

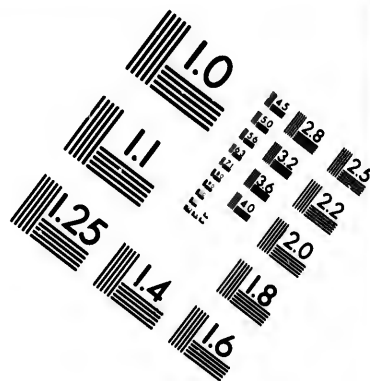
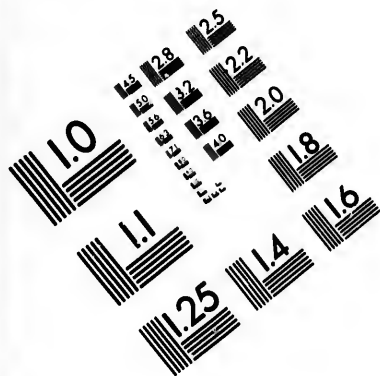
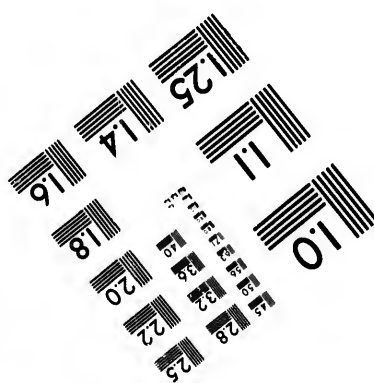
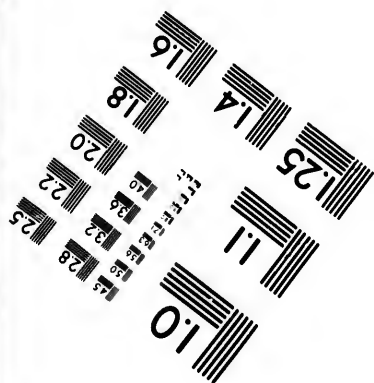
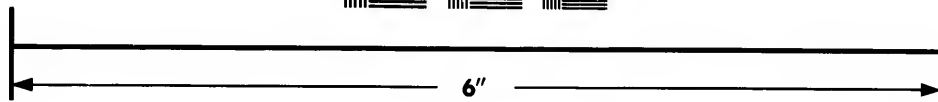
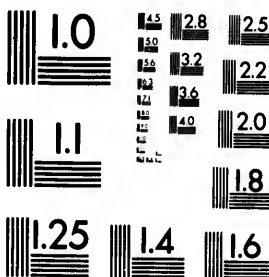


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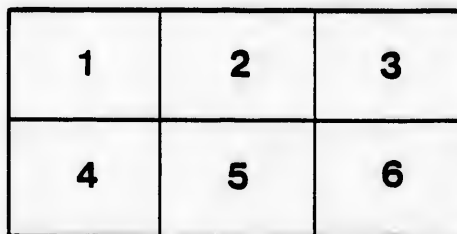
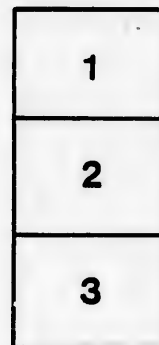
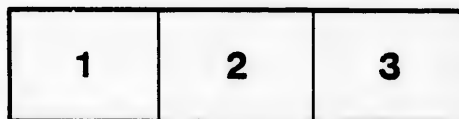
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A SERMON

PREACHED BY

FATHER BURE

DECEMBER 16, 1871

In the Church of St. Saviour, Dublin

*Printed by J. H.
Huntley & Co.*



FATHER BURKE.

IMPRESSIVE SERMON ON "DEATH AND JUDGMENT."

On Tuesday, the 16th of December, the Very Rev. Thomas Burke addressed to a large congregation, in the Church of St. Saviour, Dominick Street, Dublin, the following eloquent discourse :—

