

"ONE LORD, ONE FAITH,
ONE BAPTISM."

SERMON

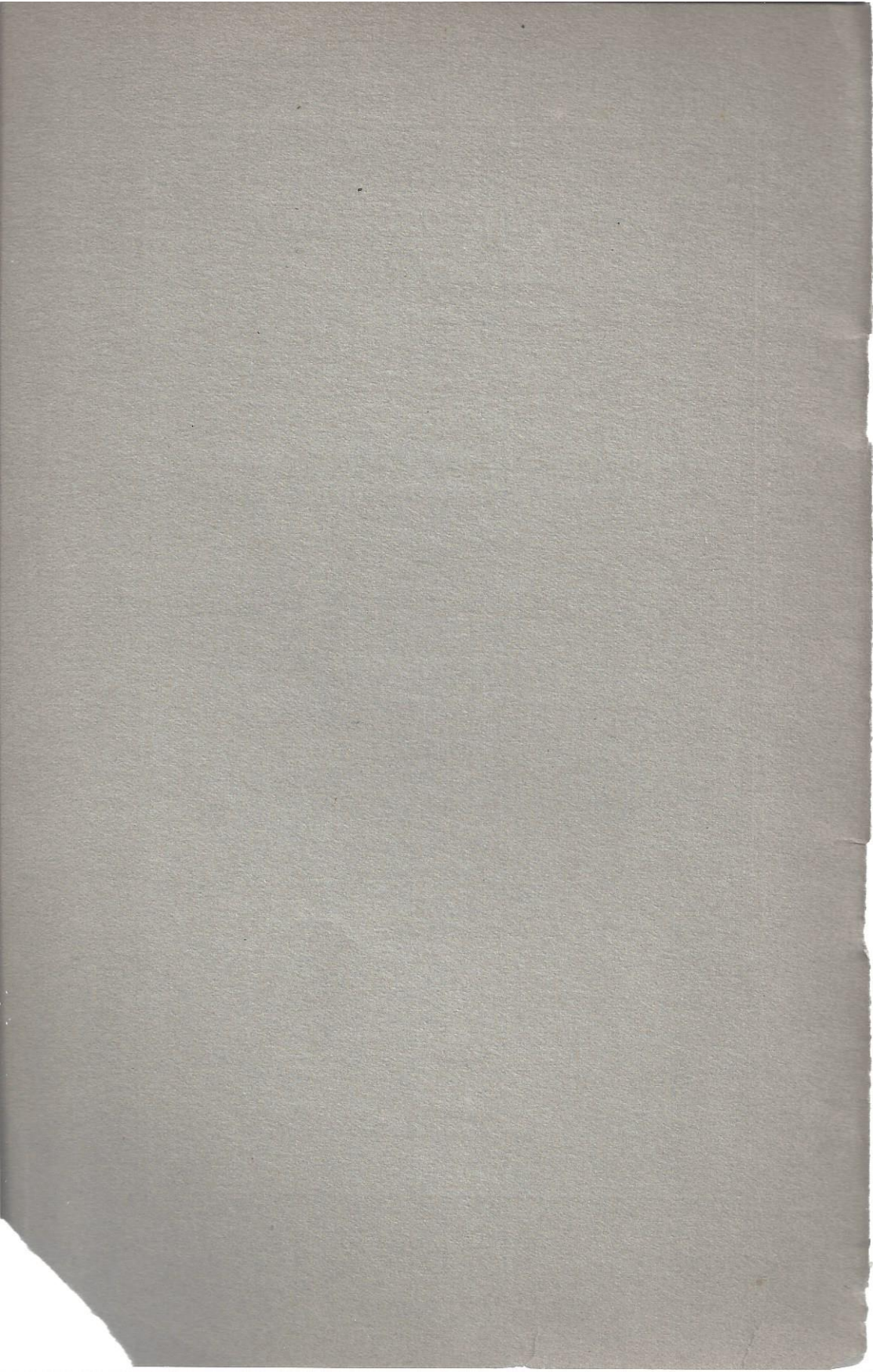
PREACHED BEFORE THE SYNOD OF SOUTH CAROLINA, AT
COLUMBIA, S. C., OCTOBER 21, 1902.

BY

JAMES WOODROW,
MODERATOR.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

Columbia, S. C.
THE R. L. BRYAN COMPANY.
1902.



“ONE LORD, ONE FAITH,
ONE BAPTISM.”

THE CHARACTERISTICS OR MARKS OF THE HOLY CATHOLIC
CHURCH, AND THE STUMBLING-BLOCKS IN THE
WAY OF THOSE WHO WOULD ENTER IT.

