

## Shorthand Sermon on 1 John 3:14<sup>1</sup>

This is the first of six sermons by Charles Wesley, written shortly after his evangelical awakening, that survive only in copies he composed in the shorthand that he had learned from John Byrom. CW appears to have preached directly from the shorthand manuscript. These sermons were inaccessible, even to most scholars, until an expansion of the shorthand was published by Thomas R. Albin and Oliver A. Beckerlegge in 1987.<sup>2</sup>

John Byrom's shorthand is constructed of consonant sounds, with vowel markers; though the latter are often omitted when assumed to be obvious. It also frequently uses single letters for entire words, abbreviations for phrases, and the like. As such, expansion of shorthand texts necessarily involves varying degrees of interpretation and hypothetical renderings.<sup>3</sup> Since the entire sermon that follows is in shorthand, we do *not* enclose each line or paragraph in double square brackets "[[]]," as we do for brief shorthand additions to longhand texts. But when more than one expansion might make sense, the letters indicated by the shorthand are given, enclosing the remainder of our suggested expansion in single brackets "[ ]." When the expansion is more tentative, a question mark is included within the brackets "[?]."

While there is no title given in the original shorthand manuscript, CW referred to this sermon in his MS Journal as on "the Threefold State." His intention was to devote the first half of the sermon to describing the three states, and then in a second section make application to persons in each of the three states. The sermon obviously grew longer than he intended. At the bottom of p. 17 (when he had completed his application to just two of the three states), CW noted: "[Begun July 8, finished July 15, 1738]]. He preached the sermon the next morning. In the following week he added the third application, and from that point he preached this as a two-part sermon, dividing it at the transition to the applications.

On the inside cover of the booklet containing this shorthand manuscript CW recorded a longhand list of dates and places where he preached this sermon:

July 16, 1738 St. George Martyr, Queen's Lane  
[July 16, 1738] Black-friars  
July 23 . . . . . All-Hallows, Thames Street – twice [both parts in two services]  
Aug. 13 . . . . . Islington at [St. Mary's] – twice [both parts in two services]  
Aug. 26<sup>4</sup> . . . . . St. John Zackary, near Bloomsbury

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<sup>1</sup>This document was produced by the Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition under editorial direction of Randy L. Maddox, with the assistance of Aileen F. Maddox. Last updated: Sept. 27, 2024.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas R. Albin and Oliver A. Beckerlegge (eds.). *Charles Wesley's Earliest Evangelical Sermons: Six Shorthand Manuscript Sermons Now for the First Time Transcribed from the Original* (Ilford: Wesley Historical Society, 1987), 8–24.

<sup>3</sup>See Timothy Underhill, "John Byrom's Shorthand: An Introduction," *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* 104 (2008): 61–91.

<sup>4</sup>This should be August 27; see CW, MS Journal.

Aug. 29 . . . . . Castle, Oxford  
Sept. 3 . . . . . St. Botolph's, little Britain – 1st pt.  
Sept. 10 . . . . . St. Botolph's, little Britain – 2nd pt.  
Oct. 1 . . . . . St. Margaret's, Westminster – 1st pt.  
Oct. 29 . . . . . St. George's, Bloomsbury – 1st pt.  
[Oct. 29] . . . . . Ironmonger's Almshouse – 1st pt.  
Nov. 5 . . . . . Shadwell [St. Paul's] – 1st pt.  
[Nov. 5] . . . . . St. Alban's, Wood Street – 1st pt.  
Nov. 19 . . . . . [St. Botolph's] Bishopsgate – 1st pt.  
[Nov. 19] . . . . . St. George's, Bloomsbury – 2nd pt.  
Nov. 26 . . . . . Cogg[e]s [St. Mary's] – 1st pt.

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Jan. 7, 1739 . . . . . [St.] Alphage [London Wall] – 1 pt.  
[Jan. 28] . . . . . [Bexley, St. Mary's church]<sup>5</sup>  
Mar. 18 . . . . . St. Catherine's – 1st pt.  
Apr. 1 . . . . . St. Catherine's – 2nd pt.

The manuscript containing this sermon survives at the Methodist Archive and Research Centre (MA 1977/597/5). The transcription which follows is our expansion of the shorthand, which differs on a few occasions from that of Albin & Beckerlegge. We focus on CW's final text—ignoring any text ~~struck out~~ and replaced by CW (shown in Albin & Beckerlegge). We also indicate the page transitions (in **red** font) of the original manuscript.

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<sup>5</sup>This instance was noted in CW, MS Journal, but omitted from this register.

[p. 1]

## I[n] N[omine] D[ei]<sup>1</sup>

1 John 3, the former part of [the] 14th verse:

“We know that we have passed from death unto life.”

In these words of the beloved disciple we have discussed the two opposite states of nature and grace—into the former of which our first birth introduced us; into the latter, our second birth in Christ Jesus. But between these two is, as it were, a middle state, which we are equally concerned to understand aright, lest we deceive ourselves by an ill-grounded hope, and forever stop short of the glory of God.

I trust there is no one here, who will not seriously attend, while in the name of our great Prophet and Teacher, now present among and with us, I endeavour:

- I. To explain these three states; and
- II. To apply myself particularly to the persons under each.

[I.1.] I begin with explaining these three states, and this I shall first do in general and chiefly in the words of an excellent divine of our own church:

Who reduces all the men in the world, and every particular man in the several periods of his life, to one of these three orders. Either he is one of those who do not apprehend sin as an evil, who either<sup>2</sup> have not attained to any sense of its malignity, or through debauchery and habitual viciousness have lost it, and so will and choose sin purely and entirely with unity of consent, and without any mixture of reluctancy (which is the most exalted pitch of wickedness that a creature is capable of). Or else he is one of those who do indeed look upon sin as evil, and as such refuse and are averse to it, but not looking upon it always as the greatest, nay as the only evil, do often refuse it only imperfectly, so that in effect they do choose it by yielding to and choosing it sometimes. Or else lastly he is one of those who, looking upon sin not only under the notion of evil but as the greatest, nay as the only evil, refuse it not only in some certain respects, but truly and absolutely so as not by any means to be persuaded to commit it.

