

ANOTHER AND A NOBLER EXHIBITION NO. 448

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 4, 1862,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places
might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.”
Ephesians 3:10.*

THE entire world has been talking during the last three days of the splendid pageant which adorned the opening of the International Exhibition. Crowds have congregated in the palace of universal art; representatives of all the nations of the earth have journeyed for many a league to view its wonders; eminent persons from all empires have appeared in the gorgeous spectacle, and such a scene has glittered before the eyes of all men, as has never before in all respects been equaled, and may not for many a year find a successor to rival it! Why all these gatherings? Why muster you, all you nations? Why do you come here, you gazing sons of men? Surely your answer must be, that you have come together that you may see *the manifold wisdom of MAN*. As they walk along the aisles of the great Exhibition, what do they see but the skill of man, first in this department, and then in the other—at one moment in the magnificent, at the next in the minute—at one instant in a work of elegance in ornament, in the next in a work of skill and usefulness—“manifold wisdom,” the works and productions of many minds, the different hues and colors of thought embodied in the various machines, and statues, and so forth, which human skill has been able to produce. We grant you that God has been most rightly recognized there, both in the solemn prayer of the Archbishop, and in the hymn of the Laureate; but still the great objective, after all, was to behold the manifold wisdom of man! And had they taken away man’s skill and man’s art, what would there have been left? Brothers and sisters may the greatest results follow from this gathering! But we must not expect that it, or anything else short of the gospel, will ever bring about the universal reign of peace. We must never look to art and science to accomplish that triumph which is reserved for the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ; yet may it spread the feelings of benevolence—may it bind together the scattered children of Adam—may it fuse into a happy and blessed union the kindreds of men that were scattered abroad at Babel, and may it prepare the way, and open the gates, that the gospel may proceed to the uttermost ends of the earth!

It is, however, very far from my mind to direct your attention to the marvels which crowd the area of the huge temple of 1862. I invite you, rather, to follow me to a nobler exhibition than this, where crowds are gathering—not of mortals, but of immortal spirits! The temple is not of art and science, but of divine grace and goodness, built with living stones, cemented with the fair colors of atoning blood, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone”—that temple, the Church of the living God, “the pillar and ground of the truth.” Into this great palace crowd ten thousand times ten thousand of the host of God, “cherubim and seraphim,” or by whatever other names those bright intelligences may be known among themselves—“principalities and powers,” the different degrees in the hierarchy of immortal spirits, if such there are—they are all represented as intently gazing upon the wondrous fabric which God has reared. Along the aisles of that Church, along the ages of its dispensations, stand the various trophies of divine grace and love—the jewel cases of virtues and graces which adorn the believer, the mementoes of triumphs gotten over sin and hardness of heart, and of victories achieved over temptation and trial. And as the spirits walk along these corridors full of divine workmanship, they stand, they gaze, they admire, and wonder and speed back their way to heaven, and sing more loudly than before, hallelujah to the God whose manifold wisdom they have beheld in the Church of God below!

Beloved friends, our text is a strange one; if you will reflect that the angels, the elder-born of creatures when compared with us, have been with God for many an age; and yet I do not know that it is ever said that by anything else they ever learned “The manifold wisdom of God.” They were with Him when He made the earth and the heavens; perhaps during those long periods when the earth was forming—“In the beginning,” when “God created the heavens and the earth,” the angels were known to visit this world, and to behold alive, and in their glory, those strange shapes of mystery which now we dig up in fossil from the earth. Certainly in that day when “the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face thereof,” the angels knew the hidden treasure; and when He said, “Let there be light, and there was light,” when that first ray of light seemed like a living finger to touch the earth and waken it to beauty, then seraphic fingers swept their heavenly harps, and “the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy.” Yet I do not learn, though they were with the Great Worker during the seven days of creation, though they saw “the cattle after their kind, and the fowls of the air after their kind,” and the fish of the sea, and all the plants and herbs, yet I see not that in all this there was made known unto them “The manifold wisdom of God”!

