

THE POWER OF AARON'S ROD NO. 521

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 26, 1863,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“But Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods.”
Exodus 7:12.*

WE shall not attempt to discuss the question as to whether these magicians actually did turn their rods into serpents or not; it is probable that they, by dexterous sleight of hand, substituted living serpents for dry rods, and so deceived the eyes of Pharaoh; on the other hand, it is possible that God was pleased to permit the devil to aid their enchantments, and so the old serpent produced a brood. But into that question, I say, I shall not enter. It is of no importance which opinion we may hold. Curious questions must, this morning, give way to important truths of God. I call your attention to the fact that Aaron’s rod proved its heaven-given superiority, and silenced all the boastings of Jannes and Jambres by readily swallowing up all their rods! This incident is an instructive emblem of the sure victory of the divine handiwork over all the opposition of men. Whenever a divine thing is cast into the heart, or thrown upon the earth, it swallows up everything else; and though the devil may fashion a counterfeit, and produce swarms of opponents, as sure as ever God is in the work, it will swallow up all its foes! “Aaron’s rod swallowed up all their rods.”

Without any preface, let me ask you, first of all, *to observe this fact*. When we have duly considered it, let us, in the second place, *draw an inference from it*. And then, in closing, let me endeavor to *show some reasons why it is right that it should be so*.

I. Let us turn aside to see this great sight—the divine triumphant over the diabolical—the spiritual subduing the natural—AARON’S ROD SWALLOWING ALL ITS RIVALS.

1. Let us take the case of the awakened sinner. That man was, a few days ago, as worldly, as carnal, as impassive as he well could be. If anyone should propose to make that man heavenly-minded, to lead him to set his affection upon things above, and not on things on the earth, the common observer would say, “Impossible! The man has no thought above what he shall eat, and what he shall drink, and how he shall be clothed—his heart is buried in a grave of cares; he rises early; he sits up late; he eats the bread of carefulness; he is glued and cemented to the world—as in old Roman walls, the cement has become so strong that the stone is no longer a separate piece, but has become a part of the wall itself—so this man is cemented to the world, he cannot be separated from it. You must break him in pieces with the hammer of death; you cannot separate him in any other way from the cares of life. Ah, but Aaron’s rod shall swallow up this rod! The man listens to the Word; the truth of God comes with power into his soul; the Holy Spirit has entered him; and the next day, though he goes to his business, he finds no true contentment in it, for he pants after the living God! Though he still will buy and sell and gain, yet there is a craving within—an awful hunger, an unquenchable thirst—which above the din and clamor of the world’s traffic, will be heard crying, “Seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.” Now his spirit pleads its needs, and outstrips the body in the contest for his warmest love—he spurns the trifles of a day—he seeks the jewels of eternity! The groveling swine which wallowed in worldliness is transformed into an eagle; the man who lived for this shadowing earth has now an eye for the upper spheres, and a wing to mount into celestial heights! Divine grace has won the day, and the worldling seeks the world to come!

It may be that the man is immersed in pleasure. He is at this theater and at that. You shall find him at every horserace and fighting ring—ah, and worse still, you may track him to dens of licentiousness, and learn that he is diving deeper than others in the turbid streams of vice! What power can make this sinner become a saint? As well ask over a moldering grave, “Can these dry bones live?”—how shall he find joy in the praise of God, or interest in waiting upon the worship of the Most High? “Absurd!” cries Unbelief, while Worldliness shouts, “Ridiculous!” The man is too far gone for regeneration! He is married to pleasure, and he wears the ring upon his finger! Yes, but Aaron’s rod can swallow up this rod! For we

