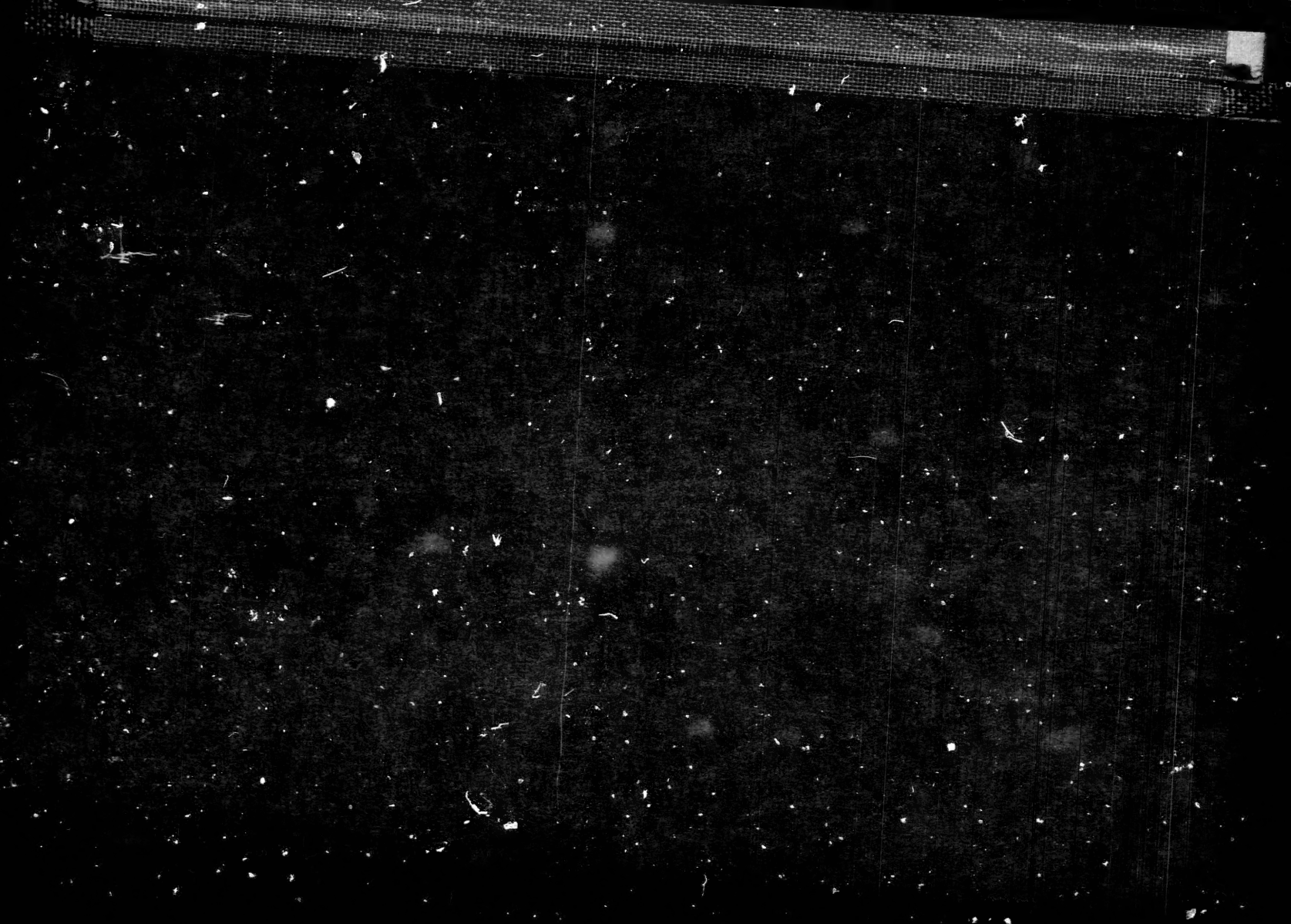

Christian Fellowship:

A SERMON

PREACHED ON ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST'S DAY, 1867, IN S. PAUL'S CHURCH, CHARLOTTETOWN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, BEFORE THE

Worshipful Master and Brethren

OF

ST. JOHN LODGE

OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS,

BY J. HERBERT READ, D. D.,

Chaplain of King Hiram Lodge, No. 821, R. E.

Published by Special Request.

CHARLOTTETOWN, P. E. ISLAND.

