

TWO VISIONS

NO. 598

A SERMON

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 6, 1864

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.

Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sorely displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And the LORD shewed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.”

Zechariah 1:8-21

THIS is a somewhat dark and mysterious passage, and if we should ask many a reader, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” he would be compelled to reply as did the Ethiopian eunuch, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” Although there are some portions of the Word of God which are hard to be understood, yet by far the greater portion of Scriptures which are at first perplexing, will open up if we will carefully peruse them, and prayerfully ask the illumination of God’s Holy Spirit.

We should seek to know all of God’s Word which can be known. You will perceive that the prophet Zechariah himself was not content with beholding the two visions described in this passage, but he must needs ask, in the ninth verse, “O my LORD, what are these?” And then again, in the nineteenth verse, “What are these?” Nor did he cease his inquiries, for in the twenty-first verse he says, “What come these to do?” If the seer of the vision asked for an interpretation, much more may you and I. He was not idly curious, but reverently teachable. Let us imitate his holy diligence in desiring to learn.

Be it remembered, that God’s Word is never out of date. It is not like an almanac which is useful this year, but which will be mere waste paper the next, but it always stands good, and the promises of God, when once fulfilled, are still valid for another fulfillment. Unlike a check, which being once paid, ceases to be of any force, the promises of God have a perpetual value in them. And if we can lay hold upon them by faith, having once drawn upon the great bank of divine mercy, we may go again with the self-same word and get as much from the liberal hand of God as we did aforetime.

Let us come then with reverent attention to this passage, hoping that God will instruct us in its meaning, and help us to grasp its promises, and win a new fulfillment.

The two visions before us describe the condition of Israel in Zechariah's day, but being interpreted in their aspect towards *us*, they describe the church of God as we find it just now in the world. You notice that *the first vision opens with a view of the church of God*. It is described as a myrtle grove flourishing in a valley. The church of God is *hidden*, unobserved, secreted as in a valley. The careless gazer sees her not, she courts no honor, she comes not with observation. The church has endured neglect and shame from the time of the cross until now, her day of glory is to come at the manifestation of the Lord from heaven, but at present—

***“Tis no surprising thing
That we should be unknown;
The Jewish world knew not their King,
God's everlasting Son.”***

When Christ came, despised and rejected of men, His glory had not broken forth. He was like the sun in a mist. The church is like her head, she has a glory, but it is hidden from carnal eyes. Persecutions, sins, infirmities, and reproaches surround her, for the time of her breaking forth in all her glory is not yet come. She lies in the valley where none but a keen observer can discover her. You *must* see the towering mountains, but only a careful eye can discover this myrtle grove.

Historians write the records of empires, but they take slight notice of the true church of God. An historian, who should pen the tale of English history, might now and then come across the church, but it would usually be the political establishment which arrogates that title, and not the spiritual and separated host of the faithful in Christ Jesus, for they are not of the world, even as their Lord was not of the world. “My kingdom is not of this world,” is still most solemnly true.

Perhaps the position of these myrtles in the valley may indicate the *gloom* which at seasons falls upon the church. When she is in spiritual darkness, when no present favor is shown her by her God in providence, when her pastors weep that their flocks are scattered by persecution, and her ministers lament that their testimony is neglected. They cry, “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” and then Zion is under a cloud, the myrtle grove is overshadowed and darkened.

Yet I think there is here the idea of *tranquil security*, the myrtle grove in the valley is still and calm, while the storm sweeps over the mountain summits. Tempests spend their force upon the craggy peaks of the Alps, but down there, where the stream flows which makes glad the city of God, the myrtles flourish by the still waters, all unshaken by the impetuous wind.

How great is the inward tranquility of God's church! She may be hunted upon the mountains, but in peace her martyrs possess their souls. She may hide herself in the catacombs of Rome, but the memorials upon the old slabs assure us that in the catacombs men lived in hallowed peace, and died in joy. God's church in the valley has a peace which the world gives not, and which, therefore, it cannot take away, a peace of God which passeth all understanding does keep the hearts and minds of God's people.

Is there not also in the metaphor a peaceful, *perpetual growth*? The myrtle sheds not her leaves, she is always green, and the church in her worst time still has a blessed verdure of grace about her. Nay, she has sometimes exhibited *most* verdure when her winter has been sharpest. God's church has prospered most when her adversities have been most severe.

