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→\*SERMONS\*←

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THE FOUR GOSPELS: THEIR DIFFERENCES AND THEIR  
ESSENCE.

BY BISHOP CYRUS D. FOSS, D.D., METHODIST EPISCOPAL, MINNESOTA.

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*But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.—JOHN xx., 31.*

THE things referred to here are the signs spoken of in the previous verse: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book." These signs were the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus; and were intended to produce faith in Him as being the Messiah, the Son of God and the real Saviour of sinners. Beyond all question the *resurrection* of Jesus is the crucial fact on which the Scriptures rest the demonstration of the truth of Christianity. An inspired Apostle, the most logical of them all, reasons about it on this wise: "If Christ be not raised your faith is vain, and our preaching vain; ye are yet in your sins; they also that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." Thus the Scriptures rest upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ the whole system of Christianity. If that fails us there is no Gospel and our faith is utterly vain. I may therefore without any straining of these words which constitute the text make them apply to the whole of the four Gospels—the four records of the earthly life of Jesus Christ—and may say that all these records are for the same purpose as the account of the resurrection, which is the seal and crown of the whole. So if Jesus' resurrection was intended to prove Him to be the Christ, the Son

Thy kingdom, and beauty of Thy righteousness be my soul's supreme desire. Help me to be so loyal to Thy will that men shall never question my sincerity. May the

richest legacy which I leave to my children, be a record of fidelity to Thee and them. Let my tent never be pitched towards Sodom.

## HELPRUL HINTS FOR WORKERS

### "Free Church" or Rented Pews.

BY JOHN HALL, D.D., LL.D. (PRESBYTERIAN), N. Y.

"The Gospel is free," it is said, "and we are to give it freely, putting the pews in the churches at the disposal of all who come."

Let us go a little farther back. What is the history of the church-building? Was it erected by the benevolence of a few, and is it to be provided with a preacher, and all expenses paid by them? If so, it is all right. It is a mission church. There are many such in our large cities, supported by Presbyterian congregations. But the feeling is in favor of making them regular churches.

"But I would not have pews rented at all. There is no scripture for it."

There is no mention of pews, or, for that matter, of church-buildings, in the New Testament. There is strong statement as to ministers being laborers and worthy of their hire, and the Old Testament and the New enjoin giving for religious objects as God hath prospered the givers, and not from a momentary impulse, but according to a regular plan.

"But look how it is. You say to the man with the gold ring: 'Sit thou here,' and the poor only gets inferior room."

Indeed we do not; we leave the gold-ringed man to buy or hire the pew, and he places himself, and we do the best we can for the poor man. You are more tempted to this error on your "free" plan than we are. Where do you put the gold-ringed people? In bad seats? Do they stand about the doors to "run the machine," and then sit, with ostentatious humility, in a back seat? Is this much better than the infelicity James condemns?

"But we leave the worshippers to give

what they feel they can give, and sit where they please."

So do we. When the building was finished the people took such seats as they found suited at once to their means and their tastes. They naturally wished to be together as families.

"But that makes invidious distinctions in God's house. You should not do that."

Nor do we. The distinction is no greater than in other conditions of the worshipper. Some drive carriages; others walk. Some live in fine houses; some in plain apartments. Some, like your friend, are gold-ringed, and others in plain raiment. These are *providential arrangements*; at least certainly not made by us, and it is more true to the truth of things to accept them than to cover them up by artificial devices. Are we not to worship "in truth," *i. e.*, according to the nature of things?

"But look at the Roman Catholics—how they are growing—and they have no pew-rents."

To begin with: they are not growing, but the reverse, if their own statements can be believed. Secondly, where they have pews, they are often rented; and thirdly, they have a worse plan, commonly, namely: worshippers paying at each diet for their chairs, or places, and according to locality. And finally, their system is so diverse from the Protestant, and their methods of making adherents pay money so unlike ours, that no argument can be drawn from them.

"But the masses are not drawn into our churches. We would get them if we had free seats."

To begin with: there are more of "the masses" in our churches—that is, a larger proportion of them to the population—than ever before. You can consult on

that point, if you please, Dorchester's "Problem of Religious Progress," and in the second place, London and other great cities of England have multitudes of churches free, *i. e.*, without pew-rents; but have they held the masses? Much depends on the pulpit.

"Well, there's something wrong about it. There's Mr. —, a friend of mine. He attended Dr. F——'s; he had a large family, and to get the pew he wanted, he had to pay as much as did Mr. C——, with twice his fortune."

But if the pews had been free, how could he have got the pew he wanted? Besides, the most of the gallery of that church, I happen to know, is unlet. He could have got a pew there for whatever he liked to pay. Perhaps he wanted, or his family did, to be near the gold-ringed people. In fact there are too many of our churches where there is no great competition for pews, and most of the prosperous churches accommodate many worshippers who pay nothing, or next to nothing. They are hospitable.

"Well, we should somehow endow

churches and let all come on equal terms and sit where they like. The rich and the poor, according to the Bible, meet together."

Beginning where you left off, please to look up that oft-quoted text and see if it means only meeting in the same pew. Would not meeting at the same church, or the same cemetery equally suit the text? And then England has had endowed churches all over, with no pew-rents; but the three classes, squire, farmer, and laborer, are more permanently divided than you ever saw them in a pew-rented church.

In conclusion we feel that in mission and evangelistic gatherings, which only look toward settled churches, free seats are proper; as the people settle down in a church, and feel equal to it, they should be encouraged to give stately, and have fixed pews for the families; and in a settled community of comfortable people, there is no more evil or wrong in applying ordinary systematic methods to the maintenance of church life than to any other department of human existence.—  
*Christian Hour.*

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## Christian Edification

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### Misery Changing to Gladness.

BY JOSEPH PARKER, D.D., LONDON.

In reading the seventh Psalm we find that it comes in with a tone of sorrow and loneliness, but it goes out with cymbals and dances, and songs and utterances of triumph. We may have thought in the earlier part of the Psalm that David had never sung in his life, or if he had, he certainly would never sing again. He seems to write himself out of his misery, as men now pray themselves out of their trouble. When the prayer begins, the listener says: "How heavily loaded is thy heart with sorrow! Surely that life is distressed beyond all possibility of recovery! Oh, how sad and mournful and pensive the utterance of that heart!" And lo! the man talks over his case with God, goes into critical detail

about it, mentions everything he can recollect; and the tone subtly changes all the while, and behold, at the last, the man is singing—the prayer has blossomed into a song, and he who began with supplication ended with praise.

So it may be in our life; there is room enough, enemies enough there are no doubt, and difficulties apparently innumerable and insurmountable. Never underestimate these difficulties. You cannot lecture a man out of sorrow. Encourage him rather to go over his sorrow, to mention it syllable by syllable, letter by letter, and when he has continued the story a long time, ask him if he cannot recollect something more, even more deeply distressing in its nature. Encourage him to tell all that is in his heart. Be good listeners. It soothes poor misery hearkening to her tale. Ask