

The Church a Safeguard against Modern Selfishness, by
Frederick William Faber. (1840).

THE CHURCH,
A SAFEGUARD
AGAINST MODERN SELFISHNESS.

BY THE REV.
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Tell ye your children of it, and let your
children tell their children, and their children
another generation.—JOEL. i. 3.

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WE are being continually called upon now-a-days to exercise the most blessed privilege and highest happiness, which falls to us as sons of God and heirs of heaven,—*self-denial for Christ's sake*. We are continually having put before us the cause of the growing population of this but half-Christian country, the generation who are now rising up about us, and who are to hand forward the Memory of Christ, and witness to His Gospel, and pass on His Cross to others in new Churches and upon new Altars, when we have been drawn into the inner world by the quiet hand of death. Now, I am anxious you should not be taken by surprise when such occasions come, that you should, while at your leisure, have taken some account of the claims at such times brought before you, the claims of those vast English multitudes, among whom the Church is still to be set up, multitudes too often lawless and disturbed, because not enough beneath the Church's hand, but who are our brethren and our countrymen, with like cares and sorrows, like need of Sacraments, and Priests, and Churches, like souls to save. By being prepared with great and anxious thought on this subject, the suddenness or frequency of the claim will be less likely to stand in the way of the largeness of your self-denial. I propose, therefore, in these few pages, to lay before you in the general the claims of church building and church extension schemes, when brought before you by authority and in a church way, how urgent they are, why you should be called upon in the matter, and how blessed a thing it is for you to be able to put trust in God, and make sacrifices for Christ's sake. For this purpose

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it may be well to consider, how we are placed in this world, how we are connected with our neighbours, how the Church brings us close to Christ, as being our spiritual mother, and what Christ expects us to do for His Church in return for all the great things she has done for us, and how that Church is now to one and all of us, a refuge from modern selfishness.

Different persons, different stations in life, different circumstances, tempers, and affections, are all liable to different sins. A rich man, for example, is tempted to be proud and careless about his soul: a poor man, to be discontented, and envious of those who are above him. So prosperity, which ought to make a man thankful, and to put him in mind of God at every turn, often makes him forget God altogether; and affliction, which ought to soften the heart, seeing it is the pressure of the Cross, sometimes hardens it; and hard beyond all hope is that heart whose fountains have been stopped by affliction and adversity. But there is one sin which besets all people, rich and poor, prosperous and afflicted, learned and ignorant; one which clings to all persons, cold-hearted men, or men of quick feelings; though of course not in like manner, nor in an equal degree. A sin it is which begins in their childhood, makes them disliked and unhappy, grows with their growth, stands in the way of every good feeling, and makes many fall short of heaven. This is selfishness: a habit of looking at ourselves, thinking of ourselves, acting for ourselves in every thing, rather than for others, even our friends and neighbours: a dislike to put ourselves out of the way to do them good, to sacrifice our own pleasure and comfort for their sake. But more than this, strange as it may seem, considering what we are, we are selfish towards God. Though all we have, health and life, and the strength of youth and cheerful spirits, food and clothing, the blue heaven and the green earth, and the year with its seasons and its harvests, are from Him and are His, yet we grudge

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to give Him back the slightest portion of that which He has given us. Though our three thousand sheep¹ and a thousand goats were safe and none missing all the while they were in the open fields, though God's Providence hath been, like David's men, a wall unto our fortunes both by night and day, and though the Church come unto us in a good day for the portion of God and of the poor, yet, like Nabal, the man of Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel, our hearts are cold towards God in the midst of our merriment, and at the sound of giving, die within us like a stone. We lay out money, we make sacrifices, we are uneasy, we run risks, we rise early and take late rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, in order to make ourselves rich in this life, to get on in the world, to be above our neighbours, and to be thought well of. Or, if our ambition lies another way, to be wise and learned, a thing in the world's sight more high and pure, and yet all the while as selfish and as little worth as the other, apart from Christ, still there is no sacrifice we will not make, no hardship we will not endure. We will practise mortification and self-denial for learning's sake, but not for Christ's. We will abstain from joys, and pleasures, and company, and numberless indulgences, and put restraint even on our loves, when ambition calls, but not at the bidding of the Church. We will neglect our health and rest, and become worn and pale, and weary, and weak, to gain earthly wisdom and power of intellect, and shorten our lives to leave our names among posterity lifted some very little, it may be, above the obscurity of the unnumbered dead. But to smooth down the severity of discipline, to have an easy Lent, or go softly through a fast, we are ready to talk of our health, and habits, and way of living, and the hardness of our duty, and the weakness of our flesh, and, in a light way, of the mercy of our God. We are strong to do all things for ourselves, our own ambition