These three degrees take in all mankind. And accordingly the Scripture makes mention of a threefold law: the first is the law of sin, which is in the members (Rom. 7:23); the second is the law of the mind or conscience (Rom. 7:23); the third is the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2). [p. 2]

These three laws answer exactly to the three moral states of human nature. Under the first law, the law of sin, are those who will and embrace sin purely and entirely. Under the second law, the law of the mind, are those who refuse and stand averse to sin

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<sup>1</sup>“In the Name of God.”

<sup>2</sup>CW copied the phrase “either through want of understanding and reflexion” from Norris, then struck it out.

in some certain respects as evil, but yet do in effect will and choose it, by choosing it sometimes. Under the third law, the law of the Spirit of life, are those who absolutely and thoroughly refuse to commit sin.

The first of these states is a state of mere sin and death, and those of this order are they who are said to be dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). The second is a state of imperfect life. The third is a state of health and vigour. The first is a state of rest and acquiescence in sin. The second is a state of contention. The third is a state of victory. In the first state, the mind is laid fast in a deep sleep. In the second she is between sleeping and waking. In the third she is broad awake and well come to herself. He that is in the first state is born only of the flesh, and has no higher principle in him; he is that natural man who perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14). He that is in the second has, as it were, some quickening motions, some ineffectual stirrings and endeavours towards the divine life. But he that is in the third is born of the Spirit and of God, and doth not commit sin because his seed remaineth in him.<sup>3</sup>

The first of these states makes no pretensions to salvation. And the second, though it seem to have something of life and righteousness in it, is yet such as is consistent with the final and absolute prevalency and dominion of sin, and consequently such as cannot qualify a man for pardon, or put him into a state of grace and salvation. Whereas in the last, the principle of divine life is so strong as not only to resist but to overcome sin, and he that is thus spiritually alive is alive indeed; alive to himself and alive to God. And if he abide in this life, shall live forever.<sup>4</sup> [p. 3]

[2.] From this general discussion, any person may easily perceive his true state; for to one of these three everyone of us, and of all mankind, must belong.

Three sorts of men there are in the world and no more: those who, having found God, resign themselves up entirely to his service; those who having not yet found him, do indefatigably search after him; and lastly those who have neither found him, nor are inclined to seek him. The first are happy and wise; the third are unhappy and fools; the second must be owned to be wise, as they own themselves to be unhappy (Pascal's *Thoughts*).<sup>5</sup>

[3.i.] Having spoken of these states in general, I shall endeavour to discuss them more particularly. And first as to those who are dead in trespasses and sins, whom the Lord of life points out under the same character, "Let the dead bury their dead."<sup>6</sup> In the midst of life these are in death,<sup>7</sup> even that spiritual death which Adam tasted together with the forbidden fruit. God,

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<sup>3</sup>See 1 John 3:9.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. John Norris, *Christian Blessedness: Or, Discourses on the Beatitudes* (London: Samuel Manship, 1690), 96–100. CW smooths Norris's language at several points.

<sup>5</sup>Blaise Pascal, *Thoughts on Religion and Other Subjects*, translated by Basil Kennett. (London: Printed by W.B. for A. & J. Churchill, et al., 1704), 289.

<sup>6</sup>Luke 9:60.

<sup>7</sup>See BCP, Burial.

who cannot lie, had plainly told him, “In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”<sup>8</sup> The sentence was accordingly exacted. The union of his soul with God (in which his spiritual life consisted, like as the natural life stands in the conjunction of the soul with the body), this union I say, was dissolved. His soul was separated from God, and in the day that he ate, he spiritually died.

Thus Adam died and all in him. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men.<sup>9</sup> Adam begat a son in his own likeness,<sup>10</sup> after his image; not that of his Creator in which [he] himself was made, but from which he fell through sin, and we in him. It is true, at the moment of our baptism, our second birth, that image was restored to us, a principle of divine life infused, and the child of wrath became the child of God. But alas the soul of most of us soon lost that second life. Again was that image wholly impaired and defaced, and the image of the world so strongly graven on it that God’s is no more discernible there. The seed of immortality is trodden down and the fowls of the air have devoured it.<sup>11</sup> Our spark is [p. 4] put out, our principle lost, our life extinguished. Pride and self-will have recovered their ground. The strong man armed has made his re-entrance, and again keeps possession of our soul.<sup>12</sup> Sin has revived and we have died.<sup>13</sup> Walking after the flesh, we are made subject to the law of sin and death.<sup>14</sup> Living after the flesh, we are again dead. For to be carnally minded is death, as to be spiritually minded is life and peace.<sup>15</sup>

Here then you see the cause why many who had put on Christ in baptism are stripped of him, their imputed righteousness, and clothed again in their own shame and sin and misery. They now appear the genuine children of their father the devil.<sup>16</sup> They bear his image and do his works. They fulfil the lusts of the flesh,<sup>17</sup> “living without hope and without God in the world.”<sup>18</sup> “It is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”<sup>19</sup>

But are these who live in gross and open sins, sins against the second table [of the law], are these I say the only baptised heathens? So the prince of this world would persuade his subjects. While they do no harm (that is, are guilty of no notorious vice), he tells them they are safe enough. A little outward religion, added occasionally to a worldly life is abundantly sufficient to denominate them good Christians. But if over and above all this, they are tolerably constant in the means of grace (which it is surely all our bounden duty to be) and sometimes

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<sup>8</sup>Gen. 2:17.

<sup>9</sup>See Rom. 5:12.

<sup>10</sup>See Gen. 5:3.

<sup>11</sup>See Luke 8:5.

<sup>12</sup>See Luke 11:21–22.

<sup>13</sup>See Rom. 7:9.

<sup>14</sup>See Rom. 8:1–5.

<sup>15</sup>See Rom. 8:6.

<sup>16</sup>See John 8:44.

<sup>17</sup>See Gal. 5:16.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Eph. 2:12.

