

Mongrel Religion

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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‘So these nations feared the Lord and served their graven images, both their children, and their children’s children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.’” [2 Kings 17:41](#).

SO DO THEY unto this day,’ said the writer of the Book of Kings, who has long since passed away unto his fathers. Were he alive now he might say concerning the spiritual descendants of these Samaritans, ‘So do they unto this day.’ This base union of fearing God and serving other gods is by no means obsolete. Alas, it is too common everywhere, and to be met with where you might least expect it. From generation to generation there have been Mongrel Religionists, who have tried to please both God and the devil, and have been on both sides, or on either side, as their interest led them. Some of these wretched blenders are always hovering around every congregation, and my hope is that I may convince the consciences of some here present that they themselves are guilty, and that of them it might be said, as of these Assyrian immigrants, ‘They feared the Lord, and served their own gods.’ My sermon will by no means be an essay upon an extinct race, but it may be placed among ‘the present-day papers,’ for ‘so do they unto this day.’ He that hath ears to hear, let him hear, and to whomsoever the word shall apply let its rebuke be taken home, and through the teaching of the Holy Spirit may it produce decisive results.

I. I shall first call your attention to THE NATURE OF THIS Mongrel Religion. It had its good and bad points, for it wore a double face. *These people were not infidels*. Far from it: ‘they feared the Lord.’ They did not deny the existence, or the power, or the rights of the great God of Israel, whose name is Jehovah. They had not the pride of Pharaoh who said, ‘Who is Jehovah that I should obey his voice?’ They were not like those whom David calls ‘fools,’ who said in their hearts, ‘There is no God.’ They had faith, though only enough to produce fear. They knew that there was a God; they feared his wrath, and they tried to appease it. So far they were hopeful persons, and under the influence of a feeling which has often led up to better things. It was better to dread God than to despise him; better slavishly to fear than stupidly to forget. We would not have men so foolish as to doubt the existence of God, nor so profane as to defy him. There was something commendable about men of whom it could be said that they feared Jehovah, even though that fear was a selfish and servile one, and was by no means so efficacious upon them as it ought to have been, for it did not cause them to put away their idols.

Another good point about these mixed religionists was that they were *willing to be taught*. As soon as they found that they were not acting rightly towards the God of the land, they sent a petition to their supreme ruler, the king of Assyria, setting forth their spiritual destitution. Church and State were fused in those days, and therefore they applied to their king that he would help them in their religious distress, and he acted to the best of his light; for he sent them one or the priests of the old religion of the land. This man was a Bethelite, one who worshipped God under the symbol of an ox, which the Scripture calls a calf. He was a very slight improvement upon a heathen; but we must be glad even of small progress. They were quite willing to be taught the manner of the God of the land, and so they installed this priest at Bethel, and gathered about him to know what they should do. We have people around us unto this day who are glad to hear the gospel, and sit with pleasure under our ministry, and if the word be faith fully preached they commend the preacher and give a gratified attention to the things that proceed out of his mouth; and yet they are living in known sin. Albeit they do not practically turn from sin and renounce the service of Satan, yet are they willing to bow with the righteous, to sing their psalms and assent to their prayers, and to accept their confession of faith. They are a teachable sort of people, so far as mere hearing goes but there they stop.

Though these strangers feared Jehovah, and were willing to learn the way of his worship, yet *they stuck to their old gods*. ‘Ah,’ said the Babylonian, ‘I listen respectfully to what you have to say of this God, of the land; but Succoth-benoth for me; when I go home I shall offer sacrifice to him.’ The men of Cuthah said, ‘Verily this is good doctrine concerning the God of Israel; but the god of our fathers was Nergal, and to him will we cleave’; and the Sepharvites, though they wished to hear of the pure and holy Jehovah, and therefore learned from his law the command, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ yet still they passed their children through the fire to Moloch, and did not cease from that most cruel of all religious rites. Thus you see that this mingle-mangle religion left the people practically where they were: whatever their fear might be, their customs and practices remained the same. Have you never met with persons of the same mongrel kind? If you have never done so, your class of acquaintances must be superior to mine. At this moment I shall not speak at random, but aim at individual cases; for I know of persons who come to this place of worship with great regularity, and yet they serve their sins, and obey their own vicious passions. They take delight in the services of this house, and yet they are much at home with the god of this world. Some worship a deity quite as horrible as Moloch, whose name in the olden time was Bacchus—the god or the wine-cup and the beer-barrel. They pay their eager devotions at his shrine, and yet they would be numbered with the people of God. They were drunk last night, and yet they are here this morning: possibly they will keep sober to-day; but they will not let many days pass before they will once more stagger before their abominable idol. In all places of worship there are people of this kind. Do not look round to see if there is a person present dressed

