XXVII

# True & False Religion

Matt. vii, 21.

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Matthew vii, 21: "Not every one that saith unto Me: 'Lord, Lord!' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father Who is in Heaven.'"

this text exhibits the distinction between

True Religion and False

and denies eternal salvation to all who do not have the first.

It is one of the many passages in the New-Testament which infallibly exhibit the inspiration of the book. It is not human to refuse friendship to those who worship us; ~~it is less human to seem a resolve~~ nor to declare unasked & at the outset of a career. ~~to seem a resolve~~ the fact & its ~~declaration~~ publication show that the Speaker depended on the eternal truth of His doctrine, & not on ~~factious~~ politic measures, for His ultimate vindication; & that the purpose in His life

say not ~~individual~~ personal success, but the authoritative revelation of God's will. How otherwise could He have said to the ~~crowds~~ hanging on His words: "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; only such as do the will of My Father Who is in Heaven!"

Well; men received the speech for the truth, nevertheless. It is another proof of the Divinity of Xt & the inspiration of His history, that notwithstanding the repellent severity of His doctrine, as we see it at this point of view, the conscience of the world has ~~thrown~~ accepted it, throwing aside for it all other forms of belief.

And so today we find these words of the Divine Redeemer, of interest to living men. ~~"What shall I do to be saved?" is now a common question; & this text, announcing it, concerns many~~ They touch a topic that is ~~felt~~ admitted to be of vital importance to every one in this church of Christ this morning.

Many call Xt "Lord"; very, very many. If that were all that belongs to the title to salvation, how large a fraction of the population of Heaven were there now, in our land alone! ~~Thirteen of our thirty-eight millions of people have formally sworn fealty to Him~~

And yet, how plainly in reason

must there be some fallacy somewhere! The state of the nation infallibly shows, as all men & all newspapers are saying every day, that the principles of truth have no such hold on people as ~~those figures prove~~ ecclesiastical statistics imply ~~truth~~. Yet that very neglect of truth has persuaded us into such a notion that loud professions constitute piety, ~~that the~~ air is full of outcries continually, because one hypocrite and another is, in these useful times, losing his mask. Men are trembling for ~~the church, &~~ religion, & truth, ~~in these days closing scenes of our long national masquerade~~. Are they really in danger, think you? ~~& truth becoming a prey is all the Bible a delusion, & the church a fraud, & Christ a myth?~~

No, no, my brethren. We have no need to fear for these. It is for our nation we have need to fear, for our time, & for ourselves. The "fearful" arguments of the day start from ~~mis~~ many premises; they assume that ~~the~~ our nation is immortal, whereas it is not this nation, nor any nation that forgets God, but the invisible Church. Against that the gates of Hell will never prevail. The important question is: Am I in that Church?

Men are assuming, again, that those who cry: "Lord! Lord!" to the Lord Jesus Xt., are the legitimate representatives of His Church & religion, His ambassadors ~~in the world~~ to the people under the prince of this world. They are erring; & the error,

in the present appalling period of ~~exposures~~ failures & exposures, is distracting the minds of believers & leading sinners astray. It is time to lay aside assumptions, & open the dust-worn Bibles, & read whom Xt Himself declares to be His true people. "To the Law & the Testimony!" O let that that blessed war-cry of the hosts of God, that used to ~~echo~~ sound thro' the tents of Israel, that ~~resounded~~ echoed from crag to crag of Scotland's hills, might be taken up now in America & sounded far & wide o'er prairie & plain, from ocean to ocean! Here lies the constitution of Xt's Church, on our desk; let us read it, & see if the defaulters, & the ~~bribe~~ forgers, & the bribe-takers, with all who share their unholy spirit, are members, not

of the church visible, but of the invisible church, the general assembly & church of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven!

And lo! the very paper of the book is water-marked all thro' & thro' with testimonies that shall set us right at once. Religion, it tells us, is not exhibited by mere word but in deeds. ~~"They call ye the Lord! Lord! and do not the things which I say? (Luke vi, 46)~~

First in the Law to the nation who were to learn the true religion to transmit to us:

(Lev. xviii)

4 Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I *am* the LORD your God.
5 Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I *am* the LORD.

The prophets were a class raised up to keep this great fact before Israel, as thus Ezekiel (B.C. 593):

(xx)

19 I *am* the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them;
20 And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I *am* the LORD your God.

By the time of Malachi (B.C. 397)

this testimony seems to have been as necessary, as the whole record is now in America: (i)

6 ¶ A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I *be* a father, where *is* my honour? and if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

Will it be said, that these Scriptures ceased to be of force when the Gospel was proclaimed? Hear then the words of the Gospel itself, of the Saviour Himself:

(Matt. xviii)

3 And said, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

15 ¶ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.
16 Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?
17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.
18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.
20 Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.
21 ¶ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.
22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?
23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Matt. vii

Every one of the followers of our Lord who were inspired ~~to reduce~~ dear out his words to doctrine, repeats the law: Paul (Rom. ii)

13 (For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

Peter (Acts x)

34 ¶ Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:
35 But in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

James (ii)

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.
22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

So then we may well give heed to the startling inquiry of the Lord the Redeemer, if we have been dreaming that a Xn may ~~do as he~~ live after any manner & yet be saved:

(Luke vi) 46 ¶ And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

These kindred texts bring up to thought, two kinds of religion, & the difference between them. Let us devote our remaining time to these points.