have seen such a man loathe the very joys he loved till there was no charm in the music of sin—no mirth in the society of folly. He fled away to hide himself; he sought seclusion that he might weep alone. Where are now the sweetness of your bowls and the melody of your viols? Where now the charms of the earth's harlotry? Where now the giddy delights of chambering and wantonness? They are gone, for Aaron's rod has swallowed up these rods of the magicians, and the mad sinner is sitting yonder—a penitent at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind! His companions follow him; with many weighty reasons, as they seem to think, they invite his return; they plead with him not to make a fool of himself by joining those melancholy fanatics; they point out the faults of many professors; they remark that hypocrisies are common; they describe the inconsistencies of good men, and they say, "What? Will you throw away the joviality of youth, the bloom and flush of life, to be united with a miserable band of enthusiasts and deceivers like these?" Then they insinuate cunning doubts; they thrust into the man's way certain strange things, of which he had never heard before, which startle him like thunder, and almost drive him from his purpose. If God's grace is in him, the world's best magicians may throw down all their rods—and every rod may be as cunning and as poisonous as a serpent—but Aaron's rod will swallow up their rods! The sweet attractions of the cross will woo and win the man's heart. The blessed arguments, fetched from the bleeding wounds of Jesus, will answer all the blandishments of Madam Wanton and the reasons of her sister, Madam Bubble. Everything shall be set aside when true religion comes in! The man shall have a longing so intense that he cannot stop it, nor can he stop himself from obedience to it—a longing after pardon by blood, and salvation by divine grace!

Oh, have you not seen the trembling penitent, when under conviction of sin, apparently oblivious to everything else? How changed the man! The furrows of that brow prophesy a harvest of hope; tears, those jewels of repentance, redden his eyes. He is dressed in the sackcloth and ashes which are the court robes of those blessed mourners who shall be comforted. For a season even righteous joys yield him no solace; the comforts of his household, and the enjoyments of the fireside fail to reach his case; there is no balm in Gilead for him—heaven alone can supply him a fit physician! His cry has become, "These can never satisfy! Give me Christ, or else I die." You have marked the stag when it is let down for a royal hunt. Away it flies. The dogs are behind it. It flies over flowery meads, but it does not pause to smell the fragrance of the dale. It dashes along the woods, but it waits not for shelter beneath yon shady oak! It scatters the sparkling waters of the brook, but it scarcely has time to bathe its limbs. Onward, up the hill, the scenery is grand, but those wild eyes, starting from its head, are solaced by no sight of beauty. The birds are singing sweetly in yonder thicket, but those startled ears are not comforted. The bay of the dog is all the noble victim hears; the wrath of the hunter is all it dreads. On—on—on it flies, panting for life. Such is the soul hunted by the dogs of conscience. Such is the awakened spirit, when the wrath of God is let loose upon it; no comforts can charm it; no joys can delight it. It flies on—on—on—never resting until it finds a shelter and deliverance in the clefts of the Rock of Ages! It is in vain that Satan tries to attract it from the one master thought; the divine Life must and will have its course. As some lofty mountain casts its shadow all along the valley, so a sense of condemnation throws its dark influence over the whole life; then follows a longing for mercy, which, like a swollen torrent, bears all before it. To use another illustration—the man has found the pearl of great price, and for joy thereof, he parts with all to buy it. No matter how dear the old ancestral homestead, it must be sold; the favorite horse; the faithful dog—all must go. He will sell his dearest joys, and his most prized luxuries of sin, that he may buy this priceless, peerless pearl! Aaron's rod swallows up all other rods, and serpents, too!

2. Beloved, the same fact, with equal distinctness, is to be observed in the individual when he becomes a believer in Jesus Christ—his faith destroys all other confidences. Once that man could trust in his self-righteousness; he was rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing; he was honest. Who could say that he ever fraudulently failed in business, or robbed a creditor? For integrity, he boasted that none could say he lacked the highest. He was, moreover, kind and charitable—amiable in his deportment, and tender in heart towards the poor. He trusted that if any man went to heaven by his merits, he should. But where is that rod now? Lo, Aaron's rod has swallowed it up! For now that man can say with the apostle Paul, "But what things were gains to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." The man once could rely upon ceremonies. Was he not sprinkled in infancy in the customary manner? Was he not confirmed afterwards by Episcopal hands? Did he

not receive the blessed sacrament of the Lord's Supper? What more was needed? He was regular at his church, or punctual at his chapel. He paid the contribution expected of him, and perhaps a little more. He had family prayers, and went through a private form at his bedside. What more did he need? But Aaron's rod swallows this up, too; for all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags. This is the cry of the man now—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." My hearers, you are not Christians unless your faith in Christ has devoured every other confidence—unless you can say—

