

SERMONS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS;

BY THE

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LATE OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND CHAPLAIN TO
THE RIGHT HON. THE COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON.

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,
BY SAMUEL DREW, A. M.

AND A

DISSERTATION ON HIS CHARACTER, PREACHING, &c.
BY THE REV. JOSEPH SMITH.

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THE MARRIAGE OF CANA.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him. —John ii. 11.

I HAVE more than once had occasion to observe, that the chief end St. John had in view, when he wrote his Gospel, was to prove the divinity of Jesus Christ, (that Word, who not only was from everlasting with God, but also was really God blessed for evermore,) against those arch-heretics Ebion and Cerinthus, whose pernicious principles too many follow in these last days. For this purpose, you may take notice, that he is more particular than any other evangelist, in relating our Lord's divine discourses, as also the glorious miracles which he wrought, not by a power derived from another, like Moses and other prophets, but from a power inherent in himself.

The words of the text have a reference to a notable miracle which Christ performed, and thereby gave proof of his eternal power and godhead. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."

The miracle here spoken of, is that of our Lord's turning water into wine, at a marriage feast. I design, at present, by God's help, to make some observations on the circumstances and certainty of the miracle, and then conclude with some practical instructions; that you, by hearing how Jesus Christ has showed forth his glory, may, by the operation of God's Spirit upon your hearts, with the disciples mentioned in the text, be brought to believe on him.

First, then, I would make some observations on the miracle itself.—Verse 1, 2. "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage." By our Lord's being at a feast, we may learn, that feasting upon solemn occasions is not absolutely unlawful: but then we must be exceeding careful at such seasons, that the occasion be solemn, and that we go not for the sake of eating and drinking, but to edify one another in love. Feasting in any other manner I think absolutely unlawful for the followers of Jesus Christ: because if we eat and drink out of another view, it cannot be to the glory of God. The Son of man, we know, "came eating and drinking." If a Pharisee asked him to come to his house, our Lord went, and sat down with him. But then we find his discourse was always such as tended to the use of edifying. We may then, no doubt, go and do likewise.

We may observe, farther, that if our Lord were present at a marriage feast, then, to deny marriage to any order of men, is certainly a "doctrine of devils." "Marriage (says the apostle) is honourable in all." Our Lord graced a marriage-feast with his first public miracle. It was an institution of God himself, even in paradise: and therefore, no doubt, lawful for all Christians,

even for those who are made perfect in holiness through the faith of Jesus Christ. But then, we may learn the reason why we have so many unhappy marriages in the world. It is because the parties concerned do not call Jesus Christ by prayer, nor ask the advice of his true disciples when they are about to marry. No, Christ and religion are the last things that are consulted, and no wonder then if matches of the devil's making (as all such are, which are contracted only on account of outward beauty, or for filthy lucre's sake) prove most miserable, and grievous to be borne.

I cannot but dwell a little on this particular because I am persuaded the devil cannot lay a greater snare for young Christians, than to tempt them unequally to yoke themselves with unbelievers: as are all who are not born again of God. This was the snare wherein the sons of God were entangled before the flood, and one great cause why God brought that flood upon the world. For what says Moses, Gen. vi. 2, 3. "The sons of God (the posterity of pious Seth) saw the daughters of men, (or the posterity of wicked Cain) that they were fair, (not that they were pious,) and they took them wives of all which they chose," not which God chose for them. What follows? "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh;" that is, even the few righteous souls being now grown carnal by their ungodly marriages, the whole world was altogether become abominable, and had made themselves vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. I might instance farther, the care the ancient patriarchs took to choose wives for their children out of their own religious families; and it was one great mark of Esau's rebellion against his father, that he took unto himself wives of the daughters of the Canaanites, who were strangers to the covenant of promise made unto his fathers. But I forbear. Time will not permit me to enlarge here. Let it suffice to advise all, whenever they enter into a marriage state, to imitate the people of Cana in Galilee, to call Christ to the marriage. He certainly will hear and choose for you. And you will always find his choice to be the best. He then will direct you to such yoke-fellows as shall be helps meet for you, in the great work of your salvation, and then he will also enable you to serve him without distraction, and cause you to walk, as Zachary and Elizabeth, in all his commandments and ordinances blameless.