<sup>19</sup>2 Pet. 2:22.

reach out their hands to the poor, this sets them even above our good safe<sup>20</sup> people, and makes them great saints!

But alas, what shall it profit them to have a form of godliness while they deny the power of it?<sup>21</sup> They still live in all worldly tempers, making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof,<sup>22</sup> the desires, the mere unregenerate nature. Self-will is the principle of all their actions. They think themselves at full liberty to please themselves, though Christ pleased not himself. Nay, they scruple not to avow it. With them it is a sufficient reason for doing anything that they have a mind to it. Tell them from our Lord that “except a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be Christ’s disciple,”<sup>23</sup> and you bring strange things to their ears.<sup>24</sup> Jesus said unto his disciples, “If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”<sup>25</sup> Why this they have often read, but never thought it concerned them. This he meant only of his apostles. Nay, but he turned to the multitude and said unto them, “Whosoever doth not [p. 5] bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”<sup>26</sup>

These words demonstrate the utter impossibility of any man’s becoming a Christian till he is thoroughly convinced that he is not his own; he is not the proprietor of himself or anything he enjoys; has no right to dispose of his goods, body, soul, or any of the actions or possessions of him. And till, agreeable to this conviction, he does endeavour to live not to himself; not to pursue his own desires; not to please himself, or to suffer his own will to be any principle of action to him.

Till he has thus renounced himself he has no share in Christ, but is as truly dead to God as if he lived in all manner of sins and wickedness.<sup>27</sup> For “he that liveth in pleasure is dead while he liveth.”<sup>28</sup> He has no more appreciation of spiritual things than a dead body has of natural, no more will or inclination to the Creator than a dead body has to the creature, no more taste or relish for his only true happiness than a dead body has for m[erriment] and d[ance].<sup>29</sup> “Having his understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart, he receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.”<sup>30</sup> So speaks the great apostle concerning the natural man. And as if this were not sufficient to express his miserable condition, he adds, “neither indeed can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”<sup>31</sup>

As to the will of man in his natural state, the same apostle assures us that it is not subject

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<sup>20</sup>The shorthand for “safe” could alternatively be rendered “sort of.”

<sup>21</sup>See 2 Tim. 3:5.

<sup>22</sup>See Rom. 13:14.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Luke 14:23.

<sup>24</sup>See Acts 17:20.

<sup>25</sup>Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34.

<sup>26</sup>Luke 14:27.

<sup>27</sup>See Rom. 1:29.

<sup>28</sup>Cf. 1 Thess. 5:6.

<sup>29</sup>The shorthand is simply “m” and “d” with a mark for a conjunction.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Eph. 4:18 and 1 Cor. 2:14.

<sup>31</sup>1 Cor. 2:14.

to the law of God; and adds, neither indeed can it be.<sup>32</sup> So dead is he to God, so without all faculties for apprehending him! He has such a mind as neither understands, nor can understand, the things of God. He has such a will as neither is, nor can be, subject to the law of God.

In his affections he is most vile, alienated from the life of God.<sup>33</sup> Here he is dead indeed! Twice dead! So far is he from having set his affections on things above that his very soul [p. 6] cleaveth to the dust.<sup>34</sup> So far is he from having his senses exercised to discern both good and evil<sup>35</sup> that he counts all spiritual sensation madness. Bid him taste and see that the Lord is gracious,<sup>36</sup> and you only place a banquet before the dead. Tell him religion is situated in the heart and must therefore be felt wheresoever it is, and it will all appear delusion to him. St. Paul in his epistle to the Philippians 1:9, prays for all those “that are partakers of his grace, that their love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment (αἰσθήσει),” in all sense or feeling, as it is in the original and in our margin.<sup>37</sup> But of this the natural man has no capability of apprehension.<sup>38</sup> Nay, he presumes to give God himself the lie in blasphemously saying all feeling in religion is enthusiasm! Him we must own to be past feeling either God or sin, and leave him to that mercy which he denies.

[3.ii.] I proceed to those who, having renounced themselves, are striving to enter in at the strait gate;<sup>39</sup> in whom the divine principle received in baptism, but buried ever since and seemingly extinct, begins to move and extort the cry of the trembling jailer, “What must I do to be saved!”<sup>40</sup> They have now turned their faces towards heaven and stirred themselves up to take hold on the Lord.<sup>41</sup> The work of repentance is begun, and by it they endeavour to break off their sins. They use all the means of grace, do all good works, and labour after the renewal of their souls in all heavenly tempers, even the whole mind that was in Christ Jesus.<sup>42</sup> In a word, they are in earnest. They own and pursue the one thing needful,<sup>43</sup> even a participation of the divine nature,<sup>44</sup> the life of God in the soul of man.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>See Rom. 8:7.

<sup>33</sup>See Eph. 4:18.

<sup>34</sup>See Col. 3:2; Ps. 119:25.

<sup>35</sup>See Heb. 5:14.

<sup>36</sup>See Ps. 34:8.

<sup>37</sup>In the AV, as published at the time, there is a margin note for Phil. 1:9, “Or, *sense*.”

<sup>38</sup>See 1 Cor. 2:14.

<sup>39</sup>See Matt. 7:13.

<sup>40</sup>Acts 16:30.

<sup>41</sup>See Isa. 64:7.

<sup>42</sup>See Phil. 2:5.

<sup>43</sup>See Luke 10:42.

<sup>44</sup>See 2 Pet. 1:4.

<sup>45</sup>An allusion to Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man; or, the Nature and Excellency of the Christian Religion* (London: Smith and Jacob, 1677). This work was a favourite of the Oxford Methodists, and well-known to CW; see CW to James Hutton, Oct. 29, 1735.