No, more, when man, the Master’s last work, walked through Eden—when, with his fair consort by his side, he stood up to praise his Maker, though he was “fearfully and wonderfully made,” though in his mind and body there was a display of wisdom unrivalled before—yet I do not learn that even in man, as a creature, there was made known “The manifold wisdom of God”! Yes, and more than this—when other worlds were made, when the stars were kindled like glowing flames by light of Deity, if there were other peoples, and other kindreds, and other tribes in those myriads of far-off lands, I do not find in the creation of all those hosts of worlds which adorn the wide fields of ether, that there was then made known to celestial spirits “The manifold wisdom of God”! No, more, in all the dispensations of divine providence apart from the Church, in all the mystic revolutions of those wondrous wheels that are full of eyes, apart from the Church, there has not been made known to these beings to the fullest extent the wisdom of God! Ah, and brothers and sisters, remember yet once more, that they with undimmed eyes look upon the glory of Him who sits upon the throne, so far as it can be seen by created vision; they behold the beatific vision; they are glistening in the splendors of Deity, and veil their faces when at His footstool they cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.” And yet, though standing, as it were, in the sun, though they are foremost of all the creatures, nearest to the eternal throne, I do not read that by all this they have in the highest sense learned “The manifold wisdom of God”!

What an idea, then, does this give to us of the importance of the Church! Brothers and sisters, never let us despise any more the meanest member of it, since there is more to be beheld in the Church than in creation in its utmost breadth; more of the wisdom of God in the saving of souls than in the building the arches of the sky! No, more of God to be seen than even heaven with all its splendors can otherwise reveal! Oh, let us open our eyes that we lose not those divine mysteries which angels desire to look into!

I have now, already, explained the meaning of the text; we have, therefore, but to direct your attention to those points of interest upon which angelic intelligence would be sure to linger. And we shall pray that, while we mention these in brief and running catalog, our hearts may be led to meditate much upon the manifold, the varied wisdom of God displayed in the Church which Christ has bought with His blood!

I. And first, dear brothers and sisters, we think that the grand object of attention in the Church to the principalities and powers is **THE SCHEME AND PLAN OF SAVING THE CHURCH**. It is this that they so much admire and wonder at. It has been exceedingly well said by others, that if a Parliament had been held of all the spirits in heaven and in earth, and if it had been committed to this general assembly to ordain and fix upon a plan whereby God might be just, and yet, the justifier of the ungodly, they must all have failed to achieve the task! Those lofty minds, doubtless, consider with delight the fact that in God’s way of saving His Church, all His attributes shine out with undiminished luster. God is just; they know it in heaven, for they saw Lucifer fall like lightning when God cast him out of his dwelling place on account of sin. God is just; and as much so upon Calvary, where his Son hangs and bleeds, “the just for the unjust, to bring us to God,” as He was when He cast down the Son of the Morning. The angels see in salvation this great wonder of justice and peace embracing each other—God as sternly just as if

there were not a particle of mercy in His being, smiting His Son for the sin of His people with all the force of His might—God, yet as merciful as if He were not just, embracing His people as though they had never sinned, and loving them with a love which could not have been greater had they never transgressed. They understand how God so hated sin that He laid vengeance on His only begotten, and yet, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” As in the crowns of Oriental princes the most precious jewels shone in clusters, so as in one wonderful *corona* all the infinite attributes of God shine out at once in all their combined glory around Your cross, O Jesus, earth’s wonder and heaven’s prodigy! This difficulty, so delightfully met, so completely disposed of by the atonement of Christ, causes the angels to behold “The manifold wisdom of God.”

