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MAN'S GIFT TO GOD.
By Rev. Adolphe Monod.

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MAN'S GIFT TO GOD:

Discourse

BY REV. ADOLPHE MONOD.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY A LADY

"My son, give me thine heart."

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GIVE ME THINE HEART.

My son, give me thine heart.—Prov. xxiii, 26.

Every system of philosophy has attempted its own definition of human nature; but has man, therefore, been more thoroughly understood? The Bible, the most practical and the least systematic of books, pursues an inverse order: instead of defining man without revealing him, it reveals him without defining him. Behold him pictured in my text, indirectly, incidentally, by a single trait, but by a trait which sheds light to the very root of the matter, and by which you may know yourselves perfectly. Man is a creature who has a heart to give.

The basis of humanity is the moral nature, and the basis of man's moral nature is the heart. By the heart I do not here under-
stand the tender affections, still less their ardent demonstrations. I take the word in an acceptation nobler and more serious, which embraces all characters, all ages, all degrees of culture; the heart is for me the seat of sentiment, of conscience, of love. All these belong to that inner region which is, as it were, the primitive and substantial groundwork of human nature. Intelligence and reason, with their wonderful brilliancy, do not penetrate so far. Yes, there is less of man in the intelligence which makes a learned criticism upon a sacred text, or a canonical book, than in the faith of a heart which casts itself into space without other support than a "word proceeding out of the mouth of God." There is less of man in the reason which discusses the relations of man to God and of God to man, than in the penitence of a heart which says to God, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned;" or in the longing of a heart which cries out to him, "My soul thirsteth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is."

But this heart within us, which more than
all the rest constitutes our being, aspires to give itself, let us rather say, it realizes its existence only by giving itself. To be loved is its joy, but to love is its life. Here, in all its truth, applies that saying of the Saviour, “It is more blessed to give than to receive:” or rather, as regards the heart, to give is to receive. To give liberally is to receive abundantly; and, in order to possess itself entirely, it must give itself without reserve. In the absence of this natural nourishment our heart turns back upon ourselves, I should rather say against ourselves, and, becoming wholly selfish, gnaws insatiably the bosom which contains it. Given, it supports us; kept, it oppresses us; given, it bestows upon us life; kept, it destroys us. Moreover, there is no one who does not seek a place for reposing his heart; and if the inner life of all those assembled before me could be disclosed at this moment, this temple, and I might say as much of the whole world, would appear like a great stage, where every body carries about his heart seeking some one to whom he may give it.
It is to the heart engaged in this search that God responds in my text, "to me:" reply more significant and more touching yet in a literal translation: "My son, give thy heart to me." Alas! this "to me" is not the only one which the heart has heard, nor the first to which it has given heed. To me sin has said, with its greedy desires; and many hearts have thrown themselves into that broad way until a slow experience has taught them that sin appeals to the cravings of the heart only to stimulate them, and that the most charming enticement is followed by the most bitter remorse. Is this true? To me the world has said with its pomps and its pleasures, and too many hearts have been led away by this allurement until they have found that the world, innocent even—if it can ever be so—has, to supply the void of the heart, only its own emptiness, which adds to the other in place of filling it. Is this true? To me natural affection has said in the form of a mother, a wife, a child; and how many hearts have given themselves unhesitatingly
to an inclination which has in its favor the promptings of nature, and even the approbation of God, until they have found that there is no creature in the world able to give repose to another creature. Alas! and if it could give it, what repose! compelled to count from day to day upon possible accidents, probable sickness, and certain death. Is this true?