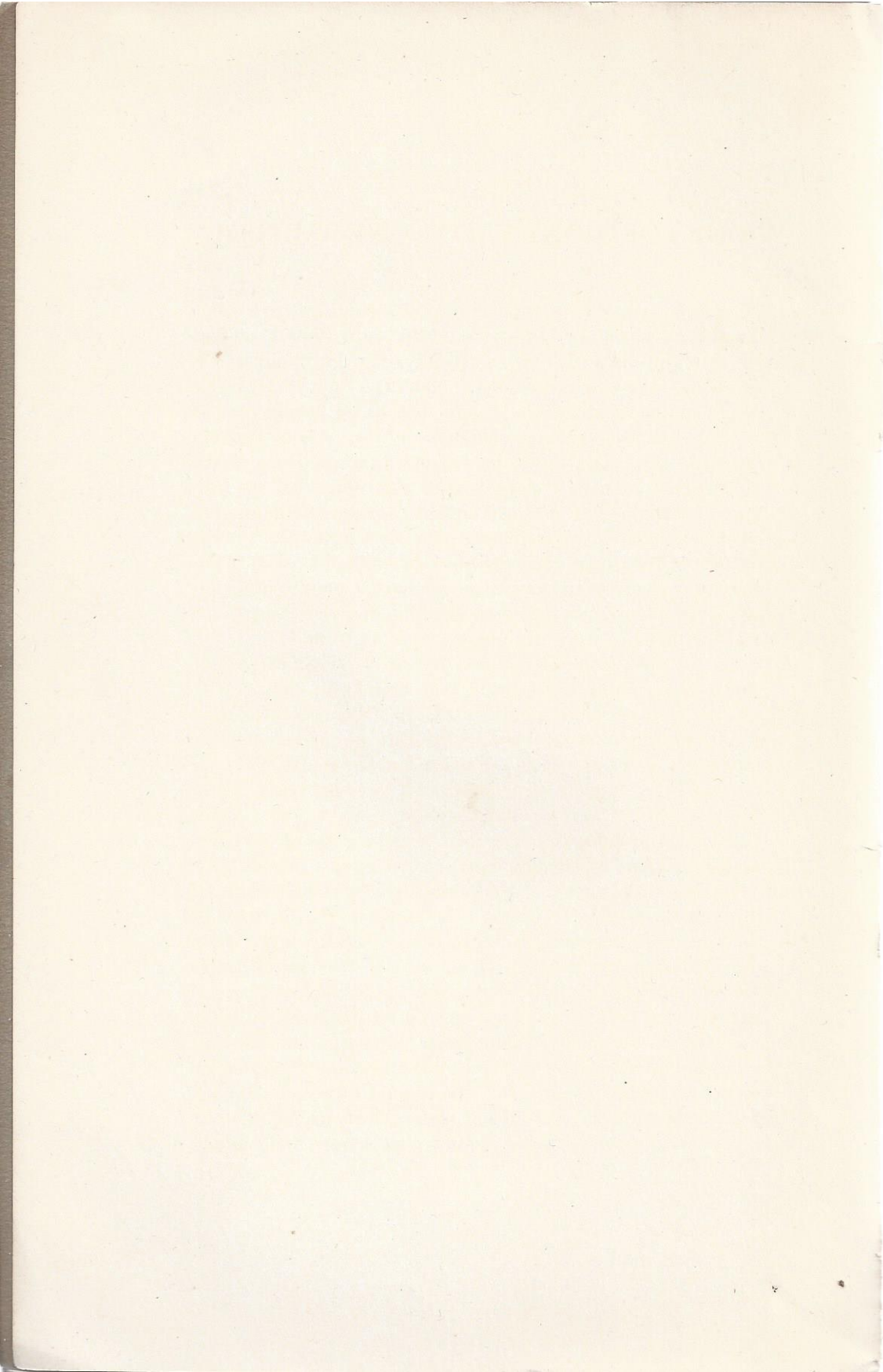
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“ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM.”

Another synodical year is now past. And we have come together in the name of the divine Head of the Church, and, as we trust, by his authority, to consult as to the things of his kingdom. We would not dare to claim the right to act in his name, unless called thereto by him; but, as we believe, he has appointed us to be his representatives by the voice of the subjects and citizens of his kingdom, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Though clothed with this office, let us profoundly recognise our personal unworthiness and unfitness, and our inability, if left to ourselves, to do anything to promote the welfare of the Church and the glory of our Lord. But in his strength we can do all things; and we have a right to claim for ourselves the promise which he gave his disciples in person—that the Spirit of truth will guide us into all truth.

Let us, then, continually plead that the Holy Spirit may be abundantly poured out upon us, that we may be endued with wisdom from on high, guided in all our deliberations to right results, having in all we think or say or do, as our sole aim, the promotion of the glory of God and the advancement of the interests of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The wisdom we need is within our reach; for we have God's positive promise that if we ask for it in faith, nothing wavering, it shall be given us, not sparingly, or grudgingly, but liberally.

During the past year it has pleased God to take to himself three of our beloved brethren of the ministry: the patriarch of the Synod, the venerable James B. Dunwody, after a service of nearly sixty years; another, D. E. Jordan, who was in active service for more than forty years, and whose efficient labors as pastor ended only a few weeks ago; a third, David A. Todd, who entered the ministry about forty years ago, but had been often laid aside by illness. Let us thank God for all he enabled them to do as his servants, and that he gave them to us so long.

Remembering the commission under which we act, that we preach the gospel to every creature, that we teach all nations

to observe all that Christ has commanded—and that those who accept these teachings, becoming true disciples, constitute the Church, it may not be unprofitable for us on an occasion like this to review fundamental elementary principles, and to consider the essential characteristics of these disciples, and of the body which they form. These are set forth in the chapter we have read, Ephesians 4, and are condensed in the few words: “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Wherever these marks are found, there is a true member of the one body—the Holy Catholic Church.

It is not intended to speak of the visible Church, or of its organisation, its government, the methods by which one becomes connected with it, nor of its modes of worship, its ceremonies, and the like; but, at least chiefly, of the Church invisible, the universal, which is independent of name, and place, and time—the body of Christ, the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife. Membership in the visible should imply membership in the invisible; but unhappily we have only too good reason to believe that this is not the case.

The first characteristic of the one body of which we are speaking is the recognition of the *one Lord*.