¹ 1 Sam. xxv.

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strengthening us. We are weak for Christ, even though He be ready to give us strength. It seems quite natural to us that we should take all this pains for worldly good, because we see and feel that it *is* good; we see how it does us good, we see that others think it good, and think good ourselves of those who have it. We certainly have great faith in the world. Would we had as great faith in Christ! We make bold enterprises and run wonderful chances, but then we see it comes back to us again. But we do not see our own souls. We do not see how the seeds of Heaven are putting forth within them, or whether they are dead or dying, or at the least unshapely and unhealthy.

We do not see how the prayers of those to whom we give alms are doing us good, on high in Heaven, or in the depth of our own souls. We give our money to the Church of Christ, and we do not *see* it come back again; and why? Because it comes back in spiritual riches, and spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned. Therefore, because we have little or no faith we are very much dissatisfied about it; and give away as little in charity as we possibly can. We are selfish towards God. The prayers of the poor on our behalf, we do not see them. Like all good things, they are invisible. Who sees the clouds rise from the earth, that are afterwards to fall in summer showers? The Sun of righteousness has ridden up on high into the middle heavens, and by a sweet compulsion draws thither to Himself the prayers of all the saints. Day and night the steam and odour go from the face of the earth. It is gathered up by Angels into precious clouds,² and falls in dews and showers of grateful freshness, oftentimes on fields far away from those whence it first ascended. Why, then, are our affections set on things we see? Who remembers to have seen an Angel? Who has seen the Spouse of Christ in her marriage jewels? Who has seen the Dead when once they

² Rev. v. 8.

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went away? We only linger about their green graves. The best thing we of earth can see, is but the outside of Heaven, and that far off. If our hopes and fears, our joys and wishes and feelings, are not set, and set steadfastly, on things we have not seen but shall see one day, if we are not waiting and trembling for their desirable manifestation at the last, we Christians are of all men in the world the most beguiled and miserable. We are like the forlorn and poor of this life, who fall asleep from weariness and crying, and then dream bright things and golden fortunes all night long, and awake doubly wretched in the morning to their real and substantial misery. The things which are seen are temporal; and it is because they are but temporal that we see them; and the things which are not seen are eternal, and it is their eternity which hides them from our view.

There is nothing we dislike so much in other people as selfishness; and, if we are honest with ourselves, there is nothing to which we ourselves are more liable. Every body will acknowledge this; so I will not waste time in proving it, nor in showing, what must be obvious, how it keeps us back in our way to Heaven, and does us all manner of harm here as well as hereafter, on earth as well as elsewhere. Let us rather look at what God has done for us, and how He has placed us, so as to protect us from this miserable sin. We are not set down in the world by ourselves. We cannot move about independent of our neighbour. We cannot live alone. We cannot love ourselves, except as we are reflected in the love of others. We do not like to think of dying alone. Our peace and health and happiness, all depend upon our neighbour. They are more in his power than they are in our own. We see this in many ways. Our neighbour can vex and annoy us every day: he can stand in the way of our getting on: he can say ill-natured things of us; and, in a word, if he chooses to act wickedly and maliciously towards us, he can make the world very wretched and miserable to us. Nay more than this, we cannot even keep