"It is decreed for all men once to die, and after this judgment." Dearly beloved, when we consider the certainty of death, and the last day—when we consider the tremendous question, which can only be solved at the hour and moment of our death, that that moment decides our fate, and our doom for an endless eternity, we must all acknowledge that it is a terrible thing to die. And yet, if our fate would be ended—that is, if it were an annihilation of the whole being, like the death of the brute beast, then surely death would be stripped of all its terrors, and no man would be afraid to die. One moment, one hour of excruciating pain, and then the end of all in eternal sleep. But this is not the death of man. Man's soul will not die. The body remains a lifeless, motionless thing. The pulse has ceased to beat, the heart to throb, every sense to perform its functions. The eyes in the body no longer see, the tongue is silent forever. A worthless and lifeless thing the body remains, soon to pass into the grave that it may mingle once more with the earth from which it sprung. Oh ! but the awful soul—everlasting, imperishable, immortal, eternal—the life that is within us, the thing that thinks, the being that feels, the spiritual character within us which says, "This is good, seek it ; that is bad, avoid it ;" the being of undying and immortal life that is in us—oh, that cannot die ! It may grieve at separation ; it may be unwilling to leave that body in whose sensuality it found its home ; it may be unwilling to leave the thing of time and of earth on which it wasted its moral affection ; but it cannot die. Death can only bring the soul, in all its life, in all the vividness of its power, into the presence of an awful God. After death is the judgment. What does this mean ? It means that the moment of death shall be also the moment of judgment. It means, dearly beloved, that whilst we lie there on our death-bed, with friends around us, going noiselessly about, and speaking to each other with bated breath, gazing on those eyes that were full of life and those lips that moved a moment ago in agony, now passed away. Whilst friends are looking at those sightless eyes, to see if the speculation of life be there ; whilst one is feeling the pulse that will never beat again, whilst another puts a hand, sensitive for its love, on that heart, to try and discover the throbbing of the lingering life, and another looks out for the breath of life, whilst they ask each other is he dead, and those whom we love most dearly restrain their grief, and are afraid to cry out—at least, not yet—lest they might disturb the passing soul ; whilst they are there deliberating whether they shall pray to God for the living, or for one already dead ;

there, in the very room in which we die ; there, in the very presence and in the midst of those friends around the death-bed ; there, whilst the last remains of animal life is still warm within us, whilst it seems to them the yielding flesh retains some touch of life, whilst the spirit is not yet passed away ; there, in the midst of them—the moment the last cry of agony separates the soul from the body—there and ther the soul, bursting away from the trammels of time and rushing into eternity ; there, on the very threshold of that eternity, finds herself face to face with God. The soul, all alone, without a friend, without a supporter, without a companion either in its sorrow or its joy—without a voice to plead for it, without a powerful hand to protect it, all alone, all defenceless, with nothing but the evidence of bygone years to depend on—that soul shall find itself face to face with God—with the Lord Jesus Christ who, coming down from Heaven at the summons of his own angels, to execute his own sentence, will be present there for judgment. The Lord God, oh ! how changed from Him who was a God of love and mercy. Now there is no vestige of mercy there, no trace of mercy on the face of God, but the awful expressions of a knowledge that nothing can escape and of a justice that will leave no sin undetected and of an anger excited at the vision of thy sins. The soul, all alone, oh ! think of it, the soul of him who dies mocking the Lord Jesus Christ, the soul of the man who made use of his last breath in life to say, "Oh, there is no God, no eternity." These were the last words of many an infidel—of those leaders of the infidelity of our age who have passed away, who died with a smile of contempt for Jesus Christ on their face, and with words of infamous blasphemy—the last words that ever he spoke, the words of Voltaire—"He, the Son of God, He, the Redeemer of all ! He was but an infamous impostor !" The holiest teaching of their Church failed to prove to them that He was the Lord, the God of earth. Now He appears to them, not as the God of mercy, not as the God of love, but as the God of vengeance whose divinity in every power and faculty—perfection—shall reveal their condemnation. The soul of the drunkard who for many years set up in his heart and worshipped the base degraded idol of his own sensuality. The impure man who spent his life in the adoration of the asmodeus of lust ; the negligent, careless man, he who had a heart for his friends, for his family, for everyone, except his God. Alone in the presence of Jesus Christ to hear the verdict of his judgment. Dearly beloved, what shall be the subject matter of that judgment. No matter how deeply that man may have been in the maze of self-love and self-deception, no matter how he may have contrived to delude himself with a false conscience, the skilful hand of the Lord reveals thought, word, and deed of the past life. It may have been centuries of years. Every day's record of graces given and despised, of opportunities offered and lost, of temptations occurring and consented to, of sin committed. Vice and virtue appear as clear to the eye of that soul, as their enormity in the eyes of God. To that soul will come clear, unmistakable, well-defined evidence of every guilty thought, word and action which filled up the series of that life which is passed. Every thought, word and act of our lives will come clear in the eyes of the astonished soul, and in the terrible eyes of Jesus Christ. To-day, dearly beloved, our memory, the spiritual life within us is hampered and confined by the action of sin in its prison, the body, and we are unable to exercise the power of the soul. A man to acquire a little knowledge must study painfully and laboriously for years. Slowly, gradually, and painfully does that knowledge increase in the mind. One idea covering another, labored, brought out with pain and care. To-day this precious memory fails to bring us back the record of yesterday. Who amongst us can remember everything that passed through his mind, every word from his

