt to think that, if he follows him, he must be right. True, he is urged to work; and there is no service, however high, which, during his novitiate, he is not directed to attempt. The work which he is disposed to choose, and the first work he is instructed to engage in, is to preach to others what he himself has found. Meetings are multiplied that he may attend them, and crowds are gathered that he may address them. The excitement of his first impressions is thus to be kept up by the bustle of evangelistic service. And what kind of being is he likely to become under such training as this? A molluscous, flabby creature, without pith or symmetry, breathing freely only in the heated air of meetings, craving to be pampered with vapid sentiment, and so puffed up by foolish flattery, as to be in a state of chronic flatulency, requiring relief in frequent bursts of hymn singing, in spouting addresses as void of Scripture truth as of common sense, and in belching flippancy questions in the face of all he meets. Self-examination he discards as a torture only meant for slaves, humility and watchfulness as troublesome virtues which the wise will eschew, secret communions with God as a relic of less enlightened and less busy times, and the quiet habitual discharge of home duties, in the fear of God, as a tame routine for legalists. The doctrine of assurance, which is preached, tends to the same effect. Assurance is regarded as the direct result of faith, or as essential to its exercise. A consciousness of faith is of itself deemed a sufficient ground of assurance. There is no place at all allowed to an attestation of faith by works. True, faith

does often rise into assurance as to the sufficiency of Christ as its object, and of the Word of God as its warrant. There is a hope arising from the consciousness of this faith, as well as a hope occasioned by its exercise. But there is also a place reserved by God for the hope arising from the attestation of faith by works. And the Lord calls the believer to examine himself, as to fruits which his faith produceth, in order to ascertain that his faith is genuine, and that therefore Christ is already his. "Faith without works is dead." Where there is a careful disallowing of self-examination, there is sufficient proof of the law being ignored as the authoritative rule of the Christian's life. Suggestions to this exercise, are not infrequently decried as temptations of Satan, or as necessarily the result of backsliding. And why so? Because it is imagined that a man is not required to prove himself to be a genuine believer, by doing the will of Christ, in obedience to His law. And yet it will be on the ground of works, as evidence of true faith, that Christ Himself, on His great white throne, will justify the verdict which proclaims them blessed, who are heirs of the kingdom prepared by His Father. A religion without reverence and without contrition can alone be fostered under such teaching as this. But now, as surely as of old, "Thus saith the Lord," "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Now, as of old, the heirs of the "kingdom which cannot be moved," "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear"; and only in that measure can they taste "the peace of God," and "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

I make no attempt to trace, to its source, the influence exerted in producing the marked effects resulting from the present religious movement. I confine my attention to the advantage afforded by the feeling which preceded that movement, and to certain elements of power in the means employed to advance it.

It was preceded by a very prevalent desire for a change. All classes of religious society seemed to be stirred by a wistful longing for something to break up the dead monotony, of which all were wearying. Some were actuated by genuine spiritual feeling. They felt that tokens of the Lord's absence abounded; and turning to the Lord they cried for the manifestation of His power and glory. Others, strangers to stated spiritual enjoyment in the means of grace, were longing for some change—some excitement to lift them out of their dullness—and for some bustle in which they might take their share of service. Others still, who knew no happiness in the house of God, and had no desire for His presence, would fain that something new were introduced into the mode of service which they felt so jading. The excitement of a revival would be to them a relief. "Special services" they strongly craved. Prayer for a revival was called for; and many were ready to take part in the meetings convened for that purpose. These meetings resulted in the hope of an answer. Though but few truly appreciated what was needed, and really dealt with God, we cannot but hope that something was done by the Lord in answer to their cry. But many there were who merely craved a change—something to relieve them of the tedium of a routine in which they found no enjoyment, because they were estranged from God—and who joined, in asking this, with those who were asking something better. These were the persons disposed to make much of their prayers, and who found it easy to hope just because they had chosen to ask; and they may have received, though not in mercy, what they sought. The expectation of a change, at any rate, was general. There was an opening up of men's minds to an expected influence. This tended to affect even the Gallios who "cared for none of those things." A revival was talked of, prayed for, and expected, and thus a general susceptibility of impression was produced. Prayer meetings,

fostering the desire and expectation of a change, were in all places the pioneers of the movement. Those who heard that a revival had taken place elsewhere, sought that it might reach their own locality. Many blindly asked for what was done in other places, instead of seeking the fulfillment of the Lord's promise. In course of time, musical practicings were added to prayer meetings, as preparation for a revival! From both the addresses and the music much was expected, when evangelistic deputies arrived. What the effect would have been, had the awakened expectancy been left to be operated on by the stated ministrations of the sanctuary, or by extraordinary efforts that introduced no departure from the usual mode of worship, no one can tell; but I cannot refrain from expressing my persuasion, that the result would have been a healthier one than that which new appliances developed. But on this wakeful state of mind was brought to bear a system of doctrine that ignored those aspects of the truth which are most offensive to "the natural man," and that, while offering something that seemed plausible to an unenlightened conscience, seemed to conserve the old heart's imagined independence of the sovereign and almighty grace of God, and by ignoring repentance preserved to it its idols. The gospel, modified to suit the taste of unrenewed men, was welcome. The recommendations of it, given by men of influence, tended to put down suspicion, and to induce the public to receive it as "the gospel of the grace of God." The new style of teaching made it seem such an easy thing to be a Christian. To find oneself easily persuaded to believe what was presented as the gospel, and to think that by this faith salvation was secured, and that all cause of anxiety was for ever gone, gave a new and pleasing sensation, which thousands were willing to share. And once the movement had begun it could command an indefinite supply of agents. All who say they were converted are set to work. Anyone who can tongue it deftly, can take a part,—he requires neither knowledge nor experience. The excitement is kept up by the bustle of public service. No fear is felt of lifting up novices "lest they fall into the condemnation of the devil." That feeling may have been suitable in Paul's day, but it has now ceased to be so regarded. But there is a fear of converts ceasing to seem to be so, if they are not kept busy in religious service. A proselytizing bustle must therefore be the outcome of their faith. There is an utter avoidance of testing work on the part of their instructors; but attesting work enough is done. They have at once been proclaimed Christians in their own hearing, and in the presence of thousands; and those who presume to tell them this are quite ready to join with themselves in thinking that they are fit for any service that they may choose to try. A season apart, to be alone with God, a solemn time for careful counting of the cost, has from Christ the double recommendation of His example and of His precept, but is desired neither by nor for these so-called converts. To these advantages for effect were added various devices, which, though quite unscriptural, or rather, because they were so, were fraught with impressing power.