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our souls safe from the harm which our neighbour may do them. Our very souls are put in one another's power. He may do harm to us by not praying for us, by setting an evil example to our children, by frightening us from confessing Christ bravely and openly before men, and the like. His sin may hinder many a blessing which would otherwise have fallen on the city or parish where he dwells. Thus do all we can to keep to ourselves and by ourselves, and to get to Heaven of ourselves and alone, it is impossible. God has so mixed us up with our neighbours, He has so entangled our concerns with their concerns, that we cannot act and live and feel alone. Thus selfishness is made difficult by the law of the world, and by God's arrangement of it. He has so ordered the world that our natural conscience might tell us how unnatural selfishness was; and not the world only, for this is the point I have been all along bringing you to, but He has put down among us the Church of Christ to help us in this very thing, to be a refuge to us from our own selfishness, to be a protection to us against the selfishness of others, to destroy selfishness from one end of the world to the other.

This is a most wonderful blessing if we only thought about it seriously, and like earnest men. Now look at the Prayer Book and the common service of the Church, how little there is in it about ourselves. It is like the Lord's Prayer, the only prayer which Christ Himself taught us to use, and which is in the plural number throughout. For example: what matter, so we might say, does it make to us at this distance and in our humble stations, whether the Queen is religious or not? It is not likely, so we think when we think selfishly, it is not likely she could do us much harm, or interfere with *our* being religious. Yet the Church makes us pray for her twice in the Morning Prayer, once in the Litany, once in the Communion Service, twice when there is the Holy Communion; and twice in the evening prayer. So at the least the Church makes us pray four times

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a day for the Queen, which we should never have thought of doing ourselves. This is one way in which the Church prevents our being selfish in our prayers; because to the Church at large it is a matter of immense importance that the Lord's anointed should be religious, and have religious people about her. So in our private prayers we should never have thought of praying for the nobility and the magistrates, perhaps not even for our fathers the Bishops. We should often have neglected the sick and afflicted, in far off countries as well as at home: prisoners, captives, travellers, young children and the like. We should not have given up so much of our time to praising God in psalms, as we do in Church. Thus the Church is continually leading our thoughts to any body rather than ourselves. She is continually trying to make us unselfish. Indeed the whole of religion is a looking out of ourselves unto Christ, whether as He is ascended to the Right Hand of the Father, or as He is reflected in the feeble shinings of His saints, or represented to us by the poor and desolate. Still it is a looking out of ourselves.

So for the same great end, among others, we have festivals in honour of the Dead: the blessed Virgin, the holy Apostles and other saints, yea, all the saints of God. The thought of the dead makes us gentle and childlike, and leads us to forget ourselves, as well it may. For we know that, according to St. Paul's teaching, the spirits of just men made perfect are not far from us. We are come to them and they are come to us. They can touch us and we can touch them: perchance do touch them when we know it not; they are gliding by every hour. The spirit has but ceased to act upon and through the body, and so we do not see them in their places. They keep threading in and out among us, going up and down, and moving round about us: especially, so we believe from St. John, in holy Churches where their

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bodies rest in hope.³ They are the first ranks of the Church who have gone before us in the Lord, so far as to be out of sight. They are beyond our view. They may see us: we cannot see them. This should make us speak very little and surely very cautiously of the Dead, and not without the warrant of the Church: whether they be our own kindred, or saints of old, or holy men of later times. All the dead are our kindred now; for there is no marrying or giving in marriage in the Church invisible. We cannot feel selfish among the Dead; and in the Church of Christ we are among the Dead.

Then again the blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ kills selfishness within us, because it keeps drawing us further and further into the communion of saints. It is a hand put forth, and taking us back into the ark from time to time continually. It makes us every one members one of another in the mystical body; for we, St. Paul teaches us, "We being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread."⁴ Thus the Church sets herself against all selfish views, all narrow opinions, all vanity, conceit, childishness, self-praise, uncharitableness, little-mindedness; it gives us great thoughts; it opens out views of heaven; it promises glorious and magnificent things which shall be hereafter; it leads us to the throne of God; it joins with Angels and Archangels and all the company of Heaven about the Altar; it feeds us with the Body of our Lord: and what have they to do with selfishness who feed thereon?