lips but a week ago—nay, even yesterday,—because his soul is incapable of the fulness of its spiritual action; but the moment the soul springing into eternity, putting forth the wings of its spiritual existence, takes its flight, divested from its mortal clay, and is no longer fettered and confined, that moment it resumes its power and privileges—that moment its knowledge becomes as the knowledge of an angel of God, and it sees all things at a glance, and comprehends all things without labor, study, and pain. That soul will assume its spiritual powers, so that memory will bring forth the full treasury of every thought, word, and action of its life. Oh! the visions of the long-forgotten hours will troop back on our observation—the follies of our youth, the first words of obscenity that ever defiled our lips, the first impure thought that ever entered into our hearts, drying up and blighting them—all the other follies of our youth—the actions that were forgotten almost as soon as committed—the first throbs of guilty pleasure and the unholy days of our manhood—the days that passed so pleasantly—the days when some sin was the burden of our daily life, the substance of our daily joy, the false words of uncharitable malice, the pulsations of revenge, the long-forgotten enmity of days and years—all will come back clear and defined before the eyes of the soul, as one act of the life. But not only in our eyes will these things appear, saying, “Don’t you remember us, arising in the form of words of obscenity or infidelity, saying ‘I am come now to confront thee and confound thee,’” but in the eyes of Jesus Christ. Oh! the Lord God of infinite purity will look for an instant on the evidence of our sins, and will turn away horror-stricken and disgusted at the sight. The Lord God of infinite love will be enraged at the sound of every false and wicked word that fell from our lips, which we shall say again. Think of it, realize it if you can. The soul standing before God, in an instant will have to think under the very eyes of the Saviour every thought; will have to speak in the very ears of Jesus Christ every word of evil; will have to perform before the terrible eyes of God every evil, base action that ever disgraced and defiled that mortal—there, in the presence of the body, will these terrible sins of life be re-enacted in an instant for the purpose of judgment. Consider for a moment He who was the witness during the long years of life of those wicked thoughts, words, and actions. He who in the greatness of His mighty patience bore with us so long, and allowed us to insult and outrage Him and put every slight on Him that every evil deed and passion suggested, will come and say, “Oh soul, I bore with thee for forty, fifty, sixty years. I bore with thee, hoping that the happy day would come when thou wouldst correspond with My grace. Now I am come and find thee in all thy sins. For thee there is no more patience, mercy, or love in My heart. I am not come now in thy behalf, but on behalf of My Eternal Father.” Who will be our accusers? We read in the Scripture, dearly beloved, that the devil, the fallen angel, not only goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, destroying souls, making a thousand faults of human passion and wickedness; tempting one man to one sin, another man to another; caring little what the nature of the sin may be, provided it draws the soul to hell. He drags one on the path of impiety, another of dishonesty, another on the byway of impurity, another on the broad path of drunkenness, caring little in what way he may succeed, provided he can tax that sin on the soul. Now we read of this same demon that he has the courage to present himself in the presence of God. You remember the words recorded in the Book of God. “And on that day,” says the inspired writer, “when the sons of God”—that is to say the angels—“came before the face of the Lord, the devil also came.” He did not hesitate to come to Him. He said to the Lord, “I have come down,