### Unscriptural Devices

1. Excessive hymn singing is one of these. The singing of uninspired hymns even in moderation, as a part of public worship, no one can prove to be scriptural; but the excess and the misdirection of the singing in this movement were irrational as well. Singing ought to be to the Lord; for singing is worship. But singing the gospel to men has taken the place of singing praise to God. This, at an rate, is something new—that indeed is its only recommendation—and when the singing is also good, its melody combines with its novelty to make an impression. The singing produced an effect. Many professed to have been converted by the hymns.

2. The use of instrumental music was an additional novelty, pleasing to the kind of feeling that finds pleasure in a concert. To introduce what is so gratifying there, into the service of the house of God, is to make the latter palatable to those to whom spiritual worship is an offense. The organ sounds effectively touch chords which nothing else would thrill. To Scottish Presbyterians this was something new; but as their spiritual guides did not object to it, why should they? Tided thus, by their pastors, over all difficulties which their scruples might occasion, they found it pleasant to enjoy the new sensation. They could be at the concert and in church at the same time. They could get at once something for conscience and something for the flesh. And yet it is not difficult to prove that the use of instrumental music in the worship of God is unscriptural, and that therefore all who have subscribed the Confession of Faith are under solemn vow against it. There was a thorough change, in the mode of worship, effected by the revolution which introduced the New Testament dispensation. So thorough is this change that no part of the old ritual can be a precedent to us. For all parts of the service of the house of God there must be New Testament precept or example. No one will pretend that for instrumental music, in the worship of God, there is any authority in New Testament Scripture. "The fruit of the lips," issuing from hearts that make "melody to the Lord," is the only form of praise it sanctions. The Church of Rome claims a right to introduce into the worship of God any innovation it lists; the Church of England allows what is not expressly forbidden in Scripture; but Scotch Presbyterians are bound, by the Confession of Faith, to disallow all that is not appointed in Scripture (Confession, chapter 21). How those, who allow the use of instrumental music in our Assembly Hall, can reconcile their doing so with their ordination vows, I cannot even conjecture.

It may seem strange, but it is quite as true as it is strange, that those who are ready to plead that principles and doctrine, inculcated under the former dispensation, are no longer entitled to our acceptance, unless redelivered with New Testament sanctions, are just the parties who are also ready to go back to Old Testament antecedents in the mode of worship. What is eternally true is treated as if it were temporary, and that which has "vanished away" is regarded as perpetual. But if the ancient mode of conducting the service of praise furnishes an example for all time, on the self-same ground you are entitled to choose what you list out of the ceremonies of Old Testament worship. The altar and the sacrifice may be defended as surely as the organ.

"But we use the organ only as an aid," it is said. "It is right that we should do our best in serving the Lord; and if the vocal music is improved by the instrumental accompaniment, then surely the organ may be used." On the same ground you might argue for the use of crucifixes and pictures, and for all the paraphernalia of the Popish ritual. "These," you might say, "make an impression on minds that would not otherwise be at all affected. They vividly present before worshipers the scenes described in Scripture, and if, as aids, they serve to do so, they surely cannot be wrong." To this, there are three replies, equally good against the argument for instrumental music. 1. They are not prescribed in New Testament Scripture, and therefore they must not be introduced into New Testament worship. 2. They are incongruous with the spirituality of the New Testament dispensation. 3. These additions but help to excite a state of feeling which militates against, instead of aiding, that which is produced by the word. An organ may make an impression, but what is it but such as may be made more thoroughly at the opera? It may help to regulate the singing, but does God require this improvement? And whence arises the taste for it? It cannot be from the desire to make the praise more fervent and spiritual, for it only tends to take attention away from

the heart, whose melody the Lord requires. It is the craving for pleasurable aesthetics, for the gratification of mere carnal feeling, that desires the thrill of organ sounds, to touch pleasingly the heart that yields no response to what is spiritual. If the argument against the use of the organ, in the service of praise, is good, it is at least equally so against its use in the service of preaching. If anything did "vanish away," it surely is the use of all such accessories in connection with the exhibition of Christ to men.

3. The novelty of the "inquiry room" was another effective aid in advancing this movement. It is declared to be desirable to come into close personal contact with the hearers of the gospel immediately after a sermon, in order to ascertain their state of feeling, to deepen impressions that may have been made, and to give a helping hand to the anxious. Such is the plea for "the inquiry room." In order that it may be supplied, hearers are strongly urged, after a sensational address, to take the position of converts or inquirers. They are pressed and hurried to a public confession. Strange means are resorted to, in order to commit them, by an open avowal of a certain state of feeling. But what right has any individual, not authorized by the Church of Christ, to do so,—to insist on a public confession on the part of anyone? Even the Church can admit to public confession only after trial. And the admission must be in connection with the dispensation of the appointed sealing ordinances. But here is a stranger, who never saw their faces before, hurrying people, whom a sensational address has excited, to make public profession of faith, thus associating them, without possibility of trial, with the Christians of the locality, and involving the credit of religion in their future conduct before the world. This, surely, is both unwise and presumptuous. How unlike this to the Divine Teacher's way! When a crowd of seemingly anxious souls gathered around Him, instead of urging them to confession, He tested them by searching doctrine, and the result was, that instead of crowding an inquiry room, they "went away and walked no more with Him." I feel persuaded that if an excited crowd, at a revival meeting, were to be addressed as were the multitude at the Sea of Galilee, the conductor would put the speaker down, denounce him for casting a gloom over the meeting, and give him no other opportunity of dealing with inquirers.