***“On Christ, the solid rock I stand!
All other ground is sinking sand.”***

It is not to trust Christ, *and* to trust self; to rely on Jesus somewhat, and then upon our prayers, and our works to some degree. *Jesus* ONLY must be your watchword! Christ will never have a partner. He trod the winepress alone, and He will save you alone; He stretched His hands on the cross, and none but He could bear the burden of sin—nor will He divide the work of salvation, lest, at the last, He should have to divide the crown. The rod of the one only High Priest must swallow up all other rods.

My dear friends, what multitudes of foes has our faith had to meet with! But how it has swallowed them all up! There were our old sins. The devil threw them down before us, and they turned to serpents. What hosts of them! What multitudes! How they hiss in the air! How they intertwine their many coils. How horrible are their deadly fangs, the gaping jaws, their forked tongues! Ah, but the cross of Jesus, like the rod of Amram's son, destroys them all! Faith in Christ makes short work of all our sins, for it is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Then the devil stirs up another generation of vipers, and shows us our inbred corruptions, our neglect of duty, our slackness in prayer, our unbelief, our backslidings, and our wanderings of heart; and sometimes, you and I get so tormented by these reptiles that we grow alarmed, and are half inclined to flee. Do not run, brother, but throw down Aaron's rod, and it will swallow up all these serpents, even though they were poisonous as the cobra, fierce as the rattlesnake, or huge as the python! You shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb! "Jesus is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him." The battle is the Lord's, and He will deliver them into your hands. The old enemy will throw down another host of serpents in the form of worldly trials, diabolical suggestions, temptations to blasphemy, ill thoughts of God, hard thoughts of His providence, rash thoughts of His promises, and such like till you will be almost distracted. You will wonder how you can meet such a host as this! Remember to stand fast and throw down Aaron's rod—your simple trust and faith in Jesus Christ—and it must, and shall, swallow up all these rods. There is not one doubt which the craft of hell can insinuate—there is not one difficulty which the infernal wisdom of Diabolus can suggest—but simple faith in Christ can disarm, tread under foot, and utterly destroy!

On a certain railroad there is a viaduct, the arches are of considerable height, wooden centers, of course, were used for the building of these arches, and they remain there till this day because there is some suspicion that if the wooden centers were knocked out, the brick arches might not be strong enough and might come tumbling down. Now, there are some professors whose faith is of that kind—it is supported by wooden centers of human persuasion, reasoning, or excitement—which they cannot afford to lose. But the Christian can say that, if by providence all the earthly props of his confidence should fail; if feelings, graces, and excitements were all gone—still the cross, alone, is an all-sufficient dependence—and faith could bear the most terrible strain which earth or hell could put upon it! I would to God we were more and more possessed of that faith which leans on God, and God, alone; for remember, the faith which is supported by anything except the word and promise of God is no faith at all! It is a bastard faith which has the cross for a buttress, but finds its foundation elsewhere; the cross must be the foundation, cornerstone, and buttress, too. None but Jesus! None but Jesus! We need to have a faith which can endure every form of trial, and as long as life lasts. One day last week, when I was preaching, it began to rain; a gentleman asked why the largest chapel in the neighborhood could not be used for the occasion. The reply was, "Why, the galleries are not safe." I thought, "What was the good of galleries into which they were afraid to let the people?" Pull them down and get new ones! So there are some people who have a faith like that good-for-nothing gallery; it is not safe; it will not sustain a crowd of afflictions and temptations, difficulties, and troubles; it would all come down with a crash in the day of trial, and great would be the fall of it. Brothers and sisters, if you have such a faith as I have described, pray God to take it away! It is worthless and dangerous; for remember, in the hour of death, if it cannot stand the tramp of the eternal feet, it will give way—and your everlasting ruin will be the result! Have a

faith which is built upon God, which will bear whatever comes. But mind you, mix not with it wood, hay, and stubble of your own gathering! Let Aaron's rod swallow up all other rods. Let your faith in Christ overturn every refuge of lies!