The myrtle was the emblem of peace and a significant token of *victory*. Were not the brows of conquerors with myrtle and with laurel bound? Is not the church of God, despite the neglect which she suffers from men, and the occasional gloom which she endures through God's providence, still a victor? May not her saints as they die, be laid in the grave with the myrtle wreath upon them? for is not every

Christian more than a conqueror through Him that loved him? Living in peace, do not the saints fall asleep in triumph.

You can readily picture to yourselves that quiet, calm, yet somewhat somber grove of myrtles, and forget not that in the midst of these myrtles, the glory of the myrtle grove, stands the Son of man. Oh! it is ever the church's glory that the Savior is present with her. "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Here is the church's strength, here is her assurance of victory, the terror of her enemies, the confidence of her friends.

If the church be likened to golden candlesticks, John saw one like unto the Son of man walking in the midst of them, and if she be a myrtle grove, then the man upon the red horse is never absent from her, but stands in the midst. He is the wall of fire round about the church, and the glory in the midst of her evermore.

For the comfort of God's people, let us closely view this vision. You say, O son of man, feeble and full of unbelief, that God's church will become extinct, that Popery will devour her, and infidelity will eat as does a canker. You fear that the banner of the truth will be dashed to the ground, and that the enemies of the Lord will win the victory. Cast away your fear, your God appears unto you this day, and in the visions of His servant Zechariah, He reassures you, and speaks "good words and comfortable words unto thee."

I. Observe THE LORD JESUS ENGAGED AS THE GREAT DEFENDER OF HIS CHURCH.

Behold a man riding upon a red horse. This same man is called an angel of the Lord. Christ shows Himself among His people as *a man*, since He is the Head of the new race of men. As Adam was *the man*, the representative man to the whole of fallen humanity, so Jesus stands forth the second Adam, the representative Man of twice-born and blood-bought humanity.

Out of love to His people He became one flesh with them, and is now most truly called, "The man Christ Jesus." "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Once, professors forgot the Godhead of Jesus, we are more likely to overlook His true and real manhood. Bone of our bone is He, flesh of our flesh. In no respects different from the rest of men, save only that no sin has ever tainted His nature. He feels as we feel, He thinks as we think. He once suffered and died, even as other men.

O, church of God, rejoice! the glorious man who is "God over all," is ever in your midst. He never forgets you, He never forsakes you. He abides with His people after a spiritual sort, forever, and never is this covenant Head separated from His body the church.

Inasmuch as He is also called *an angel*, this may suggest to us the doctrine that Christ is in a sense the Head of angels as well as men. What if I were to surmise—and it were no new thought of mine, but one which many have indulged—what if I were to suggest, not as a matter of doctrine, but only as a subject for thought, that the same great work which redeemed us who were fallen creatures, may have established the elect angels, so that they can never fall? I know not how it is that the angels have become consolidated in perfection, so that they cannot now sin, except it be through the virtue of the Savior. Could they have been so created?

A moral agent must necessarily have the power to sin, otherwise, if it had no power to sin, it would need no law, but for God to create a creature beyond all law, to say the least of it, would be unsafe. It were, in fact, to set up other gods, for a creature that knew no law would be a rival to the Godhead. But so long as a creature is under law, it may offend, and so fall.

How then, come the angels in such a condition that they cannot sin? Is it not that they are now removed by a special act of grace from under the law, and put into a condition of gracious permanence such as law could never give them. And was this act of grace the result of that great transaction upon Calvary? Is this one part of the apostle's meaning when he says, "By him all things consist"? Was there in the atonement a virtue which has established the elect angels forever in perfect holiness so that they should never sin? Else why is it that other creatures beside men join in the song? (Rev 5:9-10) "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God

by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Why did the cherubic emblems stand upon the mercy seat, and why were they made part and parcel of it, if not to show that while man bends as a sinner before that mercy seat and receives pardon, angels stand as sinless beings, looking down upon that mercy seat which is the groundwork of their eternal safety? It seems to me to magnify the greatness of the atonement that it affected heaven as well as earth, and that throughout all the principalities and powers there would be a reason why they should bow with holy gratitude before Jesus the Lord, seeing that He has redeemed them from future falling by His precious blood.

Whether this be so or not, certainly Jesus is the true Archangel. He is the Head of principalities and powers, as well as the Head of redeemed men. He is called “the angel of the covenant,” as God’s messenger sent forth to fulfill God’s will in covenant purposes to His children. Oh! this is the joy of the church, that Jesus the man, Jesus the angel, is always in her midst.

