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SERMONIC.

LOVE TO AN UNSEEN CHRIST.

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*"And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest
all things; thou knowest that I love thee."*

—John xxi: 17.

THERE were occasions in the earthly history of Christ when He exhibited all the sympathies and affections of the human heart, both of joy and of sorrow; for example, at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, and at the tomb of Lazarus. But, so far as I can remember, this is the only instance in which He ever betrayed anything approaching to what we ordinarily call sentiment. In the severity of His holiness as man, and in sublime consciousness of His trust as the mediator we are accustomed to think of Him as lifted above the necessity, if not above the reach, of human sympathy. The reader, therefore, pauses upon this peculiar passage, feeling that there must be in it something more than sentiment, and seeks for a deeper significance lying concealed. That Christ should thrice challenge Simon's love, and should thrice impose upon him a corresponding injunction, is suggestive of some moral purpose, which we nat-

urally desire to explore. When it is remembered that Peter, but a little before, had thrice denied his Lord, we find in this a clue to the whole dialogue. It was throughout a proceeding of compassionate love, offering His now penitent disciple an opportunity of retracting his profane denial; and the three-fold injunction, "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep," was the restitution of his honor and office, which Peter might well suppose forfeited by his fall.

But see the severity of Christ in the very dealing of His love. It is intimated in the style of the address: "Simon, son of Jonas"—not Peter, the baptismal name of discipleship. Does it not seem to imply that the new relation of grace was forever canceled?—that Peter is now to be thrown out of the school of his Lord, and to be nothing more than what he was before his call to the apostleship, "Simon, son of Jonas?" It is intimated again in the question, "Lovest thou me more than these?" which refers not, as many superficially interpret, to the fishes and the nets; as though Christ meant to say, "Dost thou love me more than these earthly possessions, and art thou now willing to forsake all and follow me?" The language

[The first several sermons are reported in full; the remainder are given in condensed form. Every care is taken to make these reports correct; yet our readers must not forget that it would be unfair to hold a speaker responsible for what may appear in a condensation, made by another, of his discourse.]

refers, without doubt, to those other disciples: "Lovest thou me more than they?" You remember that Peter once affirmed the pre-eminence of his loyalty and love: "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." He could not know, by consciousness, the depth of attachment which they felt to Christ; but he could, by consciousness, know his own; and, therefore, it seemed to him possible that they might be betrayed into that grievous fault, but not himself. Yet, more basely than all the rest, did Peter deny his Master. And now the Lord brings it up before his mind in the question which He addresses to him, in order that he may purge himself of the offense which had been committed against his brethren. Peter, in his modesty and in his humility, is content with simply affirming his own affection, but without any ungracious comparison. This union of faithful severity with forgiving tenderness marks, my brethren, all the divine dealings with penitent souls. How severe is the admonition, before the consolations of grace are administered to us! Just as, with a kind severity, the knife of the surgeon cuts around and drives the probe down to the bottom of the ulcer, in order that the relief and the cure may the more quickly come. In the language of Solomon, "The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil"; "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." And therefore it is that these stripes, in the language of the same Solomon, go down into the "chambers of the body."*

Before I pass from this verbal exposition of the text, I must remark upon the distinction between the two words employed by Christ and Peter in this singular colloquy: a distinction which is so persistently employed by the two as to show that it was not without design. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me (*agapas me*)?" "Lord, thou

knowest that I love thee (*philo se*)."[†] It is not until the third challenge that Christ condescends to Peter's word, and the controversy between them is healed by His adoption of it: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me (*phileis me*)?" And then it is, when Christ has come down to the plain of Peter's own consciousness and testimony, that with renewed emphasis he asseverates his love: "Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee." It would not be profitable to engage here in a philological disquisition. It will suffice to say that the word chosen by Christ, and held to with such persistency, implies a moral appreciation of him, and a consequent restful satisfaction in him; while the word of Peter implies simply an inward, personal affection. The two are not necessarily exclusive of each other; nay, they are rather united in every true Christian experience. But the word of Christ is the higher word of the two; while the word of Peter simply gives the testimony of his own heart as to the reality of his personal love. There is a clue to this lying just below the surface of the word, which it is worth our while to put the finger upon. There was a bright hour in Peter's experience, when he replied to the Master's question, "Whom say ye that I am?" by answering, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus accepts the noble confession, declares that it is the rock upon which He will build His church here upon the earth; and gives to him who made the confession, in the name of all the apostles, the keys of the kingdom, with the assurance that "whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven." Then there was a dark hour in Peter's history, when, trembling under the accusation of a maid servant, he exclaimed, "I know not the man." In the subtle employment of a single word, Christ brings the two declarations side by side in sharp contrast before his erring disciple: and, in substance, says to him: "Peter, by which of these two