But, further, when the angels see that by this great plan all the ruin that sin brought upon mankind is removed, they again wonder at the wisdom of God! And when they especially notice the way in which it was removed, the strange and mysterious methods which God used for rolling away the stone from the door of the human sepulcher, they yet more bow down with awe! Did we lose Eden in Adam? Lo, the Lord Jesus Christ has given us a better than Paradise! Did we lose the dignity of manhood? Lo, today we regain it in Christ—“for You have put all things under His feet.” Did we lose spotless purity? Again we have obtained it in Christ, for we are justified through His righteousness and washed in His blood. Did we lose communion with God? We have obtained it this day; for “we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.” Did we lose heaven itself? Ah, heaven is ours again; for in Him we have obtained an inheritance and are “made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” And all this mischief is made to destroy itself, God overruling it to be its own destruction; the dragon stung with his own sting; Goliath killed with his own sword; Death is slain by the death of the man who was crucified; sin is put away by the great sin offering, who “bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” The grave is plagued by its own victim since Christ lay a captive within it. Satan casts out Satan in this case. We rise by man as by man we fell—“As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive.” The worm in whom Satan triumphed, is the worm in whom God is glorified! It was man whom Satan sought to make the instrument of divine dishonor, and it is man in whom God triumphs over all the crafts and cruelties of hell. This, the angels wonder at, for they see in this scheme of salvation, meeting as it does every mischief, and meeting it on its own ground, “The manifold wisdom of God.”

Observe, also, that through the great scheme of salvation by the atonement, God is more glorified than He would have been if there had been no fall, and consequently no room for a redemption. The angels admire “The manifold wisdom of God” in the whole story of the human race, seeing that in the whole of it, from the beginning to the end, God is more glorified than He would have been had it all been written in letters of gold, without one sin or one suffering on the part of the human race. O Lord! When You did permit for a moment Your people to go astray like lost sheep, there might have been silence in heaven, since Your enemy had triumphed, since the precious ones whom You had loved were given up into the hand of the enemy! When the jewels of Christ were lost for a little season amidst the miry clay and ruins of the fall, there might have been a furling of Jehovah’s banner; for perhaps it seemed to angels as though God had been defeated in His highest praise; but when Christ comes back “from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah,” wearing upon His royal head the crown in which every jewel is securely set that once was in the hand of the enemy—when the Shepherd comes back from the mountains, wearing on His shoulders the lost sheep which had gone astray, there is more joy in heaven over the lost ones that are found again, than there could have been over all of them had they never gone astray! The deep bass of the fall shall swell the song of the restoration; the hollow moans, as they seemed to be, when heard alone, shall but make a part of the grand swell of the eternal song, as it shall peal up to the throne of the Lord God of hosts! brothers and sisters, if you would think for a while upon the whole work of God, taking in it the fall as being foreseen and foreknown, until the day when all the chosen seed shall meet around the throne, I think you will be struck with its glory as a whole. It was within the compass of the power of God to make creatures who would love Him, to make beings who would be attached to Him by very close ties; but—I speak with reverence—I do not see how omnipotence itself, apart from the fall and the redemption by the sacrifice of Christ, when He gave Himself to

die for us, could have made such creatures as the redeemed will be in heaven! Brothers and sisters, if we had never fallen, and never been redeemed, we could never have sung of redeeming grace and dying love! We could not, and the angels could not; we could not have known the heights and depths, and lengths and breadths of the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Feasted with heavenly food, we might have admired His bounty, but not as we now do when we eat the flesh of Christ; made to drink the wine pressed from heaven's own clusters, we might have blessed the giver of the feast, but not as we now can do, when we drink the blood of Jesus as our sweet wine! Pure and holy, we could have praised Him, and we should have done so, but not as we now can, when we have "washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." There is a nearer relationship now than there could have been in any other way, if God had not taken humanity into alliance with Himself, if the Word had not been made flesh and dwelt among us! I say there may have been other plans, but certainly no mortal mind can conceive any other. This seems to be the most wonderful, the most God-like, the most divine, that a creature shall be made perfectly free; that that creature shall offend, shall discover the justice of God through the punishment being laid upon a substitute, but shall learn the love of God through that substitute being God Himself! This creature was ordained to be attached to the Eternal One by ties of filial relationship, by bonds of affection so strong, that the pains of the rack, and the flames of the fire, should not be able to separate it from the love of God. And in heaven this creature shall feel that it owes nothing to itself, nothing to its own natural efforts, but all to Him who loved it, and who bought it with His blood! And therefore, this grateful being shall praise God, after a sort, superior by many high degrees to the attainment of any other. Oh, dear friends, I think if we study the subject for a few hours alone, we shall see that in nothing that God has done is there such a discovery of His wisdom as in the plan of redeeming love! Go round about her, O angels of the Lord; mark well her bulwarks and count the towers thereof; consider her palaces; behold the impregnable strength of covenant engagements; see the largeness and broadness of electing love; behold the veracity and truthfulness of divine promises! See the fullness of divine grace and efficacy in the pardoning blood; see the faithfulness and the immovability of the divine affection, when once it is set on men; and when you have admired the whole, go back, Spirits, and more sweetly than before, unite with us in our song—"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive honor, and blessing, and majesty, and power, and dominion forever and ever."