It is then that God comes; let us say rather (for he came first, but without finding access) then God returns, compassionately, after all the others, content to take this humble place, provided he may be received at length, were it only as a last resort. "My son, give thy heart to me." God, I say, but what God? Strange question, but too necessary at the present day, when this sacred name is turned to uses so various, shall I say? or so profane, by systems and parties. The God who demands your heart is the God who reveals himself in Scripture, the God Jesus Christ, the God Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Do not treat this doctrine as a theological speculation; it is a mystery:
still more, it is the mystery, but "the mystery of godliness."* Father, who has so loved us that he sacrificed his only Son to save us; though he so hated sin that he would not save us except by the sacrifice of his only Son. Son, who has shown among us all the fullness of divinity, clothed with a mortal body, in which also he has borne our sins upon the tree. Holy Spirit, who, dwelling in us, makes us one with the Son as he is one with the Father, and renders us "partakers of the divine nature."† That this is the God who speaks to you in my text is sufficiently shown by the name that he there gives you, "My son;" for this name has its true signification only in the mouth of that God, thrice holy and thrice good. Poor creatures lost, rebellious, we are sons only because the Father "hath made us accepted in the Beloved;"† we are sons only because the Son "is not ashamed to call us brethren;"§ we are sons only because the Holy Spirit has sealed us with the paternal

* 1 Tim. iii, 16.  
† 2 Peter i, 4.  
‡ Eph. i, 6.  
§ Heb. ii, 11.
seal, and taught us to cry, "Abba, Father!" This, this is the God, the only God, who demands the heart: the personal God, let us rather say with Scripture, "the living and true God;" the God who wishes to maintain affectionate relations with us because he has a heart which responds to ours and which seeks ours; the God made man that we may love him as really, as naturally as we love a brother or a friend, and at the same time, by a wonderful union, the spiritual God who enters into such an intimate communion with us as we can neither know nor conceive with any creature.

Your heart: ah! what other god than this cares for it? Not the god of Pharisaism, who is more than satisfied if your body is devoted to his service: if your knee touches the ground, if your frame is wasted by fasting, if your lips have pronounced certain forms of prayer, or if your hand scatters meritorious alms. Not the god of Pantheism, who, becoming confounded in turn with the human mind and with inanimate nature, can have no individual feeling, since he has
no existence of his own, and with whom to receive and to give, to love and to be loved, to create and to be created, have no distinct meaning; what do I say? with whom the true and the false, the good and evil, existence and non-existence, blend, or are lost, rather, in a universal negation, honored with the high-sounding name of absolute unity. Not the god of deism, who, giving life without giving himself, and creating as if to relieve himself, treats the work of his hands as the ostrich her eggs, "which she leaveth in the earth, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, and is hardened against her young ones as though they were not hers:"* that God, far from the sight of his creatures and from their life, who, fixed in the Arctic ice of a creation without paternity, and of a providence without feeling, makes of existence an eternal winter, and of the world an icy tomb, of which he himself is only the statue. I say nothing of the god of Mohammedanism, who repays a bloody and fatalist devotion with the base currency of

*Job xxxix, 17-20.
selfish and corrupt pleasure; nor of the god of paganism, I should say, of its thousand gods, who give back with usury to man the lessons of impiety and injustice which they receive from him; nor of the many other gods which man has created, and created in his own image.

Thus, outside of Jesus Christ, (of Jesus Christ come or expected, it matters little: the Spirit which inspires a St. Paul is the same that inspires a Solomon or a David,) no religion presents anything which resembles the invitation of my text: "My son, give me thine heart." Give me thy practical obedience, says the god of Pharisaism. Give me thy personality, says the god of Hegel. Give me thy reason, says the god of Kant. Give me thy saber, says the god of Mohammed. Give me thy passion, says the god of Homer or of Virgil. It remains for the God Jesus Christ to say, "Give me thy heart." He exalts it, this outcast from all other gods, and constitutes it the essence and glory of his doctrine. For man to give his heart to God, that heart
“out of which are the issues of life,” is not alone one of the obligations of piety; it is its very foundation, its beginning, its continuance, its end; it is the unequivocal proof of a true conversion. You tell me that a man has believed in the gospel of grace: that is well, but has he believed in it with a living faith? that he makes an irreproachable profession: but is that profession sincere? that his life is exemplary before his associates: but is that life holy before God? that he is foremost in Christian works: but does he carry into those works a Christian spirit? But tell me that he has given his heart to God: every other question is superfluous; faith, works, pardon, holiness, regeneration, all are there.