But to proceed. Who these persons were that called our Lord and his disciples to the marriage, is not certain. Some (because it is said, that the mother of Jesus was there) have supposed that they were related to the virgin, and that, therefore, our Lord and his disciples were invited on her account. However that be, it should seem they were not very rich, (for what had rich folks to do with a despised Jesus of Nazareth, and his mean followers?) because we find they were unfurnished with a sufficient quantity of wine for a large company, and therefore, "when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus," having, as it should seem by her applying to him so readi-

ly on this occasion, even in his private life, seen some instances of his miraculous power, "saith unto him, They have no wine." She thought it sufficient only to inform him of the wants of the host, knowing that he was as ready to give as she to ask. In this light the blessed Virgin's request appears to us at the first view. But if we examine our Lord's answer, we shall have reason to think there was something which was not right, for Jesus saith unto her, ver. 4. "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" Observe, he calls her woman, not mother, to show her, that though she was his mother, as he was man, yet she was his creature, as he was God. "What have I to do with thee?" Think you that I must work miracles at your bidding? Some have thought that she spoke as though she had an authority over him, which was a proud motion, and our Lord therefore checks her for it. And if Jesus Christ would not turn a little water into wine, whilst he was here on earth, at her command, how idolatrous is that church, and how justly do we separate from her, which prescribes forms, wherein the Virgin is desired to command her Son to have compassion on us!

But notwithstanding the holy Virgin were blameable in this respect, yet she has herein set rich and poor an example which it is your duty to follow. You that are rich, and live in ceiled houses, learn of her to go into the cottages of the poor. Your Lord was not above it, and why should you? And when you do visit them, like the virgin-mother, examine their wants. And when you see they have no wine, and are ready to perish with hunger, shut not up your bowels of compassion, but bless the Lord for putting it in your power to administer to their necessities. Believe me, such visits would do you good. You would learn then to be thankful that God has given you bread enough and to spare. And I am persuaded, every mite that you bestow on feeding the hungry and clothing the naked disciples of Jesus Christ, will afford you more satisfaction at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, than all the thousands squandered away in balls and assemblies, and such-like entertainments.

You that are poor in this world's goods, and thereby are disabled from helping, yet you may learn from the Virgin, to pray for one another. She could not turn the water into wine, but she could entreat her Son to do it, and so may you. And doubt not of the Lord's hearing you, for God has chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith. By your fervent prayers, you may draw down many a blessing on your poor fellow-creatures. O that I may ever be remembered by you before the throne of our dear Lord Jesus! But what shall we say? Will our Lord entirely disregard this motion of his mother? No! though he check her with "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" yet he intimates that he would do as she desired by and by. "Mine hour is not yet come." As though he had said, The wine is almost, but not quite out; when they are come to an extremity, and sensible of the want of

my assistance, then will I show forth my glory, that they may behold it, and believe on me.

Thus, sirs, hath our Lord been frequently pleased to deal with me, and, I doubt not, with many of you also. Often, often, when I have found his presence as it were hidden from my soul, and his comforts well-nigh gone, I have gone unto him, complaining that I had no visit and token of his love as usual. Sometimes he has seemed to turn a deaf ear to my request, and, as it were, said, "What have I to do with thee?" Which has made me go sorrowing all the day long. So foolish was I, and faithless before him. For I have always found he loved me notwithstanding, as he did Lazarus, though he stayed two days after he heard he was sick. But when my hour of extremity has come, and my will broken, then hath he lifted up the light of his blessed countenance afresh. He has showed forth his glory, and made me ashamed for disbelieving him, who often hath turned my water into wine. Be not then discouraged, if the Lord do not immediately seem to regard the voice of your prayer, when you cry unto him. The holy Virgin we find was not. No, she was convinced his time was the best time, and therefore, ver. 5. "saith unto the servants, (O that we could follow her advice!) whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

And now, behold, the hour is come, when the eternal Son of God will show forth his glory. The circumstance of the miracle is very remarkable: ver. 6. "And there were set six water-pots of water, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece." The manner of this purifying we have an account of in the other evangelists, especially St. Mark, who informs us, that the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not; and when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. This was a superstitious custom; but, however, we may learn from it, whenever we come in from conversing with those that are without, to purify our hearts by self-examination and prayer, for it is hard to go through the world, and to be kept unspotted from it.