This one Lord is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father, belief in whom involves belief in the Triune God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. This God is not blind Fate—a first cause, impersonal, unconscious, followed irresistibly by series of effects, in which no change of any kind can ever be brought about; nor the God of the Pantheist, the totality of the universe; nor a fetish or idol of any kind; nor yet Allah, the God of the Mohammedan, or of any who deny the tri-personality of the one true God. The foundation on which the unity of the Church rests is a belief in one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all; the Son of God, Jesus the Christ; and in the Holy Ghost, of whom it is written that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. And these three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

Another characteristic of every member of this body is the presence of *one faith*, which may exist in various and varying degrees; but ever present it must be.

It is not mere belief in the existence, character, and work of the Lord. One may write a Life of Christ in which he states with complete accuracy all that can be known of him, and may fully believe it all, and yet have no more of true faith than the devils who believe and tremble. One under the power of this true faith, seeing the infinite love the Lord showed in leaving the glory which he had with his Father before the world was, and coming to earth to take on him our nature, so that he might obey and suffer in our stead, that he should accomplish his decease, should die nailed to the cross like an evil-doer; and hearing the offer of salvation from sin made possible by this sacrifice, responds with love to love, accepts the offer, and trusts the offerer with his whole heart. All true love leads to earnest desire to please the object of the love; to strive with the help of the promised indwelling Holy Spirit to please him who first loved us and gave himself for us. The Lord has declared that the way to please him is to do his commandments; to hate sin, to repent of it, to turn away from it, and to devote every moment of the whole life to loving obedience in all things, great and small. And this not from slavish fear of punishment, but from constant burning love to the Lord who has saved from sin. Salvation from sin indeed involves salvation from hell; but one actuated by true faith obeys because led thereto by love to him who received the divinely-given name, with its divinely-explained meaning—"JESUS—for he shall save his people *from* their sins."

Anything calling itself faith which does not thus work—work by love—is dead faith, is no faith at all; as James shows in what would almost seem to be an impatient and contemptuous argument; but of which the necessity is obvious, in view of the well-nigh-universal tendency to divorce religion from holiness, faith from obedience.

As to the third mark of the one body, *baptism*—instead of one, there seem to be many. All agree that water is to be applied to the subject; but here the agreement seems to end. To whom is baptism to be administered—to believers alone, or also to those in covenant relation with them, as in the case of circumcision? Who may administer it—one duly authorised to do so by the church, or in an emergency any believer? How

must the water be applied? How often, once or three times? Must water alone be used, or water mixed with other substances? Then as to its meaning—while all recognise it as signifying the remission of sins—does it *confer* such remission, and is it tied to the moment at which the baptismal act is performed? And last, is it necessary to salvation?

On all these and other questions there is the greatest variety of opinion. But do such questions affect the *vital* characteristics of the ONENESS?

We see that all who recognise baptism at all are one in believing that it is to be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; that all believers are entitled to it; that it is a formal recognition of admission to membership in the visible Church; that it is a sign and seal of ingrafting into Christ, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit. On these points and others involved in them, there is absolute unity. And these constitute all the essential doctrines concerning baptism.

Now, how are these doctrines affected by divergent or contradictory views with regard to the questions enumerated a little while ago? Every possible difference as to these is perfectly consistent with unity touching the essential doctrines as stated.

It is not intimated or affirmed that the subjects referred to in the first set of questions are unimportant; by no means; but they are not *vitally* important; relatively, compared with the points as to which there is entire agreement, they sink into insignificance. They cannot affect true unity.

These, then, are the great truths brought before our minds by the inspired apostle, when he speaks of "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism." These are the marks by which we distinguish the body of Christ, the holy catholic Church. Where these marks are found, there is the *one* Church, however divided by minor differences into separate and even hostile organisations by whatever names known; *minor* differences, for if there is unity in these respects, the differences are relatively insignificant.

But when we look abroad over the world, can we see any body characterised by such oneness as we have been describ-

ing? No; we cannot. We see indeed multitudes of persons who believe in and worship the one Lord, exercise the one faith, and have received the one baptism; but these are divided into numberless groups differing endlessly from each other, some even claiming that they and they alone are embraced within the one Church, denouncing all others as hopelessly and fatally separated from Christ the Head.

As to the Bible, while all accept it as a revelation from God, and therefore authoritative, some claim that the Church has power to add to this revelation; others deny that this power exists. As to relations between Church and State, some claim that the Church is under the control of the State; others, that the State is under the control of the Church; still others, that Church and State are wholly independent of each other. As to form of government, some maintain that it is purely democratic; others, that it is representative; others, that it is prelatial, or papal. As to God's relation to his creatures, some recognise God's absolute sovereignty much more fully and clearly than others. As to forms of worship, some hold that whatever is not prescribed in the word of God is forbidden; others, that the Church has the right to institute such additional forms and ceremonies as to it may seem good.

Then, as to the ordinances recognised by all: in the administration of the Lord's Supper, are the elements used actually the body and blood of the sacrifice offered on Calvary, or do they merely represent these; and is the partaking of these by the communicants to be of one kind or of both kinds? And in the administration of baptism, as previously asked, how is the water to be applied, by immersion, or sprinkling, or affusion? These and like questions have been calmly examined into by the best men and the greatest minds for centuries with the sincerest desire to reach the truth; have been debated, sometimes with quiet earnestness, often in the bitterest and most hateful spirit; and when the parties have reached different conclusions, the result has been the organisation of the numberless fragments of the visible Church which we see, and over and over the drenching of the earth in blood—in the name of the Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

It is self-evident that all these fragments cannot rightfully

claim to be infallibly right. Errors more or less serious necessarily exist in all except one; and it is almost certain that they exist in all. All claim to rest on the one infallible Word; but the interpreters are fallible men; and all men and all synods and councils composed of men may err, and doubtless many, perhaps all, in all ages have erred in their decrees, their creeds, their confessions of faith. The presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost are given indeed to those who rightly ask; but not to such an extent as to secure absolutely against the possibility of error, as was the case with the inspired writers of the Holy Scriptures.