Well, now, this whole gospel, it concerns you who have it not and who feel in yourselves that you need it, (for it is you alone whom I wish to make its judges,) to decide to-day if you wish finally to put yourselves in possession of it. I will not stop to ask if you believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures, in the truth of the Gospel, in the
divinity of Jesus Christ, in the salvation which he offers: I have no time for such queries, nor do I think them necessary. The religion summed up in the heart given to God is so simple, so true, so beautiful, that these four words, "Give me thy heart," contain its sufficient apology. He who does not recognize in this appeal the beating of the heart of the true God must be a man without heart, upon whom all preaching would be lost. But you who have a heart, and who hear God in my text, consider calmly the practical question which it asks, and say whether you will give your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. And to whom, then, will you give it if not to him?

"My son, give thy heart to me:" to me, in whom alone thy heart can find repose, and to whom it unconsciously aspires.

Incomprehensible mingling of incredulity and faith, the unregenerate heart has always, like the city of Athens, an altar raised "to the unknown God" whom it seeks, if haply it may "feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in
him we live, and move, and have our being." Truly, this unknown God "declare I unto you," as St. Paul to the Athenians. All that your heart craves in return for giving itself without reserve, and which, wanting in all creatures, cannot be bestowed by any of them, it finds in the Lord Jesus Christ, without whom it can never see its wants satisfied, what do I say? without whom it would never have been enlightened as to those wants, for this living God at once reveals and satisfies them. Take, among creatures, the one whom you know to be the most amiable and the most loved: is it not true that you cannot attempt to give yourself up wholly to his love without finding very quickly a barrier which inexorably stops the flight of your heart, and which seems to say to you with bitter defiance, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further?"

Why is this? It is because that creature is mortal. Not a day passes on the morning of which you have not reason to say to yourself, "He may be taken from me before evening. For this visible form,
which is 'the delight of my eyes and the desire of my soul,' hastens to mingle with the 'dead men's bones and all uncleanness' accumulating from age to age in the bosom of the tomb" Must it be so? You do not know; it is a question of time. . . . But if you would give your heart to an object from which nothing in the world can separate you, and to which you may be permitted to give yourself up with the joy of life, with the freshness of life, with the security of life, with the immortal power of life, truly, this God whom I announce to you is what your heart demands. He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." Cling to him: he will not leave you. Call upon him: he will always answer you. Trust in him: he will never fail you; and when you yourselves fail, you shall go where you will behold him without a vail, and be united to him without hinderance.

Why, again? It is because this creature, though he should be immortal, is finite: how can he respond to the infinite longings of your heart? Inclosed within the narrow
limits of the body, constrained in his will, circumscribed in his understanding, equally incapable of showing all that he feels and of feeling all that your heart expects from his own, how can he suffice you? In a moment of rapture, perhaps touched by so much devotion, by so many attractions, so many varied merits, you think you have nothing to desire in your happiness except its continuance; but the next moment, when you have come to yourself and are freed from your tender illusions, this cry escapes you in spite of all your efforts to repress it: "Still this is not the thing; my heart demands something else!" Verily this something else, this infinity which will fill, which will overflow the whole capacity of your heart, you will find in the God whom I preach to you; in the God who possesses without measure light, power, truth, life, what do I say? who is himself all these, and from whose bosom flows, as from an inexhaustible fountain, all which upon the earth has any right to these sacred names. Fragments disseminated from the "I AM," light, truth, power, life,
all carry you back to God, like so many diverging streams to their common source; and in attaching yourself to him, you will gather the infinite variety of all gifts in an unchanging unity.

Why finally? It is because this creature is sinful, and compelled to say with you, from the little acquaintance he has with himself, "I know that in me dwelleth no good thing." And can you abandon yourself unreservedly to such a one? What! this lost creature, for whom, as for yourself, you have to solicit the pardon of God, in whom you find the same conflict of the spirit against the flesh which you experience, in whom you must each day bear the infirmities and weaknesses that he bears in you, it is in him that you are to seek, that you are to find what your heart demands! O unworthy thought! give air to the unhappy being who struggles against an atmosphere deprived of the principle of life; give light to the captive who languishes in a subterranean cell, far from the pleasant sunbeams; give bread to the hungry, water to
the thirsty, and give to the heart of man as the object of its supreme attachment a being “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;” such, finally, that his love shall be holiness of heart and his service holiness of life. Verily, in these attributes, how can you fail to recognize the God whom I declare to you?