* As some translate the clause in our version, "the inward parts of the belly."

declarations do you now stand? Are you prepared to say that I am 'the Christ, the son of the living God;' or do you dismiss me from your thought with something of contempt and scorn, as only the man whom you do not know?" And Peter, in his humility, replies, in substance, by the word which he employs: "Lord, I dare not affirm that I see all the excellencies that belong to thy nature, or that I render to thee the homage of all that love which is thy due; but I can say that, in the depths of my soul, I do love thee."

Ah! could Peter say that, immediately after his dismal fall? Is this another exhibition of that self-confidence which was so characteristic of the man? Peter is now another sort of Peter from what he was when he denied his Lord in the hall of the high priest's palace. You see all through this remarkable interview the traces of his humility and of his penitence; and yet, in the fresh remembrance of his shame and dishonor, Peter is able to say, in the face of Omniscience itself, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Brethren, we can say the same, blessed be the grace of God by which we are recovered from our falls! And, like Peter, even after the moments of our sin, when the sad memory throws a shadow upon the soul—when in the closet we lie in the dust, crying out, "God, be merciful to us, sinners!"—we are able to lift ourselves up from all that shame, and turning our eyes to the Heaven where Jesus is, say to him, with all the confidence of Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that we love thee." Let me, then, attempt this morning to point out the grounds upon which we are able to do this.

I. FAITH PRESENTS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST TO US AS A LIVING PERSON; NOT AS A PERSONAGE OF HISTORY, WHO HAS ENTIRELY PASSED FROM THE STAGE. It appears to me that, after the vivid conception of amiable qualities in those who are dear to us, which is the first condition of human love, the second prerequisite is that they shall be to us at

least *living persons*, and thus brought within the range of our sympathy. This thought can be opened, perhaps, better through illustration than by abstract reasoning. You take up, for example, a well-wrought fiction. As long as the spell of the author's genius is upon you, the characters of the story become to you real persons; and you are transported into the ideal world in which they move, and you mingle with theirs all the currents of your thoughts and feeling. It is the test of the author's genius when he is able to do just that thing. And hence the shock which we experience when we lay down the book, when the sweet illusions are dispelled, and we turn back to the hard realities of this actual world in which we live. So, too, with the hero of history, who has carved with his sword a mighty empire; or, better still, in the sacrifice of personal ambition, has fostered the best interests of his country, and is written down upon its records as the father of his people. As we praise the admirable deeds wrought by these historic heroes, there may be the most intense admiration; but not that knitting of the heart to them which we denominate love; simply because as we trace the cold record, we carry along with us a clear knowledge of the fact that they have entirely passed away, where we are utterly unable to touch them with our love. But the best illustration of all is drawn from the remembrance of our own dead. Oh, brethren! the blessedness of that memory by which we are always able to bring them back—transfigured, it may be, clothed with the beautiful light of the glory to which they have gone—yet coming back in the very form in which we knew them upon the earth, which we were accustomed to clasp in our embrace; so that we can see in them the old sparkle of the eye, and hear the familiar and precious tones of the voice! Ah, how they come back with those old remembered forms into the most secret chamber of the soul, and abide there as a living presence! We turn away from the cold, hard world, in which we are

obliged to move, and shut ourselves up in that sacred sanctuary, face to face with the living presence, and, by the power of memory, and of thought, and of affection, hold with it a sweet communion. It is because they are not dead, but to us alive; because, through the power of memory and of imagination combined, they are reproduced before us in the old life, so that they and we move together in the old channels of association, that we are conscious of a deep personal affection to those whom we call our dead. Now, just so, faith presents the Lord Jesus Christ as still living. Though absent in the heavens, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, He lives still, speaks from the excellent glory still; and it is through the apprehension of this living Christ, sustaining living relations to us, that we are conscious of this personal affection which Peter affirms, and can say with him, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that we love thee."