Yet all these subdivisions of the visible Church have not departed equally from the truth; some have striven more earnestly and successfully than others to adhere to the pure word of God—careful to add nothing and to take away nothing from what is there set forth—either from the doctrines or from the forms whether of worship or government. We of course believe that our beloved Presbyterian Church, which constantly asks, *What saith the Scripture?*—and requires for answer a *“Thus saith the Lord,”* has in its rigidly scriptural doctrines and its simple apostolic forms of worship, most closely approached the divine model. If we do not so believe, the sooner we free it from our nominal connection with it, the better for it and for ourselves—for honesty and for truth. We are often scorned and derided on account of our narrow, unyielding doctrines, and our bare, unadorned, unattractive forms of worship; but this can have no influence on us; for it is not what we might prefer, what our tastes would dictate, that controls us; our sole aim is to discover exactly what God teaches and what he commands. We do not dare to try to make improvements on what God tells us to believe or to do, either in substance or in form.

But while we thus hold, do we therefore condemn all others, and declare that they rightly form no part of the visible Church, and arrogate to ourselves the sole and exclusive title to this name? Not at all. For while we say that, so far as we can see, they are imperfect or defective in one way or another, we also say and believe at the same time that they have an indefeasible right to claim to be true churches, inasmuch as the marks

characterising the invisible holy catholic Church—one Lord, one faith, one baptism—are found in them. Just how far erroneous teachings respecting other matters may go, without nullifying the truth as to these essential, vital doctrines, without which there is no true Christianity, it would perhaps be dangerous to attempt to guess. But it is worth while observing that life-supporting food does not lose its nutritive power even when mixed with large quantities of foreign matter, nor is it thereby changed into poison. And even amongst poisons, some are injurious without being deadly. May we not be in danger of erroneously concluding that some bodies, which really teach these vital truths, have added so much that is contrary to Scripture, that they have made void the truth of God by their traditions? May not, and does not, the Holy Spirit make the teaching of the Word, even when mingled with vast masses of false teaching on non-vital points, effectual in convincing and converting sinners and in building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation?

The irresistible conclusion from these considerations seems to be that we may and must recognise as genuine parts of Christ's Church all bodies which believe on the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, God and man, in two natures and one person forever. This belief involves all others that are vital. In all so united to Christ the Head, the work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit is begun, the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed; they are more and more quickened and strengthened, in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The term "Saint" is limited by many persons and even in some churches to a small number who have been pre-eminent in some way; but in the Scriptures it is applied to all believers,—all members of Christ's body are equally entitled to it. We cannot know the hearts of others, and may err; but judging by the rule, By their fruits shall ye know them, we should use language as accurately in speaking of Saint John Leighton Wilson, Saint John B. Adger, Saint William Martin, Saint John A. Broadus, Saint Stephen Elliott, Saint Sarah Howe, Saint Mar-

tin Luther, as of Saint Paul, Saint Peter, Saint Bernard, Saint Elizabeth, or Saint Agnes. This may be merely a trivial question about words; but may it not at times help you to walk more circumspectly, more uprightly, more as it becometh saints, remembering that it is God himself who honors you with this title?

What effect should the doctrine of the oneness of the holy catholic Church have?

The unity of the Church results from union of the members with Christ the Head, all animated by the same life; if the members are one with Christ, they are one with each other. This union is closer than that between parent and child, brother and brother; there is no relation on earth by which it can be adequately illustrated; but that which exists between husband and wife furnishes the nearest approach. Parental love, filial love, brotherly love, all result from the relationships existing; but love is the essence of marriage, and married love is the type that God himself employs in his word as the best illustration of that which binds the members of his Church into one.

The more fully this relationship is recognised, the greater will be the love: love to Christ our Head, and love to our fellow-members, and also such love to other men as Christ himself feels. As previously seen, true love to Christ cannot exist without producing strong desire to do his will in all things; not only keeping his commandments, but seeking to do for our fellow-members and our fellow-men universally all that love can prompt. While we are to do good to all men as we have opportunity, yet specially to the household of faith. Though this language does not apply exclusively to the various groups called churches, it certainly includes them. Does each of these churches containing true members of the one body, love the others and do them good as they have opportunity?

Very far from it. So far, indeed, that we can find no where on earth bodies contending against each other with more virulent animosity; fighting often not merely with words expressing the most savage malignity, but resorting to death-dealing weapons, seeking to exterminate all who differ as to the doctrines and rites and ceremonies of the true Church. We are horrified when we hear at this day and in our own land, that a

community, maddened by the commission of the most shocking of crimes, has burned at the stake the brutish criminal; but thousands and thousands of pure good men and women have been thus put to death on account of some difference of opinion. And for milder punishments of such differences, ingenuity has been taxed, as never by secular powers, to invent instruments of torture which it makes one sick at heart to see or even to think of, and causes one to wonder whether the inventors were men—or devils escaped from hell.