In the beginning of this state they are generally full of delight. God does not let them serve him for nought, but draws them on with sensible comforts, and leads them in the ways of pleasantness.<sup>46</sup> They seem to taste the good word of God and the powers of the world to come in the sweetness of sensible devotion.<sup>47</sup> Nor is there any temper of a real inward Christian [p. 7] which they do not in some sort anticipate. They will often have peace with God, even the peace which passes all understanding;<sup>48</sup> and sometimes rejoice with joy unspeakable.<sup>49</sup> Nay, the love of Christ seems to constrain them,<sup>50</sup> and they long to do great things for him.

The world seems now to have quite lost its hold upon them. The devil, that roaring lion,<sup>51</sup> is chained; and the flesh but very rarely troubles them. God does not immediately lead them through the land of their enemies, “lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and return to Egypt!”<sup>52</sup> No! The sons of Anak are kept out of sight,<sup>53</sup> and peace is in all their borders. They seem altogether translated into the glorious liberty of the sons of God,<sup>54</sup> and abound in thanksgiving to him for what they call their conversion.

When the divine goodness hath thus retained them in his service, and by these arts allured them as it were to follow him, then the war in the members breaks out. Having prepared their soul to meet temptation, he now suffers it to assault them. Their own wickedness, which they seemed long since to have eschewed, makes head against them, even the sin which did so easily beset them.<sup>55</sup> For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, works in them now all manner of concupiscence. Without the law indeed it was dead. It had no force or malignity, comparatively speaking, while they were ignorant of their duty. They were alive (or seemed so to be) without the law once, but now the commandment comes, sin revives, and they die. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, they find to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceives them, and by it slays them. Thus sin, that it may to them appear sin, works death in them by that which is good, that sin by the commandment may become exceeding sinful.<sup>56</sup>

From the time that any man knows that the law is spiritual, he knows that he himself is carnal, sold under sin. And from this time he treads the same dreadful round of sin, repenting, and sinning again. His comfort is withdrawn, his peace is lost. He prays,<sup>57</sup> resolves, and strives, but all in vain. The more he labours, the less he prevails. The more he struggles, the faster is he

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<sup>46</sup>See Prov. 3:17–19.

<sup>47</sup>See Heb. 6:5.

<sup>48</sup>See Phil. 4:7.

<sup>49</sup>See 1 Pet. 1:8.

<sup>50</sup>See 2 Cor. 5:14.

<sup>51</sup>See 1 Pet. 5:8.

<sup>52</sup>Exod. 13:17.

<sup>53</sup>See Num. 13.

<sup>54</sup>See Rom. 8:21.

<sup>55</sup>See Heb. 12:1.

<sup>56</sup>See Rom. 7:8–13 for the preceding six sentences.

<sup>57</sup>Orig., “prayed”; CW added the rest of the sentence in the margin, forgetting to change the tense of this verb.



bound. So that after a thousand thousand repeated defeats, he finds at last that sin is irresistible. Then [p. 8] does he take up that sad complaint (Rom. 7) which he feels the apostle wrote of him,

That which I do I allow not. For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. (If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good). Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, in my nature, dwelleth no good thing. For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not. But the evil which I would not, that I do. (Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.) I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inner man. For I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!<sup>58</sup>

[3.iii.] Such is the language of one whom the Holy Spirit has reprov'd of sin, but not rescued from it. Being dead in sin, he once served it willingly. It is now with the utmost reluctance. Yet still he serves it, and so he must do till, being justified by faith, the law of the Spirit of life makes him free from the law of sin and death.<sup>59</sup> But where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.<sup>60</sup> And whomsoever the Son makes free, that man is free indeed.<sup>61</sup> Being risen with Christ, death hath no more dominion over him.<sup>62</sup> Being born of God, he doth not commit sin.<sup>63</sup> Believing in him, he hath everlasting life,<sup>64</sup> even that life which is hid with Christ in God.<sup>65</sup> A life which is not to be expressed but felt. Nor could we fully describe it though we speak with the tongue[s] of men and of angels.<sup>66</sup> He only comprehends and lives it who hath Christ's righteousness imputed to him.<sup>67</sup> For the just shall live by faith.<sup>68</sup> And from the moment anyone believes with the heart, he can truly say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by [p. 9] the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."<sup>69</sup> He knows the "mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you,

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<sup>58</sup>Rom. 7:15–24.

<sup>59</sup>See Rom. 8:2.

<sup>60</sup>See 2 Cor. 3:17.

<sup>61</sup>See John 8:36.

<sup>62</sup>See Rom. 6:9.

<sup>63</sup>See 1 John 3:9.

<sup>64</sup>See John 3:36.

<sup>65</sup>See Col. 3:3.

<sup>66</sup>See 1 Cor. 13:1.

<sup>67</sup>See Rom. 4:22.

<sup>68</sup>See Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, etc.

<sup>69</sup>Gal. 2:20–21.

the hope of glory.”<sup>70</sup> “Christ who is your life,”<sup>71</sup> as verily and indeed living in the believing soul as in the third heaven.

This I know, to you who feel it not, is the very foolishness of folly. It is presumption. It is blasphemy. It is what the world, the flesh, and the devil please to have it. “For no man can receive this saying unless it be given him from above.”<sup>72</sup> “But wisdom is justified of her children.”<sup>73</sup> “And he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. ‘To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna; and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.’”<sup>74</sup>

[II.1.] I am secondly to apply myself particularly to the persons under each of the three states. And first to you who are dead in sin, though now through accident or curiosity or custom you have strayed into the house of God. To you I speak, who knowingly allow yourselves in open or secret sins, and securely sleep in the shadow of death, in the very confines of hell. Whether your lives are stained with outward visible enormities, or less observable abominations, it makes no great difference. Whether lust or pride, idolatry or worldly mindedness, theft or covetousness, revenge or pleasure, fleshly or spiritual sins, keep you unconcerned in the great business of salvation; you are equally dead to God and liable to his just judgments, to feel “the worm that never dies, and the fire that never shall be quenched.”<sup>75</sup> “For as the wicked shall be turned into hell, so shall all the people that forget God.”<sup>76</sup> The careless and the debauched, the scandalous and the reputable sinner, the filthy and the ignorant thoughtless one, are held in equal abomination with God. Nay, he seems to loathe the lukewarm person even worse than him [p. 10] that is cold, and threatens with a peculiar abhorrence to spew him out of his mouth.<sup>77</sup>

Indeed, while ye live to please yourselves, it matters not much in what particular way. Be it in the grossest issues of self-love or the most refined, in all uncleanness or in all diversions, in vice or pleasure, the playhouse or the brothel. “Hear ye this and tremble, ye that are at ease! Be troubled ye careless ones, for to you am I sent to cry aloud and spare not, to lift up my voice like a trumpet, and show you your transgressions and your sins.”<sup>78</sup> Mean you to continue in this spirit of slumber till the everlasting flames awake you? Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?<sup>79</sup> “God is not a man that he should lie.”<sup>80</sup> “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”<sup>81</sup> “Hath he said and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken and shall he not make it

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<sup>70</sup>Col. 1:26–27.