3. The same fact is very manifest after faith in all who truly love the Savior. It will be found, I am sure, every true lover of Jesus has an all-consuming love—coals of junipers—which have a most vehement flame. They, who love Christ aright, love no one in comparison with Him. The husband is dear; the father is cherished; the children are precious; but after all, Jesus Christ is better than all kin. We can look upon all and say, "Yes, it were a bitter pang to lose you, but we would sooner lose you all 10 times over than once lose our Savior; for, oh, if we lose Him, we have lost all, even if all else remained. But if all is gone and we still have our Savior, we have all in Him." The Christian, as he loves nothing in comparison, so he loves nothing in contradiction to Christ. Whatever comes between him and his Savior, the true lover of Jesus abhors and rejects in a moment! He holds no deliberation or debate about the matter. He counts *that* vile, which, precious in itself, becomes evil through interposing between him and his Lord—

*"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol may be"—*

though it is a golden idol—though it is myself—whatever that idol is—

*"Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only Thee!"*

The Christian's love to Christ is of such a kind that he would forego honor and think it honor to be dishonored for Christ. Persecution's flame cannot, by any means, consume bands of union which unite his soul and his Lord. Through fire and through water this love can march; for "many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." That is not true love to Jesus which governs only one part of the man out of twenty. It must be *all* the passions bound into one. This is the reason why our apostle does not say, "Set your *affections* on things above," but "Set your *affection* on things above." Tie up the affections in one bundle. There is not to be a host of them; they are to be made into one. Bind them into a bundle of camphor, and then offer them to your Best Beloved. Oh, if I pretend to love Christ, and have other lovers, too—He cares not for such a heart as mine—it must be an undivided heart! "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty," said Hosea. "Unite my heart to fear Your name," cried the Psalmist, and let each of us pray so, too. "My beloved is mine and I am His." Let that be without any sort of reserve. Let the giving up of ourselves to Christ and the taking of Christ to ourselves be done heartily and earnestly, with all the powers of the soul!

This love to Christ reminds me of the fire which fell of old upon Elijah's sacrifice—there stood the altar made of 12 rough stones; on it lay the bullock and the wood—and over all the prophet had poured water, until it saturated the bullock, and stood in the trenches. But when the fire came down from heaven, it devoured not only the wood, and the sacrifice, but the very stones of the altar—and licked up the water from the trenches! So when this heavenly fire of love comes down upon our hearts in very deed and truth, it not only burns the sacrifice and the wood—our own true intentions and our renewed heart—but the stones, the very flesh that seemed as dull and cold as a stone! Yes, and those old corruptions which seemed to quench the fire of divine grace like water—this love licks the whole up, and the whole man goes up to heaven—a living sacrifice unto God. "My heart and *my flesh*," said the Psalmist, "cry out for the living God." I used to wonder however he made his flesh to do it, for the flesh lusts against the Spirit; but there are times when Aaron's rod does swallow up all other rods, and even the heart and the flesh cry out for the living God! Our love to Jesus should be like the love of David to Jonathan, and of Jonathan to David. As Jonathan was ready to take off both his sword, and his bow, and his belt, and give them to David, so should we make no reserve—our selfishness being swallowed up, giving to Jesus all that we are, and all that we have evermore.