like a working man, for I have not the poor in my eye at this time. Alas, this vice is to be met with in one rank as well as another, and the person I mean looks quite respectable, and wears broadcloth. Many worshippers of Bacchus do not drink so as to be found drunk and incapable in the street. O no; they go upstairs to their beds in their own houses, so that their condition is not observed; but still they must know that they are verging upon intoxication, if not actually gone. Woe unto such, who, while they pretend to be worshippers of Jehovah, are also worshippers of the beastly god of drunkenness. Is that too harsh a word? I beg the beasts' pardon for thus slandering them. Alas, there are others who adore the goddess Venus, the queen of lust and uncleanness. I say no more. It is a shame even to speak of things which are done of them in secret. Too often the god is Mammon, who is as degraded a deity as any of them. Such turn religion into a means of gain, and would sell Jesus himself for silver. The sin of Judas is one of which we may say, 'So do they unto this day.' Judas is an apostle, he listens to the Master's words, he preaches at the Master's command, and he works miracles in the Master's name; he also keeps the bag and manages the finance for Christ's little company, and he does it so carefully and economically that what he filches for himself is not missed, and he remains in good repute. Judas professes to serve Jesus, but all the while he is really serving himself, for secretly he abstracts from the treasury somewhat for his own pocket. 'He had the bag and kept that which was put therein.' There are such still in the churches of God: they do not actually steal, but they follow Jesus for what they can make or get out of him and his disciples. The symbols of their worship are the loaf and the fish. Now, this is as degrading a form of worship as the adoration of graven images. Gain is the god of many in all congregations: they seek Jesus, not because they care for his words, but because they eat of the loaves. They fear the Lord, but they serve other gods.

Are there not to be found in the world men whose very calling is contrary to the spirit of true godliness? I did know, and may I never know again such an one, a man apparently most devout and gracious, who was a deacon of a church, and passed round the communion cup; and yet over the worst drinking dens in the town where he lived, where the lowest harlots congregated, you would see the man's name, for he was the brewer to whom the houses belonged; houses which had been purposely adapted at his expense for purposes of vice and drunkenness. He took the profits of a filthy traffic, and then served at the Lord's table. I would judge no man, but some cases speak for themselves. God save the man that can pander to the devil, and then bow down, before the Most High. Persons are to be found, without a lantern and candle, who earn their money by ministering at the altars of Belial, and then offer a part of it to the Lord of hosts. Can they come from the place of revelling to the chamber of communion? Will they bring the wages of sin to the altar of God? He who makes money over the devil's back is a hypocrite if he lays his cankered coin at the apostles' feet. 'Thy money perish with thee.' How some men can rest in their impious pretensions it is not for me to guess; but methinks if their consciences were quickened, it would strike

them as being a horrible thing in the land that they should be fearing the Lord, and serving other gods. I knew one who was always at the place of worship, prayer-meetings, and all, and yet he had forsaken the wife of his youth, and was the companion of gamblers, and drunkards, and the unclean. I know another of a much milder type: he is a regular hearer, but he has no sense of true religion. He is a steady, hard-working man, but he lives to hoard money, and neither the poor nor the church of God ever get a penny from him: bowels of compassion he has none. He is a stranger to private prayer, and his Bible is never read; but he never misses a sermon. He never lifts his thoughts above the bench at which he works, or the shop in which he serves, his whole conversation is of the world, and the gain thereof, and yet he has occupied a seat in the meeting-house from his youth up, and has never thought of leaving it except at quarter-days, when he is half a mind to give it up and save the few shillings which it costs him. Oh, sad, sad, sad! I can understand the man who honestly says, 'I am living for the world and have no time for religion.' I can understand the man who cries, 'I love the world and mean to have my fill of it.' I can understand the man who says, 'I shall not pretend to pray or sing psalms, for I do not care about God or his ways'; but how can I comprehend those who are faithful to the outward part of religion, and profess to receive the truth, and yet have no heart for the love of Jesus, no care for the service of God? Oh, unhappy men, to come so near salvation in appearance, and to be so far off in reality! How can I explain their conduct? Truly, I must leave them among the mysteries of the moral world; for 'they fear the Lord and serve their graven images unto this day.' So far have we spoken upon the nature of this patched-up religion, this linsey-woolsey piety. May we have none of it.