At this day these brutal atrocities do not characterise the sufferings inflicted by professing Christians on each other; but much of the same spirit still exists. If nothing more can be done, the most caustic, acrimonious, venomous execrations are poured out against the offender. To such a degree has this spirit and language belonged to discussions concerning the truth as it is in Jesus, that a new phrase has been invented to express the extreme bitterness of the disputants—hence the strange combination—*odium theologicum*. The sight of the gentleness and love of Christians towards each other ought to be such as to call forth exclamations of admiration; but how often, instead, is—See how these Christians love one another—a scornful, cutting sarcasm.

This state of things could never have existed, could never more exist, if Christians would recognise the fact that they are brethren, brethren of and in the Lord—which they would come to do more and more clearly should they dwell more constantly on the bonds by which they are made one, instead of on the differences concerning those matters of comparatively slight importance which tend to drive them apart. Should all Christians thus be led to love as brethren, and to act under the influence of that love, how would the face of the world at once undergo a blessed change!

Such change would not and should not bring about one result which might be supposed to follow of necessity: it would not under present conditions make it desirable that the lines which now separate the various parts of the visible Church be obliterated. So long as the differences on minor points exist, on which these lines depend, the separate groups should remain as they are. Painstaking examination of the oracles of the

truth should go on in order to ascertain their exact meaning; and earnest contention for the faith once delivered to the saints should continue, but conducted in a spirit of love. And when this has led two or more to reach the same conclusion, to be agreed, then let them become one in outward form as well as in fact. But except they be truly agreed, how shall they walk together? What has just been said does not commend or encourage schism, but tends rather to prevent it. Observation shows us that in churches which lay the greatest stress on external unity, schisms and heresies,—using the words in the Bible sense,—seem to prevail to a much greater extent than elsewhere.

There is another very strong reason why the doctrine and proofs of the oneness of the Church should be made prominent in our teachings and in our thoughts—and that is that a deadly stumbling-block may be removed from the pathway of inquirers after the truth. When seeking to lead unbelievers to accept Christianity—to believe on the Lord Jesus—doubtless many of you have been met with the question—sometimes scoffingly asked, sometimes in deep earnestness,—Which Christianity do you mean? There are so many churches each claiming that it alone rightly represents it, and that all others are wrong, that I cannot tell what to do. It seems most likely to me that all are wrong. So much seems clear, that it must require long and careful study to find out anything about it. I have not time to spend on the question when the result is so uncertain. Agree among yourselves; and when you, who are experts, have done so, come back to me, and I will see about it. This seems to be a reasonable request. It must seem so to many of us, for the name being changed, the story is told of us. How often have we heard it said, perhaps have said it ourselves, this time concerning a scientific question which we have been invited to consider, Well, we don't know anything about it ourselves; but when you experts agree among yourselves, come and tell us, and we will see about it. And this, even when our position upon it may directly or indirectly involve the death of souls looking to us for help. Now what shall be our reply? As honest men we must say, Yes, you are right; Christianity so judged is not one, but many, if you accept appearances. But

if we can go on and truly say that some of the differences which separate Christianity into many churches are important indeed, but, notwithstanding the internecine strife they have occasioned, are yet of such a character as not to disturb or affect the real and fundamental unity, as has been proved, then we have a right to claim that the objections have been fairly met, and that the truth of Christianity ought to be fully accepted. The evil here described, and the terrible consequences flowing from it, are not imaginary, but are fearfully common; perhaps most of all, amongst those who are the most intelligent in other respects.

It may be permitted to illustrate by an actual case. It was my good fortune some years ago, with a large number of other members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which was in session at Brooklyn, to enjoy a day's sail on the Hudson from New York City to West Point. By a tacit agreement religious subjects are not introduced during formal meetings of that Association; but on a holiday there is no such restriction. Among the Brooklyn members there was one who was conspicuously kind and attentive to his associates. One of these from a distant State, for this and other reasons, became specially interested in him, and took the liberty from time to time of speaking to him on the subject of personal religion. At last the Brooklyn friend candidly stated that for some years he had given no attention to the matter, for the reason that, having formerly done so fully and fairly, he had failed to find sufficient reason to continue his inquiries, in view of the contentions of the so-called Christian churches, each pronouncing false what others declared to be true—to an extent that some did not hesitate to maintain that the others were not churches at all, and that out of their own pale there could be no salvation. He therefore had dismissed the subject from his mind as not deserving further thought, since there seemed to be so little hope of ever reaching the truth.

To this it was replied that what he said was unhappily only too true; but that on fundamental and vital points there was absolute agreement, that the bitter strifes which he described were concerning matters relatively insignificant. He said he had often been strongly attracted by much he had seen of

Christianity; and if that statement could be proved, he would at once become a Christian himself.

It was then proposed to submit the question to an experimental test of the severest. This was assented to. The interlocutor was a Presbyterian of the straitest sect; and there was on board another member of the Association, a Roman Catholic priest, perhaps the most prominent in Brooklyn, a regent of the University of New York, chosen by the voters of the State—Father Malone by name. It was suggested that he be invited to hold a conversation with the Presbyterian, which invitation was courteously accepted; and after the object in view was explained to him and to the large group of members who had gathered around, Father Malone said he would cheerfully answer any questions that might be put. Whereupon substantially the following colloquy took place, the Presbyterian asking the questions, and the Roman Catholic priest giving the hearty answers:

“You believe that there is a God, a personal being, who is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his power, holiness, justice, love, and truth?” “I do.”

“You believe that there are three persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,—and that these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory?” “Yes.”