II. Secondly, without a doubt the wisdom of God is made known to angels and principalities in THE VARIOUS DISPENSATIONS THROUGH WHICH THE CHURCH HAS PASSED. At first the Church was, indeed, a little flock, a few chosen out of the mass—Abram, the Syrian, ready to perish and a few godly ones in his household. Then the stream widened a little, and there became 12 tribes; and soon the dispensation became clearer. Moses was raised up, and Aaron, whom God had chosen. Then the angels desired to look into the typical rites and ceremonies of that ancient dispensation. They were pictured standing on the mercy seat, with wings outstretched, with their faces bent downwards as if they would gladly behold the secret which the golden lid concealed. Doubtless, as they saw the sacrifice, whether it was the burnt offering, the peace offering, or the sin offering—as they saw the gorgeous ceremonies of the tabernacle, or the yet more splendid rites of the temple, they admired the wisdom of God, as it was set forth in the dim symbol and shadow. How much more must they have admired it, when the Sun of righteousness arose with healing beneath His wings, when they saw the sacrifice superseded by the one great offering, the high priest set aside by the man, who having once offered one sacrifice forever, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high! How they have marveled since that time as truth of God after truth of God has been expounded in the experience of believers, as doctrine after doctrine has been revealed to the Church of Christ by the illuminations of the Holy Spirit! Oh, brothers and sisters, the angels, when they compare the past with the present, and again, the present with the past, the choosing of the Jewish olive, and the leaving out of the rest of the trees, and then, the grafting-in of the Gentiles from the wild olive, and the casting out of the natural branches, how much they must have admired the singular variety of God's dispensations, when they know, as certainly they do, that His grace remains the same!

In climbing or in descending a lofty mountain, one is struck with the sudden change of views. You looked on the right just now, and you saw a populous city in the plain; but you turn a corner and looking

through a break in the forest you see a broad lake; and in a moment or two your road winds again, and you will see a narrow valley and another range of mountains beyond. Every time you turn, there is a new scene presented to you. So it would seem to the angelic spirits. When first they began to ascend the hill on which the Church stands, “Mount Zion, which is above, the mother of us all,” they saw the wisdom of God manifested as Abraham saw it. A turn in the road, and they saw it as Moses beheld it; another, and they had a view as David was likely to gaze upon it; and then, when they ascended to clearer light, and the mists that hung about the mountainside had all been scattered, and had fallen in one gracious shower of divine grace, they saw it as the apostles beheld it when they stood upon Mount Olivet! And since then, through every trial of the Church, as the 18 centuries have rolled on since the Master went up to heaven, they have been constantly catching fresh views, and seeing fresh manifestations of the varied and constantly-changing wisdom of the unchanging God, as it is manifested in His dealings with the Church! So that both in the dispensations, as well as in the plan, there is made known to principalities and powers “The manifold wisdom of God.”