Why are men so anxious to keep the awakened in their own hands? They, at any rate, seem to act as if conversion was all their own work. They began it, and they seem determined to finish it. If it is at all out of their hand, they seem to think that it will come to nothing. They must at once, and on the spot, get these inquirers persuaded to believe, and get them also to say that they do. They may fall to pieces if they are not braced round by a band of profession. Their names or numbers must, ere the night passes, be added to the roll of converts. They are gathered into the inquiry room, to act in a scene that looks more like a part of a stage play than aught more serious and solemn. Oh, what trifling with souls goes on in these inquiry rooms, as class after class is dealt with in rude haste, very often by teachers who never "knew the grace of God in truth!" The inquiry room may be effective in securing a hasty profession of faith, but it is not an institution which the Church of Christ should adopt or countenance.

4. Even prayer meetings are converted into factories of sensation. Brief prayers and brief addresses to the stroke of hammer, or the toll of bell, silent prayers, hymns, which often contain a considerable amount of nonsense, and occasionally of something worse, sung to the strains of an organ, and a chance to address or prayer given to anyone who chooses to rise and speak,—such are the arrangements of the new prayer meeting. The silent prayer, what is it? It is secret prayer,

and therefore ought to be prayer in secret. It must be secret, just because it is silent. And where is it engaged in? In the closet? No; it was Christ who directed it to be there. There are other leaders now, and they direct that it should be in open assembly. Christ would have men, when they pray secretly, to enter their closet and shut the door. Now it must be done so that those who do it "may be seen of men." And this device, so directly opposed to the mind of Christ, is lauded as if nothing could be better. And it is becoming the habit now of worshipers as they enter the house of God. They assume, before the eyes of hundreds, the attitude of prayer, to do, in the public assembly, what Christ directed to be done in the closet. If they intend this as a public confession of their sin, in neglecting prayer in their closet, such confession would not be at all uncalled for, if duly made. They who forget to do it where Christ required it to be done, are the persons most likely to do it where it can only be a bit of will-worship and formality. The device of "open meeting," what of it? It is simply ceasing to take care that, in the worship of God, "all things be done decently and in order"; and giving the place to those who have conceit and tongue, and nought beside, which ought to be filled by those who in honor prefer others to themselves, and who seek grace to "serve with reverence and godly fear."

I have had to endure the trial of watching over a darling child, during her dying hours. Spasm, succeeding spasm, was the only movement indicating life, each one, as it came, shattering the frame which it convulsed, and thus wearing out its strength. While the spasms lasted I knew there still was life, but I also knew that these must soon end in death. There was life, but it was dying, and the convulsions of life soon ended in the stillness of death. But after the double pain came the ecstasy of a resurrection hope, and my heart could sing beside the grave, that covered for a season my dead out of sight. With still greater grief should I look on my Church, in a spasmodic state, subject to convulsions, which only indicate that her life is departing, the result of revivals got up by men. It will be a sad day for our country if the men, who luxuriate in the excitement of man-made revivals, shall with their one-sided views of truth, which have ever been the germs of serious errors, their lack of spiritual discernment, and their superficial experience, become the leaders of religious thought and the conductors of religious movements. Already they have advanced as many as inclined to follow them, far in the way to Arminianism in doctrine, and to Plymouthism in service. They may be successful in galvanizing, by a succession of sensational shocks, a multitude of dead, till they seem to be alive, and they raise them from their crypts, to take a place amidst the living in the house of the Lord; but far better would it be to leave the dead in the place of the dead, and to prophesy to them there, till the living God himself shall quicken them. For death will soon resume its sway. Stillness will follow the temporary bustle, and the quiet will be more painful than the stir. But to whatever extent this may be realized in the future of the Church in Scotland, our country shall yet share, in common with all lands, in the great spiritual resurrection that will be the morning work of that day of glory, during which "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth," and "all nations shall be blessed in Messiah, and shall call Him blessed." Meantime, were it not for the hope of this, it would be impossible to endure to think of the present, and of the immediate future, of the cause of true religion in our land. The dead, oh, how dead! the living, oh, how undiscerning! And if there continue to be progress in the direction in which present religious activity is moving, a negative theology will soon supplant our Confession of Faith, the good old ways of worship will be forsaken for unscriptural inventions, and the tinsel of a superficial religiousness will take the place of genuine godliness.

## S. The Father's Drawing

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The Father's Drawing Preached by The Rev. John Kennedy at Dingwall

About the author: John Kennedy was born in 1813. He served a charge as a minister of the gospel in the one church he pastored at Dingwall, Scotland until his death at the young age of 34 in 1847. He was of the true Puritan tradition in that he faithfully preached Christ and Him crucified and the necessity of the grace of God to make a sinner willing to repent of his sins and believe upon the Saviour. The majority of his writings are of his sermons, most of which were written down during the last year of his life. However, he was also an out-spoken critic of the methods of evangelism taught and practiced by D.L. Moody. The heavy emphasis upon the need of a sinner to "make a decision" and the use of the novel "inquiry room" and other novel tactics to gain conversions drew no little attention and objection from Kennedy and others. Thus he stood among his forebearers who rather saw the necessity to speak of the sinner's need of regeneration; a new nature, thus focusing upon the need of divine intervention and grace if one is to be saved.

"No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day." — John 6:44

THESE words were spoken by "Jesus," "the Son of man," and their teaching is therefore gracious; "by the faithful witness," and therefore they are true; by Him who is Himself Jehovah, the Eternal Son, and therefore they are divine.