I have heard of one good man who carried out to the letter this love to Christ. He was rich. He prospered much in business. A very sincere friend who might take great liberties called upon him and said, "My dear brother, you are so prosperous that I am afraid lest your heart should depart from God." The other replied, "No, my brother, I thank you for the warning, but I am not in that danger, for I enjoy God in everything." Years went on—riches took to themselves wings and fled away. The rich man was brought to the depths of poverty; he even knew what it was to need bread. The same friend came to see him, and he said, "My dear brother, you remember what I said to you in your prosperity? Now, I am afraid, lest in your adversity, you should grow unbelieving, and so dishonor your Lord." But the other said, "Dear brother, I thank you for your warning as I said before, but I am not in danger, for before I

enjoyed God in everything, and now I enjoy everything in God." Oh, this is a sweet way of living, when our love to Christ is such that we find Christ in everything! We see the marks of His pierced hands on our daily bread, and see the blood mark upon the garments which we wear. It is good, too, when suffering and needing times shall come, to find we are rich because we have Christ and can sing—

*"You, at all times, will I bless;
Having You, I all possess;
How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part with Thee?"*

4. Brethren, you will notice this in the man who makes his delight in the Lord Jesus. He who makes his delight in Christ after a true sort will discover that this delight swallows up all other delights. There is none equal to this. The Christian enjoys himself as others do. He is not denied the sweets of this life any more than another man. But to him, all these things are brown bread. He has eaten manna from heaven! His mouth has tasted angels' food, and he feels that the choicest mirth and delight his soul can know in all the bounties of God's rich providences are mere ashes compared with what he finds in Christ! His delight in Christ is of such a kind that nothing can stop it. In disease, he still rejoices in his God, who makes his bed in his sickness. When he comes to die, that last of foes cannot interrupt the music of his soul. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord," he has said, and he carries out his vow. He has little to delight in besides; but he has more delights than those who have the entire world. Though he were rich as Solomon, and had singing men, and singing women, and gardens, and houses, and chariots, and all manner of delights, he would not be so contented as he is with Christ, and with his Christ, alone! I speak experientially—I who am but a babe in Christ, even *I* know that there is such joy to be found in Jesus, such rapture, such ecstasy—what shall I say?—such heaven to be found in His dear name, and in communion with Him, that if I could have but five minutes of my Lord's company, I would sooner have it than a whole year of the society of princes rolling in wealth and exalted in fame! One glance of His eyes outshines the sun. The beauties of His face are fairer than all flowers. There is no such fragrance as in the breath of His mouth. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine."

5. Yet more is it so in a man who is devoted to God's service. The service of God swallows up everything else when the man is truly God's servant. When a man gets fully possessed with an enthusiastic love for Jesus, and there is no other love worth a moment's care, difficulties to him become only things to be surmounted, dangers become honors, sacrifices pleasures, sufferings delights, weariness rest. Life he looks upon but as a loan, and gives it back to Jesus Christ with interest. Look in the olden times, how the martyrs despised death. Aaron's rod swallowed up the terrors of fire, and stake, and rack, and dungeon. Poverty, nakedness, peril, sword—the love of Christ made short work of these. In later days, in the Reformer's times, to meet the score of the multitude, and the wrath of princes, was of an everyday thing. They laughed at all sufferings for the love of Jesus! Today, some of our missionary brothers and sisters prove the same fact. Williams staining Eromanga with his blood; Knibb spending a weary life in the midst of his swarthy brothers and sisters; Moffat, at this hour, cut off from contact with those whom he holds dear, pressing on in the work of saving the Bechuana and the Bushman—these men and men like them of whom the world is not worthy, prove that the love of Jesus will swallow up everything else! I hope there are some in this church in whom the service of Christ has become the main objective of their lives. If you stand up and preach in the streets, and you are mocked at, Aaron's rod will swallow up all the vulgarity of scoffers! You can bear all that, and rejoice in it! If you go home and find persecutors there, you can patiently endure their cruel mockery—Aaron's rod will swallow up that rod very speedily! Perhaps you have to lose customers by closing your shop on Sunday; perhaps friends forsake you because of your godly walk; perhaps adversaries gather round you, and say spiteful things of you because Jesus is yours. Aaron's rod will swallow up those rods! I would to God there were more Christians, however, in whom all their business cares, and their worldly pursuits were subjugated and subservient to their devotion to their Master. For he is not a Christian of any standing who lives for anything but to extend the name of Christ, and to spread His kingdom among the sons of men!