III. Thirdly, to be brief upon each point, we may conclude, without any doubt, that they mainly see the wisdom of God in His Church, **IN THE CHURCH’S COVENANT HEAD AND REPRESENTATIVE.** Oh, when first they heard that the Lord of life and glory was to be made flesh and to dwell among us, how they must have admired the plan of heaven’s going down to earth, that earth might come up to heaven! The baby in the manger commanded all their songs. When they saw that baby become a man and heard Him preach, how they must have marveled at the wisdom of sending God Himself to be God’s own prophet! When they saw that man living a life of perfect holiness, how they must have clapped their wings at the thought that man could see perfection now in God’s own self, shrouded in human form! But when it came to atonement, and they learned that God’s people must be crucified in Christ, how struck must they have been, as the thought burst upon them for the first time, that the whole host of the elect were to sweat great drops of blood through one man—that they were to be flagellated, to be scourged, bruised, and spat upon, in one man—that the host of the chosen were to carry the cross of their condemnation upon one man’s shoulders—that that one man was for them all, to take all their load of guilt and, nailed to the tree, bleed away His life for the whole body! Oh, I say, when they saw that lowly man, with all the sins of the whole chosen company resting upon His shoulders, and knew this solitary man to be God—able to carry the whole—they must have marveled, indeed, at the wisdom of God! And when that triumphant man cried, “It is finished!” having drained the cup of damnation to its utmost dregs, till there remained not one black drop for another of the elect to drink—when that one man descended into the grave, and the whole company of the faithful were buried with Him, oh, how they marveled! When again they beheld the second Adam bursting His grave clothes, rending the chains of death as though, like another Samson, He had broken the green branches of the Philistines, as though they were but thread, how astonished they were when they thought that the elect were risen in that glorified person! And when that man was received up into heaven, and the cloud hid Him from mortal view, how they rejoiced to see Him rise! But much more to think that we also were risen in Him, and in Him had ascended up on high—in Him the whole Church, I say, leading their captivity captive! When that representative person, with acclamation beyond all measure, rose to the throne of the Father, and took His seat at the right hand of the dreadful Majesty on High, how wonderful must have been the admiration of the spirits when they thought that He had raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus! Perhaps there is no doctrine that is more astounding to Christians than this. I know if we need a theme that will enlarge our minds, the subject of the union of the chosen with Christ is certainly the most expansive—

*“O sacred union, firm and strong,
How great the grace, how sweet the song,
That worms of earth should ever be
One with incarnate Deity!
One when He died, one when He rose,
One when He triumphed over His foes;
One when in heaven He took His seat,*

*And angels sang all hell's defeat!
This sacred tie forbids all fears,
For all He has and is, is ours;
With Him our head we stand or fall,
Our life, our surety and our all!"*

"The manifold wisdom of God," in thus constituting Christ the covenant head and representative of the elect in all its various shapes and shades, must have been discovered to angelic beings!

IV. Though that were a theme that might require a full discourse, we leave it at once to turn to another. In the fourth place, the manifold wisdom of God is made known to principalities and powers **IN THE CONVERSION OF EVERY CHILD OF GOD.**

There are some very singular implements in this present Great Exhibition; marvelous feats of human skill; but there is one thing they have not there that is to be found in the Church of the living God, and that is a heart-melter, an instrument for turning stone to flesh! There are inventions for melting granite, and for liquefying flints, but I know of no invention, but one, and that is not to be found in any earthly show, for melting the adamant of the human heart. Now when the Lord takes the profane man, or the infidel, or the proud, self-righteous Pharisee, or some tall, intimidating, careless sinner, and casts his heart into a fountain filled with Jesus' blood, and it begins to melt with penitence, the angels see the matchless wisdom of God! But I am sure, also, that there is not in the Exhibition another instrument called a heart-healer—an invention for binding up broken hearts and making them one again, and healing all their wounds; but the Lord is pleased by the same instrument by which He breaks hearts, to heal them. That blood, which melts the flint, restores us the heart of flesh. Having first melted the heart, He next shows His matchless skill by taking away despair, despondency, and terror, and giving to the poor conscience perfect peace and rest—no—exulting joy and boundless liberty! As the angels see the proud man bow his knees, as they hear him in his silent chamber pour out his heart in sighs and groans, they say, "It is well, great God, it is well!" And as they see him come down from that chamber, light of foot, and joyous of heart because his sin is all forgiven, with his groans all turned into songs, the angels say, "It is well, great God, it is well! You wound, but You heal; You kill, and You make alive." Conversion is the greatest prodigy that we know of. If there are no such things as miracles today, believe me, I have neither eyes nor ears! But you say, "What miracles?" I answer, not miracles in smitten rocks that yield rivers of water, or seas that are divided by prophetic rods, but miracles in hearts and consciences, obedient to holy, heavenly power! I have seen in my short life more miracles, and stranger miracles than Moses ever worked, and wonders as great as Christ Jesus Himself ever performed on flesh and blood; for they are His miracles today that are worked through the gospel!