He did not deliver the doctrine of the text, in His sermon to the congregation which assembled to hear Him beside the Lake of Tiberias, till He had first spoken regarding the necessity, in order to salvation, of coming to Messiah; the excellence of Him to whom they were called to come; the blessedness of those who came; and the warrant to come to Him, as given to all who hear the gospel. He insisted on the necessity of faith at the outset of His discourse, teaching them that what they needed, as sinners having an endless existence, was not "meat which perisheth," but "meat which endureth unto everlasting life," that this enduring meat "the Son of man" alone could give to them, and that this meat was received and enjoyed only by those who believed on Him whom God had sent. He then speaks of the excellence of Him who was sent, as "the bread of God" "which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." This is followed by a description of the blessedness of all who come to Him. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" — "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" — "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." And after insisting on the necessity of faith, on the excellence of Him who is its object, and on the blessedness of all who have come to Messiah, He tells them of the warrant of faith as given in the command of God to believe in His Son. "This is the work of God," He tells His hearers, "that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." This is the one way of securing the favour of God, and the faith by which this is attained He requires us to yield to Him whom He hath sent.

It is in connection with these truths we are required to consider the doctrine of the text. At first sight it would seem as if this part of Christ's sermon had rendered it impossible to derive any encouragement from all the rest of it. It would seem as if it were cruel to tell a man that he must believe or he is lost for ever, and then to tell him he can't believe. What matters it how excellent Christ is if I cannot come to Him? To speak to me of the blessedness of those who believe, if I am unable to join them, is but to tantalise me. And of what advantage to me is it to have a warrant to come if I cannot make use of it? So some may be disposed to speak regarding such a doctrine, in such a connection, as that of the text. I may have something to say to those who thus regard the doctrine of this passage; but meantime I would only say that no one can quarrel with the doctrine of the text without quarrelling with Christ, for it is His mouth that uttered it, and it was He who preached the truths in connection with which it stands before us here. In addressing you from this text, I would direct your attention to the spiritual impotence here declared — to the drawing of the Father — and to Christ's perfecting of the salvation of all whom the Father causes to come to Him.

#### I. THE SPIRITUAL IMPOTENCE HERE DECLARED.

It is inability to come to Christ as He is revealed and offered in the gospel. And this spiritual impotence is universal, for Jesus saith — “No man can come to me.” And He very plainly declares every man's inability to come to Him, for the words “can come” can have only one meaning assigned to them, and might be rendered “is able to come.” Such is the plain import of Christ's teaching in the first part of this verse, whatever view may be taken of man's impotence, and in whatever way it may be attempted to reconcile this statement with those which insist on his responsibility. Let us take the explicit teaching of Christ so far as it goes, and let not our reception of it as true depend on our being able to reconcile it with all other parts of His teaching. To refuse to receive His teaching as true simply because it is His, is to lapse into rationalism, and to allow our own conceptions of the fitness of things, and not the revelation of His will by God, to determine the form and measure of our faith.

Coming to Christ is a willing movement of the heart. He must be so known and regarded by him who comes to Him that He is heartily desired. The soul coming to Christ is willing to accept of Him on the terms according on which He is offered in the gospel, as a Saviour from all sin. And this coming to Christ is an exercise of faith. There is in it a trustful, as well as a wistful, feeling, towards Christ, resulting from receiving as true God's testimony regarding Him, and from discovering, in the light of that testimony, the suitableness, as well as the divine appointment, and personal excellence, of Christ, as a Saviour. It is to come thus to Him that Christ declares every man, without exception, to be unable, without the drawing of the Father.

Such a doctrine as this is not pleasing to “the natural man,” and he either openly rejects it; or, while professing to receive it, wickedly abuses it. The old heart's pride, with its strong dislike of being indebted to the grace of God, rises against it. And one's love of ease combines with his pride in securing its rejection; for if one realised that his salvation was dependent on the will of God, he could not be at ease; but when he thinks of it as a matter that is in his own hand, then, he can sleep on imagining that when a convenient season” comes he can secure his salvation. Not such is the feeling of the poor captive, who in his madness barred and bolted the door of his cell thinking it was a palace, but who has been awakened to find himself in bondage, with no power to remove the bars and bolts wherewith he himself shut the door, because he has no strength to reach them,

and finds sentinels posted to keep him in his prison. He now feels assured that he cannot escape unless an order for his release is issued by him at whose instance he is confined, and that the only key by which the door can be opened is in his hands. He cannot now sleep quietly in his cell, dreaming of finding escape whenever he inclines to go out. His sleep is broken and his vain dreamings are at an end. And there are others who, while professing to receive the doctrine of man's spiritual impotence, at the same time abuse it, and do so also from the desire to be at ease. "No efforts of ours," they say, "are of any avail, therefore we will do nothing, and enjoy our case till the Lord does His work the only work that can avail for good to us." It is as if one who was declared to be dying, and was told that there was only one physician who could cure him, continued quite unmoved, made no effort to secure the attendance of the only one who could treat with success his case, and continued to take the kind of diet by which his sickness was induced. The man who could act so must have been insane; but still more insane is the sinner, who makes his utter dependence, on the sovereign grace of God, a reason for continuing at his ease in sin. But let men reject or abuse this doctrine as they may, it is plainly stated in the text, and let us now proceed to consider the grounds on which, besides the statement before us, it may be based.

1. The sinner is spiritually impotent because he is spiritually dead.

"Dead in trespasses and in sins" is the description given of every one as he is "by nature." Now if there is any exercise that is impossible to a spiritually dead sinner, it is a movement towards God — it is coming to Christ. This was the doctrine of Christ to Nicodemus. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," though Christ, as revealed in the gospel, is "the door," and though it is by faith in Him the kingdom of God is entered; and this is plainly declared in the words which tells us that "as many as received" Christ, even they "that believed on His name" "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This is an abundantly strong confirmation of the doctrine of the text. We have a direct affirmation of it thrice over in the gospel of John within its first six chapters, and frequently elsewhere, and he is mighty in his strength to resist Scripture evidence, who refuses to receive this doctrine as true.