In like manner the holy doctrines on which the Church is founded, and the history of the heresies by which those doctrines have been assailed, warn us very fearfully against selfishness and selfish times. The great and foremost doctrine of Church teaching is the Incarnation of

³ Rev. vi.

⁴ 1 Cor. x. 17.

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our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This comes uppermost in her Creeds; this comes uppermost in her best and soundest doctors. The Church does, as it were, in all her gifts and offices set forth and embody after a living way the Incarnation of the Lord. It is in the Church, says one, that Jesus Christ is re-appearing always, and is living eternally. The Church is, as it were, the abiding, continuing, and going on of the Incarnation of the Son of God. Christ is one and the same and always unchanging; and so He has made His Church one. He is made flesh, and has taken an outward form; and so He has made His Church visible. He, as our Mediator, is God; and so He has made His Church indefectible. He is an eternal Priest; and so He has made His Church to have no end. But, if we look at some of the schools of theology which sprung up abroad in the sixteenth century, we find quite other doctrines coming uppermost; not that the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Lord is denied (God forbid!), only it does not occupy the place it did in the harmonious teaching of ancient times. Original sin, grace, free-will, election, assurance, come in Lutheran and Zwinglian writers, where in the Fathers we should find references to the Incarnation, and the Sacraments by which it is conveyed to us and given us, as St. Leo expresses it, "as a step for us to tread upon, that we by It may ascend to Him."⁵ The effect of this difference, of this distortion of the analogy of faith, is, that by putting over-prominently and exclusively forward questions concerning our own soul, and the effects wrought in it, it leads to excessive self-contemplation, and so lowers the standard of holiness by weakening the temper of faith. Thus even in this Catholic country, some have been found of late years, who have drawn up what they deemed a full confession of their faith; in which, notwithstanding, no statement whatever was made regarding the Divinity of the

⁵ Serm. v. de Nativ.

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Three Persons of the most Holy Trinity, or the union of the divine and human Natures in our blessed Lord. This is an awful warning. The same lesson may be learnt even from the course which heresy pursued in early times. While the primitive fires burnt hottest and clearest, the Church had power and health to eject all heresy from out of her, and leave it to rage and spend itself beyond the consecrated precincts. But afterwards, while she was still adorned by gifts, and graces, and eminent lights, heresy began assailing what was uppermost in men's thoughts, the Trinity and the Person of our Lord. Thus Arianism, the greatest of these, was condemned at Nice, A. D. 325, which was not far from a hundred years before Pelagius began in the West to teach his heresy about grace and original sin.⁶ The class of controversies which afflicted the Church in the fourth century, concerned mysteries out of men's selves; those which concerned mysteries within themselves did not begin till the fifth century. One began in the Eastern Church, the other in the Western; both probably were raised on questions uppermost in men's minds at the time; and thus it took four centuries to bring down the lofty minds of Christians to question and cavil, and go wrong about themselves, their nature, and the operations of their souls. This rather, as we find it in St. Hilary⁷ would be the way an ancient Christian would have looked at human nature, always in the incarnate Word, never apart from Him; as "human nature, in Christ, advancing towards God, going onwards to eternity, and through eternity about to abide the consummate image of the Creator." So long was selfishness in breaking into and disturbing Church doctrine.

Selfishness, too, is effectually warred against and cast out by the temper, which it is the Church's office to give birth to and bring about within us,—the Catholic

⁶ About A.D. 405.

⁷ De Trin. xi. 49.