oh God! I have ruined so many souls and made so many enemies of Thine." And God was obliged to say, "Hast thou seen my son Job? Go and tempt him." The devil answered God, "Give me power over him to try him. Afflict him, and I swear that he will curse Thee in Thy face." The devil, as recorded in Scripture, had the courage to come before God, and he will have the courage to come and claim his own against the claim of God. Therefore, at the hour of judgment, the devil, if he has any power, will come and say, "Oh Christ, hear is a soul awaiting Thy judgment, and that the body and soul are mine. Thou were the Creator and Redeemer, oh God. Thou alone shouldst have all claim to that body and soul, still"—for even the devil will speak the truth in the presence of the God-man—"oh! Christ, that body was the slum of the earth. Thou didst make it from out the breath of Thy mouth. Thou didst create that soul new from Heaven, I acknowledge, oh! Christ, Thou didst make every sacrifice to redeem it, stopping at nothing that the ingratitude of man put before you—the humiliation of your Divinity; you embraced the Cross of Calvary, the crown of thorns, and an ignominious death; all I acknowledge, oh, Christ! for the sake of that soul that now stands before Thee; and now I swear before Thee, oh, Christ! that instead of serving Thee, instead of loving Thee, instead of adhering to Thee, that soul and body, of their own free will, became my most faithful servant. I was the demon of crime; the brand of my crime is on it; I was the demon of impurity. I claim this soul and that body. Look on them, oh, Christ, and Thou wilt see on soul and body the brand of shame. I was the demon of drunkenness. I claim this soul and that body, for I swear to you, oh, Christ! this is the soul and that is the body of a drunkard." The devil will come and shame the Lord Jesus Christ—shame the Son of God. Reproaching Him he will say, "Look on that, Lord, oh, God! all Thou hast done for this creature. You became man for him, became his brother, taking a body like that, a human soul like that, a human soul like this. You became his brother, a sharer in his manhood. Behold the shame he put upon you. He selected the meanest, lowest, worst of devils, and before them he prostrated that body and soul which thou in Thy goodness and mercy created and redeemed." What will our excuse be, dearly beloved, in that ominous crisis? All heaven shall be struck down silent before the voice of God. What shall we say? Denying the evidence of our past lives, denying the accusations of the devil, shall we say, "Oh, Son of God! it is false. I was not the base sensual man that these false demons have represented me." Christ our Lord will then return from the evidence of the devils to the evidence of our own conscience. Our Lord will say, "Oh, soul, look on thy own works. There they are; you see them clearly; are not the evidence of these works clearly against thee? I am to-day the judge who have been for years the witness of thy sins. You sought, oh guilty one, the ways of drunkenness, and the shadow of the night to cover your iniquity; but I was there, and in the sight of my mind the midnight was as noonday. You covered your sins with the mantle of hypocrisy and deceit, but I saw it all." Shall the soul say, "Have pity on me, oh God! because I was weak, and temptations and my passions were strong in the days of inconsiderate youth. I did not reflect, I was so weak and the enemy so strong." And Christ our Lord will answer, "Had you not my Omnipotence at your command? Why did you stand alone? Why did you face your enemy alone when you might have had me, the Lord God Omnipotent, at your right hand to defend you? When I was in my tabernacle on the altar why did you not come to me? Why did you cast aside your God with sneers? Why did you walk in the path of iniquity?" Had that soul said, "Lord, those around me were so bad," our Lord would say, "Why did you

seek evil society and bad company? Why did you cast your lot with sinners? Had I not my sons on earth to advise you and strengthen you? Why did you despise them and load them with scorn?" Shall we say, "Have pity on me, oh God, for I knew no better." Christ our Lord will answer, "I say thou liest; you did know better. Had you not the words and instructions of thy Church? Had you not the sacraments? Every element that the mind of God could devise and every means that the power of God could create for your sanctification?" Can the soul in that hour of bitter mercy appeal to the mercy of God, and perhaps in its despair it may cry out, "Oh, Son of God! remember Thy sufferings, Have pity on me; cast me not away from thee forever." And our Lord will answer, "Have I not warned you that the hour of mercy would expire with thy death, and then I would meet thee in judgment? Now there will be no more mercy, but all stern justice." Shall we call to the angels and saints of God? appeal to Mary and say, "Oh Mother, speak to thy Son, and implore his mercy?" No, no. Before the anger and justice of God every angel and saint in heaven will tremble. The Virgin, Mother and Queen of Heaven will tremble before the anger of her awful Son. No, there is only one excuse that we can make—only one defence—but, blessed be God, that excuse and defence is sure to save. What is that?