2. Coming to Christ is opposed to all man's "natural" tendencies.

Coming to Christ, implies willingness to be indebted to the grace of God for salvation. That must be expressed in every exercise of faith bearing on the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is quite opposed to the pride of man's heart, which is such that never can it cease to be ambitious of being independent of God. How then can a man come to Christ unless the Father draws him? And coming to Christ is an exercise of faith in the word of God as the only warrant of his hope of salvation. This word, and this word alone, presents to him the object of his faith, gives the only light by which he can be guided to Him, and is the only, cord by which he can take hold of Him when he comes. But nothing is more natural to a man than to think that nothing is real which he cannot see or handle, and that to trust in the word of God as true, is to act the part of a vain dreamer. Specially is this true as to his state of feeling towards "the word of the truth of the gospel." So far as the truth of the word of the law is concerned, he has some warrant in believing in its divine authority, from the operation of his conscience, which testifies on the side of the divine law in its claim and in its curse. But he has no such help in accepting as true "the gospel of the grace of God." The good news is such that he can have no anticipation of it. So new and so

wonderful is it, that he feels as if he must be furnished with evidence that will reach him through all his senses ere he can realise it as true. But to him who is coming to Christ no other warrant of faith than the simple word of God, as written in the Bible, is given, and on that he must hang the whole weight of his case as a sinner. How then can he, so resolved to “walk by sight” ever come to Christ “except the Father” “draw him?” And coming unto Christ is coming to Him for salvation from all sin. Every man by nature loves sin, “because the carnal mind is enmity against God.” I cannot be a hater of God without being in love with sin, to which He in His holiness is infinitely opposed. To what he loves the sinner will cleave, and never shall he willingly come to Christ for salvation from it.

3. Coming unto Christ is opposed by all the powers of darkness.

“The god of this world,” with the great army under his command, is ever busy in endeavouring to keep souls away from Christ. He is ever active in “blinding the eyes of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” This is surely most formidable opposition. Think of the might and malice of such an army, think of the opportunity of successful working the reigning power of sin in the heart affords, and think, too, of the many weapons furnished to the great enemy in the things of “a present evil world,” and then surely it must be manifest that the words of Christ are true when He says, “No man can come to Me except the Father, who hath sent Me, draw him.”

4. It is altogether inconceivable that there can be any coming to Christ without some action on the part of God. As to the extent of that action, in order to the result of faith, there may be differences of opinion, but as to there being some measure of it, all who pretend to be evangelical must be agreed. If faith be an actual coming unto Christ in desire and trust, must there not at any rate be a revelation by God to the coming one of His Son, and must there not be a reception of him when, he comes? If the giving of the word sufficed as a revelation, why was Christ unknown since first the gospel reached us? And can we reach Him and lean on Him without meeting with such a reception as encourages us to do so? The presence even of our Queen is guarded, and, when there is a reception, those who are introduced expect the Sovereign to take some notice of their presence and obeisance. And are we to be admitted to the King of Glory except according to an authoritative exercise of His will? and if He reveals not Himself to us, as He does not to the world, how possibly can we trust in Him? If we add this reason for divine action being necessary, in order to the coming of a sinner to Christ, to those previously stated, how abundantly true appear the words of Him who said — “No man can come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.”

## II. THE FATHER'S DRAWING.

“No man can come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.” These words tell us that what is indispensable, in order to the coming of a sinner to Christ, must come from the Father; that we are to regard the Father in this connection as He by whom Christ was sent; and that the power of the Father is exerted as a drawing power, bringing the soul to Christ.

1. The drawing that brings a sinner to Christ comes from “THE FATHER.”

“The Father” is the distinctive name of the First Person of the Godhead. This is His name because of His relation to the Second Person, who is called “The Son” on account of His relation to the

First, while the Third is called "The Spirit" because of His relation to the Father and to the Son. He (the Father) is the representative of the Supremacy of the Godhead. He is so without being personally greater than, while essentially one with, the Son and the Spirit. To His sovereign will must, therefore, all salvation be ascribed. "All things are of God," the Father, through the Son and by the Holy Ghost; and to Him, therefore, must ultimately be ascribed the bringing of a sinner to Christ.

How great an event, when viewed in its relation to the Father's action, is the coming of a sinner to Christ! He who wields the authority, and is sovereign Lord of all the resources of Jehovah, alone can secure a meeting between Christ and a sinner! Each act of faith bearing upon Christ is the result of an exercise of His sovereign will, and of the operation of His Almighty power. How infinitely great, therefore, is the coming of a sinner to Christ! How small it seems to the eye which does not rest on the action of the Father! And when a sinner does come, how well warranted is his faith! He is acting according to the call, and because subject to the drawing of the Father. Can anything be more legitimate, therefore, than faith in Christ?

2. But the text requires us to consider the Father, in this connection, as He by whom Christ was sent. The sending of His Son as His Anointed by the Father is the highest display ever given of His sovereignty; the highest commendation ever given of His love; and is such as must be followed by the drawing unto Messiah of all whom He sent Him to redeem.

