

*The Gift and Office of the
Holy Ghost.*

BEING THE
SUBSTANCE
OF A
DISCOURSE

Delivered in

Little Sommerford in Wiltshire,
In the YEAR 1740.

By *J O H N C E N N I C K.*

*He that bath an Ear let him hear what the Spirit saith
to the Churches. Rev. ii. 7.*
God bath revealed them to us by his Spirit. 1 Cor. ii. 10.
*He bath given us the Earnest of the Spirit in our Hearts.
2 Cor. i. 22.*

D U B L I N :

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M D C C L I V.



T H E

Gift and Office of the Holy Ghost.

ACTS ii. 38, 39.

Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the Remission of Sins, and ye shall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost; for the Promise is unto you and to your Children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.



WHEN our Saviour was mentioning to his Disciples his Departure to his Father they were troubled, and could not consent to be left alone in the World without their dear Lord and Master : It was the more trying to them, who had hitherto entertained such *Jewish* Ideas about his restoring the Kingdom to *Israel*, that he should spake of going away ; but the Lord tells them

it was expedient, and bid them not be troubled; for, saith he, *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come again to you, you shall not be left Orphans in the World; I will send you the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name. Now if I go not away the Comforter cannot come, but if I go I will send him unto you; he shall bring all Things to your Remembrance, whatsoever I have told you. He shall speak of me. He shall glorify me. He shall take of mine and shew it unto you. He shall lead you into all Truth. He shall abide with you for ever.* This could satisfy them a little, but they understood not rightly what he meant till he was risen from the Dead, and then he breathed on them and gave them his Spirit, and thus sealed them to the Day of Redemption, and at once opened their Understanding in the Scriptures concerning Himself and his Kingdom. But as he continued to instruct them in the forty Days of his Abode among them before he ascended, he yet bid them wait for this Promise of Him and the Father, namely, a pouring out of the *Holy Ghost*, to empower and anoint them Ambassadors and Preachers of his Gospel, and which he said should happen not many Days hence. This said, he blessed them, and was received up into Heaven in their Sight.

Accordingly not long after, while all the Apostles and Brethren were with one Accord together in a House in *Jerusalem*, on a sudden they heard a Sound from Heaven like a mighty rushing Wind, which filled the House where they were sitting, and there appeared as it were cloven Tongues of Fire and sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the *Holy Ghost*, and began to speak with Tongues as the *Spirit* gave them Utterance. This happened in the Morning, and was quickly noised about in the City; and as there were in *Jerusalem* devout

vout Men out of every Nation under Heaven, there came together a Multitude of People who all heard in their own Language, though those whom they heard speak were all *Galileans*, while they were of many Nations and Tongues. Now, as the serious Part were amazed above measure, and glorified the wonderful Work of God, some mocked and made their Game, saying, they were full of new Wine and drunken. Then the eleven Apostles stood up, and *Peter* spoke and declared, that none were drunken, since it was only nine o'Clock in the Morning, and therefore it could not be likely; but he said, This is that which was promised in the Prophet *Joel*, *In the last Days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all Flesh, and your Sons and your Daughters shall prophecy, your young Men shall see Visions, and your old Men shall dream Dreams, and on my Servants and on my Handmaidens I will pour out in those Days of my Spirit.*

Then having spoken much of *Christ*, he saith, *Him whom ye have taken and by wicked Hands crucified and slain, is exalted to the Right Hand of God, and having received of the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. Therefore let all the House of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.* To this Discourse of *St. Peter* the Holy Spirit so set his Seal that many, who mocked before, were struck to the Heart, and cried out, *What shall we do!* *Peter* answered, *Repent and be baptized for the Remission of Sins, and ye shall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost, for the Promise is unto you and to your Children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

This had such a blessed Effect upon all that heard the Word, that the same Day was added to the Church of *God* three thousand Souls. May the *Lord* go on to add to his People, by Means of the same Gospel, till all the Earth is covered with his Knowledge as the Waters cover the Sea, and all Flesh have seen the Salvation of *God*.

I shall speak but little of the Doctrine of Repentance, and of Baptism, &c. now, because my Design is to open especially this great Doctrine of the Gift of the *Holy Ghost*.