Brothers and sisters, we are waiting for the time in which my text shall have a more splendid significance than I can give it just now. In every neighborhood, wherever Christ's truth is preached, like Aaron's rod, it swallows up all the serpents of sin. Go to the dark alleys in London, take Jesus Christ there, and Aaron's rod shall swallow up the rods of ignorance, vice, and ungodliness! Go to popish countries—spread the Bible—let the name of Jesus Christ be proclaimed, and there is no lie of the Pope which the

cross cannot overcome! Go to the heathen land, where Juggernaut sits in bloody contentment on his throne, or to the islands of the South Seas, or to Africa's wondrous plains; wherever you go, cast down Aaron's rod, and whatever the form of superstition or error, it shall swallow all up! Wait yet a little while, when from eastern coast to western, one song shall be heard, the Hallelujah to the Lord—when Jesus' name shall be exalted, and every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord! Then, admiring angels looking from the battlements of heaven, or flying down and mingling with the sons of earth, shall rejoice to see that *Jannes* and *Jambres*, who withstood Moses, were not more totally defeated than the foes of Christ shall be when Aaron's rod shall swallow up their rods, and the chorus shall be heard, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigns!"

II. WE NOW DRAW AN INFERENCE.

If it is so, that wherever true religion—the finger of God—comes into a man, it becomes a consuming passion till the zeal of God's house eats the man up—then, there are many persons who profess religion who cannot have found the right thing! I will picture you one or two of them. There are some who sit and listen to the gospel, and who somewhat delight in its Doctrines. They feel an attachment to the truth, and find some degree of comfort in it. But the one thing they think of is how they shall scrape together money—how they shall, by some means or other, fill their bank account! As for God's house, though it has many claims, it is looked upon as a nuisance when it once entrenches upon their pocket. They give—well, what per cent do they give of their incomes? So small is the fraction that we will not waste our time in calculating it. I dare say they give as much as their religion is worth. We have heard of one who said that his religion did not cost him above a quarter of a dollar a year; and somebody said he thought it was very dear at that price. I dare say most people are pretty good judges of what their religion is worth and their payment for its support may be taken as a fair estimate. Those who are mean, miserly and miserable in the cause of Christ—whose only expenditure is upon self—and whose main objective is gain, what can we say of them? Why, that they look upon religion as some great farmers do upon their little off-hand farms. They think it is well to have a little religion; they can turn to it for amusement sometimes, just to ease them a little of their cares; besides, it may be very well, after having had all in this world, to try to get something in the next. They are not honest people; serving the devil all their lives, the devil has a sort of deferred interest in them, and will no doubt see to his claims; but, instead of doing justice, they want to cheat him at the last. No doubt, in the end, they will have their due. There are many of these in our churches with whom we can find no fault in other respects. They are moral and decent in all ways; they can pray very nicely in prayer meetings, yet, they never dream of consecrating their secular employments unto God! Aaron's rod, in their case, has never swallowed up their rods.

I heard of a minister, who, having needed to have a chapel built, told the collector to call upon a certain person. The collector said, "Oh, he will not give anything; he never gives anything." "Well," said the minister, "if he gives as he prays, I should think he would give all he has!" So the collector called. "Well," the gentleman replied, "really, he had so many calls." You know all the fibs which are customary on such occasions; he would give nothing; so the collector said, "Sir, our minister said if you were to give as you pray, he thought you would give a large amount." Well, that touched his conscience. "Our minister said, he thought when you prayed, you would give yourself away." There are many who say that, who are a long way from meaning to carry it out practically. But give me the man who, with all worldly discretion, feels that it is as much his business to get money for God, as it is mine to preach for God! He sells his calicoes, his slabs of meat, his earthenware, or his groceries, for Christ, as truly as I come upon this platform to speak for Christ! He sanctifies his ordinary calling to the cause of Christ, and makes himself the Lord's servant in everything, saying, "Here, Lord, I give myself to You. It is all that I can do." I am afraid the inference I am to draw from what I have already said, is that those who love the world have a religion they had better get rid of.