He is represented as *riding upon a horse*. This is to show His *swiftness*. He flies upon the wings of the wind to defend His people. An ordinary commander cannot be in two places at once, and while the right wing has victory under his leadership, the left may be broken. But our Savior rides swiftly as the flashes of thought along the whole ranks, cheers them all on, and secures to every warrior the ultimate victory.

Riding on the horse is a symbol of His *zeal*. He comes with all His power and might, flying with all speed so that none of His people should perish. He shows Himself strong on behalf of them that serve Him, and is jealous for them with a fervent jealousy. But why a *red* horse? Does this describe His atonement? Does this picture His sufferings? Is it His own blood with which the horse is covered? Or is he spattered with the blood of his foes slain in battle? “The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.”

He comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength because He has trod the winepress of wrath, and trodden His foes in His fury. Does this manifest the terror, the strength, the majesty of Him whose name is “the Lion of the tribe of Judah”? The day is coming when He will ride on His *white* horse and go forth conquering and to conquer, but today it is the red horse, for His church still suffers, still is she stained with the blood of persecution.

John says that when he saw the Son of man, “His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace,” and so is it still with our Lord. His head is glorious in heaven, but His feet, we that have fallen upon these evil days, still glow in the furnace. As far then as earth is concerned, the fitting picture of Christ is the man upon the red horse in the midst of the myrtle trees. Rejoice, O ye people of God, that Jesus is in the midst of His saints with His sword girt upon His thigh.

II. I take you a step farther. For the comfort of God’s people we have not only Christ engaged, but we see THE WHOLE ANGELIC HOST READY TO DO US SERVICE.

Observe, that behind the man on the red horse, was a company of horses—of course, these were not horses without riders, for they are represented as speaking. The church of God has the angels of heaven to be her protectors. These angels are described as mounted, to represent their swiftness, “He maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire.”

You perceive also the strength of the horse mingled with its swiftness, what God bids His messengers perform, they do. Who can stay their hand! He gives them a charge, and girds them with His own power. Zeal quickens every step of these burning ones. Standing with wings outstretched, they wait upon the divine will, and when the command is given, no eagle cleaves the air so swiftly as the holy ones.

They appear to be of different sorts. There are those who are commissioned for vengeance, these ride upon the red horses of God’s tremendous wrath. Who knows how often and how terribly angels may have smitten through the loins of kings! An angel slew Sennacherib’s host. Was it not an angel that

smote Herod? Has not God still upon His red horses, angels that shall speedily make an end of the church's proudest persecutors?

Then there are those on the white horses that come to bless God's saints. Was it not such a spirit that delivered Peter from prison, and cheered the heart of Paul in the stormy night? Who knows how often they strengthen the faint, and comfort the broken-hearted? They are ever ascending and descending upon that ladder which Jacob saw. Some come to curse the wicked, but as many come to bless the righteous. As for the speckled or bay horses, these are the mingled circumstances in which you see both the mercy and judgment of God. Angels are not strangers to these, for God employs them upon many occasions.

What part do angels take in the protection of the church? I suppose it would be very difficult to describe precisely *how* they act, but that they do work for us is most certainly a Scriptural doctrine. They are represented as guarding the Lord's people. "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all your ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him."

Have we not some reason to believe that angels inject comforting thoughts into our minds? When Christ was in the garden, there appeared unto Him an angel strengthening Him. May it not be that those warm thoughts which come welling up in our minds, as *we* think, spontaneously, have been suggested by angels?

We are prone to ascribe our temptations to the devil, how is it we do not ascribe some of our excellent comforts to the work of angels? Are those bad spirits to have the monopoly of dealing with us? Are they to be the only spiritual agents? God forbid! Doubtless, as *bad* ones would cast us down from the pinnacle where we stand, so these *good* ones would bear us up. May there not be going on in the air strange battles between the demons and the spirits of light?

Is the case mentioned in Jude the only one in which an angel has contended with the devil? Are there no combats such as that described by Daniel in his tenth chapter, where Gabriel and Michael seem to be both engaged against a prince of the power of the air? May it not be that bright angelic squadrons are holding strange fight with hosts of demons while the Word is preached, contending for and against that glorious truth which is the power of God unto salvation? We know not what spiritual agencies are continually at work, but that they are at work is clear enough in the Word of God. Spenser was no dreamer when he sang—

*"How oft do they their silver bowers leave
To come to succor us that succor want!
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,
Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
And all for love and nothing for reward:
O why should heavenly God to men have such regard."*

Brethren, may not angels also operate upon the wicked? Is it not possible that the strong restraints which sometimes come upon ungodly men, and the singular thoughts which make them, like Balaam, speak what they do not mean, and say a good word where they would curse—is it not possible that these may be caused by the suggestions of angels?