I know in this degenerate Age, I might say, in this sinful and adulterous Generation, no Doctrine has been less regarded or believed than this; for how many deny entirely the Inspiration of the Spirit? And others content themselves without it, as if it was not material if they have it or not; whereas none can be saved who have not *Christ* in them the Hope of Glory. I shall therefore shew out of the Scriptures, that *this Promise of the Father* was foretold by the Prophets and confirmed by the *Lord Jesus* and his Apostles, as necessary to everlasting Salvation, only I will first speak a few Words of the Doctrine of Repentance, of Baptism and of Remission of Sins, and pursue my Purpose as I have said.

Repentance is, like the *Holy Ghost* and Forgiveness of Sins, &c. a Gift of *God*. *He shall give Repentance and Remission of Sins to Israel*. It has been a Deceit of *Satan* to persuade People they can repent when they please, and this keeps half the World easy in their Sins. The Revellers, the Robbers, the Unchaste, the Drunkards, the Swearers and Lyars, with all the Friends of the World and Lovers of Pleasure, go on thinking one Day to repent and be good, and when the *Holy Spirit* awakens their Consciences to a Sense of their Danger, and they
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muse a while on their Condition and are ready to tremble ; or when by the sudden Death of some near Relation or Friend, or by some uncommon Tempest, or Dream, or Sermon, or by reading the Scriptures, or by Sickness, or escaping some great Danger, the *Lord* is pleased to shake their Hearts, they soon find Ways to put all by, as *Felix* did *Paul*, with, *Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient Season I will call for thee.* They get some merry Company, some play, sing, drink, or walk out, and with the Promise of turning e'er long to the *Lord*, or repenting before they die, they lull to Sleep in a carnal Security their poor Souls, till perhaps before they are aware they rush into Hell, as a Horse rushes into the Battle, and Repentance is hid from them till it be too late.

Oh ! did these poor Men know what true Repentance was, they would not rest till they had obtained a Heart of *God*, truly sorry that they had so wickedly lived, to the Grief of our *Lord Jesus* ; they would mourn for Him whom they had pierced, as one mourneth for his only Son, nor could they be satisfied till they had found his Pardon. Where a true Repentance is, the Soul hungers and thirsts after Righteousness, and mourns for a Saviour, and will not be comforted without Him. They leave all their Sins, and hate the very Places where they have done amiss ; and beside a Sense of their original Sin, or sinful Nature, their hardness of Heart and filthy State weighs them down so that they can forget to eat, but Day and Night, in Bed or up, their Heart and Soul cries out for Mercy till they get Mercy. This is a Repentance not to be repented of. To be sorry for a Season, and then go back again as a Dog to his Vomit, or the wash'd Sow to wallow in the Mire, is at best but a Dog's Repentance,

and the Nature is not changed nor the Heart altered nor softened in the Blood of *Christ* at all. Don't content yourselves with it, for it is nothing ; but if ye would be saved ask of the *Prince of Peace*, who gives Repentance, and He will do it for you. One tender Look from Him can melt the Heart of Stone, as it did *Peter*, and do the Deed at once. Don't, oh ! don't trifle with it, and think you can return when you will, lest to your Hurt you find it with you as *Esau*, who found no Place of Repentance, tho' he sought it carefully with Tears.

Of Baptism I shall say little, because I praise those who use the Baptism of Water in Faith, in the Name of the *Lord*. It is just and right, and must not be slighted ; yet I know there is but one true Baptism, and that is of the *Spirit*, the *Baptism of the Holy Ghost*, and without which all other Baptisms are but faint Shadows.

John the Baptist baptized to Repentance, but the later Apostles of *Christ* for Remission of Sins ; and in the very Act of Baptism some have received Remission of their Sins and the Gift of the *Holy Ghost* ; but our *Saviour* is not confined in such Cases, for many have been baptized among us who neither know what Repentance or Remission of Sins mean, but are without both. O ! let such come to our *Saviour*, and he will forgive them ; He will blot out their Sin and they shall know it here upon Earth, to their great Joy and Comfort ; the *Holy Spirit* will comfort them with manifesting and applying the Blood of *Christ* to their Hearts, and in this there is nothing more needful than a living Faith. God does not ask any great Thing of us, He does not require us to perform some severe Task, e'er we can attain this ; but it is the free Gift of God, and whoever believes in Him shall receive Remission of Sins.
Oh!

Oh! that *none* here would rest without it a Day longer, but ask it of *Jesus Christ*, who was exalted also to give *Forgiveness of Sins* to his People, and they should soon see they have not asked in vain.