II. Let us now consider THE MANNER OF ITS GROWTH. However came such a monstrous compound into this world?

Here is the history of it. *These people came to live where the people of God had lived.* The Israelites were most unworthy worshippers of Jehovah; but, still, they were known to others as his people, and their land was Jehovah's land. If the Sepharvites had stopped at Sepharvaim they would never have thought of fearing Jehovah; if the men of Babylon had continued to live in Babylon they would have been perfectly satisfied with Bel, or Succoth-benoth, or whatever the name of their precious god might be: but when they were fetched out from their old haunts, and brought into Canaan, they came under a different influence, and a new order of things. God would not allow them to go the whole length of idolatry in his land: though he had cast out his people, yet still it was his land, and he would make these heathens know it, and show some little decency in their new abode. Now, it sometimes happens to utter worldlings that they are dropped into the midst of Christian people, and they naturally feel that they must not be different from everybody about them. A kind of fashion is set by the professors among whom they dwell, and they fall into it. If they do not become gracious people themselves they try to look a little like them. Everybody in the village

attends a place of worship, and the new comers do the same, though they have no heart to it. They have not the courage of their want of conviction, so they just drift with the current, and as it happens to run in a religious direction they are as religious as the rest. Or it may be they have a godly mother, and their father is a believer, and so they adopt the traditions of the family. They would like to be free to forsake the ways of piety, but they cannot be quite so unkind to those whom they love, and so they yield to the influences which surround them, and become in a measure fearers of God, out of respect to their neighbors or their families. This is a poor reason for being religious.

Something else happened to these Assyrian immigrants which had a stronger influence still. At first they did not fear God, but *the Lord sent lions among them*. Matthew Henry says, 'God can serve his own purposes by which he pleaseth, little or big, lice or lions.' By the smaller means he plagued the Egyptians, and by the greater these invaders of his land. There is no creature so small or so great but God can employ it in his service and defeat his enemies thereby. When these lions had torn one and another, then the people trembled at the name of the God of the land, and desired to know the manner in which he would be worshipped. Affliction is a wild beast by which God teaches men who act like beasts. This is the growth of mongrelists. First, they are among godly people, and they must, therefore, go a little that way; and next, they are afflicted, and they must now go further still. The man has been ill, he has seen the brink of the grave; he has promised and vowed to attend to good things, in the hope that God would relent and permit him to live. Besides that, the man's extravagance has brought him into difficulties and straits; he cannot go so far or so fast as he formerly did, and hence he inclines to more staid and sober ways. He dares not follow his bent, for he finds vice too expensive, too disreputable, too dangerous. Many a man is driven by fear where he could not be drawn by love. He does not love the Lamb, but he does fear the lions. The rough voices of pain, poverty, shame, and death work a kind of law'work upon certain consciences which are insensible to spiritual arguments. They are forced, like the devils, to believe and tremble. Apprehension does not in their case lead to conversion, but it compels an outward respect for divine things. They argue that if the ills they feel do not reform them they may expect worse. If God begins with lions, what will come next? Therefore, they outwardly humble themselves, and yield homage to the God they dread.

But notice, that *the root of this religion is fear*. There is no love on the right side; that affection is in the opposite scale. Their hearts go after their idols, but to Jehovah they yield nothing but dread. How many there are whose religion consists in a fear of hell, a dread of the consequences of their sin. If there were no hell they would drink up sin as the ox, standing knee-deep in the stream, sucks in the water. If sin were not followed with inconvenient consequences, they would live in it as their element, as fishes swim in the sea. They are only kept under by the hangman's whip or the jailer's keys. They dread God, and this is but a gentler form of hating him. Ah, this is a poor religion, a religion of bondage and terror.

Thank God, dear friends, if you have been delivered from it; but it is sure to be the characteristic of a fusion of fearing God and serving other gods.