Observe further, ver. 7. "Jesus saith unto them," not to his own disciples, but unto the servants of the house, who were strangers to the holy Jesus, and whom the Virgin had before charged to do whatsoever he said unto them, "Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear to the governor of the feast. And they bare it." How our Lord turned the water into wine, we are not told. What have we to do with that? Why should we desire to be wise above what is written? It is sufficient for the manifestation of his glorious Godhead, that we are assured he did do it. For we are told, ver. 9, 10. "When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants that drew the water knew,) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man

at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when they have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now,”

To explain this passage you must observe, it was the custom of the Jews, nay, even of the heathens themselves, (to the shame of our christian-baptized heathens be it spoken,) at their public feasts to choose a governor, who was to oversee and regulate the behaviour of the guests, and to take care that all things were carried on with decency and order. To this person then did the servants bear the wine; and we may judge how rich it was by his commendation of it, “Every man at the beginning,” &c. Judge ye then, whether Jesus did not show forth his glory, and whether you have not good reason, like the disciples here mentioned, to believe on him?

Thus, my brethren, I have endeavoured to make some observations on the miracle itself. But, alas! this is only the outward court thereof, the veil is yet before our eyes. Turn that aside, and we shall see such mysteries under it, as will make our hearts to dance for joy, and fill our mouths with praise for evermore!

But here I cannot help remarking what a sad inference one of our masters of Israel, in a printed sermon, has lately drawn from this commendation of the bridegroom. His words are these: “Our blessed Saviour came eating and drinking, was present at weddings, and other entertainments, (though I hear of his being only at one;) nay, at one of them (which I suppose is that of which I am now discoursing) worked a miracle to make wine, when it is plain there had been more drank than was absolutely necessary for the support of nature, and consequently something had been indulged to pleasure and cheerfulness.”*

I am sorry such words should come from the mouth and pen of a dignified clergyman of the church of England. Alas! how is she fallen! or at least in what danger must her tottering ark be, when such unhallowed hands are stretched out to support it! Well may I bear patiently to be styled a blasphemer, and a setter forth of strange doctrines, when my dear Lord Jesus is thus traduced, when those who pretend to preach in his name, urge this example, to patronize licentiousness and excess. It is true (as I observed at the beginning of this discourse) our blessed Saviour did come eating and drinking. He was present at a wedding and other entertainments. Nay, at one of them worked a miracle to make wine, (you see I have been making some observations on it,) but then it is not plain there had been more wine drank than was absolutely necessary for the support of nature; much less does it appear, that something had been indulged to pleasure and cheerfulness.

The governor does indeed say, “When men have well drunk,” but it nowhere appears that they were the men. Is it to be supposed, that the most holy and unspotted Lamb of God, who was manifested to destroy the works

* See Dr. Trap’s Sermon against being righteous over much.

of the devil, and who, when at a Pharisee's house, took notice of even the gestures of those with whom he sat at meat. Is it to be supposed that our dear Redeemer, whose constant practice it was, to tell people they must deny themselves, and take up their crosses daily, who bid his disciples to take heed lest at any time their hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, can it be supposed, that such a self denying Jesus should now turn six large water-pots of water into the richest wine, to encourage excess and drunkenness in persons, who, according to this writer, had indulged to pleasure and cheerfulness already? Had our Lord sat by, and seen them indulge, without telling them of it, would it not be a sin? But to insinuate he not only did thus, but also turned water into wine, to increase that indulgence; this is making Christ a minister of sin indeed! What is this but using him like the Pharisees of old, who called him a glutton and a winebibber? Alas! how may we expect our dear Lord's enemies will treat him, when he is thus wounded in the house of his seeming friends? Sirs, if you follow such doctrine as this, you will not be righteous, but I am persuaded you will be *wicked over-much*.

But God forbid you should think our Lord behaved so much unlike himself in this matter. No, he had nobler ends in view, when he wrought this miracle. One, the evangelist mentions in the words of the text, "to show forth his glory," or to give a proof of his eternal power and godhead.

Here seems to be an allusion to the appearance of God in the tabernacle, which this same evangelist takes notice of in his first chapter, where he says, "The Word (Jesus Christ) was made flesh, and dwelt (or, as it is rendered in the margin, tabernacled) amongst us." Our dear Lord, though very God of very God, and also most perfect and glorious in himself as man, was pleased to throw a veil of flesh over this his great glory, when he came to make his soul an offering for sin. And that the world might know and believe in him as the Saviour of all men, he performed many miracles, and this in particular; for thus speaks the evangelist, "This first," &c.