If it were appropriate just now, I might point to some in these galleries and on this ground floor, and ask them to tell what miracles God did for them, and how they are here today in one happy circle met for the praise of God! Men who once were everything that was vile; but they are washed, they are sanctified. The tears start in their eyes now, when they think of the drunkard's cup, and of the swearer's oath with which they were once so well acquainted. Ah, too, and of the dens and visions of filth, and of lasciviousness which they once knew; and they are here, loving and praising their Lord! Oh, there are some in this house today who, if they could speak, would say they are the greatest sinners out of hell, and the mightiest wonders out of heaven! If our gospel is hid, it is only hid to those who willfully shut their eyes to it! When one sees harlots reclaimed, thieves, drunkards, swearers made to be saints of the living God, do not tell us that the gospel has lost its power! O sirs, do not dream that we shall believe you while we can see this power, while we can feel it in our own souls, while every day we hear of conversions, while scarcely a week rolls on without some score of brands being plucked from the eternal burning! And, I say, if the Church of God on earth admires these conversions, what must angels do who are more acquainted with the guilt of sin, and know more of the loveliness of holiness, and understand better the secret heart of man than we do? How must they gladly and exultingly admire in each distinct conversion as it presents phases different from any other, the "Manifold wisdom of God!" That ingenious toy called the kaleidoscope at every turn presents some new form of beauty, so the different converts who are brought to Christ by the preaching of the Word are every one unlike the other; there is something to dis-

tinguish each case; by them, to the very letter, our text is proven, the manifold wisdom, the much varied wisdom of God is displayed! I have sometimes understood the word “manifold” as comparing grace to a precious treasure that is wrapped up in many folds. First this, then the next, then the next must be unfolded, and as you unwrap fold after fold, you find something precious each time. But, it will be long before you and I shall have unwrapped the last fold, and shall have found the wisdom of God in its pure glittering luster, lying stored within as the angels behold it in the Church of the living God!

V. But time has failed me, and therefore, I must leave points upon which I wanted to dwell. The principalities and powers, to this day, find great opportunities for studying the wisdom of God in THE TRIALS AND EXPERIENCE OF BELIEVERS, in the wisdom which subjects them to trial, in the divine grace which sustains them in it, in the power which brings them out of it, in the wisdom which overrules the trial for their good, in the grace which makes the trial fit the back or strengthens the back for the burden. They see wisdom in the prosperity of Christians when their feet stand like hinds’ feet upon their high places; they see the same in the despondencies of believers when even in the lowest depths they still say, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” As every day brings to us our daily bread, so every day brings to heaven its daily theme of wonder and the angels receive fresh stores of knowledge from the ever-new experience of the people of God! They lean from the battlements of heaven today to gaze on you, you tried believers! They look into your furnace as did the King of Babylon, and they see the fourth man with you like unto the Son of God! They track you, O you children of Israel in the wilderness; they see the places of your encampment, and the land to which you are hastening. And as they mark the fiery cloudy pillar that conducts you, and the angel of God’s house that leads the van and brings up the rear, they discover in every step of the way, the wonderful wisdom of God!