<sup>71</sup>Col. 3:4.

<sup>72</sup>Cf. John 3:27.

<sup>73</sup>Matt. 11:19, etc.

<sup>74</sup>Rev. 2:17.

<sup>75</sup>Cf. Mark 9:48.

<sup>76</sup>Cf. Ps. 9:17.

<sup>77</sup>See Rev. 3:16.

<sup>78</sup>Cf. Isa. 32:11, 58:1.

<sup>79</sup>See Matt. 23:33.

<sup>80</sup>Num. 23:19.

<sup>81</sup>Ezek. 18:20.

good?”<sup>82</sup> It is he hath pronounced your doom. “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!”<sup>83</sup> “For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!”<sup>84</sup>

I would gladly hope there are some here present who, having never before entertained a serious thought about their salvation, are now pricked in their heart, and ready to ask, What shall we do? To these I answer in the words of my Master, “If he hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come, bring forth fruits meet for repentance.”<sup>85</sup> Repentance is the indispensable preparat[ion] for mercy, and “except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.”<sup>86</sup> “But when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.”<sup>87</sup> “All his transgressions [p. 11] that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him, [...] because he considereth and turneth away from all his transgressions, he shall surely live, he shall not die.”<sup>88</sup>

These and a thousand other gracious invitations God makes to bring back sinners to himself. He not only threatens but promises, and courts you with the most importunate entreaties. He draws you with the cords of a man,<sup>89</sup> and leaves no way untried to win you to your own happiness. “Wash you, make you clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do well. [...] Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”<sup>90</sup> “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, oh house of Israel!”<sup>91</sup>

Is any of you so senseless as not to feel some relentings for such amazing condescension and love? Surely that man’s heart is harder than the nether millstone. May God who made it soften it. And to this end hear ye him! Hear him in that vehement expression of his unutterable tenderness toward the most obstinate offenders, “How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me. My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger. I will not return to destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Num. 23:19.

<sup>83</sup>Matt. 25:41.

<sup>84</sup>Heb. 10:30–31.

<sup>85</sup>Cf. Matt. 3:7–8.

<sup>86</sup>Luke 13:3.

<sup>87</sup>Ezek. 18:27.

<sup>88</sup>Ezek. 18:22, 28.

<sup>89</sup>See Hosea 11:4.

<sup>90</sup>Isa. 1:16–18.

<sup>91</sup>Ezek. 33:11.

<sup>92</sup>Hosea 11:8–9.

Here you see the strong reluctance there is in God to punish—such lingering backwardness, such sweet delay! As if the Father of compassions could not put so great a force upon his nature as to give up the most hardened sinner. Still his mercy triumphs over his justice. It will be heard. It binds the hands of the Almighty, and will not let [p. 12] him alone to destroy.

“Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.”<sup>93</sup> Oh that this infinite goodness of God might lead you to repentance! Oh that anyone of you would even now arise and go to his Father and say unto him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son!”<sup>94</sup> He sees you now, while you are a great way off, and has compassion, and only awaits your turning towards him, that he may run and fall on your neck and kiss you.<sup>95</sup> Then will he say, “Bring forth the best robe” (even the robe of Christ’s righteousness) “and put it upon him, [...] for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”<sup>96</sup>

**2**<sup>97</sup> [2.] To you whom God hath wrought for this selfsame thing I am next to speak, and show the way of peace and salvation. God is not far from everyone of you. For you there [is] about to be joy in heaven, and the angels are tuning their harps. I shall therefore warn you of the one obstacle which earth or hell can throw in your way to happiness,<sup>98</sup> and that is your listening to those miserable comforters who would persuade you, you are already in possession of it—of the greatest happiness which God hath promised to his children below. If ye will hearken unto God more than unto man, and take the scriptural promises in their plain, obvious meaning, ye will find a happiness unutterably inconceivable which God hath prepared for them that love him,<sup>99</sup> even before the sons of men.<sup>100</sup> Some foretaste of this happiness he gave you when first you turned from those dumb idols—honour, riches, and pleasure—to serve the living God.<sup>101</sup> Nor hath he since that left you comfortless,<sup>102</sup> but oft refreshed you with the dew of heaven,<sup>103</sup> and fed you with the fruits of Canaan.<sup>104</sup> But will ye therefore set up your rest on this side Jordan?

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<sup>93</sup>Joel 2:12–13.

<sup>94</sup>Luke 15:18.

<sup>95</sup>See Luke 15:20.

<sup>96</sup>Luke 15:22–24.

<sup>97</sup>CW has written “2” in the far left margin, possibly indicating where he made the break between the first and second parts when he lengthened the sermon and preached it in two parts.

<sup>98</sup>The shorthand here is “h” with a substantive mark under it (when the substantive mark is above it, it typically denotes “heaven”). It might alternatively be rendered “health,” but is most likely “happiness,” in the Aristotelian sense of wholistic “well-being.”

<sup>99</sup>See 1 Cor. 2:9.

<sup>100</sup>See Ps. 31:19.

<sup>101</sup>See 1 Thess. 1:9.

<sup>102</sup>See John 14:18.

<sup>103</sup>See Hosea 14:5.

<sup>104</sup>See Josh. 5:12.