Yes, my brother, give, give your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. This God, eternal, infinite, holy, is alone adapted to your heart, and your heart to him. Your heart yearned for him before it knew him; and how much more will it yearn for him if it has begun to know him? It is enough that you have only caught a glimpse of him to make it impossible for you henceforth to find repose elsewhere. The heart of man is so made, thanks to its Creator, that it can never stop its attachment at any point if it conceives the possibility of carrying it higher. You may ascend, if you will, the whole scale of creatures, from more worthy to more worthy, something will always urge you to still ascend; you will ever hear, like the two wit
nesses in the Apocalypse, a voice from heaven saying to you "Come up hither;"* and so long as there shall be a God in the universe, nothing less will content your heart. Him or nothing! Him or a frightful void and bitter disgust. I say more: Him for the joy of your life, or Him for its torment. His benevolence will allow you no repose away from him. Your intoxication he will dissipate; your enchantment he will chill; your cup of pleasure he will poison; he will summon against your idolatrous attachments, separation, disease, death, until the day when, deprived of the creature, you cast yourself at length, it may be from weariness, from thirst, from despair, upon his paternal breast, and learn to cry with the psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee; my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!"† My portion, because he is my rock, where this heart may lay down all its burden without fear of ever seeing it fall.

"My son, give thy heart to me:" to me, who before asking it of thee have first given thee mine.

Love appeals to love: and this appeal is the most irresistible of all. They may tell you, "You must love that person," and your heart cannot respond: it may even feel an inclination to resistance, through the secret pleasure which it finds in asserting its freedom. They may say to you again, "This person is worthy of all your love;" and although recognizing the claims which he has upon you, your heart may feel held back as if in spite of itself by a lack of natural sympathy. But let it be said to you, "This person has loved you with the tenderest love, with no interested motive, nor thought of reciprocation; he has risked for you his fortune, his health, his life;" and your heart is gained at once, by the instinctive horror that ingratitude inspires in the human conscience even when unrenewed. This state of things is never perfectly realized with any mortal; it may be because he fails to find in you, as you in him, all that so
noble a heart demands: it may be because there exists in him, as in you, a depth of coldness, of egotism, which minglest self-seeking with the most passionate attachments. But God has realized it, fully realized it; for if you ask what he is, St. John replies, “God is love;” and if you ask what he has done, the same St. John replies, in the same epistle, “He first loved us.” This is what breaks the heart when it has believed in the gospel, that is, in the good news of the love of God in Jesus Christ; and what makes Christians such as St. John, is the power of saying with St. John, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.”*  

This love of God, giving himself, giving himself first, giving himself without reserve, you will see everywhere and always if you have eyes for seeing it. But do you wish to have it plainly declared? Follow the beloved disciple to Golgotha; for it was in view of the cross that he wrote what I have just read to you. A certain author has said, “God shows us his hand in creation; in

* 1 John iv, 16.
redemption he gives us his heart.” Doubtless there is something forced in this antithesis. I demand more for creation: no, the heart of God is not absent from nature; it is felt in the impulses of the human soul, in the beatings of the mother’s heart, in the precious fruit of a fertile earth, in the showers of heaven, in the fruitful seasons, and even in the satisfied hunger of the little birds; and what would it have been then, O thou God who art love, if in place of “subjecting the creation to vanity,” * man had preserved it as it proceeded from thy hands! Moreover, the God Saviour is no other than the God Creator; and redemption has only lavished upon us the love that creation has held concealed from the beginning. Yet it is very true that the tokens of love which God has given us in creation grow pale beside those that he has given us in redemption; as the stars of night seem to us extinguished by the light of day without in reality disappearing: and we shall only imitate the example of St. John, of all the apostles, in

going at once to the cross of Jesus Christ in order to point out "what love the Father has shown for us," or according to a more literal translation, "what love the Father has given us." The expression is strange, I confess; I understand that our translators were unwilling to transfer it to our exact and conventional idiom; and yet I regret it. The word *give*, this favorite word of the gospel, can be replaced by no other; and if St. John has chosen it, it is because he has seen in the love of the cross more than a feeling that reveals itself; he has seen there a heart that gives itself.