I

There is, the Bible tells us in these texts, a religion which consists in crying: "Lord!" "Lord!"

~~1. Such a religion is formal. It is one that makes its appearance at set times, like the seasonable garment,~~

1. Such a religion, in the first place, is always formal. Its ~~profes~~ members are careful to observe times, & seasons, & days, & years. They do not neglect attending church. They may often be found in the prayer-meeting. They are busily concerned with many forms of Xn. work. They scrupulously observe the formalities of religion. They may be free to talk in its conventions, or even in private religious conversation. They are not slow to pray in the midst of their brethren. In all these respects they ~~are not behind~~ ~~differ from~~ seem as earnest as the best Xns.

But there is nothing behind all this. When they cry Lord! Lord! the tone is not reverent. It overshoots its mark, or sinks far beneath it. They talk as if by clock-work, not freely. They speak more of the forms, than

~~which is counterfeit, but when confronted by genuine holiness hollowness is exposed, and it to is soon detected.~~ Sermon XXVII.

A

A Christian of this sort was once appointed to aid in a convention of young men. He had gifts of speech, & was ready to talk, after his kind; but before his turn came the meeting was filled with the power of the Holy Ghost, & men spake as the Spirit gave them utterance. Our friend felt his own lack of harmony, ~~was embarrassed at a state of things foreign to his heart,~~ & being a sensible man, frankly confessed, to his companions, that they were talking of an experience to which his heart was a stranger. He was a formal Christian.

~~2. Again, the religion which~~

12

~~consists in crying: "Lord!" "Lord!"~~

of the spirit, of religion; their ideas are rather religious, than spiritual; more of the church, than of its Head. Thus there is great rigidity, & iciness, about such Xns. adp. A.

2. False religion, moreover, is always censorious. It devotes fine attention enough to the truth to know how to mark imperfections, & inaccuracies, & faults; & their attention seems to have no hindrance from turning wholly upon these. Well indeed were it if all true Xns knew & understood the truth as well as those who only cry "Lord! Lord!" but this knowledge only makes these latter, censorious. They are ready to condemn methods of work; of preach-

ing; the coldness of the church; the folly of the impenitent; the errors of their brethren: never themselves. They are never found humbly repenting; often call themselves perfect; they know nothing of the Gospel figures "seventy times seven"; disbelieve in the reality of Jesus' temptations; complain, hate, but never love.

These are they who cry to the Redeemer of men: "Lord!" "Lord!" But it will not save them. Every one who is to be saved must indeed, so salute Him; but not every one who does will be saved. The mere formality, the mere knowledge of His claims & the details of His system of religion, will not avail. No matter how well-

repented their worship of Him 13
may have made them among
men; no matter how eminent they
may be; no matter with what wealth
of money, with what pomp of power
with what privilege of birth, with what ex-
cellence of brain, they may magnify
their salutation: the Lord of glory
plainly says: Not every one that
saith unto Me: Lord! Lord! shall
enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but
he that doeth the will of My Father
Who is in Heaven. This is the
authoritative declaration of Him
Whose power to deny favor is
admitted in saluting Him as
Lord. Let us turn away, then,
from what He denounces as false

religion, and seek to understand wherein true religion may be known.

II

Only they, our Lord declares, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, who do the will of God the Father.

First, then, one must know what that will is & how it is to be done. God's will is plainly enough revealed, in the Holy Scriptures. Yet how necessary to their understanding, is a careful study of them! Hence

1. An inquiring spirit is the first feature of true religion. One must wish to know what is the mind of God, & wish it enough to search carefully where it may be

found.

The man who wishes to win a fortune, willingly studies the business by which he hopes to succeed. The man who believes there is mineral wealth on his land, diligently to find & possess it. Long years of study are gladly given to secure an author's fame, or an inventor's patent. And yet ~~the Kingdom~~ every one of these men has a soul to save. Has God made them with faculties & energies to be used on earthly interests alone, & intended them to be of no service in "the Kgdm of Heaven"? The answer is in the word "doeth" in our text; & so we find it necessary that a man should feel, &

I have, & exhibit, just as much energy in his religious, as in his secular interests. The means of religious wealth are by the grace of God placed within his reach. The sincerity of his desire will be ~~exhibited~~ shown by the measure of his use of them.

It is a great presumption to suppose that general intelligence, or general minor, will put one in possession of a sufficient knowledge of the Divine will, to answer the requirements of our text. A sincere wish to know it, will send one often to the pages of the Bible. How earnestly does the Psalmist speak of his study of the ancient law!