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temper. It is by this temper which God has given her, and which she would fain communicate to her sons, that the Church Universal has been “exalted like a palm tree in Engaddi, and as a rose plant in Jericho, as a fair olive tree in a pleasant field, and as a plane tree by the water”⁸ and filled with God’s wisdom, “as Phison and as Tigris in the time of the new fruits.” This is the temper by which partition walls are broken down, and the earth made one and of one speech, and the curse of Babel turned aside, and the miracle of Pentecost made abiding. The narrow views of politicians, and their still narrower jealousies, literary theories of national characters, and attempts after union, such as conquerors or men of science weakly strive to gain, are all broken through and swept away, and set at nought by this temper, of which we speak. The world at times has seen this temper living and working, and it has feared it and obeyed it. But now the Body of Christ is torn asunder, and the members war against each other, and endeavour to be by themselves; and thereof has come weakness, disease, slumbering, and fearful dejection in men’s souls. Time was in Europe when the Church was free to have the same rites, and pray the same prayers all over. It may not be so now. Time was when foreigners, travellers, and merchants went here and there, and found in every place his own Church, priest, Altar, home. It is not so now. Let us see this well illustrated.

“There was nothing new, or strange, or singular, about the burial procession particularly calculated to excite the attention of Marco Polo. The ‘*De Profundis*’ of the stoled priest spake the universal language adopted by the most sublime of human compositions, the Liturgy of Western Christendom. Yet, though no objects appeared which could awaken any lively curiosity in the traveller, there was much in their very familiarity to excite the

⁸ Ecclus. xxiv.

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sympathy of the wanderer in a foreign land. With an altered tone he said to the friar, 'Saddened is the spirit of the pilgrim, by the dying twilight and the plaining vesper bell. But he who braves every danger for himself, may feel his heart sink within him when the pageant of triumphant death brings to his mind the thought, that those from whom, as he weened, he parted for a little while only, may have been already borne to the sepulchre. Yet there is also a great and enduring comfort to the traveller in Christendom. However uncouth may be the speech of the races amongst whom the pilgrim sojourns, however diversified may be the customs of the regions which he visits, let him enter the portal of the Church, or hear, as I do now, the voice of the minister of the Gospel, and he is present with his own, though alps and oceans may sever them asunder. There is one spot where the pilgrim always finds his home. We are all one people when we come before the Altar of the Lord.'⁹ Now this is what we have lost; this is what all good men are sickening for the want of, what all good men must in their measure strive to bring back again, by cultivating in his own heart, and carrying out in his own modest practice, the Catholic temper. He must not look at his particular Church, as if, like his country, it were an island. He must not let his sympathy, or love, or admiration be confined within any bounds short of the Church Universal. He must feel as the Church Universal feels. He must teach as the Church Universal teaches, and ever has taught. He must pray God for the time when he may worship as the Church Universal worshipped. He must guard the faith jealously, as the salutary deposit handed on to him; but he must shun the close, bitter, schismatical spirit of controversy, that spirit which is nothing but "the disquieting of good men, and the forgetfulness of good turns." He must throw himself out of systems, sects, schools, parties, into the free, capacious

⁹ Palgrave, Merchant and Friar, p. 138.

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teaching and temper of the Church Universal. Thus by God's grace may the sundered members of His Church begin to stir, and move, and come one to another, and join themselves, and live anew; and the shape and outline and attitude, which long past centuries had known, shall gradually grow clearer, more forcible, and more distinct before men's eyes, lovely and venerable. Then shall the Church be again informed by the Catholic temper, "the understanding spirit, holy, one only, manifold, subtil, lively, clear, undefiled, plain, not subject to hurt, loving the thing that is good, quick, which cannot be letted, ready to do good, kind to man, stedfast, sure, free from care, having all power, overseeing all things, and going through all understanding, pure, and most subtil, spirits."¹⁰ This is the Catholic temper, the temper of the Church, who is "more moving than any motion: she passeth and goeth through all things by reason of her pureness. She is a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty; therefore can no defiled thing fall into her. And being but one, she can do all things: and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new: and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God and prophets: and in that she is conversant with God, she magnifieth her nobility." Such is the Church Catholic, the Bride of Christ. Such shall she one day be seen to be.