Because the Holy Spirit [p. 13] hath visited you, will ye not suffer him to make his abode with you? Ye have indeed received the Holy Ghost, and so had the apostles when Jesus breathed upon them. Yet was he not fully come till<sup>105</sup> Christ was glorified.<sup>106</sup> “Ye likewise know him now, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you,”<sup>107</sup> unless you do despite unto him,<sup>108</sup> by not desiring, or not expecting him. But whosoever, trusting to his past attainments, to anything he has either done or felt, sits down contented without the seal of his redemption, the earnest of his inheritance, the witness of the Spirit, that man has turned God’s favours against himself. He is yet in his sins and in his blood, and to him I testify, Christ shall profit him nothing.

But beloved I am persuaded better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation.<sup>109</sup> You will not forfeit your own privileges by denying them. You will not plead for a perpetuity of bondage, a necessity of living and dying under the law. You own that if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed!<sup>110</sup> And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.<sup>111</sup> You claim this Spirit and this liberty which are by promise yours, and know that as soon as ye are justified by faith the law of the Spirit of life shall make you free from the law of sin and death.<sup>112</sup> For this is the very end of our Lord’s coming, as he himself declares, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”<sup>113</sup> Or, as it is in the evangelical prophet, “to preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”<sup>114</sup>

“Turn thou then to the stronghold, thou prisoner of hope, even to thee does he declare, that he will render double unto thee.”<sup>115</sup> He can translate thee this moment out of darkness into his marvellous light,<sup>116</sup> out of bondage into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.<sup>117</sup> Believest thou that he is able to do this? I know that thou believest! “Be it unto thee according to thy faith!”<sup>118</sup> [p. 14]

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<sup>105</sup>Orig., “till till”; an errant duplication at the break of a line.

<sup>106</sup>See John 7:39.

<sup>107</sup>John 14:17.

<sup>108</sup>See Heb. 10:29.

<sup>109</sup>See Heb. 6:9.

<sup>110</sup>See John 8:36.

<sup>111</sup>See 2 Cor. 3:17.

<sup>112</sup>See Rom. 8:2.

<sup>113</sup>Luke 4:18.

<sup>114</sup>Isa. 61:1.

<sup>115</sup>Zech. 9:12.

<sup>116</sup>See 1 Pet. 2:9.

<sup>117</sup>See Rom. 8:21.

<sup>118</sup>Matt. 9:29.

You who have not yet attained to that vehemence of importunity, that unutterable sense of your own emptiness which is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Prepare!”<sup>119</sup> You I would earnestly exhort to labour after it and never rest satisfied with anything less than Christ in you, the hope of glory.<sup>120</sup> Seek him in all the means he hath appointed, yet not trusting or resting in any. Hunger and thirst after him.<sup>121</sup> Pray without ceasing, till he is formed in your hearts by faith.<sup>122</sup> And refuse to be comforted because he is in you. All depends upon this, your refusing to be comforted. You must despair before you can hope. Out of the deep must you call upon him, for it is from thence only that he will hear your voice.<sup>123</sup> Out of the depth of invincible sin and reme[diless] misery. You must own and feel yourselves to be utterly lost without Christ; to be lost, undone, and damned forever. But from the moment you discern this, there is nothing can pluck you out of his hand.<sup>124</sup> For (as an excellent author speaks),

No soul can be lost that can truly humble itself before God, and pray to his mercy to be helped, saved and redeemed in such a manner as it shall please him. Let it be hid or buried or imprisoned where it will, hell and earth, death and darkness, and everything must give way to the soul thus converted to God; that has no confidence of its own, that sees nothing of its own but sin; and that desires and calls upon God to save it by some miracle of his own mercy and goodness. By this sensibility of the want of a Saviour, and by this humble conversion and application to God for him, all chains are broken off, all wounds are healed, and the soul must infallibly find, if it continues to seek, its salvation in the unknown depth and riches of the divine mercy.<sup>125</sup>

To a soul by Christ thus disposed for Christ I need not point out any particular promises. All the promises in Scripture are made to him, and as sure as God is true, he shall find they are. Yet forasmuch as you know faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,<sup>126</sup> I shall mention some of these exceeding precious promises,<sup>127</sup> and if now is his time, the Spirit of truth shall now apply them.<sup>128</sup> [p. 15]

And first I would ask you in the name and words of God, “Hath he brought to the birth, and shall he not cause to bring forth?”<sup>129</sup> “Hath he begun a good work in you, and shall he not

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<sup>119</sup>See Isa. 40:3; John 1:23.

<sup>120</sup>See Col. 1:27.

<sup>121</sup>See Matt. 5:6.

<sup>122</sup>See 1 Thess. 5:17, Gal. 4:19, Eph. 3:17.

<sup>123</sup>See Ps. 130:1–2.

<sup>124</sup>See John 10:28.

<sup>125</sup>William Law, *A Demonstration of the Gross and Fundamental Errors of a late Book* (London: W. Innys & R. Mansby, 1737), 204.

<sup>126</sup>See Rom. 10:17.

<sup>127</sup>See 2 Pet. 1:4.

<sup>128</sup>See John 16:13.

<sup>129</sup>Cf. Isa. 66:9.

perform it until the day of his coming?”<sup>130</sup> Nay, but “faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it.”<sup>131</sup> “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. He will save. He will rejoice over thee with joy. He will rest in his love. He will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful.”<sup>132</sup>

“The Lord hath sent me,” saith our great Deliverer, “to comfort all that mourn. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.”<sup>133</sup>

[possible optional or additional material]

“Seek and ye shall find, saith your gracious Master, seek and .... Blessed are the poor in spirit .... Blessed are they that mourn, for .... Blessed are they that hunger and thirst  
....”<sup>134</sup>

“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”<sup>135</sup> “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands.”<sup>136</sup> “Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their head. They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.”<sup>137</sup>

“I, even I, am he that comforteth you!”<sup>138</sup> And to us, whom he hath sent forth in his name, “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith our God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and say unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.”<sup>139</sup> He hath sent us to lay open these mysteries of his love, and to preach the gospel unto every creature.<sup>140</sup> He grant that it may now come unto you,

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<sup>130</sup>Cf. Phil. 1:6.