“You believe that the Son of God became man, and that he continues to be God and man, in two distinct natures and one person forever?” “Certainly.”

“You believe that God has revealed his will to us, and that this revelation is contained in the Bible, and that every part of the Bible is true?” “That is my belief.”

“You believe that the Son of God, the Divine Man, after a life of some years on earth, was put to death on the cross, that he thus died that he might make atonement for the sins of all who should believe on him?” “That is the only foundation of my hope of salvation.”

“You believe that all who sincerely believe on him, will repent of sin, trust him, love him, and do his will, constantly growing in holiness while life lasts?” “Assuredly.”

“You believe in what is commonly called the Apostles’ Creed?” “Yes.”

“You believe that all who so believe and act God will take to be with himself in glory forever?” “Thank God for giving me the right so to believe.”

After answering all these questions, Father Malone affirmed that they set forth all the essentials of Christianity, and closed by saying with emotion: “Yes—all these things I believe with all my heart. Blessed be God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, my only hope.”

The Brooklyn member admitted that the proof of the unity of belief on the part of the representatives of the Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic churches was complete; that these were the extremes, and that if there are no vital differences between them, there are none anywhere. To this general assent was given.

It is gratifying to be able to add that at a subsequent meeting of the Association, the Brooklyn member informed me that, his apparently insuperable difficulty having been removed by this conversation, he had become a sincere believer in Jesus Christ.

Now if the method illustrated in this example should be pursued, might we not reasonably hope that the harm done by this grievous stumbling-block would be greatly lessened, or even wholly removed? It is certainly true that the things about which we agree are of vastly greater importance than the things about which we differ. Then surely (may it not again be urged?) we should let our minds dwell more on this happy truth, and in our conversation and in our public ministrations teach it more fully and lay more stress upon it. If any churches deny what has been said, let us go forward teaching the truth, not turning aside to wrangle about it, but hoping and believing that with increasing light we shall all see eye to eye.

But besides the stumbling-block which we have been considering, there are others which directly or indirectly tend to repel from the Church seekers after the truth, or at least to bolster up those who are trying to justify their refusal to accept the offers of the gospel.

In all ages of the Church, not merely under the name Christian, but before the days of Christ on earth as well, there has been a strong tendency to assume that man is wiser than God, and to act accordingly. This blasphemy is not often put into

as plain words as it once was, when, after Jesus had declared to his disciples his will, that is, God's will, Simon Peter, who had just proclaimed him Christ, the Son of the living God, dared to rebuke him, saying, "That be far from thee, Lord." Yet, though not always so directly, the same implied assumption of superior wisdom has been shown times without number, and where it might be least expected. Once the Lord gave very explicit directions to Saul, whom he had set up to be king of Israel, as to what he was to do. Part of these directions were observed; but Saul thought some of them were rather needlessly harsh and wasteful, and therefore he interpreted them liberally, and while disobeying, regarded himself as substantially obeying, and really doing what was much better. Perhaps Agag did not deserve quite so severe punishment; and as to the sheep and oxen, and other things, why not spare them for the present, to sacrifice unto the Lord? This would be destroying them after all, and the magnificence of the sacrifices would make the services very attractive and popular, and greatly promote the piety of the people. So that on meeting Samuel and making report to him, he piously and boldly began by saying, "Blessed be thou of the Lord; I have performed the commandment of the Lord"—and proceeded to show how he had done so not only, but had greatly improved on the commandment by softening the harsh points, and providing for more acceptable worship on the part of the people. Then came the word of the Lord, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected thee from being king." This solemn word has reverberated through all the ages since then, and it might have been expected to prevent the awful sin condemned; but from that day to this, such is man's arrogant self-confidence and trust in his own superior wisdom, that the earthly rulers of the Church have been continually adding to and taking from God's commandments, wholly unconscious that in so doing they have been guilty of iniquity and idolatry.

Very often the Church has acted and is acting as if the Lord had never said, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I com-

mand you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." The Saviour himself says: "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men; for, laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men. Full well ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition." So through the Apostle Paul, we are warned against a "voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, subjection to ordinances after the commandments and doctrines of men; which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship and humility and neglecting of the flesh."

But notwithstanding all,—doctrines, rites, ceremonies, the observance of holy days, have, by different branches of the Church, been added to and variously modified with hardly any limit. How far this process can be carried without destroying the vitality of any branch, separating it from the one body, who shall say? It is from such additions and modifications that the greater number of differences between the various branches of the visible Church spring.

It may be observed that a very great part of the additions and changes in doctrine and practice which would fall under the description given, and which we would call corruptions, have originated in the best motives, just as in the case of Saul,—a desire to glorify God and to make his service more attractive and acceptable to men. But praiseworthy as is this motive and desire, it cannot change disobedience to God into holiness. Saul's stout argument in his own defence, that his liberal interpretation of God's command, and his doing what would contribute in a higher degree to the glory of God and the holiness of men, was utterly rejected. Nor did Peter's affectionate care for the welfare of his Lord meet with a better fate. No, errors are not made less harmful by intermixture with truth; indeed, they are made thereby all the more dangerous; it is the truth present that causes the intermingled error to be more readily accepted.

In the case of moral laws, what has been said of doctrines and rites and ceremonies fully applies. As has been said, how-

ever blasphemous it may sound, it is yet true that man has often regarded himself as wiser and holier than God, and has shown it by commanding what God has not commanded, and forbidding what God has not forbidden, but even, it may be, commands. The number of humanly manufactured sins is very great. There is hardly a branch of the Church which has not indulged in this manufacture. And here, as in the other similar cases, not a few persons exhaust their efforts to be holy in scrupulously keeping the man-made commandments, to the comparative disregard of the utterances of the Almighty Ruler and sole Lawgiver of the Universe.