(1.) The sending of His Son is the highest display of the Father's sovereignty. This must be before our minds when we think of His drawing a sinner to Christ. How could there be a higher display of His sovereignty than in the mission of His Son "to seek and to save that which is lost?" How could His absolute supremacy more gloriously appear? Under what law, arising necessarily from what He was or out of any antecedents of His action, could He be requiring such action as this? Surely we cannot ascribe it to the operation of any unavoidable constraint that such a one as Jehovah the Son should be sent to obey and die in human nature on the earth. And there could be nothing in the Father's relations to those whom He sent His Son to redeem requiring such a gift in order to their salvation. The mission of the Son abundantly proves that, in the view of God, those whom He sent Him to redeem were death-deserving sinners, and that He, therefore, could be under no obligation to provide deliverance from death for any of them. But "it seemed good in His sight" to purpose the salvation of His chosen, and, in order to the fulfilment of that decree, He sent His Son in order, by "the sacrifice of Himself," to redeem them. It is in pursuance of this scheme of sovereign grace He draws a sinner to Christ, and, in connection with this action, His absolute sovereignty must be recognised and acknowledged. The last foothold, on the ground of a covenant of works, that must be abandoned by a sinner is the idea, that he can, to any extent, be independent of God, for the exercise of saving faith, that he has any plea to urge for the gift of faith, and that he can escape from feeling absolutely dependent on the sovereign will of God for that faith in the exercise of which he can come to Christ. But it would be utterly inconsistent with His mission by the Father, with the relation in which, as Mediator, He stood to Him who sent Him, and with His zeal for His Father's glory, as well as with His love to His people, not distinctly and repeatedly to claim this acknowledgment of divine sovereignty in connection with the gift of faith. And He claims it still. And He cannot but claim it; for if sinners are such as the word of God describes them, they must be told the truth regarding themselves, and if the coming of a sinner to Christ is the result of the Father's drawing, this must be declared to the praise of Him "of whom are

all things.”

(2) Think of the Father as giving, in the mission of His Son, the highest commendation of His sovereign love. A higher there could not be given. And this would appear to us if we by faith realised the divine glory of Him who was sent, His relation, as the “Only Begotten Son,” to Him who sent Him, the humiliation to which He, when sent, was subjected, and the designed results of His death to the hell-deserving ones whom He was sent to redeem. The marvellous love thus expressed in the mission of Christ, is further expressed in the drawing of blood-bought sinners to their Redeemer. This must never be forgotten. But it may be asked, “In what relation do sinners, who hear the gospel, stand to the Father and to His love?” There are two relations, at any rate, in which they stand to the Father. They are the subjects of His government, and are quite at the disposal of His absolutely sovereign will. Thus they are as rational beings. And as sinners they are in such a relation to Him as “Judge of all” that they are under a sentence of condemnation to eternal death. Let neither of these relations to the Father be ignored by any of us. “But,” it may be asked, “how are we, who hear the gospel, related to the Father’s love?” Not so, that we have any warrant to conclude, because of what the gospel tells you of His love, that it now, and as you are, embraces you. It speaks to you of that love, it exhibits the glorious proof given of the sovereignty, freeness, and riches of that love, in the mission and death of the Son, as the Christ and “the Lamb of God,” but it cannot, by possibility, assure you of being an object of that love till you first come to Christ, and be embraced by it in Him. Aught else would be utterly inconsistent with the mode in which His love was revealed, as well as with the source whence it flows. Love, that could not approach a sinner except through Christ’s rent body and shed blood, cannot, apart from Christ-crucified, be approached by a sinner. It cannot come but through divine blood to you, and you must not attempt to come to it except through the same channel. Let there be movements in desire and faith towards it as it is revealed in Christ, but let there be no attempt to embrace it, as a loved one, till first, as a sinner, you embrace “Jesus Christ as He is freely offered to us in the gospel.” The revelation of the Father’s love, in the mission of His Son, is not a declaration that all to whom the gospel comes are loved by God. This cannot be; for if so, all who are in a state of nature on the earth must be equally regarded as objects of the Father’s love, whether they have heard the gospel or not. And how can we conceive of those as objects of His love to whom He has never told of His love, and who derive no opportunity of benefit from it? But if the revelation of the gospel declares sinners who hear it to be loved by God, must we not ascribe this advantage to the sovereign will of God, and thus from the marshes of Arminianism be constrained to repair for a firm footing to the sure ground of Calvinism? Thus far, at any rate, must the sovereignty of God be acknowledged. The distribution of the gospel is quite as unaccountable, except by referring it to the sovereign good pleasure of God, as is the salvation of some and not of others to whom the gospel has been sent. The mode in which God distributes the gospel is a palpable exhibition of the sovereign grace of the salvation of which the gospel testifies. But any sinner who is required to acknowledge the Father’s sovereignty is entitled to contemplate the Father’s love. O what a privilege it is to be told that the drawing of a sinner to Christ is in the hands of Him who commended His love in the mission of His Son. He to whom you are shut up in your impotence to believe, as the only One who can help you, is He who so loved the world as to give His Son to make atonement for sin by “the blood of His cross.” That is one grand association with the Father. “Yes,” you say, “but what encouragement can I derive from thinking of the Father’s love, unless I may think of it as love to myself?” At any rate, you may think of it as love to sinners, while you

regard it as sovereign love to each one of all who are its objects. Being love to sinners you may appeal to it as the fountain of all saving grace. Friend, your difficulty arises from your thinking so much of yourself, that you are disposed to regard yourself as an ill-used man, if God does not, without any regard to His holiness, and to the honour of His Christ, come to tell you where you are, and as you are, that you are an object of His love. You would surely act more wisely if you took, before the Father, your place as a sinner, at the disposal of His sovereign will, and appealed to His love as love that was expressed in sending His Son, as “the Son of man,” “to seek and to save that which was lost.”