It is this living Christ who gives the freshness and vitality to the Bible which belongs to no other book. Because He lives in His own essential life, and lives as mediator at the Father's right hand, there is life in all the words and syllables and lines and letters of the sacred book. As you and I walk up and down through its pages, it is as though we were walking arm and arm with our living Lord through the walks of a garden; and as our eyes trace the words, they are not to us the cold impressions of the printing press, but they are the articulate utterances of the living Lord, who speaks through this word, as it is interpreted to us through the Holy Spirit, with His own lips from His throne above. Thus it is that the Bible becomes to us a secondary incarnation of our Lord—the secondary rainbow, the outer halo which we behold around His blessed head. And what is it but this continued life of the Redeemer in the heavens above which makes Christianity the living and aggressive religion that it is? Even in the feebleness of its infancy, it came forth

and impinged upon the huge and hoary idolatries of the world; and, like the little stone cut out of the mountain, it gathers in volume as it rolls, crushing everything beneath its weight. The living Christ, who is its author, communicates His divine life, through His own Spirit, into the hearts and activities of His people, and makes the church a living society, incapable of death—the only society on the face of the whole earth that is absolutely immortal. Because, then, the Lord Jesus is revealed to us by the Spirit as the living Christ, He is brought within the reach of our affections; and our joyful testimony is, "Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Peter i: 8.)

II. AGAIN, FAITH PRESENTS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST CLOTHED WITH ALL THE SENSIBILITIES AND THE SYMPATHIES OF A PERFECT MAN. Ah! brethren, we cannot live long without sympathy. It is not the four walls and the narrow space which make the cell of the culprit; but it is the seclusion, in his loneliness and confinement, from all sympathy and communion with his race. I know that in the first excess of severe grief the heart instinctively recoils from sympathy. It exclaims, in the language of Job, "Miserable comforters are ye all," when those comforters come with their premature consolations and lay them over upon the wound of the heart. There is a deep philosophy in this. When our loved ones are gone away, away from us, to whom we were accustomed to minister daily, and upon whom we lavished our affections, the heart feels, in the tearing away of these associations, that it has no other form in which to express its love but to feel the pain of the loss. When friends come, with their premature consolations, in the first excess of bitter sorrow, and tell us not to weep and not to mourn over our dead, we instinctively feel that they are perpetuating a robbery upon those dead, to whom belong all the

affections of the soul; and that since we can no longer follow them with the ministrations of our love, the least we can do is to go into solitude and feel the pain of the separation. There is a secret luxury in grief; and the greater the pain, the more acute the anguish, the more bitter the tears, the more heart-rending the groans, all the sweeter is the comfort that comes to us in the very indulgence of the woe. Yet, at last, we must come back from our solitude into society; and when time has a little beveled off the edges of our grief, we exclaim, as did the patriarchal sufferer, "Have pity on me, have pity on me, O ye, my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me!" Then, when the heart yearns and looks in every direction for the sympathy which it needs, where shall it be found? There are causes too obvious which prevent others from actually feeling our woe. They may have passed beneath the same sorrows themselves, but were they endowed with the same sensibilities as we? Was their suffering as acute? Who can tell? If they had all the sensibility that we have, and we can be persuaded that their suffering was as great as our own, words are no conveyers of grief. You cannot run these tender emotions into the cold iron form of any written word. It is the sigh, the groan, the sob, the tear, the wrenching of the hands, and the prostration of the body upon the ground! We must fall back upon these mute gestures of the body in order to find the symbols of true grief; for there is no language which can express what is felt in the soul under the bereavements which God inflicts. What we want is a perfect sympathy, and a sympathy which is independent of all cold and external forms of expression—a sympathy which has power to go underneath our sorrow and help us to bear its weight. Where shall we turn in life to find the sympathizing friend who can do this for us, until faith purges the eye and reveals to us "the Lamb standing in the midst of the throne, as it had been slain?" We behold in Him "the man of sorrows

and acquainted with grief," whose "visage was more marred than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." It is He who went down into the depths of human sin, and, therefore, into the depths of human woe: who, in exhausting the cause, has also removed the effect; who not only bore our sins, but carried our sorrows. As there, upon the throne of power, He reveals to us the hands which were pierced and the side which was opened, we can roll ourselves over upon His bosom, with the assurance of a perfect and a tender sympathy. When this "Elder Brother" comes into the sanctuary of our woe, and puts around us the everlasting arms, we feel that we are comforted with the comforts of God, and kissed with the kisses of His mouth. In the experience of His sympathy in the hour of our desolation, we are constrained to say, with tender emotion, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that we love thee."