This then was the chief design of our Lord's turning the water into wine. But there are more, which our Lord may be supposed to have had in view, some of which I shall proceed to mention.

Secondly, He might do this to reward the host for calling him and his disciples to the marriage. Jesus Christ will not be behind-hand with those who receive him or his followers, for his name's sake. Those who thus honour him, he will honour. A cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple,

shall in no wise lose its reward. He will turn water into wine. Though those who abound in alms-deeds, out of a true faith in, and love for Jesus, may seem as it were to throw their bread upon the waters, yet they shall find it again after many days. For they who give to the poor out of this principle, lend unto the Lord, and look, whatsoever they lay out, it shall be repaid

them again. Even in this life, God often orders good measure, pressed down and running over, to be returned into his servants' bosoms. It is the same in spirituals. To him that hath, and improves what he hath, for the sake of Christ and his disciples, shall be given, and he shall have abundance. Brethren, I would not boast, but, to my Master's honour and free grace be it spoken, I can prove this to be true by happy experience. When I have considered that I am a child, and cannot speak, and have seen so many of you come out into the wilderness to be fed, I have often said within myself, What can I do with my little stock of grace and knowledge among so great a multitude? But, at my Lord's command, I have given you to eat of such spiritual food as I had, and, before I have done speaking, have had my soul richly fed with the bread which cometh down from heaven. Thus shall it be done to all such who are willing to spend and be spent for Christ or his disciples, for there is no respect of persons with God.

Thirdly, Our Lord's turning the water, which was poured out so plentifully, into wine, is a sign of the plentiful pouring out of his Spirit into the hearts of believers. The holy Spirit is in scripture compared unto wine, and therefore the prophet calls us to buy wine as well as milk, that is, the Spirit of love, which fills and gladdens the soul as it were with new wine. The apostle alludes to this, when he bids the Ephesians "not to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." And our Lord shows us thus much by choosing wine, to show forth the strength and refreshment of his blood, in the blessed sacrament. I know these terms are unintelligible to natural men, they can no more understand me, than if I spake to them in an unknown tongue, for they are only to be spiritually discerned. To you then that are spiritual do I speak, to you who are justified by faith, and feel the blessed Spirit of Jesus Christ working upon your hearts, you can judge of what I say. You have already (I am persuaded) been as it were filled with new wine by the inspiration of his holy Spirit. But, alas! you have not yet had half your portion. These are only earnest, and in comparison but shadows, of good things to come. Our Lord keeps his best wine for you till the last. And though you have drank deep of it already, yet he intends to give you more. He will not leave you, till he has filled you to the brim, till you are ready to cry out, Lord, stay thine hand, thy poor creatures can hold no more! Be not straitened in your own bowels, since Jesus Christ is not straitened in his. Open your hearts as wide as ever you will, the Spirit of the Lord shall fill them. Christ deals with true believers, as Elisha did with the poor woman, whose oil increased to pay her husband's debts. As long as she brought pitchers, the oil continued. It did not cease till she ceased bringing vessels to contain it. My brethren, our hearts are like those pitchers. Open them freely by faith, and the oil of God's free gift, the oil of gladness, the love of God through Christ, shall be continually pouring in, for believers are to be filled with all the fulness of God.

Fourthly, Our Lord's turning water into wine, and keeping the best until last, may show forth the glory of the latter days of his marriage feast with his church. Great things God has done already, whereat millions of saints have rejoiced, and do yet rejoice. Great things God is doing now, but yet, my brethren, we shall see greater things than these. It is meet, right, and our bounden duty, to give thanks unto God, even the Father; for many righteous men have desired to see the things which we see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things which we hear, and have not heard them. But still there are more excellent things behind. Glorious things are spoken of these times, "when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." There is a general expectation among the people of God, when the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile shall be broken down, and all Israel be saved. Happy those who live when God does this. They shall see Satan, like lightning, fall from heaven. They shall not weep, as the Jews did at the building of the second temple. No, they shall rejoice with exceeding great joy. For all the former glory of the Christian church shall be nothing in comparison of that glory which shall excel. Then shall they cry out with the governor of the feast, "Thou hast kept thy good wine until now!"