<sup>131</sup>Cf. 1 Thess. 5:24.

<sup>132</sup>Cf. Zeph. 3:17–18.

<sup>133</sup>Isa. 61:2–3.

<sup>134</sup>The first section here is written in the margin at this point on p. 15. These appear to be short prompts for CW to add further quotations to his point; from Matt. 7:7 and Matt. 5:3–10.

<sup>135</sup>Heb. 13:5.

<sup>136</sup>Isa. 49:15–16.

<sup>137</sup>Isa. 51:11. This section appears within the text, but is both underlined and placed in brackets by CW. This may intend emphasis; or it might indicate material that could be deleted under constraint of time.

<sup>138</sup>Isa. 51:12.

<sup>139</sup>Isa. 40:1–2.

<sup>140</sup>See Mark 16:15.

not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.<sup>141</sup>

He it is that now speaks to you and calls, “Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. And he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat. Yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”<sup>142</sup> I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground!”<sup>143</sup> The same gracious promise he afterwards repeats, when in the likeness of our sinful flesh, “Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink! He that believeth on me, as the Scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Or, as he expresses it to the woman of Samaria, [p. 16] “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life. But this he spoke of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.”<sup>144</sup> And that all who will may receive this faith he assures us in those words, “He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”<sup>145</sup> And again to us who have obeyed his call (as every man upon earth may) he said, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s pleasure to give you the kingdom”;<sup>146</sup> even that kingdom of God which is within, which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.<sup>147</sup>

Oh numberless are the scriptures wherein he promises this Holy Spirit to all that ask him, especially in that last discourse to his church,<sup>148</sup> which the children of this generation, no less blasphemously than absurdly, appropriate to his apostles. But ye will not so easily quit your title to the legacy of your Lord, even that blessed Spirit, which not only St. Peter or St. John, but you and I and every baptised person may claim as his heritage forever. For to you our Lord had respect when he said, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. [...] I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you.”<sup>149</sup>

“Ye now have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”<sup>150</sup> “Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also.”<sup>151</sup>

This life and Comforter and joy ye have in believing, for so saith the Author and Finisher of our faith, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death

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<sup>141</sup>See 1 Thess. 1:5.

<sup>142</sup>Isa. 55:1.

<sup>143</sup>Isa. 44:3.

<sup>144</sup>John 7:37–39.

<sup>145</sup>John 6:37.

<sup>146</sup>Luke 12:32.

<sup>147</sup>See Rom. 14:17.

<sup>148</sup>I.e., his cadre of disciples.

<sup>149</sup>John 14:16–18.

<sup>150</sup>John 16:22.

<sup>151</sup>John 14:19. These two sentences appear within the text, but are both underlined and enclosed in brackets—again, either to indicate emphasis; or possible elision if time required.



unto life.”<sup>152</sup> And this you may see belongs only to them that believe with a living, saving, justifying faith—which you have not as yet. Therefore is this life or faith promised in the following verse to those that are now spiritually dead. “Verily, [p. 17] verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they that hear shall live.”<sup>153</sup> In these words God, “willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”<sup>154</sup>

I trust there is more than one here present who finds that he hath laid hold of the hope set before him—that believing, he hath everlasting life;<sup>155</sup> and rejoices in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he hath now received the atonement;<sup>156</sup> the Spirit also bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God.<sup>157</sup> To you who still wait for the promise of his coming, I shall conclude in his own words, “Behold I come quickly! [...] I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. [...] He which testifieth these things saith, “Surely I come quickly. Amen! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”<sup>158</sup>

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen!”<sup>159</sup>

(Begun July 8, finished July 15, 1738)

[p. 18]

[II.3.]i.<sup>160</sup> I am thirdly and lastly to address myself to you whom God, who is rich in mercy, of his great love wherewith he loved you, hath quickened together with Christ, even when ye were dead in sin, and hath raised you up together, and made you sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.<sup>161</sup> Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!<sup>162</sup> My first and almost needless advice is “Be thankful.”<sup>163</sup> Ye cannot but say both now and ever, “Blessed be the God

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<sup>152</sup>John 5:24.

<sup>153</sup>John 5:25.

<sup>154</sup>Heb. 6:17–18.

<sup>155</sup>See John 6:47.

<sup>156</sup>See Rom. 5:11.

<sup>157</sup>See Rom. 8:16.

<sup>158</sup>Rev. 22:12–20.

<sup>159</sup>Rev. 22:21.

<sup>160</sup>Having run out of time the night before he first preached this sermon, CW added the last promised section, and typically preached the resulting lengthy sermon in two parts.

<sup>161</sup>See Eph. 2:4–6.

<sup>162</sup>See 2 Cor. 9:15.

<sup>163</sup>Cf. Col. 3:15.

and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!”<sup>164</sup>

ii. My next advice (if it be not the same) I shall give you in the words of the prophet Isaiah: “And in that day shalt thou say, O Lord, I will praise thee. Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song. He also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.”<sup>165</sup> He again repeats and enforces his exhortation to an outward experience of our inward joy: “And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord, for he hath done excellent things. This is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.”<sup>166</sup>

What I mean to press upon you is that you would not hide Christ’s righteousness within your heart,<sup>167</sup> but let your talk be of his truth and of his salvation. Hereby you set to your seal that God is true.<sup>168</sup> Return then and show what great things Jesus hath done for you.<sup>169</sup> What he told you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.<sup>170</sup> He hath put a new song in your mouth, even a thanksgiving unto our God. [p. 19] Many shall see it and fear, and shall put their trust in the Lord.<sup>171</sup>

Let not Satan deceive you through a false humility. We are not ignorant of his devices,<sup>172</sup> whereby he would get that advantage over us which he has got over many sincere souls, by persuading them to keep back glory from God. Beware of him when transformed into an angel of light,<sup>173</sup> a preacher of humility. He never fails preaching it upon one occasion—that is, when our speaking would endanger his cong[regation] or advance that of Christ’s. Then he most tenderly cautions you against pride; especially if you presume to mention your own experiences. When you have, notwithstanding all his dissuasives, broke through in the power of faith and testified Christ’s triumphant entry into your soul, you must then expect to be rebuked by the righteous Pharisees that you should hold your peace. But do you cry out so much the more, Hosannah to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosannah in the highest!<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>1 Pet. 1:3–5.