III. FAITH REVEALS CHRIST SO AS TO BRING US INTO CONTACT AND PERSONAL COMMUNION WITH HIM. It is not enough simply that Christ and we live, with this stretch of distance between us—He in the one world, we in the other. We must be brought into actual fellowship; and this makes the relation an individual relation between ourselves and our friend. You have read, perhaps, the History of the Reformation by D'Aubigne, of Geneva—a work so powerful in its dramatic character that it brings all the persons of the history right before the mind, and throws you into actual contact with them as living realities; and, as you pore over its pages, your heart goes over the waters to the man who wrote it. But if he had ever sat down and penned you an individual letter, pouring into your ear the experiences of his own soul, you would have felt that this correspondence brought you into a personal relationship, making the attachment infinitely strong. My hearers, this is but a feeble representation of the correspondence which we are able to maintain with this absent Jesus, now living in the Heavens; for when

the Holy Ghost interprets to us the Word, these promises become the very language of Christ breathing in confidential whispers into our ear the assurance of His grace. It is a peculiarity of faith, in the reading of the Scriptures, that although it may be a word which thousands have read before us, and thousands may read around us, and thousands shall read after us, yet, when the Holy Spirit illuminates our understanding and makes a divine application of it to us, it becomes the personal word of the Savior to ourselves, just as much as though He stooped from the throne of His glory, and, with His loving voice, whispered it to ourselves alone. Then, Christ having spoken to us in the Word, we close the door and kneel before His mercy seat in prayer, and pour our supplications into His ear; and, as the Holy Spirit indites these petitions, we speak, not as one who speaks into the air, but as one who lies in the bosom of his friend and touches his very heart. Brother, do you know the difference between praying and saying prayers? How many times, in your closet, have you gone through the form of prayer, and risen from your knees feeling that the words never rose above your head—that they were dissipated into thin air, and you had no hope to overtake them as they melted into space? And then you have knelt again and have spoken your words of prayer, and you felt the very breath of your Friend upon your cheek, and your lips pressing against His ear, and there was within you a consciousness of personal communion with a real, living, personal Being. Surely, then, if faith presents Christ to us as one with whom we are in actual correspondence, with whom we hold a communion as real as any that we hold with a friend on the earth, in the enjoyment of this confidential friendship, we are able still to say, with Peter, "Lord, thou knowest that we love thee."

IV. FAITH ENABLES US TO APPROPRIATE THE GLORIOUS RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST, WHICH BECOMES A BOND OF SYMPATHY AND OF LOVE BETWEEN OURSELVES AND OUR

Lord. It is upon the ground of this righteousness that our Head stands accepted before the Father. It was by virtue of this righteousness that He burst the seal of the grave and rose triumphant over death. It was by the merit of this righteousness that He ascended through the clouds into the heavens. It was by the force of this righteousness that He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and gave public proof of His mediatorial rule, when, on the day of Pentecost, He shed down the Holy Spirit with power upon the Apostles. With this glorious righteousness He appears before His Father and before the holy angels, rejoicing in it as the crown of His glory. And now we, by faith, having this righteousness and making it our own, go up into the presence of the same glory, and feel that there is a bond between us and Christ; we rejoicing in the same righteousness with Himself, and feeling that it constitutes our glory even as it constitutes His own. By virtue, therefore, of the sympathy created through the possession of this righteousness, we are able to say, "thou art the chiefest among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely." "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

V. LASTLY, FAITH PRESENTS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST SO THAT WE REJOICE IN THE SENSE OF THE PARDON OF OUR SINS AND IN ALL THE BENEFITS OF GRACE WHICH HE CONFERS UPON US. While sin lies upon the conscience unpardoned, we are averse to thoughts of God. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." The Apostle declares of the wicked, that they "do not like to retain God in their knowledge." All thoughts of God, because they are thoughts of perfect holiness, are distasteful to the sinner, who feels that holiness arrayed against him and that it must draw the sword of justice and execute upon him his doom. Under the pressure of the curse, man, instinctively and with a total aversion, turns away from the contemplation of God; but when the Holy Spirit seals a gra-

cious pardon upon the conscience, it becomes delightful to behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" to see, in our incarnate Redeemer "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person." Do you know what it is to love a being who has pardoned you? And when the sense of gratitude springs up in the soul for all the benefits of redeeming grace, do you know anything of the joy which comes from loving the Savior, who has bestowed all this upon you? If not, I tell you it is your loss. It is your loss if you have not Him before your eye who in the one hand holds the gift of a full pardon, and, in the other hangs out before you the crown of life which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to them that love Him at the last day. In the exercise of gratitude for saving grace, in the joy which springs from the sense of pardon sealed upon an accusing conscience, we are constrained to exclaim, with Peter in the text, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that we love thee."