1869.

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PREFACE.

The Author deems it right to remark, that these sermons were never written with the design of their being published, but in compliance with the kind and repeated request of the Worshipful Master and Brethren of St. John's Lodge, the manuscript is sent to the press, in the hope that it may be humbly instrumental in cherishing the Christian grace of Love among the Brethren, and in promoting the high moral principles of Ancient and Accepted Free Masonry.

J. H. R.

Charlottetown, P. E. I.,
April, 1869.

SERMON I.

"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."—1 JOHN, i. 7.

The Bible is God's inestimable gift to man, as the rule of faith and practice. From its exhaustless treasury we may obtain such a measure of Divine knowledge, as will guide us safely through the journey of life, and fit us for the pure and sinless worship of that glorious temple, "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," where every true Christian looks for a home and a rest; when the labor of life is ended.

Our assembling here to day is a public acknowledgment of our faith in God, and our belief in the inspiration of His holy Word, which is the great beacon light, to show us our duties and our dangers. It is the only safe and unerring directory to the realms of everlasting glory, by taking heed to which, our path will be "as the shining light, that shineth more and more, unto the perfect day." Light and darkness—truth and error—holiness and sin, are the great antagonistic influences in the moral world. To infuse light into the soul darkened with the mists of sin,—to recover man from the error of his way, by indoctrinating his mind with Scripture truths,—to correct evil influences, which are natural to the human heart, by imparting desires after holiness, is the Divine mission of "the Gospel of the ever blessed God."

St. John tells us in the context that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another "and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin."

I do not intend to enter into a detailed exposition of the text, which was brought to our notice in the Epistle for the day; but I purpose to make use of it, as suggestive of thoughts appropriate to the occasion which has brought us together this morning in God's House of Prayer.

The term Light, in Scripture language, is a figurative expression, signifying knowledge, purity, holiness and glory, which, in their highest acceptation, are attributes of the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, and, as Christians, we are to seek their attainment. By cultivating the graces that adorn the Christian character, we become more and more like our Divine Master, who has left us a command to walk in His footsteps.

Of all the tests whereby we may know if we have passed from the darkness of sin into the pure light of the Gospel, the exhibition of the grace of Love is the truest. It is the brightest gem in Jehovah's crown. It shone most conspicuously in the Saviour's life, and obtained for St. John the Evangelist the high and honored distinction of the disciple "whom Jesus loved." History informs us that when the aged Apostle was unable to preach, or even to walk, he was carried each day into the congregegation, whom he addressed as little children, bidding them love one another; and, it is said, they once asked him for something more, to which he replied: "nay,

when I have told you *that*, I have told you all;" and we can scarcely read his epistles with attention, without, in some measure, being imbued with this all-excelling grace. St. Paul, in the thirteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, says that Charity or Love is the greatest of all the graces which adorn the Christian. Faith may fail—hope may become dim, but love, the sweetest chord on the golden harp, will survive the dissolution of all things earthly, and flourish in celestial beauty and brightness when ages have passed away. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him: and if we walk in the light of this Divine grace we possess the truest bond of Christian fellowship, "without which, whosoever lives is counted dead before God."

To suppose that there can be any true religion where love does not exist, is to imagine a body without a soul —a world without a sun. St. James teaches us that our religion, to be worthy of the name, must be *practical*, pervading our thoughts, words and works. "For, as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Our blessed Master has given us a mark or description of character by which His people are known. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." St. John, echoing the sentiments of his Lord, says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Here you may observe that the beloved disciple is speaking of a fact with which he, and all who were united in the fellowship of the Gospel, were familiar. If, then, the exercise of this Christian grace of love is the sure evidence of our divine relationship to God, and that we are walking in the light of His beaming

smile, where, I ask, are the proofs of it to be found, in the high-sounding profession of our times? We may be useful members of society; we may give of our goods to feed the poor, and immolate our bodies upon the altar of martyrdom; but if love be not the moving principle in us, our works will be regarded by Him, who reads the heart, as no better than the sounding brass, or the tinkling cymbal.