We may say in that hour of judgment, "It is true, oh God, I cannot deny the actions of my youth; there are the follies of my manhood and the sins that I committed. With shame and sorrow I acknowledge them. Nay, more, I know that they are sufficient to cast me into hell before Thy face; and oh, Judge, this is not the first time these things appeared before Thee. This cause has come to Thy court before Thy sentence was pronounced. There is only one sentence for mercy or anger, there is only one judgment. Oh, God, I have come to Thy Court before, and laid before Thy face these sins. Of my own act in humiliation, sorrow, and tears I have heard from Thy lips the words, 'I absolve thee from all thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' These words, oh Christ, I heard them. It is true they came from the lips of man unto whom Thou has said, 'Whose sins you shall forgive they shall be forgiven, whose sins you shall retain they are retained. As the Father has sent me I send.' Now, oh Lord, I bind you by your own words. You cannot judge again." If we are able to say that; if the devil's accusations were most terrible, if sins were to confront us as numberless as the ocean's sands, as red as scarlet—the most terrible that ever yet found their way to hell; if we are able to plead this—that these sins passed under the eyes of the Judge before, the Lord will say, "I have judged these sins before, I cannot judge again,"—they are no longer guilt. I care not how terrible the sin a man commits, if he turns to God, does penance, weeps for that sin, changes his life, makes that sin the abhorrence of his sorrow, expresses his heartfelt grief for having offended God—the soul is to be judged. The Lord God will say that is not sin. It is as if we never committed the sins that pass out of the tribunal of penance. The sins which the priest of God in the name and power of the Son of God has forgiven have no effect; and, therefore, to the accusations of the demons the Lord will say, "Begone to thy elements of sin; thou hast nothing to accuse this soul if his sins are forgiven, and he possesses the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding." Nothing else will save us. The tribunal of mercy to-day will be afterwards the tribunal of justice. Think of it. On this matter I feel deeply and earnestly. Every word I say to you finds an echo in my own heart. I hope I hold out for you what I hope for myself. Oh God! if I thought that every word and act of my life would rise against me in judgment, nothing would remain. I

might die and go down to hell for evermore. But against the very justice of Christ we will be able to hold up the shield of the mercy of Christ in the tribunal of penance. But if we refuse the only safeguard and shield of mercy God furnishes against His judgment; if these sins rise up that never heard the voice of the sorrowing soul, or which never felt the penitential tear—those sins that we persevered in and that we loved better than the mercy of God, that we clung to telling the God of mercy to go on His way, to take His sacraments, graces, and mercy to those who wanted them, and we would hold by our sins,—nothing can save us. Now, the devil has given his testimony, the Angel Guardian has spoken, and our own consciences. The soul stands before God, parting on its eternity, whilst He for a moment considers judgment according to His own word. I will take unto myself a moment of time, then will I judge. Oh think, dearly beloved, of that wretched soul looking on the face of God, and seeing the cloud of anger, the awful expression of divine feeling coming on the face of the Son of God, those meek and gentle eyes flashing forth his anger. The right hand with the stigma of Calvary on it lifted up in anger. That soul will hear coming slowly and terribly from the lips of the Saviour, "Thou art lost, and lost forever. No more joy, but the depth of hell's darkness forever. Depart from me to eternal pain. I know ye not; I died for you, yet I swear I know you not. The lips that now pronounce *you* doom, oh, they quivered in agony on the cross; in spite of that agony these lips breathed forth a prayer for you. The hands I now lift in malediction were nailed to the cross that thou mightest be saved from hell. Begone! Depart forever into eternal darkness." Is there no hope? that despairing soul will cry out. I cannot dwell there. Think of Thy own words, "Who is there that will be able to remain in eternal fire?" Oh, Christ! I cannot live in hell. "All I could do I have done to save thee, and now thou goest down to hell. In spite of Me, thou hast chosen thy portion. Depart into eternal flames!" Before you expose yourselves to such a doom as this, if you have no charity or consideration for your own souls, at least have some consideration for the Lord Jesus Christ. Think how His heart must be wrung with pain to say those words. It is a strange thing to speak of the heart of God as being wrung with pain. When God sent forth the deluge He was touched in His heart with infinite grief for having made man and being obliged to destroy him. Think what it must cost our Lord, who loved that poor soul he consigns to hell—that soul which he came down from heaven to save—and the outcome of such love and mercy is its condemnation. If the Lord calleth on any one here to-night, if there is one who forces Almighty God to send him into hell for all eternity, let us not bring this grief on the Sacred Heart that bled for us. Let us rather give them joy, and secure for ourselves eternal happiness, and then the words that will fall from his lips and on our hearts will be: "Come, ye beloved of my father; come, thou brother of My love; I suffered for thee, and I am glad of it; I, at least, have some return for my suffering. Come, that I may show thee to my angels and saints, and crown thee for all eternity in the regions of eternal happiness." The man who wishes this need not be frightened at the prospect, for Christ our Lord is sitting in the tribunal of mercy, and the sinner who kneels at His feet will be received with love, and his first reception will be the surest pledge that at the hour of judgment He will receive you with the same love and gladness, and make you happy in His kingdom for evermore.

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