One reason why they dropped into this self-contradictory religion was that *they had a trimming teacher*. The king of Assyria sent them a priest: he could not have sent them a prophet, but that was what they really wanted. He sent them a Bethelite, not a genuine servant of Jehovah, but one who worshipped God by means of symbols; and this the Lord had expressly forbidden. If this priest did not break the first commandment by setting up other gods, yet he broke the second by making an image to represent the true God. What saith the Lord? 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.' This priest taught them the calf worship, but he winked at their false deities. When he saw them each one bowing before his own idol, he called it a natural mistake, and by no means spake indignantly to them. If one of them worshipped Succoth-benoth, so long as he also brought an offering to Jehovah, he was not so uncharitable as to condemn him. He cried, 'Peace, peace,' for he was a large-hearted man, and belonged to the Broad Church who believe in the good intentions of all men, and manufacture excuses for all the religions of the age. I know of no surer way of a people's perishing than by being led by one who does not speak out straight, and honestly denounce evil. If the minister halts between two opinions, do you wonder that the congregation is undecided? If the preacher trims and twists to please all parties, can you expect his people to be honest? If I wink at your inconsistencies will you not soon be hardened in them? Like priest, like people. A cowardly preacher suits hardened sinners. Those who are afraid to rebuke sin, or to probe the conscience, will have much to answer for. May God save you from being led into the ditch by a blind guide.

And yet is not a mingle-mangle of Christ and Belial the common religion of the day? Is not worldly piety, or pious worldliness, the current religion of England? They live among godly people, and God chastens them, and they therefore fear him, but not enough to give their hearts to him. They seek out a trimming teacher who is not too precise and plain-spoken, and they settle down comfortably to a mongrel faith, half truth, half error, and a mongrel worship half dead form, and half orthodoxy. God have mercy upon men, and bring them out from the world; for he will not have a compound of world and grace. 'Come ye out from among them,' saith he, 'be ye separate: touch not the unclean thing.' 'If God be God, serve him: if Baal be God, serve him.' There can be no alliance between the two. Jehovah and Baal can never be friends. 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.' 'No man can serve two masters.' All attempts at compromise or comprehensiveness in matters of truth and purity are founded on falsehood, and falsehood is all that can come of them. May God save us from such hateful doublemindedness.

Thus have I described the nature and the growth of this cross-bred religion.

III. Thirdly, let us estimate THE VALUE OF THIS RELIGION. What is it worth? First, it must evidently be *feeble* on both sides, because the man who serves Succoth-benoth cannot do it thoroughly if all the while he fears Jehovah; and he who fears Jehovah cannot be sincere if he is worshipping Moloch. The one sucks out the life of the other. Either one or the other alone might breed an intense worshipper; but when there are two deities, it is written, "Their heart is divided, now shall they be found wanting." A man of the world who is out and out in his conduct can make the best of his worldliness: what joy there is in it he gets, what profit there is to be made out of it he obtains; but if he tries to mix godliness with it he is pouring water on the fire, and hindering himself. On the other hand, if a man goes in for godliness, he will assuredly make something of it, by the blessing of God: if there be any joy, if there be any holiness, if there be any power, the man who is thorough-going wins it; but suppose he is pulled back by his love of sin, then he may possess enough religion to make him miserable, and enough of sin to prevent his salvation; but the two are opposed, and between them he finds no rest. The man is lame on both feet, impotent in both directions. He is like the salt which has lost its savor, neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but to be trodden under foot of men.

At first I should think that the mixture of the true with the false at Samaria *looked like an improvement*. I should not wonder but what the priests of Judah were rather glad to bear that the lions had come among the strangers, and that the people wanted to know something about Jehovah. It had a look in the right direction, and consequently the Scripture says that they feared God; but yet this fear of God was so hollow that, if you turn to the thirty-fourth verse, you will read, "They fear not the Lord." Sometimes a verbal contradiction most accurately states the truth. They feared the Lord only in a certain sense; but, inasmuch as they also served other gods, it came to this when summed up, that they did not fear God at all. The man who is religious and also immoral, to put it in short, is irreligious. He who makes a great fuss about godliness and yet acts in an ungodly way, when all comes to all, is an ungodly man. The value of this mixture is less than nothing. It is sin with a little varnish upon it. It is enmity to God with a brilliant colouring of formality: it is standing out against the Most High, and yet with a Judas kiss pretending to pay him homage.