Lastly the Church itself, the way it is left with us and trusted to us, teaches us very forcibly how hateful selfishness is in God's sight. Christ gave His Name, the only one under heaven whereby men can be saved. But He did not leave it to every mans judgment what to think of His great Name, how to believe in Him, with what rites He was to be worshipped, and the like. He did not leave the faith with this man or that man, or any set of men. He left it with the Church, with the Church only, the Church

¹⁰ Wisdom vii. Viii.

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Catholic, one and entire; and made it impossible it should be pure and whole anywhere out of the Church, or any where short of the Church. In Scripture language the Church was to be the pillar and ground of the truth: the *pillar*, as bearing it up and witnessing to it and keeping it safe and not letting the world reach it to lower it or do it violence; the *ground*, as being the authority on which the truth rests, the lawful and very sufficient evidence upon which men are to receive it. Now in this view it is clear the Church is of immense importance; the salvation of all generations depends upon it. What means then did our Saviour ordain for handing the Church on from one generation to another, for preserving it amid storms and persecutions, for enabling it by its own inward purity to overcome the world and to save alive the souls of those within its gates? Visible miracles gradually ceased, that is to say, they were not put forward in the same way they were before. God did not visibly interfere; heretics and blasphemers were not always struck dead as by a miracle, though here and there God did interpose, and the world wondered. Still as a general rule, it was left to men, to our fathers, to us, to hand on the Church, to leave the old faith as we received it. This was the law: "Tell ye your children of it; and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation." Thus the Church was made to depend on us, the salvation of all generations was made to depend on us. This is a fearful thought, almost too fearful to bear. The salvation of all after generations depends on us. And yet we are careless about it, ungenerous, little-minded, sparing, selfish in saving souls.

Yet still we have among us the Church, which is a refuge from our selfishness: and she is from time to time calling upon us to exercise this privilege of taking refuge with her by our alms. We are for ever being called upon to aid in handing on the Gospel, the one sound faith, the wisdom hidden from of old, to our posterity. We are invited

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to be fellow-workmen with Apostles, primitive confessors, martyrs, bishops, saints, men who raised dead bodies, workers of miracles, lords over evil spirits, mighty teachers, masters in Israel. This was their office to hand on the faith, to teach it to those who came after them, to feed the little ones of Christ. Such was the task which they were foremost in; and to this day we make mention of their names with reverence, because of their faithfulness in their generation. Surely this is a great privilege for such unloving Christians as we are, full of ourselves, full of the world's taint, full of earth and all that is therein. Yet there is no danger of selfishness intruding here. We do not come out from others in this. We are not singular. We are not ostentatious. We are but a few of many, of whom God taketh count, and watcheth their hands and hearts as they go by to the treasury of the temple. The brightest saint in God's kingdom has no temptation to selfishness. He is but one, one little one, among the thousand stars that are thickly sown, like seeds of light, all over the dark skies, waiting for a still more glorious brightness, when they shall grow and shine in the kingdom of their Father, when the heavens shall be new, and the face of the earth covered with another freshness, being baptized with fire. We are not to ask ourselves where our self-denial is to end, when we have done enough, when the measure of our sacrifice is full. This is the spirit of a slave rather than a son. It is never full. There is never self-denial enough; all is self-denial in the school of Christ. We have a life in our veins, we have not laid that down yet beneath the Cross. The blood of martyrdom would not fill the cup. The martyrs themselves are but unprofitable servants, though they are as Angels in our eyes. Why are we clinging to these perishable things? Surely we do not love them. Our home is not here. It is very far away, we are pining for it. We are athirst for God.

But perchance it may be said, this is an unnatural state. We *do* love these things; "we have set our hearts, it

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cannot be concealed, we have set them fondly on earth, and the green things and the bright things that are upon the earth." It cannot be. You cannot love the world nor the world you. The Cross has been planted in your hearts. You and the world, you and your affections, you and your idols must part for ever, part in the blood that flowed where the stern Cross went deepest in. You and all your dreams must part, O ye of the Christian Circumcision!