If, my beloved brethren, we are the servants of Christ, we must divest ourselves of selfishness—abound in His work, and extend the right hand of fellowship to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. St. Paul well understood this, when he said, "Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works." And Holy Scripture has condensed the result of long experience, where it says, "That as iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

To walk together, implies a union in sentiment and taste. Holy Scripture puts the enquiry, "How can two walk together, except they be agreed, and what communion hath light with darkness?" It is therefore essential to the prosperity of any society, and universal experience confirms the truth, that there should be a general agreement in all its principles, or there can be neither harmony nor fellowship among its members. What, but sin, has produced jarring interests in the Church and the world? It has darkened all that is great and ennobling in man, and produced thorns where flowers of loveliness might grow in rich luxuriance. Sin has sown broadcast throughout the world the seeds of envy and hatred, which bear fruit, alas! too abundantly, in the soil of the heart. To correct this dominant evil, the Christian religion directs us to the well-spring of our

Heavenly Father's love, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into this world to destroy the works of the devil, and to plant in the hearts of His people the graces of the Spirit, which, if cultivated by watchfulness and prayer, will bring forth fruit abundantly to Jehovah's glory.

Do we want an illustration of pure disinterested love? See it wondrously exhibited in the harmonies of Divine Providence, making the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sending rain upon the just and the unjust. Yea, day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night certifieth to the knowledge of Him who crowns the year with His goodness.

But the manifestation of Divine love in creation is eclipsed by the more glorious work of redemption, when God gave His dear Son to be a sacrifice for sin; whose whole life may be summed up in the terse, yet expressive language of St. Peter: "He went about doing good." My brethren, if we will but take the blessed Saviour as our pattern and our guide, studying the lessons He would have us learn, we shall walk in the light of His countenance, and there awaits us after death a blessed reward in the realms of everlasting glory.

It is an unspeakable comfort to know, that we are not alone in the journey of life; that invisible agencies are engaged on our behalf. A heavenly Father's watchful care is over us. An all-prevailing Advocate ever lives to intercede for us, and the Holy Comforter is ever ready to help our infirmities (if we seek his aid,) whilst angel bands, who execute the Eternal's behests, are ministering spirits to salvation's heirs; so that if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and we may travel on, and fear no danger. Again, our blessed Lord has taught us the benefit of

mutual help, by sending forth His seventy disciples, two and two, to preach the gospel. My brethren, combined action is a felt necessity, whether it applies to the government of the Church, or to civil institutions. It is recognized as one of the cardinal principles of our ancient and honorable fraternity, assembled together this day for a sublime object—the worship of Almighty God, but not for the purposes attributed to it by ignorance and prejudice. I shall not attempt to refute these opinions, by entering into details in defence of our ancient institution. The occasion demands better and holier thoughts; but I would simply remark, that a society which begins and ends its deliberations with prayer; comes to church before it proceeds with its annual business; and claims as its patrons such distinguished Christian men as St. John the Baptist, and St. John the Evangelist, whose death on this day has been commemorated for ages in the Christian Church, answers every objection to its being an irreligious institution. From the building of Solomon's temple, through every age and change in architecture, workmanship, and material, Ancient Freemasonry has stamped its mind and hand upon the grand and useful; traces of which are to be found in many of our churches and cathedrals, which dot the mother country. The order is spreading far and wide, and numbers on its records thousands of the vast human family, from the monarch on the throne to those in the humbler walks of life, who are associated together in the bond of a common fellowship, for scientific investigations; and for cherishing those truly Christian adornments, brotherly love, relief and truth.

It would occupy a longer time than could be permitted me on this anniversary, in telling you how Free-

masonry has released the martyr from persecution, the captive from his chains, and turned aside the warrior's sword from falling on his antagonist. It has soothed the sufferer on a sick bed, relieved the distressed from penury, the widow and orphan from destitution. Such are some of the benefits which our ancient and honorable Institution has conferred on our fellow creatures; and, like the good Samaritan, it continues to dispense its bounty amid the selfishness of a cold and chilling world.

Finally, brethren, permit me to remind you of those distinguished ornaments that mark your honorable fraternity: love to God and man. The Bible you are to solemnly regard, as the free gift of God to man, the rule of life and practice, the pillar and ground of truth; and it is only by taking heed to its light, that we can walk securely through the dark valley, guided by that Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Give a renewed proof this day of your continued sympathy for suffering humanity, by cheering stricken spirits with the wine and oil of your Christian benevolence; and let the world see, that if there is a threefold cord which unites Free and Accepted Masons in the bonds of fraternal fellowship, they are not so unmindful of the wants of their fellow-creatures, as to wrap themselves in the garment of selfish indifference, and pass by on the other side. Remember, also, my Brethren, that whilst you are to fear God, you are to honor your Sovereign, and show by your example the beneficial effects of the moral and religious training of your time-honored fraternity. May the words of one of the brightest ornaments of your Ancient Order, conveyed to us in the text, be treasured in all our memories, that "If we walk in the light, asGod is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

Let your benevolence this morning be the spontaneous gift of thankful and loving hearts; and may God accept the service, and bless the giver, for His dear Son's sake, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and whose grace alone can prepare us for the inheritance of the saints in light.