Many errors originate in a strong desire to recast truth in popular moulds; to smooth away harshness of aspect; to accommodate to modern thought; to justify the cry of Peace, Peace, though there may be no peace; to abstain from appearing to violate good taste. And all this may be accomplished by applying the principle of so-called *liberal* interpretation to the teachings of the Scriptures. This liberality, so much vaunted, has not as its object the discovery of the exact truth; but rather the reshaping of God's teachings by clipping, and trimming, and bending, and polishing them, so as to make them fit into our pre-conceived opinions and wishes; it is mere indifference to the truth. Whatever our view as to strict construction and liberal interpretation in other spheres may be, clearly in seeking to learn exactly God's will from his word, nothing but the strictest construction should control. It is only thus that the causes can be made to disappear which separate the parts of the visible Church.

When this method shall be universally applied by Christian men desiring to learn, with the Holy Spirit's aid, exactly the truth of God, then soon will come forth, seen to be one even on earth, a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

But there are still other ways by which spots and wrinkles obscure, or even keep altogether from being seen, the beauties and glories of this one body. These consist not only in the doctrines and observances originated by man without authority from God, and the decrees commanding acceptance of these and obedience to them on penalties varying from rebuke to impris-

onment and death, but in the arguments put forth by church authority to support both the divine teachings themselves and the false interpretations of these teachings. Discourses, synodical decrees, and books, filled with false statements and false reasonings, have been scattered everywhere by the thousand, from apostolic times to this day, claiming to defend and uphold Bible truth.

How often do we hear, and how often have been heard for nearly two thousand years, good men, truthful men, denouncing as false and utterly inconsistent with belief in the Bible and Christianity, facts, and teachings, and principles, which are well known to be true by all intelligent persons. These good men have honestly thought all the time that they were defending the truth, while in fact they were making sure its rejection by vast numbers. That the Bible and the Church have survived such defences, is a very strong proof that they are from God, that "the Church, the ground and pillar of the truth, is indeed founded on a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Oftentimes most terrific assaults have been made from without by professed assailants; but these have done little or no harm. But the well-meant defences referred to, made by those within, have resulted in untold disaster. The cause of surprise is not that the truth has withstood the assaults of its foes, but that it has survived the defences of its friends. Yet even they cannot destroy the foundations or shake the walls of the citadel of the King. It still stands, and shall stand forever.

Happily belief in the truth which God makes known to us in his holy word does not depend on our study of historical evidences or abstruse academic arguments. If it were so, how could the world be saved? Such rush lights are not needed to show us that the sun shines in the heavens. The entrance of the word giveth light. Accompanied by the quickening Spirit, it carries full conviction that it is the word of God, and therefore infallibly true. There are, indeed, many arguments of many kinds whereby it abundantly proves itself to be so, yet our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts.

One more barrier and stumbling-block in the way of those who would enter the kingdom of God must be mentioned: it is to be found in the lives of those who claim to be already within; who profess to have taken as their own the one Lord, to have that faith which works by love, showing its existence by true obedience to the Lord's will. We have already learned that such profession, if not shown to be genuine by works, is empty and vain—a fatal mistake, when not a proof of hypocrisy. Still we must remember that even in the most loyal subjects and sincerest believers, sanctification is a work, not an act; is gradual, not instantaneous; and that perfect freedom from sin is not reached in this life. Hence we should be careful before we decide that this man is self-deceived, that one a hypocrite; for we do not know the heart; God does. But for such reflections it would be very hard for us to keep from denouncing as hypocrites many of our fellow-men who claim the one Lord as their King. And it requires no tedious search to find examples in the Bible that should give us pause. Not to speak of Old Testament saints, look at poor Simon Peter, often first-named of the disciples, and one of those most highly favored of the Lord: in the court of Pontius Pilate see his cowardice and his hypocrisy, his cursing and his lying; and again, long after his restoration, after years of blessed and successful work in the ministry, see the manifestation of the same cowardice in the acts for which he was so sharply rebuked by his fellow-apostle Paul. Then see the description of the church at Corinth given in Paul's epistle when he says of the conduct of some in celebrating the communion, "One is hungry, one is drunken." But let us turn away from this dismal picture, carrying with us the lesson of charity to keep us from unjust and untrue judgments with regard to those who now live as well. Perhaps there is nothing better fitted to impress on us the fact that those called saints by inspired writers were but partially sanctified than the exhortations addressed to them by the Holy Spirit through the apostles.

But these considerations do not diminish the terrible effect produced on the world by the sins of professors of the faith. We cannot expect unbelievers to make allowances when they are trying to find out what kind of tree Christianity is by look-

ing at the fruit it bears. Now, truth is in order to goodness; it is claimed that faith proves its existence by works, by keeping the commandments. These people, say unbelievers, profess to be Christians—are they any better than we are? Without going over all their commandments, let us select one or two as a test; for they tell us that he that shall offend in one point is guilty of all. Take the eighth, then: Thou shalt not steal. Do these professing Christians keep that any better than multitudes of our neighbors and friends who make no such profession? We often see them borrowing money; buying goods on credit; promising to make payment at definite times, and the like. Now, do they make the payments as promised any more faithfully than we unbelievers do? No, they do not, so far as we can see; very often they fail to keep the promises made—that is lying; and they keep the property they received on the strength of their promises—and that is stealing. In the whole matter of debt-paying, see how lying and stealing go hand in hand.