These Samaritans in after years *became the bitterest foes of God's people*. Read the Book of Nehemiah, and you will see that the most bitter opponents of that godly man were those mongrels. Their fear of God was such that they wanted to join with the Jews in building the Temple, and when they found that the Jews would not have them, they became their fiercest foes. No people do so much hurt as those who are like Jack-o'-both-sides. The mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with the Israelites, fell a-lusting. The mischief does not begin with the people of God, but with those who are with them, but not of them. The tares which you cannot root out grow with the wheat, and draw away from it that which should have nourished it. As the clinging ivy will eat out the life of a tree around which it climbs, so will

these impostors devour the church if they be left to their own devices. This patchwork religion is of more value to the devil than to anyone else; it is his favourite livery, and I pray you hate it, for it is a garment spotted by the flesh. I believe, dear friends, that those people who have a dread of God, which makes them appear religious, and who yet all the while live in their sins, are most in danger of any people in the world; for there is no getting at them to save them. You preach to sinners, and they say, 'He does not mean us, for we are saints.' You bring the thunders of the law to bear on the congregation, and they, being inside the church, are not afraid of the tempest. They hide behind their false profession. There is more likelihood of the salvation of a downright outsider than of these pretenders. They hold with the bare and run with the hounds, they fear the Lord and serve other gods, and they will perish in their folly. Their ruin will be all the more terrible because they sin in the light. They have so much conscience that they know what is right and what is wrong, and they deliberately choose to abide with the evil, even though at the same time they do despite to their better selves. Surely they will be banished to the deepest hell who seemed inclined to go towards heaven, but who, nevertheless, presumptuously wrenched off bolts and bars to force their way to destruction. O you religious worldlings, for you there is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

How provoking this adulterated religion must be to God! It is even provoking to God's minister to be pestered with men whose hypocrisies weaken the force of his testimony. Here is a man who is known to be one of my hearers, and yet at the same time he drinks, and speaks lewdly, and acts wickedly. What have I to do with him? His tongue is never still, and he tells everybody that he is a friend of mine, and my great admirer, and then men lay his conduct at my door, and wonder what my doctrine must be. I could almost say, 'Sir, be my enemy, for this will harm me less than your friendship.' If this grieves his ministers, how provoking must it be to God himself: these people are seen to worship him, and when strangers come into the assembly they spy out these hypocrites, and straightway charge the holy Jesus with all their faults. 'See,' say they, 'there is old So-and-so. He is a great man among them, and yet I saw him come out of the gin-palace more than three sheets in the wind.' Thus the holy God is dishonored by these unholy hypocrites. True religion suffers for their falsehood. One may fancy the Lord Jesus saying, 'Come now, if you must needs serve the devil, do it; but do not loiter around my gates and boast of being my servants.' The holy God must often feel his indignation burn against unholy men and women who intrude into his courts and dare to pass themselves off under his name. I put this very plainly. Some of you do not know how necessary it is to speak plainly in these days. If any of you perish through hypocrisy it shall not be because I did not speak boldly about it. May God the Holy Spirit of his great mercy apply the words where they need to be applied, that those who are fearing God and serving other gods may grieve over their inconsistency, and repent and turn in very deed and truth to the Most High.

IV. I pass briefly to another important point, which is this, 'THE CONTINUANCE OF THIS EVIL: for the text says, 'As did their fathers, so do they, unto this day.' I believe in the final perseverance of the saints: I am almost obliged to believe in the final perseverance of hypocrites; for, really, when a man once screws himself up to play the double, and both to fear God and serve other gods, he is very apt to stick there. It takes a great deal of effort to bring yourself to that degree of wickedness; you must use a great deal of damping of conscience and quenching of the Spirit before you can reach that shameless point, and having once gained that position you are apt to keep it all your life long. 'So do they unto this day.'

Look, friends. It seems unlikely that a man would willingly continue in such a ridiculous position even for an hour. I call it ridiculous, for it is unreasonable and outrageous to be serving God and Satan at the same time. It is inconsistent and self-contradictory, and yet, though it be so, it is a sad fact that it is a deep pit and the abhorred of the Lord fall therein, seldom to be lifted out of it. Often by the grace of God we see the confirmed sinner plucked like a brand from the burning; but, oh, how seldom do we see the hollow-hearted Pharisee brought out of his delusions. On the anvil of a false profession Satan hammers out the most hardened of hard hearts.