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Brotherly Love:

A SERMON

PREACHED ON MONDAY, DEC. 28TH, 1868, IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH,
CHARLOTTETOWN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND,
BEFORE THE

Worshipful Masters and Brethren

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ST. JOHN AND VICTORIA

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SERMON II.

"*Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*"—1 JOHN, iv. 2.

In selecting a subject for the occasion which has brought us together this morning in the house of prayer, our thoughts are naturally drawn to the writings of St. John the Evangelist—one of your Patron Saints, of whose death we were reminded yesterday. If we read the Gospel which the Beloved Disciple penned, or the Epistles that bear his name, we observe running through his writings, like a golden thread, the grace of charity, or love, which was so beautifully exemplified in the Master's life and conversation; the grace which shall one day leaven the mass of humanity, when the Lord Jesus shall appear in his second advent of glory, and make all things new—"and there shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." My brethren, I have chosen a theme for our anniversary which describes in brief yet expressive language, the character of the Great Architect of the universe as the pattern for our imitation; and we best attain the end for which man was created, when we endeavour, by the help of Divine grace, sought for in earnest, faithful prayer, to follow, though at an immeasurable distance, the mind and will of the Infinite. The Divine Word tells us that it is in the exercise of the crowning grace of charity, we declare the

fact of our belonging to Christ; who has said, "By th... shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye ha... *love* one to another." S. John, echoing the spirit of h... Lord, says, "We know that we have passed from dea... unto life, because we *love* the brethren;" and in the co... cluding verse of the chapter that contains the text, t... beloved Apostle asserts, "This commandment have w... from God, that he who loveth God, love his broth... also."

In the words before us, St. John commends to o... notice the example of God, as worthy of our closest im... itation; and the nearer we approach to the excellen... of the Divine character of Jehovah, the more we sh... become what Adam was, when he was placed amid t... beauty and loveliness of Eden, ere sin had blunted t... finer feelings of his nature, when he reflected, in eve... feature, the mind of his Creator. I will not attempt ... describe the ruin of the noblest work of God by sin... and how he, who should have stood firm, as the pillar ... truth, became a broken column, and ruin and wretche... ness entered this world, bringing in their sad tra... Death and all our woe. I would rather occupy th... time permitted me, in suggesting for your prayerf... consideration the adoption of those principles inculcate... in the word of God, which assimilate our nature to th... Divine.

St. John has given us in the text a most cogent re... son why we should love one another: "because God h... in such a wondrous manner manifested His love to u... in sending His son to be the propitiation for our sins.

If the infinite Jehovah, who dwells in light unap... proachable by mortal eye, surrounded with myriads ... sinless intelligences, the brightest and best, who p...

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rld; pitied man, toiling in the chains of the most ab-
slavery, from which he could not liberate himself,
devised a scheme of deliverance from Satan's cruel
ndage, at such a vast price, as no human arith-
tic can count, nor the utmost stretch of angel minds
nceive, because human Redemption could be accom-
shed in no other way; then we are presented with an
gument as powerful as it should be convincing, why
should love God, and love one another.

We have just celebrated the Christmas Festival, that
minds us of the wondrous incarnation of Deity, whose
vent was carolled by angel choirs, in their sweetly re-
cing song that startled the watchers on the plain of
thlehem; and the burden of their song was, "Glory
God in the highest. and on earth peace, good-will to-
ard men." Then followed, in the commemorations of
e Christian year, the anniversary of St. Stephen's
ath, the first Christian martyr, who, like one of old,
aled the truth with his blood. Yesterday was the an-
ersary of the death of your illustrious Patron, St. John
Evangelist, whose life is worthy of your best and
rnest study, not only as being so richly imbued with
e spirit of his Master and Lord, but illustrating, in his
ntact with mankind, the winning grace which earned
r him the enviable distinction, "The Disciple whom
sus loved."

