THE PULPIT.

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DEVIL'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON.

The following text of Scripture was selected as the subject of a discourse preached on last Sunday evening by the Rev. Lighthurn, in the Central Methodist Episcopal Church, Vine street, above Twelfth, of which he is the pastor:

"And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."—II. CHRONICLES, xxviii. 9.

The speaker, who entered upon the discussion of his theme with great earnestness, without the aid of notes, commenced with a clear and consecutive statement of the peculiar circumstances under which this solemn and tender address was delivered by the man who after God's own heart, spoke to the Son who was about to succeed to the throne of Israel. The incidental thoughts with which this introductory narrative was mingled, no less than the appropriate language in which they were clothed, were well calculated to awaken a lively interest in the discourse which was to follow.

Doubtless, said the speaker, when the opening words of this admonition—so kind, so full of tenderness—fell from the lips of the aged psalmist, many who heard him were moved to tears. In the presence of the people he had declared that the Lord had chosen Solomon to sit upon the throne of Israel, and then, turning to his son, he had addressed to him, personally, the warning language of the text.

In taking up the nature of this advice, the speaker proposed to consider first, the acquisition of the knowledge of God. There were, indeed, many kinds of knowledge that were not to be despised. Self-knowledge, for example, was important; so, too, a general knowledge of men and things was desirable. For the acquisition of these, men had circumnavigated the globe, and delved deep into its bowels; yet, important as such knowledge was, the knowledge of God was an *indispensable* knowledge. When, therefore, David had exhorted Solomon to *know* God, he had meant it in its highest sense. He did not mean merely a knowledge of God's wonderful works as manifested in creation. This, he thought, was clearly shown in the important qualification with which the exhortation was accompanied, viz: "Know thou the *God of thy father*." It evidently referring to the pardon of blood, and pastor of God, had been plied gently to bear upon him. There was, said the speaker, a knowledge of God which in its nature was very important, though this kind, said he, any Christian ought to be ashamed to possess; and it had been the possession of this kind of knowledge that Paul had reference to in addressing the Corinthians, when he said "for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." To know God in *Christ Jesus*, was to know him aright—all other knowledge of God was necessarily imperfect and unavailing.

But, in the next place, it was important for us to consider the *service* which Solomon was called upon to render that God whom he was exhorted to "know." "Serve him with a perfect heart." Never did a sweeter or more tender address fall from the lips of a father to his son than this address of David to Solomon. The speaker said, he could not but think of the words of Christ, "If a man sins in public, let him confess, and repent of it in public; and as there was nothing in Ecclesiastes to indicate Solomon's repentance, and as God was no respecter of persons, but dealt with the King on his throne no more leniently than with the humblest beggar, he saw not one shadow of hope for Solomon's salvation."

The next step taken by Mr. Lighthurn was to set forth more emphatically that Christians—real Christians—need to be very watchful up to their death, lest they also fall away, and be lost for ever, even as was Solomon. Paul had said, he continued, "I am afraid I shall be cast away myself."

[Evidently referring to Paul's words in the ninth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." As a matter of information to the general reader, it may be stated that all scholars who have made the original text of the Christian Scriptures their life long study, agree that the exact rendering of the above passage is this: "Lest that, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a *reprobate*, *proved*"—the italicized words having reference to the custom of ancient times of approving runners in the Grecian games, by the judges, who, if any of the runners came in first, gave to the successful runner a crown of victory, but if any came in last, they gave him a wreath of parsley, which was the badge of shame. The Greek word translated "castaway" in the above passage, is the same word which is translated "reprobate" in the 27th verse of the 1st chapter of Romans, and "reprobate" in the 5th verse of the 3d chapter of Titus.]

The speaker was now prepared to take up the solemn close of this admonition: "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off forever." Pausing for a moment significantly, the speaker continued, "Yes and Solomon did forsake God; and the presumption is that God did cast him off forever." The reasoning employed to demonstrate the point was as follows:

Solomon intermarried with idolatrous women. Step by step, from one grade of vice to another he had made his way onward, in utter disregard of the admonitions of his father or the commands of God. To use the speaker's own words, his strides down to hell became fearfully rapid. Yet, O God! he exclaimed, in announcing it, Solomon became an idolator. He worshipped no less than three different gods and built a temple for each of them, and personally sacrificed to them. This idolatry we knew he had long persisted in; and we had every reason to believe, was continued down to his death. His death was no less dismal than his closing career; for we had not the slightest intimation of his repentance. He knew that sophistry had attempted to supply what was wanting in this particular, by alleging that Solomon had repented, and afterwards wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes. But, said he, read that book. It was full of acknowledgments of vanity; but not one word was said in it about this sin of idolatry. How vastly different in this respect was it from the Fifty-first Psalm, in which David pours out his soul in devout acknowledgment and lamentation over the sin he had committed in the sight of God! For his own part, he was free to assert that there was nothing whatever in the Book of Ecclesiastes to prove that Solomon had ever repented of his sins.

The speaker said this attempt to screen Solomon reminded him of what he had once seen in the *Advocate*, on the evidence of the recovery of a certain Episcopal Bishop, (whose name we do not choose to give in this connection,) but which, instead of making the matter better, only proved, to his mind that the Bishop was too proud to repent of his guilt. God helping him, he said, he meant to preach the whole truth. If a man sins in public, let him confess, and repent of it in public; and as there was nothing in Ecclesiastes to indicate Solomon's repentance, and as God was no respecter of persons, but dealt with the King on his throne no more leniently than with the humblest beggar, he saw not one shadow of hope for Solomon's salvation.

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God's *searching the heart*, was the next point taken up. He told his hearers that the unclosed eye of Jehovah was always upon them. God's love was not to be bought by our simply serving him; it was the *heart* that He searched, and which alone gave value and acceptance to our service. There was, he thought, too much outward parade of service, and too little of the heart. To judge from appearances, said he, we might be led to suppose that in some of our churches, the people rest their acceptance upon their multiplicity of prayers, and endless variety of religious forms.

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