(3.) To the Son, whom the Father sent, is due by Him who sent Him the drawing of sinners unto Him. He owes Him this fulfilment of His promise given to Him when He covenanted with Him as to the salvation of His chosen, and in reward of “the travail of His soul” in their behalf. The fulfilment of that promise, and the giving of that reward, are absolutely certain. This furnishes ground of rejoicing to all who love Christ and who love souls, for there is security for Christ being satisfied, and, for all His redeemed being saved. But the Father’s way of fulfilling His promise to the Son was to invest Him as the Covenant Head with all authority, and to anoint Him with the fulness of the Holy Ghost, in order that the power of the Mediator might be a security for His obtaining His reward. It is on this account you hear Christ saying that He Himself “will draw all men unto” Him. You may then think of the sovereign love and supreme authority of the Father as evidenced in making Christ the author as well as the object of faith. And if the Father calls you to come to His Christ, in whom all fulness of saving grace is to be found, may you not come for faith to Him when you cannot come with faith, and ask Him, as the Father’s Anointed One, to do for you all that is required to your coming to Him, as well as to save you with an everlasting salvation when you come. Take Christ as a faith-giver, in the presence of the Father who appointed Him to be so, and if you do not, then you are utterly excuseless if you perish in your unbelief.

3. The Father’s drawing. This is, and must be gracious, attracting, and effectual. Gracious, infinitely gracious, it must be, as it bears on a mean, guilty, loathsome, hostile sinner. Gracious, beyond all conception, must be the drawing which brings into a relation of everlasting union that sinner to His glorious Son. Gracious enough to be matter of eternal wonder and praise is this action of the Father, resulting as it infallibly does in the everlasting salvation of the sinner on whom it takes effect. And it is drawing by attraction. He who comes is “made willing” in a day of power. It pleases God to bring, by His quickening spirit, the dead soul alive, and to reveal His Son in Him, and by His excellence and love to draw the soul, now spiritually alive, to His Christ. There is no dragging though there is drawing. It is attraction, not compulsion, that overcomes the sinner, into submission, and wins his acquiescence in the terms of the gospel. This drawing is and must be effectual. No power can successfully resist the drawing of the Father. The three Persons of the Godhead act, each His part, in bringing the soul to Christ, and what possible combination of influences can withstand action of which this is true? The wildest rebel He can subdue, the most ignorant He can enlighten, the most hostile He can make friendly, the most oppressed He can deliver, the man who has been longest “dead in trespasses and sins” He can quicken “together with Christ,” and the most timid He can “persuade and enable” “to embrace Jesus Christ as He is freely offered to us in the gospel.”

III. CHRIST’S PROMISE OF COMPLETING THE SALVATION OF ALL WHOM THE FATHER DRAWS TO HIM — “And I will raise him up at the last day.” This is the third time this promise was

given by Christ in His discourse. It is a promise bearing on all who come to Him, whenever and whatever they may be. It specifies only the crowning act of salvation — it is a promise that He shall “bring forth the headstone of the building, with shoutings, crying grace, grace, with it” — but surely this implies a promise of doing all that is required in order to prepare for this. “The headstone” cannot be brought forth, till every stone is laid in the wall on the foundation — till the building is ready for the headstone. Christ, by these words, engages to see to it that all sanctifying grace is given, that He shall instruct and guide, and preserve and comfort to the end all whom the Father draws to Him; that He shall receive their souls at death, when He has purged away all their corruption, to their place in the “Father’s house,” and that however long their bodies may lie asleep in the grave, He will at the last day quicken and transform them, so that, perfectly like Himself, they may be prepared for being for ever with Him.

O what a promise this is? It is infinitely rich. There is nothing wanting to it that can be required by a soul from the first moment of faith in Christ till he enters everlasting glory. And it is as true as it is rich. Sometimes among men we find those who make promises which they never intend to fulfil. A small promise, if true, would be better than all the large promises which these may offer as a ground of hope. But in Christ’s promise there is the bounty of infinite love with the certainty of infallible truth. And this is His promise to all who come to Him, and an interest in all the grace of this unfailing promise shall be yours, if, as a sinner, you come to Him as He is revealed and offered to you in the gospel. This promise is one of those with which we repeatedly meet in the word of God, in which the grace of all the promises is gathered up, and nothing besides is left to be asked beyond their fulfilment. On this, believer, you have to be drawing during all your life in the wilderness. The promised grace is all in Him in whom “the promises of God are yea and amen.” From His mouth comes the promise, and in Him is stored the grace. And by such a word as this He makes you free to make use of all He is, and has, and has done and suffered. He gives Himself over, to the faith which He has begotten, in order to the plenishing of the sinner whom He loved. And He does even more than this, for He not only assures those who have come, that He shall be unto them according to the measure of their faith, but that He shall see to their having the faith, as well as the supply which is secured through faith. O what rest would be yours and mine, if we implicitly trusted in Him, and left our whole case in His hands!

#### APPLICATION.

1. We have in this text what is a marked feature of Christ’s teaching all throughout the traces He traces up all salvation to the sovereign love of the Father who sent Him.

It is this which is so marked in the words, “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” And He thus ascribes all the praise of salvation to the Father’s sovereign love while He declares “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father.” If He who was the Son, essentially one with, and personally equal to, the Father, was thus careful to refer all salvation to the sovereign good pleasure of the Father, as “Lord of heaven and earth,” surely all who follow Him as preachers must be careful to do the same, even when, like the Master, they are addressing mixed multitudes.

2. We may learn from this text that a doctrine, because distasteful to hearers, or because liable to be abused by them, ought not to be withheld.

If it is part of “the whole counsel of God” it must be preached, however offensive it may be regarded, and to whatever extent abused. “The chief end” of the preacher ought to be to glorify God by exhibiting Him as He has revealed Himself. This must be done whatever may be the issue. There must be no new aspect of His character presented to men — nothing but His name as He Himself has revealed it — no representation of His scheme of redemption that does not accord with His mind in the word, no modification of the bearings of doctrine to suit them to the taste of unrenewed men, nothing that “thus saith the Lord” does not cover. In combination with the zeal which makes one careful to keep the glory of God, as the great end of his preaching, in view, there ought to be, as there was in the Master, yearning pity towards the sinners to whom Christ is preached. Carefulness to be exact in stating doctrine, according to a system, there may be where there is no due reference to the word of God; but there can be no pity like Christ’s in the heart of anyone who is not anxious in his preaching to conserve the honour of the divine name, while guided solely by the light of the divine word. Cold dogmatism or blind earnestness are not the only alternatives in preaching. The true preacher is he who is like Christ in glorifying Him who sent Him by ascribing all salvation to His sovereign will as “Lord of heaven and earth,” and who is like Him also in His pity, as expressed in His weeping over doomed Jerusalem.

