

**THE FINAL APPEAL IN MATTERS OF
FAITH. A SERMON PREACHED IN ST.
GEORGE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH,
SOUTHWARK, ON SUNDAY, THE
17TH OF MARCH, 1850**

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The final appeal in matters of faith. A sermon preached in St. George's Catholic Church, Southwark, on Sunday, the 17th of March, 1850 by N. Wiseman

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N. WISEMAN

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A

SERMON

PREACHED IN

ST. GEORGE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH,
SOUTHWARK,

ON SUNDAY, THE 17TH OF MARCH, 1850,

BY

THE RIGHT REV. N. WISEMAN,

BISHOP OF MELIPOTAMUS, V. A. L.

LONDON:

THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON.

A SERMON,

&c.

“MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD.”

JOHN xviii. 36.

On this day, my dear Brethren, on which the Church commences her solemn commemoration of our blessed Redeemer's Passion, I would gladly have addressed myself to that most tender and most profitable subject. I should have been glad to introduce you into the sorrowful commencement of our Passion-tide; but there are times when it may appear as though the very finger of God, through the workings of His Providence, points out to us themes which it would be a neglect of duty to pass by, in those more particularly whose office it is to endeavour to direct the thoughts and judgments of those committed to their charge, so as to suggest to them what they should fear, what they should hope, and, what is of far more importance to us, for what they should pray.

You are all aware that within these few days there has occurred an event calculated, according to the opinion of all men, in a most important, and, perhaps to us, in a most consoling way, to affect the

state of Religion in this country, and, more particularly the position of that Establishment, which, under the name of the Church of England, is most especially connected with the religious and spiritual destinies of the great mass of the people. You are aware, in fact,—for I know well what has brought you hither in such multitudes,—you are aware, that I am about to speak to you clearly and definitely, according to my humble but sincere judgment, respecting a late most important decision, which affects necessarily the doctrines as well as the position of that Body to which I have alluded; a decision which I know not how I can better characterise, than by saying, that it suggests to me, and I am sure it has suggested to many, the thought,—“Is this the Kingdom of God? Is this the Kingdom of Christ, which is not of *this* world? Is that which has been so judged by powers which at once strike us as of earth, earthly, the Kingdom that owns no mastership, no authority here below, that cannot be transmitted through the ordinary channels by which earthly rule is handed down? *Can* this be the Kingdom of Christ, which is not in any way a *Kingdom of this world?*” Such, my Brethren, is truly, then, my intention. Much that I shall have to say to you will bear the form of an historical sketch; because it is necessary to have clear principles respecting the mode in which the Church has ever upheld her authority, in order to come to a just judgment respecting that decision which holds the minds of so many, trembling, at this moment, in the balance; scarcely knowing whether it may not

prove a final and fatal judgment with regard to that ecclesiastic Polity which it mainly affects.

When our blessed Redeemer, at this season upon which we are entering, was pleased to deliver himself into the hands of sinners, he allowed himself to be led from tribunal to tribunal, from judge to judge, but recognising not the authority of any of them in his regard, he simply *refused to plead*. When it was necessary to assert his Divine authority; when he was asked, if he was "The Christ, the Son of the living God;" when he was questioned respecting his Kingdom; *he answered*: because he was bound to avow that very principle, on which he refused to answer else. But when they began to question him respecting his disciples and the doctrine that he had taught, then Jesus simply *held his peace*. He was judicially questioned by Annas and Caiphas; he was authoritatively interrogated by the Jewish President; he was mockingly arraigned before the king of his people; and yet to one and all he *refused to plead*. He bowed his head to their buffets; He bent his back to their scourges; He stretched forth his hands upon their Cross; He laid bare his heart to their lance; He suffered every penalty, every consequence; though by a word he might have escaped them.

And when that heart was thus laid open, there came forth from it a mysterious flow.—The Adam of the new Covenant was cast into the sleep of God, and forth from his side went forth his Bride, the Eve of the new Law—the Church of God;—she came forth, as is beautifully and by a singular concur-

rence expressed by the two greatest Doctors of the Greek and Latin Church, placed before us but two days ago by the Church in her office,—she came forth under the purest Sacramental type, in that Water which regenerates unto eternal life, in that Blood which nourishes and quickens unto everlasting glory.

The Church, then, was at once the Spouse and yet the Child of Christ—born upon Calvary, the bed upon which she received her birth, was the Cross, where the throes of the Divine Heart gave her her first existence. She came forth as the child of persecution, as the child of suffering; and she commenced at once her career of struggle, and of ceaseless wrestling, with the Powers of earth.

It is easy to observe, my dear Brethren, by what natural transitions the very Word of God leads us gradually, in the History of the Church, away from Jerusalem, where it first sprung; guiding us as though by the thread of its history, in the life and actions of Saint Paul. We follow him step by step, from, and back to, Judea, till his final departure; when, shaking off from his feet the dust of that now outcast city, he makes his way through Asia and Greece, until at length he reaches, what is clearly to be the final term of his Apostleship, the Imperial city of Rome; where he either meets, or is soon joined by, the other, the greatest, the chief Head of the Apostles, the Head of the Church under Christ, Saint Peter, the first Bishop and Pope of that See.

In Ecclesiastical history, how soon we turn our