<sup>165</sup>Isa. 12:1–3.

<sup>166</sup>Isa. 12:4–16.

<sup>167</sup>See Ps. 40:10.

<sup>168</sup>See John 3:33.

<sup>169</sup>See Mark 5:19.

<sup>170</sup>See Matt. 10:27.

<sup>171</sup>See Ps. 40:3.

<sup>172</sup>See 2 Cor. 2:11.

<sup>173</sup>See 2 Cor. 11:14.

<sup>174</sup>See Matt. 21:9.

iii. My third and most important direction is, “Be not high minded, but fear.”<sup>175</sup> I mean not to recommend a servile, tormenting fear, for that ye are inc[apable] of, but a humble, filial fear which is perfectly consistent with the most assured confidence in God. You need never fear that you in particular shall fall from grace, while you fear and abhor that arrogant doctrine of devils<sup>176</sup> that it is impossible! The holiest man upon earth is in a possibility of so falling as never to rise again. For so saith the Scripture, “Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”<sup>177</sup> The words “any man” are not in the original, for the literal translation is “Now the just man shall live by faith; but if he draw back,” which evidently proves the possibility of his drawing back, as do the numberless scriptures cautioning us against relapsing, and exhorting us to persevere.

To those who would avoid these scriptures, by vainly imagining they may fall away but not finally, let the great apostle answer: “It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves [p. 20] the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.”<sup>178</sup>

The persons here described are real inward Christians; of whom it is affirmed that if they shall fall away—that is, if they shall totally apostatize—it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. It is not only said that they can fall away, but that they can so fall away as never, never more to return. Not that every wilful sin after conversion is such a falling away, but only absolute apostasy. Mark well what I say, you that seek occasion of offence, and you who receive the words sincerely. I do not say that one who is a Christian indeed can never recover if he sin wilfully; for David sinned most grievously and recovered. So did St. Peter, after he had dissembled the truth and carried away others with his dissimulation.<sup>179</sup> God suffering his most faithful servants to relapse into gross sin, to show them that they were but men, and guard them from this very presumption, this dangerous downfall, this horrid delusion—that they could not fully fall from grace.

This then is what I have divine authority for saying, “The Christian most spiritual may sin wilfully and recover. The most spiritual Christian may likewise so sin as never to recover, so fall as never to lift up eyes again, till he lift them up in torments.”<sup>180</sup>

iv. That you may not be of them that draw back to perdition,<sup>181</sup> let me recommend to you in the fourth [place] a constant use of all the means of grace. He that thinketh he can stand without them is on the brink of falling.<sup>182</sup> Indeed, a man must suppose himself not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles,<sup>183</sup> before he can fancy himself above the use of means. Nay, he

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<sup>175</sup>Rom. 11:20.

<sup>176</sup>See 1 Tim. 4:1.

<sup>177</sup>Heb. 10:38.

<sup>178</sup>Heb. 6:4–6.

<sup>179</sup>See Gal. 2:11–13.

<sup>180</sup>See Luke 16:23.

<sup>181</sup>See Heb. 10:39.

<sup>182</sup>See 1 Cor. 10:12.

<sup>183</sup>See 2 Cor. 11:5.

must be holier than St. Paul, for “he still kept his body under, and brought it into subjection, lest that by any means, after he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway.”<sup>184</sup> I shall only observe upon these words that they prove it possible for the holiest man upon earth to fall fully from grace, and that the surest forerunner of such apostasy is the discontinuance of the means of grace.

v. A fifth advice I would give you is to show your faith by your works.<sup>185</sup> [p. 21] Without these all pretensions to faith are false. These are the necessary effects or fruits or signs of a living faith. Necessary they are, not to justify us before God, but to justify us before man. Or rather, not to make, but to show us acceptable. Not as the cause, but as the evidence of our new birth. Not as conditions, but consequents and tokens of our salvation. The faith which worketh not by love,<sup>186</sup> is an idle, barren, dead faith;<sup>187</sup> that is, no faith at all. So St. James describes it in his golden epistle, which I would earnestly recommend to your frequent meditation.

“He that abideth in me, and I in him,” saith our blessed Lord, “the same bringeth forth much fruit.”<sup>188</sup> He therefore that doth not bring forth much fruit is not in Christ. Whosoever finds in his heart that Christ is his righteousness, shows in his life that Christ is his sanctification. His works testify of him. He walks worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in every holy and heavenly temper.<sup>189</sup> Good works are natural emanations of the divine life, and flow from it as the stream from the fountain. Hereby is the Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit.<sup>190</sup> By this shall all men know that ye are Christ’s disciples.<sup>191</sup> Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye now know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.<sup>192</sup> Being made partakers of the divine nature,<sup>193</sup> express and manifest it by all good works and all holiness. “Giving all diligence to add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they shall make you that ye shall neither be barren” (idle, it is in the original) “nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>194</sup>

*Source:* Methodist Archive and Research Centre, MA 1977/597/5.

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<sup>184</sup>Cf. 1 Cor. 9:27.

<sup>185</sup>See James 2:18.

<sup>186</sup>See Gal. 5:6.

<sup>187</sup>See James 2:17–26.

<sup>188</sup>John 15:5.

<sup>189</sup>See Col. 1:10.

<sup>190</sup>See John 15:8.

<sup>191</sup>See John 13:35.

<sup>192</sup>See 1 Cor. 15:58.

<sup>193</sup>See 2 Pet. 1:4.

<sup>194</sup>2 Pet. 1:5–8.