Fifthly, and *lastly*, this shows us the happiness of that blessed state, when we shall all sit together at the marriage supper of the Lamb and drink of the new wine in his eternal and glorious kingdom!

The rewards which Jesus Christ confers on his faithful servants, and the comforts of his love wherewith he comforts them, whilst pilgrims here on earth, are often so exceeding great, that were it not promised, it were almost presumption for them to hope for any reward hereafter. But, my brethren, all the manifestations of God that we can possibly be favoured with here, when compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us, are no more than a drop of water when compared with an unbounded ocean. Though Christ frequently fills his saints even to the brim, yet their corruptible bodies weigh down their souls, and cause them to cry, "Who shall deliver us from these bodies of death?" These earthly tabernacles can hold no more. But, blessed be God, these earthly tabernacles are to be dissolved. This corruptible is to put on incorruption. This mortal is to put on immortality, and when God shall cause all his glory to pass before us, then shall we cry out, Lord, thou hast kept thy good wine until now. We have drank deeply of thy Spirit. We have heard glorious things spoken of this thy city, O God! but we now find, that not the half, not the thousandth part, hath been told us. O the invisible realities of the world of faith! Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of the greatest saint to conceive how Christ will show forth his glory there! St. Paul, who was carried up into the third heavens, could give us little or no account of it. And well he might not—for he heard and saw such things as is not possible for a man

clothed with flesh and blood to utter. Whilst I am thinking, and only speaking of those things unto you, I am almost carried beyond myself. Methinks I now receive some little foretastes of that new wine which I hope to drink with you in the heavenly kingdom for ever and ever.

And wherefore do you think I have been saying these things? Many, perhaps, may be ready to say, to manifest thy own vainglory. But it is a small matter with me to be judged of man's judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord. He knows that I have spoken of his miracle, only for the same end for which he at first performed it, and which I at first proposed, that is, "to show forth his glory," that you also may be brought to believe on him.

Did I come to preach myself, and not Christ Jesus my Lord, I would come to you, not in this plainness of speech, but with the enticing words of man's wisdom. Did I desire to please natural men, I need not preach here in the wilderness. I hope my heart aims at nothing else, than what our Lord's great forerunner aimed at, and which ought to be the business of every gospel minister, that is, to point out to you the God-man Christ Jesus. "Behold then (by faith behold) the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." Look unto him, and be saved. You have heard how he manifested, and will yet manifest, his glory to true believers; and why then, O sinners, will you not believe in him? I say, O sinners, for now I have spoken to the saints, I have many things to say to you. And may God give you all a hearing ear, and an obedient heart!

The Lord Jesus who showed forth his glory above seventeen hundred years ago, has made a marriage feast, and offers to espouse all sinners to himself, and to make them flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone. He is willing to be united to you by one Spirit. In every age, at sundry times, and after divers manners, he hath sent forth his servants, and they have bidden many, but yet, my brethren, there is room. The Lord therefore now has given a commission in these last days to others of his servants, even to compel poor sinners by the cords of love to come in. For our Master's house must and shall be filled. He will not shed his precious blood in vain. Come then, come to the marriage. Let this be the day of your espousals with Jesus Christ. He is willing to receive you, though other lords have had dominion over you. Come then to the marriage. Behold the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. Let me hear you say, as Rebecca did, when they asked her, whether she would go and be a wife to Isaac. O let me hear you say, We will come. Indeed, you will not repent it. The Lord shall turn your water into wine. He shall fill your souls with marrow and fatness, and cause you to praise him with joyful lips.

Do not say you are miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and therefore ashamed to come, for it is to such that this invitation is now sent. The polite, the rich, the busy, self-righteous Pharisees of this generation have been bidden already, but they have rejected the counsel of God against