At any rate these bright spirits rejoice to minister to the heirs of salvation. Courage! Courage! ye warriors of the cross. March on to victory, for I hear the wings of angels flying at your side. Strike, for angelic swords are drawn. Sound your clarions, for the trumpeters of God are near. Behold the mountain is full of horses of fire, and chariots of fire round about the church of God. More are they that are for us than all they that are against us. We are come unto an innumerable company of angels, all of whom

salute us as fellow soldiers in the host of God. Here let us pause and bless the grace which makes ten thousand times ten thousand angels the allies of the warriors of the cross.

III. As you read on, you will perceive another ground of comfort to those of you who are alarmed for the church of God. WE HAVE THE WHOLE OF PROVIDENCE ENGAGED UPON OUR SIDE.

Thus it is written, "These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth." They gave in the result of their reconnoiter. They said, "We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sits still, and is at rest." According to the first chapter of the book of Ezekiel, the four living creatures, whom I take to represent angels, always co-worked with the wheels. The mysterious agency of angels is at work together and in unison with the great work of providence.

Whatever may be occurring, great or small, is certainly happening for the good of God's church, and for the propagation of God's truth. How singularly does God, in political events, prepare men's minds for the particular phase which His church assumes! There was perfect peace over the whole world at the time when Christ was put to death. The whole world was subject to one dominion, so that the apostle Paul and his coadjutors could preach everywhere the unsearchable riches of Christ.

I cannot go into the question this morning, but every Christian student of history knows that the circumstances of the outward world have ever been arranged by God so as to prepare the way for the advance of His great cause.

How strangely providence works to spread the truth. They said of Martin Luther's writings, that they were scattered by angels. No such distributors were employed, but still they were scattered so widely that it was a perfect mystery how it was done. There was scarcely a little peddler who went about with jewels, who did not somewhere in his stock keep a copy of the Word of God or Luther's Psalms.

It was said that in England, out of every three persons you met with in the road, though they might be but peasants breaking stones, there would be one of the three a Wickliffe, for Wickliffe's translation of the New Testament spread marvelously, though it was continually hunted after, and burnt when discovered.

You will find, if I mistake not, that soon God will scatter broadcast over all lands those testimonies which are most clear and most full of Christ, in such a way that our societies will have to hold up their hands in amazement and say, "We cannot tell how this was done." God finds a market for His wares. He needs not to advertise them. God Himself, who revealed the truth, will incline men's minds to procure the truth.

Then how singularly does God work in providence to prepare individuals for the truth! How many a man has come into this Tabernacle with a heart as much prepared for the particular sermon to be delivered as it possibly could be, so that he has said that the preacher must have been told what his feelings were, for the Word has come so pointedly home. It was nothing but God in providence ploughing the field for the seed.

How often can we see God opening the doors of nations to missionaries! It was marvelous that China should become accessible after being shut up so many years, and whatever may be said concerning our treatment of the Japanese (and we are not among those who would vindicate or defend any tyranny on the part of the strong), yet Japan must be opened and the Gospel of God must be preached there. For every nation that shuts her gates against the truth shall find God's battering ram shake the nation to its foundations sooner than His Word shall be shut out. Courage, ye warriors of the cross! Christ is with you for your captain. Sound your trumpets and advance to battle! If Christ and His angels, and the providence of God all work with you, who can be against you?

***"When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?
When He His people's cause defends,
Who, who shall stay His hand?"***

IV. I come now to point out to you something equally interesting and even more comfortable in this vision. We have here AN INTERCEDING SAVIOR.

The twelfth verse, “Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?” That same Christ, who is on earth in spirit, on the red horse, is in heaven in person, pleading before the throne.

Let me not talk coldly upon this, but carry up your hearts to heaven. I think I see Him, the Angel of the covenant—He pleads—He pleads *for mercy*. Mercy that sent Him to earth, mercy is His petition now. He pleads for *present mercy*. His cry is, “How long? Eighteen hundred years is it since My blood was offered, and yet My kingdom has not come. Lo! near two thousand years have rolled away, and yet Antichrist is not slain, but Satan’s seat is still upon the seven hills. How long? how long? how long?”

Observe the objects of His intercession, He pleads for Jerusalem and Judah. “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me.” With what pleading power He points to His wounds, and declares Himself to be no other than that mighty one who discharged the Father’s will, and bore the whole of wrath divine!