My dear hearer, have you ever placed yourself seriously before the cross of Jesus Christ? Have you ever asked yourself how much love God gave you in that mysterious hour, when through the immensity of space, and for eternal ages, resounded that cry of self-sacrificing love, "It is finished?" We are told that the pious Moravian reformer dated his consecration to God from a day when, traversing a gallery of paintings, he stopped by chance (I speak as a man) before
a picture of the Lord Jesus expiring on the cross, with these words written beneath: "Behold what I have done for thee; and thou, what hast thou done for me?" The thought of what God has given us upon that cross, contemplated seriously for the first time, gained for him that day the heart of Zinzendorf, and through his heart, all his life. O that this discourse might be to you as the picture to Zinzendorf! And why may it not be? Why may I not count with you upon the truth of the gospel, upon the Spirit of God, upon your heart, if you have one? No eloquent word-painting of the sufferings of your Saviour, no pathetic appeal to a nervous sensibility; the fact, the simple fact of redemption speaking to your feelings, to your reason, of what the God who demands your heart has done for you: "God manifested his love for us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." *

Christ died for us: I desire no more. Christ, that Son of God, his only and well-

* Rom. v, 8.
beloved Son; that other self, through whom he has done all his pleasure; that God who became man that he might give himself to man without reserve, who shall tell us his true name? Who shall tell us of his adorable glory? Who shall tell us of his tender relation to the Father? Who shall tell us when the seraphim themselves vail their faces with their wings to hide themselves from the brightness of his majesty?* As for us, when we have attempted to conceive the love, most exalted and most holy, of the Father most loving for the Son most lovely, and this love climbing in silence a Mount Moriah, how can we conceal from ourselves that all this is as much below the mysterious reality as the earth is below heaven and man below God? O unspeakable gift! Christ died: that death, that cruel laceration of the flesh which is scarcely remembered for the anguish of soul a thousand times more cruel; that burden of all the sins of the human race, pressing upon a single head, and that the only innocent one; the curse of Sinai de-

* Isa. vi, 2.
scending with all its terrors upon the Lamb of God, and contrasted at the same time with the human sanctity of the victim, and with his divine grandeur; what earthly death can approach it? what earthly sympathy can respond to it? what earthly imagination can conceive it? And when you have tried to bring together in your mind all that you have felt, known, understood, dreamed of human sorrow, what would this drop of water appear in that depth of anguish in which resounds the lamentable cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" O sacrifice ineffable! Christ died for us; for you, for me, for us all. For us, holy, obedient, faithful? No; but for us sinners, rebels, enemies, who were living only to offend him, and who by our crimes had nailed him to the cross, where he had expiated them. For us, at least, penitent, believing, praying? No; but for us impenitent, unbelieving, "having no hope and without God in the world," who had begun to suspect our sin and our danger only when learning at what price God had redeemed us
from the one and rescued us from the other. Is this the manner of man? And what are our ways compared with the ways of God's free grace? or our thoughts compared with his thoughts? O unspeakable compassion!

But do you follow me? Must I not fear that I shall not find in you that simple and open heart that the picture found in Zinzendorf? Your notions of God and his justice, of yourselves and your sins, of Jesus and his work, are so confused and so uncertain that what pierced the heart of the young reformer will appear to you perhaps only like a history known from childhood, and which speaks to you only an obscure language. Well, if your feeling is deadened and your understanding darkened to this degree, yield to the judgment of others; I will not object to that. Turn your back to the cross and read the love that God there bestows upon you in the impressions that it has produced upon witnesses most capable of understanding and appreciating it. Believe the only disciple who followed the Crucified thither, not to say through the Spirit of God which inspired
him, "In this is manifested the love of God toward us, that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world to be a propitiation for our sins."