VI. And lastly, beyond all controversy, WHEN THE LAST OF GOD’S PEOPLE SHALL BE BROUGHT IN and the bright angels shall begin to wander through the heavenly plains and converse with all the redeemed spirits, they will then see “The manifold wisdom of God.” Let the angel speak awhile for himself. “Here,” he says, “I see men of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, from Britain to Japan, from the frozen north to the burning zone beneath the equator; here I see souls of all ages, babes here, snatched from the womb and breast, and spirits that once knew palsied age to whom the grasshopper was a burden. Here I see men from all periods, from Adam and Abel down to the men who were alive and remained at the coming of the Son of God from heaven. Here I see them from the days of Abraham, and the times of David, and the period of the Apostles, and the seasons of Luther and of Wickliffe, even to the last times of the Church. Here I see them of all classes. There is one who was a king, and at his side, as his fellow, is another that tugged the oar as a galley-slave. There I see a merchant prince who counted not his riches dear unto him, and by his side a poor man who was rich in faith, and heir of the kingdom of God. There I see the poet who could sing on earth of Paradise Lost and Regained, and by his side one who could not put two words together, but who knew the Paradise Lost and the Paradise Regained within the Eden of his own nature, the garden of his own heart! Here I see Magdalene and Saul of Tarsus, repenting sinners of all shades and saints of all varieties, those who showed their patience on a lingering sick bed, those who triumphed with holy boldness amid the red flames, those who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy; the monk who shook the world, and he who cast salt into the stream of doctrine and made it wholesome and pure; the man who preached to his millions, and brought tens of thousands of souls to Christ, and the humble cottager who knew but this Bible true, and herself the partaker of the life of Christ—here they all are, and as the spirits wander and look first at this and then at that—first one trophy of divine grace, and then at another monument of mercy, they will all exclaim, ‘How manifold are Your works, O God! In wisdom have You made them all. Heaven is full of Your goodness which You have worked for the sons of men.’”

And now, dear friends, the sermon is done, when I ask you just these questions. The first shall be a question for the children of God, and the other for those who know Him not.

First, to the children of God; do you think you and I have sufficiently considered that we are always looked upon by angels, and that they desire to learn by us the wisdom of God? The reason why our sisters appear in the house of God with their heads covered is “because of the angels.” The apostle says that

a woman is to have a covering upon her head, because of the angels, since the angels are present in the assembly, and they mark every act of indecorum, and therefore, everything is to be conducted with decency and order in the presence of the angelic spirits. Think of that, then, when this afternoon we shall be talking together. Let us not talk in such a way that a visitor from heaven might be grieved with us; and when we are in our general assemblies met together, let us not discuss ignoble themes, but let the matters which we discuss be truly edifying, seasoned with salt. Especially in our families, might we not say more about Christ than we do? Do we not often spend days, perhaps weeks, without making any mention of such things as we could wish angels to hear? You are watched, brothers and sisters, you are watched by those that love you! The angels love us and bear us up in their hands lest we dash our feet against the stones. They encamp about our homes; let us entertain these royal guests. Since they cannot eat our bread and sit at our table to partake of our good cheer, let us talk of subjects which will delight them in a manner with which they shall be gratified, and let their presence be to us a motive why we should so conduct ourselves that to angels and principalities may be made known by us the wisdom of God!

And, lastly, what do some of you think angels would say of *your* walk and conversation? Well, I suppose you don't care much about them, and yet you should. For who but angels, will be the reapers at the last, and who but they shall be the convoy to our spirits across the last dark stream? Who but they shall carry our spirit like that of Lazarus into the Father's bosom? Surely we should not despise them. What has your conduct been? Ah, sirs, it need not that the preacher speak; let Conscience have her perfect work! There are some here over whom angels, could their eyes have known a tear, would have wept day and night. You have been almost persuaded to be Christians. You have known the struggles of conscience, and you have said, "I would to God I were altogether such as the saints are!" But you are still unconverted. Stay, spirit, guardian spirit, you who have watched over this son of a sainted mother, wing not back your disappointed flight to heaven! He relents, he relents! Now the Spirit of God is moving in him. "*It shall be,*" he says, "*it shall be.*" "I repent and believe in Jesus," but oh, spirit, you will yet be disappointed, for he is about to say, "In a little time; go your way for a little season; when I have a more convenient season I will send for you." Angel, you will be disappointed yet, but if the soul shall say, "Now, even now, in this house of prayer, I cast myself upon the finished atonement of Christ; I trust in Him to save me," wing your flight aloft, you glorious angel! Tell the cherubs around the throne of God that the prodigal has returned, and an heir of heaven has been born! Let heaven keep holiday, and let us go into our homes rejoicing, for he who was dead is alive again, and he who was lost is found!

May the Spirit of God do this, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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