The kingdom of Heaven is within you. You are not your own. You are lifted above yourselves. You are washed with a heavenly washing. You have the gift, which is above all other gifts, the gift of the justified, the Presence of God within you. Ever since the time that you were fearfully and wonderfully made into sons of God and heirs of heaven, this inward kingdom has been unfolding itself in your souls. First one and then another of your lusts and affections have been mastered. Sacraments, providences, ordinances, discipline, ascetic habits, sometimes slowly, sometimes swiftly, all have been drawing your natural infirmities more and more within the power of this supernatural kingdom. The heart is like a tract of barren country, hardly recovered to fertility. Still, year after year, every prayer and act of faith, every self-denial and suffering, has been taking in some little portion from the wilderness. Angry tempers, idleness, childish sins, bad habits clinging about us and hindering us, are by degrees brought under the dominion of our new nature. The kingdom of Satan grows narrower day by day, though here and there the waste brown sand again encroaches on the green. Our very sins themselves alter, and evil as they are and impure, still disclose to us the presence of virtue in the soil. They witness to our being more or less religious. We are being transformed into Angels, and more than Angels, though suffering here. Yea, more than Angels, for when we wake up at the last to sleep no more for ever, we shall be satisfied with His likeness Who *was* Man, and *is* Man, and

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Who has our nature upon Him where He is. We shall be in some high sense like Him, else could not we endure to see Him as He is. How fearful to think of what unknown operations our regenerate but still striving souls are now the scene and the place. That inward kingdom is unfolding itself there. But selfishness is hindering it. Self is keeping back its glory and its power. Self is making it jealous of opening out and disclosing itself. Self is struggling against the Spirit and the Sacraments. Therefore deny that self, and the empire of Christ will stretch forth from the river even unto the great sea, from Baptism until eternity begins. Therefore mortify, treat hardly, and bring under that evil self, and then will that inward kingdom be like the rising of the sun behind the hills. The morning will sweetly invade the night. The lines of darkness will fade off and be overrun with light. "It shall be," in the words of 'him who was raised up on high,'¹¹ as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

Clear on all of us, and clearly shining was our baptismal rain. But the spirit of selfishness has passed upon us since. We are stained with sad impurities. We are beaten back in our upward flight by weakness and self-indulgence. We are laden with our sins. The burden of them is intolerable. Self has taken such hold upon us that we are not able to look up. We think holy thoughts; and then unhallow them by telling them to others, that they may see how great our thoughts are, We watch and fast, and are fain our faces should grow pale, that men may see how austere our watching and our fasting are. We give alms, alms after the fashion of these latter times, in public and with our names, that men may wonder we can give so much, and think of all the self-denial it must cost us. Self is in every thing. The hundred gates of the heart may be shut against

¹¹ 1 Sam. xxiii. 4.

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open sins, but self goes in and out thereat unquestioned day and night. Thus it is that self becomes hateful to us. We are weary of our own littleness and meanness. We are contemptible to ourselves. We groan, being burdened, and are miserable; yet we have not courage to throw ourselves away from ourselves. O what a poor and miserable Christianity is this! How often do we think, when self intrudes, of our early Baptism, and its innocent liberty, and its self-forgetting quietness; we think of the Font that is by the entering in of the Church, and long with a holy longing, and cry with David, "O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David."¹² And we have THREE, mightier than men, unto Whom we were baptized, to break through the hosts and bring us water from the consecrated Well. Let us leave our selfishness behind, and go and take refuge there. Alms, said an old martyr, are the imitation of our baptism, and win the indulgence of God. Alms repair its freshness. By alms do we absolve ourselves from sin. Alms, as one of the ancients teaches, are a second baptism. "Give alms," said our Lord; "Give alms of such things as ye have, and behold, all things are clean unto you."¹³ Let us come continually out of a free heart, to pass the watchword, the Cross of Christ, along the invisible lines of after generations. We have a right to deny ourselves for Christ; a right to suffer with the Incarnate Son, and purify selfishness away by suffering. In the quiet courts of the alms-giving Church we may take sanctuary from ourselves.

THE END.

¹² 2 Sam. xxiii. 15.

¹³ St. Luke xi. 41.