There are other persons who profess to be Christians, but who spend all the week without ever brushing against their religion. They expect it to call upon them as the postman does, at regular hours; it may wake them up on Sunday morning, but it must mind it does not intrude upon the Monday! What are the books they read? Those yellow volumes of one shilling or two shilling trash which abound at the railway bookstalls? What is their talk about? Well, anything you like, except what it should be. What do they do during the week? Oh, they do 20 things. But what do they attempt for Christ? *Do for Christ, sir?* With what surprise they look at you, when you ask them that question! What did they do all the week? Well, let us see—beginning with Monday and going on to Saturday—hear it all—and what is its sum

total? As far as the Church or the world is concerned, these people might just as well have been in bed and asleep all the time—they do nothing whatever—they have a name to live, and practically they are dead. If a young man joins a rifle corps, there he is; he stands in the rank; he learns his practice and drill; he tries to get a prize by hitting the target. But when a man joins the Christian Church, where is he? I do not know where he is! You may find his name seven hundred and something in the attendance book. He is *there*, but what is he? You find him at chapel on Sunday, but where is he, and what is he doing for the cause of Christ during the week? The smallest scrap of paper would be too large to record his deeds of faith. He thinks he adorns his profession; but what kind of adornment is it, or whoever sees that adornment, I cannot tell. I believe that the man who does not make his religion his first and last thought, who does not subject all his actions, his eating and drinking, too, to the cause of Christ, has not the work of God in his soul! “Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The man who has not consecrated the lap stone—who has not dedicated the counter to God—who has not made the desk and the pen holiness unto the Lord has yet to learn what the Christian religion is! It is not a uniform to be worn one day, and cast away the next; it ought to be a part of the woof and warp of your being; it ought to run in your blood, penetrate the marrow of your bones, work in the arms, gaze from the eyes, and speak from the tongue. O to be baptized, saturated, immersed in the Spirit of God and so, wherever we go, to say to men who put our Lord at the bottom of the scale, “For us to live is Christ!” Only such, I say, will ever be able to add, “For me to die is gain.”

I hope this may come home to some of you; and if it does, may it produce from this day forth a more thorough love to Jesus—a more practical way of showing a more entire devotedness to that great cause which is either an awful imposition, or else deserves to have our whole heart, our whole spirit, soul and body devoted to it.

III. Now, I will close, by trying to GIVE SOME REASONS WHY I PUT THE SERVICE OF GOD SO PROMINENT, AND THINK THAT AARON'S ROD OUGHT TO SWALLOW UP ALL OTHER RODS.

What does the great gospel revelation disclose to us? Does it not show us an awful danger, and only one way of escape from it? Yonder is the place where the wrath of God burns without abatement, where souls suffer indescribable pangs. “Tophet is ordained of old; yes, for the king it is prepared; He has made it deep and large: the pile there is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it.” Horrors, past imagination, are revealed to us by the words of Jesus when He speaks of the worm that dies not, and of the fire that never shall be quenched! If we could once, but for an instant, have an idea of the wrath to come; if but for a moment the scathing lightning of God could flash before our vision—if we could taste, but for an instant, the bitterness of that cup of trembling, the dregs of which the wicked earth must drink—I am sure we would feel that the religion which teaches us how to escape from it must be worthy of a man's most solemn consideration, and we should give to it all the strength of our mind! To escape from hell—O sirs—if you do but manage *this*, though you die in an attic, you will have done well! Oh, if you have but escaped from the wrath to come, you will have been wise; though you have lived as paupers here, wiser far than he who has piled—like the tower of Babel—wealth on wealth, only to find his way to despair at last!

Does not our religion also reveal to us the joyous reward of another world? It opens to us yonder pearly gates, and bids us gaze on angels and glorified spirits. It tells us of celestial glories, of immortality, the crown of life which fades not away. It brings to our ears the melody of heavenly harps, and bids our eyes look upon the splendors of the Son of God upon the throne. Heaven—if there is a heaven, and we, by calling ourselves Christians, accept it as truth—should it not, then, be our first and last thought, the Alpha and Omega of man's existence, to seek and find it—so that we may not be shut out like the foolish virgins, but may enter with the wise into the marriage supper? By hell and by heaven, therefore, I do entreat you, let Aaron's rod swallow up all other rods; and let love and faith in Jesus be the master passion of your soul!