Believe those glorified elect who sing the song, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."† Believe the holy angels who bow themselves over that divine love, as the cherubim over the ark, and who vainly "desire to look into"‡ it. Believe the inanimate nature which this spectacle animates; those rocks which are rent, that earth which gives up its dead, that sun which hides itself, that day which is changed to night, that vail of the temple which is rent in twain as if the whole order of things, human and divine, was overthrown. But much more believe the Crucified himself, moving toward his cross: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." And may I not, with you,

* 1 John iv, 9, 10.  † Rev. v, 9.  ‡ 1 Pet. i, 12.
mount to the first source of the love revealed to the world by the cross? go back before time began, penetrate into those impenetrable sanctuaries where the councils of the mighty God are held, and suppose yourself present as that deliberation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in which the redemption of fallen man is predetermined from eternity, and the work of love shared among the Father who calls us, the Son who redeems us, and the Spirit who sanctifies us!*

Angels of heaven, present in the assemblies of the Church, speak: has no news come to you from this council of love? no word, no thought, no ray escaped which may reveal the gift of God to these hearts that nothing yet has been able to touch? If the laws which govern our relations to you, while we are inclosed in these mortal bodies, do not permit you to bring from heaven to earth the news of that divine deliberation, come that I may commission you to carry from earth to heaven the news of another deliberation, wholly human, but at least as

*1 Pet. i, 2.
marvelous! Go, tell the celestial intelligences that, while I announce here, agreeing with you, with Scripture, with the truth of God, and with the conscience of man, the love of a God who has sent his Son into the world, there is here, before me, a lost sinner who deliberates with himself whether or no he ought to give his heart to the God who has given to him his Son; who waits to determine whether he may be able to escape from the force of preaching which has, he thinks, either too much control over him or too little over itself, and who will perhaps tell you to-morrow what resolution he has taken: go, tell it; and you who have so often found earth incredulous to what comes from heaven, will, for the first time, find heaven incredulous to what comes from earth!

"My son, give thy heart to me;" to me, for I demand it of thee.

He demands it of thee. If I wished here only to defend the right of God over the heart that he demands, it would suffice for me to recall to you that it is he who has made it, and that, in demanding it, he only
demands a gift which comes from himself. I said just now that the Lord Jesus Christ has first given us his heart in creation; he has done more, he has placed it within us. Love, which is the most beautiful definition of God, is also the best gift that God has bestowed upon man. If the creature is loving, it is because the Creator is love. And who then has the first claim upon this power of loving, if not he who has placed it in us with his image? What! that energy of devotion, that warmth of affection, that need of sympathy, all those sentiments at once so lively and so tender, by which he is not only shown forth but imaged forth within us, should they exist for all the world except for him? Away with this impious error, this excess of ingratitude! but the more odious it is, the less I believe it necessary to dwell upon it. There is a consideration more delicate which I have to present to you; and I desire, in closing, to make an appeal to what is deepest and most sacred in the heart of man.

When God presents himself before you
and says to you, "My son, give thy heart to me;" when he recognizes in you a heart to give, and when he invites you, if I may be allowed the expression, to yield him the preference, does it not seem to you that, by an infinite condescension, the parts are inverted: that you hear to-day, as a prayer from God, what it belongs to man to grant, and that you are called for the first time to do something for him who has done everything for you? Far, far from us, need I say it? be every thought which could in the least disparage the infinite grandeur, the unchanging bliss of the King of kings, who needs not man to serve him, nor the son of man to help him! "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous, or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" But the greatness of God is not, after all, a greatness of insensibility, nor the bliss of God a bliss cold and impassable. The Lord Jesus Christ is a living God, in whom exists a spirit of love and of sympathy. Now what means have we of representing to ourselves this love, this sympathy,
except by transferring to God the analogous sentiments, found in man by separating them from everything sinful and carnal, retaining only what is essentially living and personal? Moreover, God encourages us to recognize his traits in those of man, whom he has created in his own image, when he reveals himself everywhere to us under the name of Father; and how can we conceive a father without a paternal heart? My text is filled with this thought: God there compared himself so truly to a father that we hardly know whether it is an earthly or the heavenly Father who speaks; and he who says here, "My son, give thy heart to me," is the same who says elsewhere in the same chapter, "My son, if thy heart is wise, my heart, even mine, will rejoice." But this touching language is feeble compared with those transporting words of a prophet, which go beyond all I have dared to say, and in which we scarcely know whether more to admire the beauty of the language or the tenderness of the sentiment: "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.”*