2 Mine eyes prevent the night watches,

that I might meditate in Thy word" (Ps. cxix, 148). How cordially did the true disciples cry, when the Saviour asked if they, like the false ones, would also go away from Him: (John vi, 68) "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

True religion then is anxious to inquire, & does inquire, at the oracles of God, as to His will. It is not content with mere received opinions. It listens to all opinion & comment, not censoriously, but inquiringly; testing assertion by holy Scripture; searching the Scripture for guidance in all ~~trouble &~~ matters of responsibility.

2. But as we have seen, it is for-

cible to have knowledge of the truth, enough, only to be condemned. A man does not serve God merely by knowing, but by doing, His will; & yet to know it is plainly the first, & too often a neglected, essential. The second is a spirit that experiences & cherishes God's ~~truth~~ written revelations.

He who has sat down & read, for example, the instructions of Xt in the eighteenth of Matthew about going to an offending friend & trying to come to a kindly understanding with him, instead of cherishing a sullen anger; has indeed perhaps caught a glimpse of the perfect righteousness & love of Xt which has

drawn his heart to him. But he who, so reading & so feeling, takes that instruction to himself & goes to his offended neighbor according to it, such a Xn gets not only a glimpse, but a very visitation of the Lord, & enjoys an experience which enables him indeed "rejoice in the Lord."

Again, he who, reading in the Epistle of St James the prohibition against respect of persons, gives up his behavior to accordance with that revelation of God's will: he also gains an experience of Xt. He finds, not in the reading, not in the resolving, but in the actual doing of this will of God, a sweet consciousness that he is of the Kingdom of Heaven; that his citizen-

ship is no longer with the princes of this world, but in Heaven ~~with those~~ where the perfect law of love obtains. And when thereafter he has occasion to say: "Lord!" to the Lord Jesus, his heart swells with an ineffable consciousness that that cry means something, & is such accepted of Xt. For each of these has obeyed Xt.; has fallen into line with Him; marches to the same music of angels; bears the same cross; looks for the same reward, with Xt.

But I was saying that the second element of true religion was a spirit of not only of experie-

enacting, but of cherishing, the written will of God.

Can it be possible that one shall have such an experience of the blessedness of doing God's will as I have been recounting, & not cherish it? I do not know; some seem to, sometimes. But it is certain that the experience must be, is cherished, by every one that enters into the kingdom. For to obey God once is to receive the joy that belongs inseparably to obedience; but to repeat the act, over & over again, is to show a spirit of genuine love for God's law. One act may be casual; but many prove a disposition.

3. There ought to be named one

other element of true religion; the shunning of everything contrary to the will of God.

With never so feminine a love to God & willingness to do His will, the true Xn is always exposed to the temptations of Satan. Satan is, the Scripture plainly tells us, the prince of this world; & by consequence loyalty to God is to be shown not only by knowing & honoring the truth, but by shunning the evil that is in the world. That is part of the "doing the will of the Father." We read for example how St Peter fell into the temptation of dissimulating among Judaizing Xns, & how St Paul blamed him for it; & we

admire the reality of Peter's religion when we find him after ~~that~~ endorsing the scriptures of his "beloved brother Paul," as one who writes acc. to "wisdom given unto him." How many a man can successfully imitate even a prolonged obedience to the Divine will, otherwise, who is caught ~~dep~~ passed in the nets of Satan?

True religion then consists in taking & sustaining a due relation to the will of God: in wishing to know & understand it; in yielding it habitual obedience; & in keeping oneself unspotted from the world. They who so ~~live~~ shall enter into ~~the~~ the Kingdom of Heaven, we are authoritatively assured.

they who do not, no matter how perfect an appearance they may present; nor how sharply they pretend to guard the truth; are encouraged to no hope of a share or place in that Kingdom.

## III

It remains now to ask: What is the difference between these two, the religion of doing & that which only cries Lord! Lord! In how can one come into the possession of the true?

There is all the difference that exists between a good thing & its counterfeit. The one is of faith, the other is an imitation. The one comes from the head, the other

from the heart; the latter seeks the glory of God, the former only aims to win a personal the' high advantage. The one costs something; the other is full of ~~suffer~~ vain professions. The one ~~looks understand that the~~ looks to a future heaven; the other perceives that the Kingdom of Heaven has its beginnings in this world. The one would make a hell of any sphere; the other ~~would~~ brings down the essential good of Heaven into the present life. What a difference is here! Truth, & a lie; good, & evil; honesty, & hypocrisy; felicity, & misery! Behold how many seek the good, & are not able to compass it!

It may be said to me, that

no one can do the will of the Father in Heaven, after the manner we have been considering; that men have lost the power to do it. That is true. But God can enable them once more; & He has graciously chosen to pledge Himself to give the ability, to every one who asks it of Him.

If you are burdened with your sense of shortcoming under the teaching of our text today; if you want to have the relief that would come to an awakened & anxious conscience by entering upon a life of genuine obedience to the blessed Saviour: He has said to you: Come unto

me, all ye that labor & are heavy laden & I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you & learn of Me; for I am meek & lowly in heart; & ye shall find rest unto your souls.