

SERMONS

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Sermons by Charles Wadsworth

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CHARLES WADSWORTH

SERMONS



I am most truly
Yours
Chas. Wadsworth

CHARLES WADSWORTH was born in Litchfield, Conn., May 8, 1814. He was graduated from Union College in 1837 and entered Princeton Theological Seminary in 1838

His first pastorate was in the Second Presbyterian Church of Troy, N. Y. It began in 1842 and continued eight years.

From Troy, in 1850, he removed to Philadelphia, Pa., and became the pastor of the Arch Street Presbyterian Church, where he labored twelve years, preaching constantly to throngs.

In 1862 he accepted a call from Calvary Presbyterian Church, of San Francisco, Cal. In this church he remained seven years, during which period his great popularity as a preacher continued unabated.

He resigned this charge in 1869 and returned to Philadelphia, becoming pastor of the Third Reformed Church. In 1878 this congregation became united with Immanuel Presbyterian Church under his pastoral care. Here he labored until the date of his death, which occurred on April 1, 1882. It resulted from an attack of pneumonia of but a few days' duration.

He left a wife, two sons and a daughter. Dr. Wadsworth was a born poet, an orator of the highest order, and ranked among the most eminent and illustrious American divines of his day.

NOTE



THESE discourses have been carefully copied from the original manuscripts, and are reproduced here nearly word for word as written by the author's own pen.

They were prepared by him simply for pulpit delivery.

Probably had he consented to their publication at all, he would have revised and remodeled many, if not all of them, before allowing them to appear in "cold type."

But it has been thought best, since his pen is laid aside forever, to attempt no change in them, and to present them in this volume as nearly as possible as they were left by him in their original draft.

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GOD'S TEMPLE

"Ye are the Temple of the living God."

II. Corinthians, vi, 16.



GREAT fault to-day, alike in our Bible reading, and Bible exposition, is a too ready and too rigid analysis. A fondness for critical investigation, is a characteristic of the age. We have no reverence for ancient and original forms. We are sacrificing the impression of the true and the beautiful, to an ambitious searching after their essence or elements. We are digging down the mountains, that we may classify their strata; and mutilating spring's fairest flowers, to perfect our scientific botany; and killing the bird of heaven, that we may measure the tension of its muscle, and detect the secret of its fine mechanism, and tearing the human body to pieces to wonder at the marvels of its matchless anatomy.

And this, perhaps, is all well, because great lessons are learned in the operation, and so full is God's universe of mountains, and birds, and flowers, that, spite of our largest mutilations, they will yet press upon our observation in their original forms, and teach us their finer lessons, as unutilated thoughts of the creator.

But alas, that this habit should have gone so mightily with us into the sacredness of revelation till every beautiful figure of the Bible is subjected to the same uncompromising analysis, and all the sweet flowers in the garden of God are cut up as specimens, and the glorious landscapes of divine truth in the Bible are mutilated by systematic theology; its spreading plains, measured off into plough-ground by the acre, and the forests crown-

ing its hills, as with a diadem, felled and measured as theological cord-wood.

In other words we do not let the strong and glowing figures of the Bible come to us as they were designed to come, in all the force of their naked and natural loveliness. We want to know the exact theological value of every oracle, and so cut the flower to pieces and tear off the rich dress of the metaphor, and thus lose the fresh and fervent impression—the very expressions they were meant to make in their magnificent rhetoric.

We forget that *figures* are the earliest forms of language, and positively the most powerful expressions of truth, and that, as a flower loses half its eloquence when mutilated by a botanist, so Bible metaphors lose half their sweetest meaning when subjected to the philosophic analysis of language. Take, for example, the figure of the text, "Ye are the Temple of the Living God," and how seldom do we let this, and its fine parallelisms, press upon the thought in their un mutilated eloquence.

Oh, we must find some philosophic meaning in them, which, perhaps, the inspired writer never thought of, or, we must at least, so divest it of its poetic significance as to reduce its whole meaning to the truism, that, as a temple was a building dedicated to a Deity, so a Christian is entirely consecrate to the service of God. This we call the theologic value of the text, and what we find fault with in the philosophic analysis is that, like a flower under the knife of a botanist, the text loses its fresh and fervent impression in the process that would simplify it. This excessive analysis is to be resisted. Instead of subjecting the language uttered eighteen centuries ago to our own severe canons of interpretation, we are, so far as may be, to place ourselves in the condition of its primitive