And must He not prevail? Church of God, if you can be rejected, yet *He* cannot be. Shall the darling of the Father receive no answer to His cry? Does He plead for us, and shall we be afraid? No! in the name of Him who lives, and loves, and pleads before the eternal throne, let us set up our banner, for God has given the victory into our hands in answer to the pleadings of His Son.

V. Nor is this all, observe that WE HAVE IN THIS VISION A GRACIOUS GOD, for as soon as the plea was put up, the Lord answered the angel that talked with Him, “with good words and comfortable words.”

O Zion, there are good things in store for you. Church of God, your time of travail shall soon be over, and your children shall be brought forth. Your captivity shall end, and the day of manifestation shall appear. Bear you patiently the rod for a season, and under the darkness still trust in God, for He has not forgotten you. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.”

God loves the church with a love too deep for human imagination to understand. He loves her with all His infinite heart. Therefore be of good courage, she cannot ail aught, to whom God speaks “good words and comfortable words.”

What these comfortable words are the prophet goes on to tell us, “I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.” You perceive He loves her so much that He cannot bear she should go astray to others. And when she has done so, He cannot endure that she should suffer too much or too heavily. He will not have His enemies afflict her. He is displeased with them because they increase her affliction.

When God seems most to leave His church, yet His heart is very warm towards her. It is remarkable that whenever God uses a rod to chasten His servants, He always breaks it, as if He loathed the rod which gave His children pain. As soon as ever God struck Israel, whether by Moabite, or Midianite, Babylonian, Persian, Assyrian, Greek, or Roman, in every case He broke the rod in pieces as soon as He had used it, for He is loath to vex His people. He feels the smart far more than His people. “As a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him,” and the rod cuts Him more than it cuts His church.

Let us be of good courage, God has not forgotten us. You may belong to a part of the church which is in great obscurity, but He has not forgotten it. You may think that the Lord has passed you by, but He has not. He that counts the stars, and calls them all by name, has no limit to His understanding, and no measure to His knowledge. He binds up the broken in heart, and heals their wounds, and He knows your case and state as much and as perfectly as if you were the only creature He had ever made, or the only saint He had ever loved.

VI. We must now consider the second vision of Zechariah, prophetic of SUITABLE INSTRUMENTALITY.

It was dark, and as the prophet looked into the air with wonder, the rider on the red horse melted away, and the myrtle grove disappeared. The horses too—whether bay, or red, or white—with their angelic riders, were gone. Instead of these, he saw in the sky four terrible horns. They were pushing this way and that way, dashing down the strongest and the mightiest, and the prophet naturally asked, “What are these?” The answer was, “These are the horns which have scattered Israel.” He saw before him a representation of those powers which had oppressed the church of God. There were four of them, for the church is attacked on all sides. Well might the prophet have felt dismayed.

But on a sudden there appeared before him *four carpenters*. He asked, “What shall these do?” The original may as well be translated *four smiths*, perhaps the better way would be to make it *four workmen*. If they were carpenters, they were doubtless armed with their saws, or if smiths they came with their heavy hammers. “What shall these do?” Why, these are the men whom God has found to break those horns to pieces and fray or frighten the powers which wield them.

Brethren, *God will always find men* for His work. If He requires carpenters, He has only to call for them, and there they are. If smiths shall be better, “He createth the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire.” You look upon the paucity of ministers, it is true there is a great lack of faithful servants of God, but remember, you have but to pray that He would thrust forth more laborers into His vineyard, and the thing is done. For God always knows where to find men for His work.

And He finds men *at the right time*. The prophet did not see the carpenters *first*, when there was nothing to do, but first the horns and then the carpenters.

Of late, there has been a great uprising of infidelity—infidelity of the worst kind, that *lying* infidelity which swears that it believes the Articles of the Christian faith, and wears a mitre, or a priest’s frock, and believes nothing of the kind. Well, I ween, may any lie find fitting refuge beneath the wings of the Anglican Establishment. What solemn criminality must belong to those who utter falsehood in the name of the Holy Ghost, and acting in the office of priests, justify the wicked for a reward. To say in God’s name what I know to be untrue, is a crime which transcends in infamy all other crimes of mankind, I will not even except murder, if it be upon provocation, for to murder souls deliberately by teaching a lie, is as great a crime as to slay a man in haste.