One reason why it can be said of most men "so do they unto this day," is because it yields them a sort of comfort; at any rate it keeps off the lions. 'Why,' say they, 'it must be the right thing to do, for now we are quiet.' While they lived in sin without a pretense of religion, when the minister preached the word powerfully, they went home trembling; now they do not care what he preaches about: the lions roar no longer, not so much as a cub shows itself. Though they do drink a little, though they do use strong language now and then, though they are really unconverted, yet since they have taken a pew at the church, or the chapel, they feel wonderfully easy in their minds. This peace they think to be worth a Jew's eye. It is so soothing and pacifying to the conscience to feel that you mix up with the best of the saints, and are highly esteemed by them. So they wrap it up, and go down to hell with a lie in their right hand.

The worst of it is that not only men themselves do this, but their children and their children's children do the same: 'As their fathers did, so do they unto this day.' In an out-and-out godly family it is a great joy to see the children springing up to fear God; but these double people, these borderers, see no such desirable succession. Frequently there is an open decline from apparent religion: the sons do not care to go where the old man went at all; nor need we wonder, since it did him so little good. He made all unhappy at home, and none are eager to imitate him. In other cases, where there was kindness at home, the children are apt to try the same plan as their fathers, and mingle a little religion with a great deal of worldliness. They are just as keen and sharp as their worldly sire, and they see on which side their bread is buttered, and therefore they keep up the reputation of religion. A little guilt and paint go a long way, and so they lay it on. They fly the flag of Christ, at any rate,

even though the vessel does not belong to his dominion, and is not bound for the port of glory. As vessels sometimes run a blockade under a false flag, so do they reap many advantages from sailing under Christian colors. This detestable iniquity will not die out: it multiplies itself, scattering its own seed on all sides, and so from generation to generation it lives on; whole nations fear the Lord and serve other gods.

The greatest curse, perhaps, that ever visited the world came upon it in this way. Certain vain-glorious preachers desired to convert the world at a stroke, and to make converts without the work of the Spirit. They saw the people worshipping their gods, and they thought that if they could call these by the names of saints and martyrs the people would not mind the change, and so they would be converted. The idea was to Christianize heathenism. They virtually said to idolaters, 'Now, good people, you may keep on with your worship, and yet you can be Christians at the same time. This image of the Queen of heaven at your door need not be moved. Light the lamp still; only call the image 'our Lady,' and 'the Blessed Virgin.' Here is another image; don't pull it down, but change its name from Jupiter to Peter.' Thus with a mere change of names they perpetuated idolatry: they set up their altars in the groves, and upon every high hill, and the people were converted without knowing it converted to a baser heathenism than their own. They wanted priests, and, lo, there they were, robed like those who served at the altars of Jove. The people saw the same altars and sniffed the same incense, kept the same holy days and observed the same carnivals as aforetime, and called everything by Christian names. Hence came what is now called the Roman Catholic religion, which is simply fearing God and serving other gods. Every village has its own peculiar saint, and often its own particular black or white image of the Virgin, with miracles and wonders to sanctify the shrine. This evil wrought so universally that Christianity seemed in danger of extinction from the prevalence of idolatry, and it would have utterly expired had it not been of God, and had he not therefore once more put forth his hand and raised up reformers, who cried out, 'There is but one God, and one Mediator between God and man.' Brave voices called the church back to her allegiance and to the parity of her faith. As for any of you who are trying to link good and evil, truth and falsehood together, beware of the monstrous birth which will come of such an alliance: it will bring on you a curse from the Most High.