themselves. They are too deeply engaged in going, one to his country house, another to his merchandise. They are so deeply wedded to the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, that they, as it were with one consent, have made excuse. And though they have been often called in their own synagogues, yet all the return they make, is to thrust us out, and thereby in effect say, they will not come. But God forbid, my brethren, that you should learn of them. No, since our Lord condescends to call first, (because if left to yourselves you would never call after him) let me beseech you to answer him, as he answered for you, when called upon by infinite offended justice to die for your sins, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God!" What if you are miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, that is no excuse. Faith is the only wedding garment which Christ requires. He does not call you because you already are saints, but because he intends to make you saints. It pities him to see you naked. He wants to cover you with his righteousness. In short, he desires to show forth his glory, that is, his free love, through your faith in him. Not but that he will be glorified, whether you believe in him or not. For the infinitely free love of Jesus Christ will be ever the same, whether you believe it, and so receive it, or the contrary. But our Lord will not always send out his servants in vain to call you. The time will come when he will say, none of those which were bidden, and would not come, shall taste of my supper. Our Lord is a God of justice, as well as of love. If sinners will not take hold of his golden sceptre, verily he will bruise them with his iron rod. It is for your sakes, O sinners, and not his own, that he thus condescends to invite you. Suffer him then to show forth his glory, even the glory of the exceeding riches of his free grace, by believing on him, "for we are saved by grace through faith." It was grace, free grace, that moved the Father so to love the world, as to "give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!" It was grace that made the Son to come down and die. It was grace, free grace, that moved the Holy Ghost to undertake to sanctify the elect people of God. It was grace, free grace, that moved our Lord Jesus Christ to send forth his ministers to call poor sinners this day. Let me not then, my brethren, go without my errand. Why will you not believe in him? Will the devil do such great and good things for you as Christ will? No, indeed, he will not. Perhaps he may give you to drink at first of a little brutish pleasure, but what will he give you to drink at last? A cup of fury and of trembling, a never-dying worm, a self-condemning conscience, and the bitter pains of eternal death. But as for the servants of Jesus Christ, it is not so with them. No, he keeps his best wine till the last. And though he may cause you to drink of the brook in the way to heaven, and of the cup of affliction, yet he sweetens it with a sense of his goodness, and makes it pleasant drink, such as their souls do love. I appeal to the experience of any saint here present, (as I doubt not but there are many such in this field,) whether

Christ has not proved faithful, ever since you have been espoused to him? Has he not showed forth his glory, ever since you have believed on him?

And now, sinners, what have you to object? I see you are all silent and well you may. For if you will not lie drawn by the cords of infinite and everlasting love, what will draw you? I could urge many terrors of the Lord to persuade you, but if the love of Jesus Christ will not constrain you, your case is desperate. Remember then, this day I have invited all, even the worst of sinners, to be married to the Lord Jesus. If you perish, remember you do not perish for lack of invitation. You yourselves shall stand forth at the last day, and I here give you a summons to meet me at the judgment-seat of Christ, and to clear both my Master and me. Would weeping, would tears prevail on you, I could wish my head were waters, and my eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep out every argument, and melt you into love. Would any thing I could do or suffer, influence your hearts, I think I could bear to pluck out my eyes, or even to lay down my life, for your sakes. Or were I sure to prevail on you by importunity, I could continue my discourse till midnight. I would wrestle with you even till the morning watch, as Jacob did with the angel, and would not go away till I had overcome. But such power belongs unto the Lord, I can only invite. It is He only can work in you both to will and to do after his good pleasure. It is his property to take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh. It is his Spirit that must convince you of unbelief, and of the everlasting righteousness of his dear Son. It is He alone must give faith to apply his righteousness to your hearts. It is He alone can give you a wedding garment, and bring you to sit down and drink new wine in his kingdom. As to spirituals, we are quite dead, and have no more power to turn to God of ourselves, than Lazarus had to raise himself, after he had lain stinking in the grave four days. If thou canst go, O man, and breathe upon all the dry bones that lie in the graves, and bid them live; if thou canst take thy mantle and divide yonder river, as Elijah did the river Jordan; then will we believe thou hast a power to turn to God of thyself: but as thou must despair of the one, so thou must despair of the other, without Christ's quickening grace. In him is thy only help; fly to him then by faith. Say unto him, as the poor leper did, "Lord, if thou wilt," thou canst make me willing and he will stretch forth the right hand of his power to assist and relieve you. He will sweetly guide you by his wisdom on earth, and afterwards take you up to partake of his glory in heaven.

To his mercy, therefore, and almighty protection, do I earnestly, humbly, and most affectionately commit you. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord lift up the light of his blessed countenance upon you, and give you all peace and joy in believing, now and for evermore!