To-day, we are reminded of the death of the Innocents
Bethlehem and the surrounding coasts, by the cruel
ict of Herod the Great; and we may dimly picture to
ur minds the sad wail of those Israelitish mothers at the
rbarous slaughter of their little ones; but the day that

heard their cry of anguish on earth saw them rejoici
spirits in the Paradise of God. Thus we have singula
grouped together, in the brief space of four consecuti
days, what may be regarded as a too faithful delineati
of human life, in which sorrow and joy are strang
blended together.

I need not take up, link by link, the evidenc
of God's love to man in creation and Provide
to prove to you how richly our Heavenly Father h
provided for His creatures happiness and comfort in t
loveliness of creation, the adornment of the intelle
and all our varied mercies, social and religious: but
would remind you of that wondrous exhibition of Divi
love, the gift of a Savior, the greatest God could give
man receive—which so astonished the angelic intel
gences, that it surpasses the utmost stretch of th
gifted minds to fathom its depths. If, then, God
loved the world as to eclipse all other of the Divi
manifestations, by the gift of His only Son to die
man's salvation; if the great and glorious Jehovah, w
was supremely happy without us, moved by the pur
and most disinterested benevolence and love, made su
a vast sacrifice for man's happiness, temporally a
spiritually, to which we had no claim, how it shou
move us to pray for the help of Divine grace, to cul
vate the spirit of charity or love to God and in our int
course with each other; and what a blessed change wou
be effected in the habits of society in general if this heave
ly grace were daily cherished in the hearts of men. Ho
altered would the world be, how smooth the path of li
which sin has made rough and rugged, if men would b
strive to be followers of God as dear children, and lo
one another. But until this heavenly grace influenc

mens' hearts and minds, in vain may we hope for practical illustrations of the apostolic exhortation in the text, and this world will continue to be what sin and Satan have made it, the scene of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.

I need dwell no longer on the advantages that accrue from the practice of this cardinal grace of love. Reason and Revelation combine in declaring "how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is a fulfilling of the new commandment—the royal law of love. It unites God to His intelligent creatures, and His people to Him; and confederates together minds of kindred character. To promote the exercise of this Divine quality, and its cognate virtues, as well as the pursuit of scientific knowledge, your ancient and honorable Order has been instituted; and we best commend its principles to the world, when we exhibit, in our intercourse with each other, Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. Let the high moral character of your time-honored fraternity, whose landmarks to the initiated are neither obscure nor doubtful, be maintained in its fullest integrity. Follow your illustrious Patrons, S. S. John, as they followed Christ, and you shall walk the round of life's pilgrimage supported by the Friend who is more than a Brother, until you are brought into the presence chamber of the King of Kings; where, in the light of the glorious temple not made with hands, we shall have explained to us the way in which we were led, and learn from the Master Himself those mysteries, which are now hidden in the impenetrable depths of futurity. Let love to God and man mark your daily lives. Then you will have the evidence that you have passed from death unto life, encouraged in the exercise

of this fraternal grace by a sense of gratitude to Almighty God for His love to man, in sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

In conclusion, my Brethren, let the period of the year at which we have arrived remind us that the sands of life's glass are fast ebbing out, and time is bearing us on its ever-flowing stream to the ocean of eternity.

In a few brief hours and 1868 will have mingled with the past. Another portion of the hand breadth of our existence will be gone for ever; and how little may remain to each of us! So uncertain is the tenure of our lives that we cannot tell what will be on the morrow. How many of our brethren, during the year that is now almost gone, have reached the bourne whence no traveller returns? and, ere 1869 shall have been succeeded by a new date, you and I may enter the house appointed for all living.

By all that is solemn in life, in death and eternity, strive to cultivate more diligently those graces of the spirit, Faith, Hope and Love. Make sure, my beloved brethren, that you are in the endeared remembrance of of the Lord our Shepherd, then, as you enter the dark valley, you may confidently affirm "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me," for He who "has the keys of hell and of death" says to all who have taken Him for their Elder Brother and their Friend "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and on the morning of the Resurrection He, who once came in the flesh as a frail and feeble infant for man, (yet mighty to save,) will appear at His second advent as the Lion of Judah's tribe, by whose almighty power His people shall be raised from their graves to share in the undying, fraternal love of Heaven, where the exercise of this all-excelling grace is the delight of the perfected.