V. I shall now close by saying a few words byway of CURE OF THIS DREADFUL EVIL OF MONGRELISM; this fearing the Lord, and serving other gods. Suppose men were thus fall of duplicity in politics, what would be thought of them? If a war should rage between two nations, what would be thought of the man who professed to serve the Queen, and all the while was playing his cards to win favor with the Queen's enemies. What would he be? A liberal-minded person? A gentleman of broad sympathies? Perhaps so. But also he would be a traitor, and when he was found out he would be shot. He who in any way tries to serve God and his enemies, is a traitor to God: that is what it comes to. In ordinary politics, if

there be two parties, and a man comes forward and says, 'I am on your side,' and all the while he is doing his best to help the opposition, everybody says that he is a mean fellow. And what meanness it is to say, 'I am for Christ,' and yet practically to be for his enemies; to cry up holiness, and yet to live in sin; to preach up faith in Christ, and yet to trust in your own merits. This wretched shuffling indicates a meanness of soul from which may God in infinite mercy deliver us. Suppose a man in business said, 'Oh, yes, I will be an honest man, but I will at the same time practice a trick or two; I will be as straight as a line, but yet I will be crooked too.' Why, he would very soon be known by only one name, and that name a dishonorable one. A merchant cannot be honest and dishonest, a woman cannot be both chaste and unchaste, pure and impure, at the same time; and a man cannot be truly with God and yet with the world; the amalgamation is impossible. Everybody sees through such sham godliness.

Ah, my dear friends, suppose that God were to treat us after the like double fashion; suppose he smiled to-day and cursed to-morrow suppose he said, 'You fear me, and so I will give you comfort to-day but inasmuch as you worship other gods, when it comes to the last I will send you to your own gods; you shall go down to hell.' You want one course of conduct from God, mercy, tenderness, gentleness, forgiveness; but if you play fast and loose with him, what is this but mocking him? Shall a man mock God? O thou great Father of our spirits, if we poor prodigals return to thee, shall we come driving all the swine in front of us, and bringing all the harlots and citizens of the far country at our heels, and introduce ourselves to thee by saying, 'Father, we have sinned, and have come home to be forgiven and to go on sinning'? It were infernal, I can say no less. Yet some attempt it. Shall any of us come to the blessed Christ upon the cross, and look up to his dear wounds, and say to him, 'Redeemer, we come to thee; thou shalt be our Savior, thou shalt deliver us from the wrath to come; but, behold, when we have washed our robes we will defile them again in the filth of the world. Wash us, and we will go back, like the sow, to wallow in the mire. Forgive us, and we will use the immunity which thy mercy grants us, as a further incentive to rebellion'? I can imagine such language as that being used by Satan; but methinks few of you have descended so low as to talk thus. Yet is not that exactly what the man says who professes to be a Christian, and yet wilfully lives in sin?

Lastly, what shall I say of the Holy Spirit? If he does not dwell in our hearts we are lost; there is no hope for us unless he rules within us. And shall we dare to say

'Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all thy quickening powers,'

meanwhile I will live in filthiness and selfishness. Come, Holy Spirit, come and dwell with me, and I will hate my brother, I will boil with angry temper, and will be black with malice, so as to make my home miserable. Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove, come dwell

within my soul, and I will carry thee to the theater, and the ball-room, and the house of evil name.

I hate to utter such language even for the sake of exposing it; but what must God think of men who do not *say* so, but who *act* so; who, like Balaam, live in sin and yet cry, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.' I dare not preach from that very popular text, for it is the mean, selfish wish of a man who even at the last would save his own skin. The old sneak! He wanted to live and serve the devil, and then cry off at the last. Surely he might have said, 'I have been a prophet of Satan, and have sold my soul to him; let me die as I have lived.' I would wish to live in such a way as I would wish to die. If I would not like to die as I am, then I ought not to live as I am. If I am in a condition in which I dare not meet my God, may God in mercy fetch me out of the condition at once. Let me be right, and let there be no mistake about it; but do not let me try to be both right and wrong, washed and filthy, white and black, a child of God and a child of Satan. God has separated heaven and hell by a gulf that never can be passed, and he has divided the two characters which shall people those two places by an equally wide gulf. This division can be passed by his grace, but none can inhabit the intermediate space. None can hang between spiritual death and spiritual life, so as to be partly in one and partly in the other. Decide, then, decide. Be one thing or the other. 'How long halt ye between two opinions?' Again I say with Elias, upon Carmel, 'If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.' But do not mix the worship of the two, for thus you will provoke God, and cause his anger to burn like fire against you. May God bless this word, for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON'2 Kings 17:24-41; [Psalm 62](#).

HYMNS FROM 'OUR OWN HYMN BOOK'"63, 655, 809.