

**A SERMON; WITH AN
APPENDIX. TO
WHICH ARE ADDED
PRAYERS FOR THE TIMES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649347636

A sermon; with an appendix. To which are added prayers for the times by James Skinner

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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JAMES SKINNER

**A SERMON; WITH AN
APPENDIX. TO
WHICH ARE ADDED
PRAYERS FOR THE TIMES**

A HOLY ZEAL FOR HER "LITTLE CHILDREN"
THE PRESENT HOPE OF THE CHURCH :

A SERMON;
WITH AN APPENDIX.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

Prayers for the Times.

BY

JAMES SKINNER, A.M.

A PRIEST OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.



"Lo, children and the fruit of the womb are an heritage and gift
that cometh of the Lord. Like as the arrows in the band of the giant,
even so are the young children"—Ps. cxxvii. 4, 5.

Τὰ τέκνα ὄμοιο εἶσι ἐν Χειρὶ καὶ δόλῳ μετελαμβάνουσιν· μαθήσονται
εἰ κατανοήσουσιν ἐκ τῆς Θεῆς ἰσχυρί, τί ἔργα ἔργη ἐκ τῆς Θεῆς δόξανται,
καὶ ἡ φύσις αὐτῶν καλὴ καὶ μέγας, καὶ ὅλον κάνας τοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ ὄντας
ἀποστερημένους ἐκ καθαρῆς δικαιοσύνης.—St. Clem. ad Cor. i. 21.

LONDON:

JAMES BURNS, 17 PORTMAN STREET,

PORTMAN SQUARE.

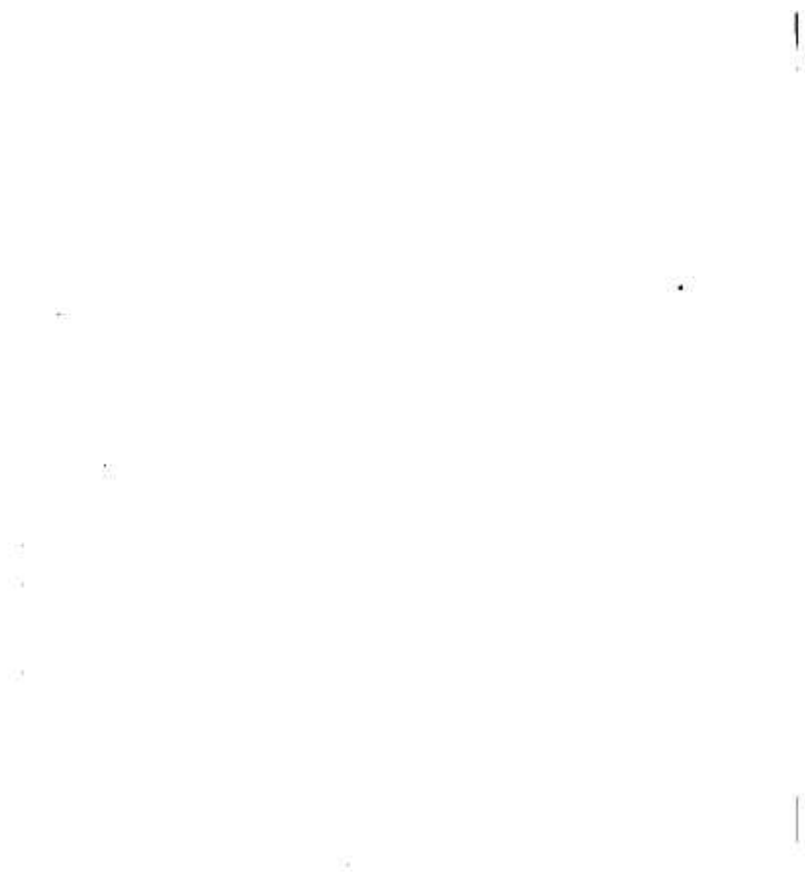
1843.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY LEVY, ROBINSON, AND FRANKLYN,
Great New Street, Fetter Lane.

TO

W. N. A.

WHO, WITH "FEARLESS LOVE AND HOPE UNCLOYED,"
UNNOTICED BUT NOT UNBLESSSED,
LABOURS FOR THE LAMBS OF CHRIST'S FLOCK,
COMMITTED TO HIS CHARGE;
TO WHOM
THESE DAYS OF TRIAL
ARE
DAYS OF FAITH AND PRAYER;
THESE PAGES,
IN TOKEN OF HOLY BROTHERHOOD AND AFFECTION,
ARE DEDICATED.