Now, my friends, I draw these thoughts to a practical close by one or two reflections:

I. THE FIRST IS, THAT GOD HAS MADE A WONDERFUL PROVISION IN THE GOSPEL OF HIS SON FOR THE EXERCISE, AND THE GRATIFICATION WITHIN US, OF THIS PRINCIPLE OF LOVE. Surely, God made us to love. He gives to us a heart which is capable of it, and then He places us in the bosom of relations which draw it out. It is the first lesson learned by the infant. Did you never bend over your own babe, as it hangs on its mother's breast and drinks the nourishment of its mother's life into its own form, wonderingly turning up into that mother's face its blue eye, in which you begin to see the sparkle of intelligence, gazing and gazing into that mother's face, and learning, as it looks, the first great lesson of infantile love? After a little, when it turns from that mother to your manly arms, cooing with its slender voice and purring with its tiny hands, is it not in the school of love? Are you, father and mother, not teach-

ing it the lessons of affection? With its expanding powers, it spreads its young heart over the whole circle of brothers and sisters within the sacred inclosure of the family; and overleaping those narrow boundaries, it seeks to love neighbors and friends and further kindred—until, the waves spreading from the center in circles over the sea of life, this love takes hold upon one's country; expanding at last, into that broad philanthropy which takes up the whole race in the bonds of a common brotherhood. Why, what are all these earthly relations but the successive rounds of the ladder by which we ascend higher and higher, until we approach the great God, whom we are to love with all the heart and with all the soul and with all the strength and with all the mind? What is the family, and what is our country, and what is the wide earth upon which we live, but the schools into which we are introduced, that we may learn the divine art of loving, so that it shall become at last the mastering habit of the soul? The impressions are stereotyped forever; so that, having learned what it is to love on earth, and how enjoyment comes to us in the exercise of love, we may at length, transformed by grace, stand amid the angels in Heaven, forever loving Him that hath redeemed us, and made us kings and priests unto God in His temple above. To use an exquisite thought, first indicated to me by the most suggestive of all writers, Isaac Taylor—and which I can only reproduce in substance, not in language—love is not that material thing which you cut into pieces and distribute around, giving a little to one and a little to another, until the whole is exhausted; but it is that immaterial, spiritual thing, the whole of which you give to one, and yet have the whole of it left to give to another. Thus, through all the circles of human relationship, we love with all the wealth of love with which a gracious God may have endowed us. Here is a mother with six children around her knee; does she love each child with one-sixth of her heart, so that, when it is distributed over the entire

circle, her whole capacity for love is exhausted? Or does she not love each child with the love of her mother's heart? And then, having loved all the six, with all the heart that she has, has she not the whole heart left to give to him whom she knew and whom she loved before she knew or loved any of the six? Ah! these earthly relations never can absorb the love of which we are capable. We love wife and children and friends and country and the race with all the love that God has given to us; and yet it overpasses all these earthly measures, and longs for a receptacle into which it can pour its entire flood forever. Just like this bold river which rolls by and almost around our city; which, in its descent from the distant North, sends off its streams upon the right hand and upon the left, watering the plain on either bank; then, gathering its waters back into its own current, and rolling on, chafing within its banks, increasing in bulk and increasing in power, until at last it disembogues into the gulf, and sweeps on into the broad ocean that is beyond. So do the affections of the human heart overpass the home, overpass the country, overpass the world, sweeping on, chafing in their banks; and they must at last have an ocean into which to empty, even the bosom of God. In the infiniteness of His goodness, God presents Himself as the eternal and complete object upon which these affections of ours shall terminate, and always is He to be seen in Jesus Christ. Always, through eternity, are we to grow into Christ, to be assimilated to Christ, to be changed into His image from glory to glory, as here on earth from grace to grace. Here we know and are assimilated to Him, as the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief; having fellowship with Him in His humiliation, in His shame, in His reproach, in His dishonor, in His death. Then, rising with Him in His own glorious resurrection, we are to grow into Him forever and forever, be associated with Him forever and forever in His exaltation; rising from one plane to