Sometimes in contemplating this wonder of love, a God Creator and Saviour who demands the heart of his sinful and lost creature, we fear, like Moses at the burning bush, to approach too near. Without pretending to raise a bold glance toward the divine nature, let our attention rest upon that God who became man expressly to place himself within our reach, and let us contemplate the heart of the Father through the human heart of that Son, who has himself said to us, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”† Indeed, can you imagine Jesus unmoved at the sight of the penitent sinner who offers him his heart? Unmoved! He who compares himself to the good Shepherd, going after his lost sheep until he has found it, placing it upon his shoulders, rejoicing, and returning home, calling in his friends and neighbors and saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I

* Zeph. iii, 17.  
† John xiv, 9.
have found my sheep which was lost!" that joy—will you not give it to him?

When Jesus, "wearied with his journey," and seated by Jacob's well, said to the Samaritan woman, "Give me to drink," who of you does not envy that woman the privilege of being able to give to her Saviour a cup of cold water to quench his thirst? But you will have no reason to envy her if by the gift of your heart you respond to that other "I thirst," deeper and more spiritual, which escaped him upon the cross where he died for you. When Jesus said to Zaccheus, "Come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house," who of you does not envy Zaccheus the privilege of receiving his Saviour at his house and lavishing upon him all his care? But you will have no reason to envy him if you open your heart to that same Saviour who says to you to-day, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice, and will open to me, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." When Jesus falters under the heavy instrument of his suffering,
who of you does not envy Simon of Cyrene the privilege of carrying, a few moments, for his Saviour that cross upon which he was soon to bear "our sins in his own body?" But you will have no reason to envy him if you are of those in whom he "sees of the travail of his soul," and if your heart makes a part of that precious "portion that he divides with the strong" before "pouring out his soul unto death." And when this same Jesus, already crucified and just risen again, says to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, loveth thou me?" who of you does not envy the sinning but forgiven apostle the privilege of pouring into the wounds that he has made in the body and soul of his Saviour the oil and wine of his repentance and his love? But you will have no reason to envy the apostle himself if, with a heart which thrills like his at the question of his Master and yours, longing to cause some joy to him whom you have caused so many griefs, you can say to him in your turn, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." If there is any one here
who feels otherwise in regard to this, any one who, in the place of the Samaritan woman, would have refused the cup of cold water; any one who, in the place of Zaccheus, would have kept his door closed; any one who, in the place of Simon of Cyrene, would have suffered the cross to remain upon the shoulders that were carrying it; any one who, in the place of Peter, would have replied otherwise than he replied, such a one will be only consistent with himself in resisting the invitation of my text, and in continuing to refuse his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ who demands it.

Refuse it! and why? When you have refused to him this heart that he demands, what will you do with it? Think of it; what will you do with it, for you must do something with it; it must needs be given to some one. When you wish to keep it for yourself alone you cannot do it; to whom then will you give it? Look to this, speak, explain yourselves. Do you dare to rise in this assembly and say to us that for any object more worthy you
take from God this heart that he asks? "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, saith the Lord, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."