PREFACE.

THE substance of the following sermon was preached in aid of the Infant Schools of a large parish in the chief town of the East Riding of Yorkshire. To originality, either in thought or language, the writer lays no claim. It has occurred, however, to him, that the object which led him, with specific reference to a district not blessed with more than an ordinary share of the unanimity common to our unhappy times, to insist upon the basis of our Christian responsibilities, as applicable to the claims of infants, may, with some measure of benefit, be extended to a wider sphere. At a season when men are looking painfully around them for remedies against evils which alarm, and for solutions to difficulties which perplex them,—earnest minds seeking for aid above and beyond mere facts and “narratives,” and restless and curious souls loving to be tempted with ever-recurring “disclosures” to keep alive their morbid fever,—at a time when zeal for individual systems, and a general sinking of “mutual forbearance,” are tending fatally to the manifestation of personal jealousies; it is believed, and hoped, and prayed for, that some safe and wholesome vent may be found, at least for the parochial clergy, whence their sorrows for the past, their fears for the present, and their hopes for the future, may expend themselves.

Our faith in the all-powerful and all-merciful Son of God, "the King of the saints, and Prince of the Catholic Church," will suffice to carry us through. The past, with all its record of associations formed, and schemes propounded,—the indignation and zeal, the caution and fear, the ardour and anxiety, which it witnessed, is gone. It is with Him who ordered it. The present, with all its trials and temptations, its presumptions and its fallings away, its promises and its deceits, is with us,—with us to be used,—and He is also with us, who can direct us to use it aright.

The future is to us a mystery; but to Him who is from everlasting to everlasting, with all its catalogue of ends and issues, fulfilments and completions, it is as clear as the sun at noon. But dark as are the results of God's providence to us, we are yet His instruments—so far as He wills to make us so—and with the *future* in our view, it is our main and chief duty, for the *present*, steadily and calmly and faithfully to work.

In this thought, then, is the vent for all our fears and anxieties. God has been pleased to visit us with present sorrows—rivalry, and division, and heart-burnings, and discord,—defections from the faith and from filial duty,—misunderstandings, and recriminations, and rebukings, and blasphemies:—where is the remedy? In mutual fault-finding, and murmurings, and unquiet discontent? God forbid. In controversy,—mere cold negations, or high and heated assertions? God forbid. Where, but in the calm, deliberate, and hallowed conviction, that our HEAD is with us still—our very sorrows are tokens of His presence,—that our duty is to *work with Him*, and bring a glorious future *out of* a discordant, but not an unpromising present. "No misery is reckoned more

than common or human, if God so dispose that we pass through it, and come safe to shore; even as, contrariwise, men do not use to think those flourishing days happy which do end with tears."¹

But in times of danger and difficulty, a parent's first thoughts are for his children. And if evil days *have* fallen upon our Church, it is full time that we secured her "little ones," the "lambs of the flock," from being victims to the evil. If brighter days are hoped for, and a happier and more blessed portion is anticipated for the Church, it is full time that a holier and a firmer band of soldiers were in training to do her service, and to be worthy of her high behests.²

¹ Hooker, Ecc. Pol. v. 765.

² "If judgments descend upon ourselves, we are to take another course:—not to inquire into particulars to find out the proportions (for that can only be a design to part with just so much as we must needs), but to mend all that is amiss; for then only can we be secure to remove the *deans*, when we keep nothing within us, or about us, that may provoke God to jealousy or wrath."

"Of old the prophets had it in commission to reprove the popular iniquity of nations, and the confederate sins of kingdoms; and in this *Christianity altered nothing*. And when this is done modestly, prudently, humbly, and patiently, oftentimes the tables turn immediately, but *always* in due time; and a great alteration in a kingdom becomes the greatest blessing in the world, and fastens the Church, or the crown, or the public peace, in bands of great continuance and security; and it may be the *next age* shall feel the benefits of our sufferance and repentance. And therefore, as we must endeavour to secure it, so we must not be too decretory in the case of others, or disconsolate or diffident in our own, when it may so happen that all succeeding generations shall see that God pardoned us and loved us, even when He smote us. Let us all learn to fear and walk humbly. The Churches of Laodicea and Colosse suffered a great calamity within a little while after the Spirit of God had sent them two epistles by the ministry of St.