Let us look at an example which may have a painfully close application even in our Presbyterian Synod. During the last seventy years many promises of money on subscription lists and in notes have been made for your Theological Seminary; how many of these promises have been broken? And yet they were made by persons belonging to the best class of people on earth of which I know anything.

Of course these failures to pay can be characterised by the terms lying and stealing only where it has not become impossible through misfortune to make the promised payment. And in the case of misfortune—should after a while ability to pay return, if the return were after the expiration of the time prescribed in a statute of limitations, or if one had passed through bankruptcy however honestly, what proportion of Christian debtors would then make payment? Extremely rarely one; and then it is heralded over the world as almost a miracle of honesty. The debtor in such case pleads with his conscience that the debt has been discharged by law; and that he therefore rightfully keeps what belongs to his neighbor—forgetting that God, the Lord of the conscience, has no statute of limitations.

Any other commandment taken as a test would yield similar

results—as for example, the third—how fearfully common is the violation of it by church members. The profane use of the holy name itself by these is perhaps rare. But how very often do the unbelieving and profane hear the church member use expressions identical with their own, under the influence of the same feelings and for the same purposes, except that, instead of the holy name itself, abbreviations or disguises, or unmeaning sounds, are substituted—the veil being too slight to keep an open-eyed observer from perceiving that the moral character is the same in each case. We shall not undertake to decide which is the more heinous sin—the honest, outspoken, unhypocritical profaneness, or the same act with the attempt to conceal added.

Again: God's name includes his Word—anything whereby he makes himself known—hence jokes, witticisms, funny stories, based on biblical expressions, are clearly instances of taking the Lord's name in vain; and these are painfully frequent even among professing Christians. But it cannot be necessary to pursue this point farther.

Can we much blame the unbeliever if he tells us: You say faith leads its possessor to do right. I do not see how that can be; but I have tested the matter in the only way I know of, and which also is recommended in your Bible—and you see the result. Wherein am I not justified in thinking that your Christianity is all humbug or fanaticism; and in dismissing the whole subject?

Is there not much palliation for such reasoning and such conclusion in the lives of great numbers of professing Christians whom it is fair for the unbelievers to take as average samples of the product of faith? True, they ought not to do so; and the consequence is their own undoing; but will they alone be condemned? If they perish because driven from the path of safety by our unrighteous example, they not the less will be taken away in their iniquity; but we have God's word for it, that their blood will be required at our hands.

Here there is, then, the combination of every possible worthy motive that can impel to the most earnest striving after perfect holiness: first, that we may escape the denunciations which God has uttered against the unfaithful servant and watchman, by

avoiding everything that could be a stumbling-block to those who would enter the way that leads to life; then, our love for our fellow-men leading us to desire to win them to Christ, who honors us in allowing us to become co-workers with him; and last and chiefest of all, our love to Christ, which accompanies all true faith in him.

We have now seen something of the unity of the Church—the body of Christ, which is holy, and catholic; each member united with Christ the Head, believing in him, and therefore born of God, and united by bonds which can never be broken.

This body—the Church of Christ—has thus far been spoken of chiefly as it exists on earth. But that which begins now ends never.

Let us consider for a few moments the state of the saints who have passed from the ranks of the Church militant to the Church triumphant—to the communion in glory which the members of the invisible Church enjoy with Christ. Here questions of many kinds crowd upon us, clamoring for answers, to many of which no answers can be given: God has not revealed them to us; and reason and experience can give no help. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Still it has pleased our gracious Lord to make known to us much. Here we have been struggling to become perfectly free from sin, conformed to the image of Christ;—in response to this longing, we are told that, while it doth not yet appear what we shall be, there we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Is not this happiness enough: that we shall see his face, shall be evermore in the presence of the Lord, and shall be like him—at last perfect in holiness? The gates of death, which we once regarded with terror, have become gates of glory, and have admitted us, freed from the burden of sin, to gaze, filled with love and gratitude, into the face of the King on his throne, the Lamb who was slain, and who by his blood redeemed us to God. God himself shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; there shall be no more death; no hunger or thirst; neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for all these things are passed away.

Everything that affords us most happiness here will be ours there, or will be replaced by something infinitely better. As our highest honor and happiness here is to serve God and to be co-workers with him, this will not be taken from us, however it may be changed. As continuous delight has been within our reach here in the pursuit of the true, the beautiful, and the good, we shall not be shut off from this avenue of delight, but our powers of knowing, and loving, and serving, will reach higher and higher stages of development through eternity. The home of the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, will be no Nirvana, it will not be a prison where we shall be condemned to everlasting idleness.

We often hear the expression, "Too good to be true"; but here are blessings and honors promised infinitely above all we could dare to hope for: we shall inherit all things; God will be our God, and we his sons; we shall be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb; and—inconceivable thought—to him that overcometh will he grant to sit with him in his throne, even as he also overcame and is set down with his Father in his throne.

Then, in the immediate presence of God and the Lamb, shall we see and spend a blessed eternity with the great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues; with the apostles, and martyrs; renewing, too, our companionship with those we knew and loved on earth.

And we shall unite with them in crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

So shall we ever be with the Lord.

And when I'm to die,
 Receive me, I'll cry,
 For Jesus has loved me, I cannot tell why;
 But this I can find:
 We two are so joined,
 He'll not be in glory and leave me behind.