Moreover, do we not learn in our holy faith of an unexampled love? Where was love such as that which brought the Prince of Glory down to the gates of death, and made Him pass the portals amid shame and scoffing? Oh, matchless love which draws the Prince of Life down to the shades of death; that takes the crown from His lofty brow, removes His purple robe from His shoulders, loosens His glittering garment, and strips His fingers of their golden rings; that wraps Him in clay, clothes Him in rags, houses Him nowhere, gives Him no place to lay His head; that makes Him eat the bread of poverty and drink the water of affliction! Shall such a love as this have half our hearts? Shall it have a cold love in

return? Shall Jesus sit at the end of the table? Shall we stow Him away in some back chamber of the heart? Shall we treat Him to cold meats, to dogs' meat? God forbid! Let us make Him King of kings within our hearts, as He is today King of kings in the highest heavens! If Christ is anything, He must be everything; if He deserves not to be everything, He deserves to be less than nothing.

But, my brothers and sisters, does not the grace of God create in us a new and noble nature? And if new and noble, should it not predominate? He is accursed who lets his body rule his mind who lets his eating and drinking chain the immortal spirit! And he is equally accursed who shall let his mind rule his new-born spirit! No, let that nature which feeds on Christ, which breathes Christ, and which ascends to Christ—as flame ascends up to the central source of fire—the sun—let that nature always have its full liberty. Let it be ruling in us! Though the law in our members strives against it, yet let it rule and reign—like the rod of Aaron—let it swallow up all other rods. And since, dear brothers and sisters, since God has been pleased to ennoble us by giving us the high dignity of being His children, shall we make our being a son of man a greater thing than being a son of God? Shall men, as they look at me, say of me first, “He is a tradesman”? O let me live so that the first thing they may say shall be—“He is a Christian!”

I heard of one, speaking of a certain earnest man's religion, as riding his horse. I knew that the person who so spoke of him knew nothing about it, for this is a steed which you may ride all day and all night long. It is a very Pegasus which will bear you up to heaven and carry you aloft up to the starry spheres. Never dismount, Christian—having been once set upon Christ's own beast—continue to ride till He brings you safely home. Whatever others may be with their religion, let yours be of a sort which you cannot lay aside; you *must* hold it, you *must* speak about it!

The Brahmins and the Hindus practice caste. A Hindu one day asked our missionaries whether they had caste in England. The missionary replied, “No, all men might eat and drink together.” The Brahmin said this was very disorderly and even immoral. But the missionary said, “Well, but upon your great feast day—for instance, the great feast of Juggernaut—the Sudra eats with the Brahmin.” “Oh,” he said, “that is because we are in the presence of our god.” “So,” said the missionary, “that is the reason why we have no caste in England, because we are *always* in the presence of our God.” I would that we thought of this; and being always in the presence of our God, let us live every day as the idolater does some days; as the Romanist does now and then. Talk of holy days! Why, every day ought to be to you a holy day! Speak of keeping the Sunday holy! Every day should be kept holy! Only the Sunday is a day of rest unto us more than the others. Write upon the bells of the horses, “HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD,” and let the pots in your own house be like the bowls before the altar.

I shall not say any more upon this subject. Only pray that the Lord may give to this Church a larger number of consecrated men and women—and ask of you, for I make a point of it—to remember that this must always be a labor of love if it is to be acceptable! No man ever does anything for the Lord acceptably which he would rather not do—no man ever gives to the Lord acceptably that which he would rather withhold. The service of Christ is perfect freedom—to serve Him day and night is to enjoy perpetual liberty! Only try it, dear brothers and sisters! You who are low in divine grace, and weak in your faith, doubting and unbelieving, do more for Christ! Make your consecration more perfect; and your light shall come forth as brightness, and the glory of your soul as a lamp that burns!

May the Lord now add His blessing. Amen.

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