3. In the light of this text we may see how desirable coming to Christ is.

Look at it as the fruit of the Father’s love, and as the result of the Father’s drawing, and how great does faith in Christ appear to be! And then think of it as the means of securing an interest in a perfect salvation, and how gracious and rich a boon the gift of faith, as a gift from God, appears! Does it so appear to you? Has this drawn forth your desire in prayer to God for the precious gift of faith? Has it made you anxious to “win Christ and be found in Him?” Or have you chosen as the objects of your desire only such things as first cheat, and then utterly destroy, the soul.

4. What debtors to God are all who have come to Christ!

They are under debt for their coming, and when they come they incur debt to grace as great as a perfect and everlasting salvation! They are under debt to the Father for drawing them to Christ, and they are under debt to Christ for the “righteousness and strength” which they found in Him, and they are debtors to the Holy Ghost for fulfilling in them “the good pleasure” of God. O, friends, seek to see and feel and acknowledge more and more the obligation under which you lie to “the God of all grace,” that you may be kept more lowly, more thankful, more zealous, more faithful, as your days in the wilderness are passing away. And remember that it is only by incurring fresh debt that you can attain to fresh growth — debt to Christ, “without whom you can do nothing,” debt to the Father for turning you to Him “in whom it pleased” Him “that all fulness should dwell,” for during all your life you must know that “no man,” spiritually dead or spiritually alive, “can come to” Christ “except” as the Father draws him; debt to the Holy Ghost, without whose gracious operation you cannot receive according to the Father’s giving, and to the right and pleading of the Son. To be a debtor for salvation through faith your old covenant spirit deems to be a hard thing, but it still more vehemently rebels against your being a constant debtor for faith to God. You sometimes think you could bravely get on if you could only be master of your faith, and go to the storehouse when you please. But to be dependent on the Father’s drawing, for each act of faith, during all your life on earth, leaves to self no ground of glorying. And this is the arrangement that is best for you, and it is so just because it is mortifying to your pride of heart. You never feed except when self is starved.

5. The text forbids any one to imagine that he came to Christ if he has not been taught that he could never come unless the Father drew him. This is a lesson which Christ insisted on being learned when He dealt in secret with an inquirer such as Nicodemus was, and then He preached to a multitude beside the Lake of Tiberias. You, therefore, cannot be in His school if you are allowed to skip this lesson over. It cannot save you from being deceived that you do not like the doctrine, because you prefer a view of your relation to God which would spare you the self-mortification which it inflicts. It is not what suits your taste, but what suits your state you need to be told to you; and if it be true that such is your actual condition, that you cannot come to Christ unless the Father draw you, what but evil can result from your shutting out that truth from your soul? But you will be disposed to say, "If I believed that to be true, I could have no hope." Certainly not in yourself, but that is just the reason why you are called to believe it.

Another may say, "If I believed that, I would fold my hands and cease from all effort." And if you did, what a strange reason you would assign for being listless! your being so lost that you could not escape from destruction without being drawn to Christ by the Father! This is to be your opiate, is it? If so, it is the most extraordinary inducement to sleep that was ever heard of. Another asks, "How can this spiritual impotence to believe consist with my being accountable to God for my unbelief?" That is an old question, to which no new answer can be given. Both things are consistent in the view of God, and let that suffice. It is high time for you to know that depravity of heart cannot excuse iniquity of conduct, for your guilt occasioned your depravity, and the state of your heart cannot, therefore, excuse the guilt of your actions.

6. There is encouragement in the text to all who fain would reach Christ, and who find that nothing but the Father's drawing can bring them to Him.

Friends, if a sense of the power of unbelief is your burden, while a sense of the guilt of it is your shame — if the one makes you bow, while the other makes you blush — this flows from some revelation of Christ by the Father. But having given this, He will give more. And is it not well for you that it is the Father, as representing the authority, grace, and power of the Godhead, whose work it is to draw? There can be no gift too great for His love, no work too hard for His power, and whatever it pleaseth Him that He hath the right to do. And when your hope of help is faint, look to Him through the given Son. Remember that "all that the Father hath is" His, and that if you may claim Him as the gift of God, you will find in Him, as the provision of the Father's love, enough to meet you in your impotence, and a warrant to cleave to Him as you ask Him to help you in your time of need.

7. Are any of you afraid of not being drawn to Christ?

If so, do not smother that fear; do not let it press you to despair; be sure to tell it to God; and give "no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids" till you are drawn by the Father to Christ. I say to none of you "Be not afraid of not coming," for it is an awful thing not to come, and certain you are not to come if the Father withholds from you His grace. Nor can I tell you that you have any claim on God, or that you can offer any prayer, so long as you are "dead in sins," and apart from Christ, that is not "an abomination in the sight of the Lord." But neither can I refrain from bidding you to pray, as even Simon Magus was commanded, though he was "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." And if you realise that you are called by God to come, and that the authority of that call shuts you up to Christ, and are, at the same time, conscious of your

impotence to come, while you know yourselves to be without any right to expect that the Father will draw you, and to be at the disposal of Him who “will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and who hardeneth whom He will,” do not despair, but hold on and still cry, for you are less likely to perish than when you were at your ease; and as you are beginning to feel the straitness of the gate, through which alone the way of life is entered, there is some reason to hope that you are going through; and, if your soul is agonising to enter, who knoweth but you are passing through the throes of that new birth, because of which alone one can, by coming to Christ, enter the kingdom of God.

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