O! behold in this your shameful history; behold here the bloody outrage that you commit against the living and true God! With a heart which must needs be given, with a heart quick to give itself to the creature who asks it, to the creature even who has not asked it, what am I saying? perhaps to the creature who does not want it, behold yourself begging from door to door an asylum for that heart, here deceived, there repulsed, always agitated and restless. Unhappy one! And you have near you the Lord Jesus Christ who asks it, who entreats it, who expects it! To explain the crime, the enormity of such a subversion, there is need of a simplicity wanting to our degenerate Christianity. Let one of those Bassoutos,

* Jer. ii, 12, 13.
translated suddenly "from darkness to light, from death to life, and from the power of Satan to God," whose touching story was a few days since told us by a pious missionary, lend me his voice." God said to the sun, shine, and it shone; he said to the grass, grow, and it grew; he said to the rivers, flow, and they flowed; he said to man, love me, and man refused to obey!"

But what am I doing this last hour? I gather the strongest reasons, I choose the most touching expressions, I urge, I entreat, whom, and for what? God, to pardon man, a sinner, and to restore to him his heart, too justly alienated from us? No, but man, a sinner, to give his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ; to the God for whom this heart hungers and thirsts; to the God who has given us his own; to the God who seems to need ours to complete his rapture of love. Ah! is not this superfluous labor? Alas! must we not rather fear that it will be labor in vain? There must be stronger reasons still, expressions yet more touching, illustra-
tions and entreaties yet more pressing, or more than one of these sinners to whom I speak will go hence such as he came, responding to God who says to him, "Give me thy heart," if not I will not, at least I cannot; the same thought only expressed with more caution, or rather, which is less compromising, responding nothing, casting aside the entreaty of God, and impatient to extinguish, in the occupations or in the pleasures of life, the unwelcome light which has just arisen in the depth of his soul. But no, stay! We may never meet again. Two words more. I speak as a dying man to dying men. Understand, at least, who you are, and at last become acquainted with yourselves. You do not need to wait for that until the judgment of the great day, when the opened books will unveil heart-secrets. A heart cold toward God is already unveiled, already judged. Still, if it were cold toward all—but no! alive for all the rest, alive for the family, alive for the world, alive for wealth, alive for pleasure; cold for God alone. Cold? that is saying
too little; with the Lord Jesus Christ indifference can never go alone. With that living God who alone fills the heart, indifference is folly. With that compassionate God who has given us his heart, indifference is ingratitude. With that incarnate God who solicits our hearts, indifference is impiety. With the Lord Jesus Christ there is no middle ground between love and enmity. Now, enmity toward God, do you know what that is? It is hell, at once experienced and justified; it is hell upon earth, in anticipating what hell may be in hell. “Enemies of God,” that is what you are. I say it according to Scripture: recoil with terror if you will, but examine yourselves, and you will agree with me. You are indifferent toward God. Why? Because you are weary of his service, weary of his commandments, weary of his importunities, weary, perhaps, of his love. This weariness, is it anything else than secret hostility? Once more, enemies of God, this is what you are; I will say what you have been, what you will be no longer, what already you are no longer, if I rightly read your hearts. Q
brother, sister, give the world to-day, in anticipation of what you will give the universe at the judgment day, the only moral spectacle more beautiful than that of a holy angel who has never ceased to love God; the spectacle of a sinner, of an enemy, become a friend; of a Peter, lately an apostate, to whom Jesus says, "Lovest thou me?" and who replies, "Thou knowest that I love thee;" of a Mary Magdalene, lately possessed of seven devils, to whom Jesus says, "Mary!" and who replies, "Rabboni!" Yes, be this St. Peter, be this Mary: you can if you will. Man all his days refuses the heart of God; but God will never refuse the heart of man. It is not to refuse it that he asks it, that he awakens it, that he touches it. Will only, and you will give it; will, and you have already given it.

Surround him, this prodigal son, retracing the way to his father's house, ye elder brothers who have returned thither before him; anticipate him by love; encourage his still faltering steps. Most of all, ah! most of all, spare him the scandal of your dead
profession, and examine thoroughly whether you have truly given your hearts to God.

And Thou, who seest him "when he is yet a great way off," Father eternal, come to meet him! and while he pours into thy bosom his humble confession, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," may he feel thy heart, the Father's, beating against his own, the Son's, and may he hear from thy lips the paternal cry, "This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!"

THE END.