Let me give an instance of how our State Church sins against morality and Scripture. It is taken from last week’s paper. “One of the most shocking scenes that ever occurred in connection with the prize ring, took place in Sheffield yesterday (Sunday). A number of young men and youths, frequenters of some of the lowest brothels and beerhouses in the town, agreed to meet in the Old Park Wood, and fight for a sum of money.

“One pair of pugilists set to and fought for an hour, and then the arena was cleared for another couple, two young men named Dawes and Horne. They fought for twenty minutes, and Dawes received a heavy blow on the jugular, he was placed on his second’s knee, ‘Time’ was called, amidst much shouting and yelling, he got up and advanced to meet his antagonist, but had not gone a yard before he reeled, fell, and died instantly.”

A few graphic lines from *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph* will describe the burial of this unhappy youth—“The remains of Dawes (who was killed in a prize fight on Sunday morning), were interred yesterday afternoon, at the general cemetery. A heterogeneous multitude—old and young of both sexes, from the squalling cherub in arms, to the decrepit hag, thronged the sacred edifice. Still more numerous, ill-mannered, and ill-conditioned was the throng who clustered around the grave—pig-headed and bull-necked young fellows, mostly under twenty years of age, who must have been the representatives of the ‘P.R.’ in Sheffield. The Service for the Dead was performed by the Rev. G. Sandford, and at its conclusion the rabble departed.”

Did this clergyman give God hearty thanks that it had pleased Him to deliver this brother out of the miseries of this sinful world? Did he pray the Father to raise the bystanders from their death in sin unto

the life of righteousness, that when they shall depart this life, they may rest in Him “as our hope is this our brother doth”? I am called *uncharitable* for denouncing this infamy. I beg to offer apologies. I have said I cannot understand how Evangelical clergymen can bring their conscience to perform such enormities. I apologize—I apologize altogether. I will not say again, “I wonder how they can bring their consciences to it”—for when men act thus, I believe *they have no consciences at all*. Thus far I apologize, but no further.

Conscience must be seared utterly, if not extinct, when the man can stand there, dressed in the habit of a priest of God, and say over a sinner who has died in the very act of sin, that he buries him in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life. Let these men find a trade where truthfulness is not essential to success, but for them to stand as teachers, and claim to be successors of the apostles, is an evil which might stir the very stones of the street to cry out against them. But for the putting down of these giant evils God will find men at the right time, and as *this* evil seems to have mounted to the very highest pitch, He will find somewhere a hand to shatter this horn.

Observe again, *He finds enough men*. He did not find *three* carpenters, but *four*. There were four horns, and there must be four smiths, and each smith must take his proper place. And then He finds *the right men*, not four gentlemen with pens to write, not four architects to draw plans, but four mechanics to do rough work.

He who wants to open an oyster, must not use a razor, there needs less of daintiness and more of force for some works. Providence does not find gentlemen to cut off the horns, but carpenters. The work needs a man who, when he has his work to do, puts his whole strength into it, and beats away with his hammer, or cuts through the wood that lays before him with might and main. Rest assured, you who tremble for the ark of God, that when the horns grow troublesome, the carpenters will be found.

You need not fret concerning the weakness of the church of God at any moment. There may be growing up in the chimney corner the man who will shake the nations. Chrysostoms may come forth from our ragged schools, and Augustines from the thickest darkness of London’s poverty. The Lord knows where to find His servants. They may be in the Universities of Cambridge or Oxford, or possibly in the peasant’s hut.

He has but to hold up His finger, and as Luther and Melancthon, and Calvin and Zwingli, Bucer and Farrell, and multitudes of the same kind were found, and as in modern times on the continent, Haldane was the means of calling forth Malan, and Gaussen, and Vinet, and D’Aubigne, and the whole company of the Monods, and multitudes of faithful servants to bring back the Helvetian and Gallic churches to their allegiance. So, let God but find one man at first to bear the brunt, and they come, they come, an exceeding great army.

Be it ours to deliver the Word, and leave the results with God. And His army, though it may now be hidden, shall stand forth ready for the affray. God has in ambush a multitude of mighty men, and at His word they shall start up to the battle, for the battle is the Lord’s, and He shall deliver the enemy into our hands.

These two visions seem to me to be full of comfort to the true church of God. Let us abide then, dear friends, faithful to Christ, faithful to His Word, and who knows what may come? But if we be God’s enemies, let us fear and tremble, for the angels on the black horses shall be our destruction, and as God is strong to defend His people, so is He strong and swift to slay His enemies.

Beware, ye who forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you. Fly to Jesus, trust Him, and live.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.