a plane that is higher, and having a larger view of the infinite that is in God; and then springing from those higher planes to peaks that are loftier still, and having a broader landscape, and beholding Him in the further stretch of His boundless nature, as it spreads itself out before us, boundless and boundless everywhere. Through all eternity we shall explore God, beholding in Him the infinite and the holy, the beautiful and the true, the good and the right, God over all and blessed forever. And still the infinite in God stretches out before us after an eternity has been spent, to occupy the eternities that are to come. Oh! the provision in the Gospel of Christ to meet the yearnings of love! Do you and I thus love God in Christ, or are we binding down this elastic heart to the poor and perishing objects of the earth? I know how sweet it is to love those whom God gives to us in the tender relations of the home; but, my hearers, they die, and we have to go in our tears and hunt for them in the darkness of the grave! But God lives—God the good, God the wise, God the holy, God the true, God glorious in His majesty, always offering Himself to the embrace of our affections, our inheritance and our portion throughout eternity. I am sorry for you, my hearer, to the very core of my heart, in the depths of all the pity of which I am capable—I am sorry for you if you cannot say, with Peter, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." You have not the field upon which your affections can expand until you find yourself embraced in the arms of everlasting love and glory.

II. Last of all—for I premit other thoughts which I had intended to present—IF IT BE SO SWEET TO LOVE CHRIST ON EARTH, WHAT WILL IT BE TO LOVE HIM IN HEAVEN?—for here we see "as through a glass, darkly," but there "face to face." Then we shall know even as we are known; then faith and hope will have passed away, but charity, the greatest of the three, will abide—faith swallowed up in sight, and hope lost in possession. But love will remain, eter-

nal in man because eternal in God—love, the very name by which the saint in glory is described, as it is the name by which the glorious God is revealed. In the glory and expansion of that love it might seem as though at last the Heaven of Heavens could not contain us; but there will be God, in whose circle we shall continue to move, and we shall enjoy the possession and the glorious sense of possession of His love forever. How sweet it is to love! How sweet it is to be loved! How hard it is when the knife cuts the tie by which we are held to those whom we love! My brethren, this is the joy of the upper home which is offered to you through the Savior—always to know the blessedness of love, and always to enjoy the consciousness of being loved—of loving a love that is divine, and of being folded in the embrace of Him whose sweetest title is that He is LOVE.

PERSONAL VIRTUE AND RELIGION.— TO YOUNG MEN.

BY C. H. HALL, D.D. IN THE CHURCH OF
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I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.—1 John ii: 14.

IN other words, the old apostle had written a word of counsel to them because they were strong and sound and pure, and he leaned so far on them as the hope of the generation which was to follow him. To have the word of God in one's heart and soul is to be healthy all through—to have wisdom and discretion, and all virtues and graces. To have overcome the wicked one, is to be pure and unspotted from the world, to have kept the flesh in due subjection to the spirit, and to have put forth the shield of faith and quenched the fiery darts of the devil. Then the old man gives to the young

men his definition of the words going before. "All that is in the world," and it all tempts especially the young of both sexes, 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,' is not of the Father, but is of the world, passing away, as the desires also pass, and almost before youth has passed, vanishing and deserting the worldling." Well does he say, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." You have, then, in these words almost the only passage in the New Testament, in which the voice of inspiration spake to you especially and particularly as a class. You hear just how God, through His servant St. John, would give voice to your own conscience, and set before you the narrow path that leadeth unto life. Ye are strong; ye have in your hearts the word of God; ye have as yet overcome the wicked one; now use the advantages to resist the desires of the flesh, of the eye, and of pride, that ye may overcome the world and do the will of God.

Just here let me state two or three items of fact which may help us to a right conclusion of the value of the apostolic advice. I read in a circular letter of the Y. M. C. A., that after careful investigation they find that "less than one-tenth of the young men of this city are in Churches and Sunday-schools." If this is true, it is a tremendous fact and shows a pestilential fault somewhere. It would have been a startling announcement to General Sherman, about the time he was attacking Atlanta, that less than one-tenth of his army believed in the Union cause. It would disturb the public confidence to hear that nine out of every ten clerks were incredulous as to the policy of honesty. It would hardly do much good in either case to add that the mothers, and wives, and sisters of these men were all true to the Union and to fidelity in financial dealings. "I write unto you," said St. John—not to your mothers or sisters. There is no safety here in proxy-religion, no very cheerful

*The annual sermon to the Twenty-third Regiment of New York State National Guard, delivered in the Church of the Holy Trinity by the chaplain, C. H. Hall, D.D., May 28, 1882.