I now come to speak of *the Promise of the Father* concerning the *Holy Spirit*, and to speak of his Office, &c. in the World.

Ezekiel had said from the Lord, *I will sprinkle clean Water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your Filthiness, and from all your Idols will I cleanse you; a new Heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit also will I put within you; I will put my Spirit within you.* *Jeremiab* had prophesied of the same. *Isaiab* also had said, *Thus saith the Lord, I will pour my Spirit upon thy Seed and my Blessing upon thine Offspring.* *Zechariab* hinted also at the same; but *Joel* had been more especially particular, because formerly it was esteemed only the Privilege of Seers and Ministers, therefore he said it should be poured out upon the Sons and Daughters, upon the Servants and Handmaidens; or, as *St. Peter* expresses it, *on all, as many as the Lord our God should call.* The Apostles always promised the *Holy Spirit* to such as believed; and *St. Paul* asked it as a necessary Question, *Have you received the Holy Ghost?* and affirms boldly, *If any Man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.* This was our Saviour's Doctrine, He said, *I will not leave you comfortless, I will send you the Holy Ghost, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the World cannot receive because they have not seen him neither known him, but ye know him, for he is with you and shall be in you.*

It is most sure that the Churches of our Nations so believed also; or why is it said, * *All Works done before*

* See the Thirty-nine Articles.

before the Grace of Christ and the Inspiration of his Spirit are not pleasant to God. And again, Godly Persons feel in themselves the working of God's Holy Spirit, but curious and carnal Persons lacking the Spirit of Christ, are thrust by the Devil into wretched and unclean Living, no less perilous than Despair. Also there the Prayer of David is used, *Take not thy Holy Spirit from us, and Cleanse the Thoughts of our Hearts by the Inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, &c.* Also, *Grant that we being regenerated and made thy Children by Adoption and Grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit.* Also, *God who didst teach the Hearts of thy faithful People, by sending to them the Light of thy Holy Spirit, grant us by the same Spirit to have a right Judgment in all Things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy Comfort.* How can Men who deny the Gift of the Spirit now, and use these Prayers, escape mocking of God, and drawing near to him with their Lips when their Hearts are far from Him? Dreadful is their Case indeed, they have Ears and don't hear; they have Eyes and see not, they pray but not with the Spirit, nor with the Understanding, and must not look to receive any good Thing from the Hand of the Lord; they cannot receive it, they do not believe the Promises of God, but stagger at them through Unbelief.

The Office of the *Holy Spirit* our Saviour has set down to be threefold, namely, *He shall convince the World of Sin, of Righteousness, and of Judgment.*

First, He saith, He shall convince of Sin because they believe not in me.

This Sin of Unbelief, ever since our First Parents were seduced to disbelieve God in the Garden of Eden, when he said, *In the Day that ye eat there-*
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of, *i. e.* the forbidden Fruit, *ye shall surely die*, is so deeply rooted in the Heart, in the Mind and Nature, that nothing but *Almighty God* can convince a Man duly of it.

It should seem a strange Thing to tell *Jews* that they did not believe, at a Time too when their Religious Worship was at the highest pitch of Grandeur and Order, and when all Nations looked upon them as the *City of Perfection*, the *Joy of the whole Earth*; but it would appear far more strange to attempt to prove to People who profess Christianity, and the serious Sort of these too, who have had the strictest Education, kept to the publick Worship, read the Scriptures, and heard Sermons, shunn'd bad Company, and used much Prayer in private, that after all, it is easy to be deceived and be without Faith in *Christ*. I am sure this was my Case from my Youth; I aim'd sincerely at Righteousness, and wanted to be saved, yet had I died in that State, I don't know what would have become of me, for I am persuaded, tho' I watched, fasted and prayed much, gave Alms, frequented the Sacrament, and did all I could think of to make my Conscience easy, yet I was entirely a Stranger to *Faith*, and did not know what *believing in him* meant. As often as I strove to cry Peace to my Heart, and to think myself right, so often was the *Lord* pleased, as it were, to impress upon my Mind, *Yet lackest thou one Thing*. But as I never heard any one scruple their Faith, if that came at all into my Thoughts I would not suffer it, till one greater than my Heart open'd my Eyes, and made me see and feel I had no Confidence in *Christ*. I did not believe in him for Remission of my Sins; for, to speak truly, I believed nothing more than a Heathen or Turk: I thought if I did all in my Power, and
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was obedient to the Commandments, prayed many times in a Day, fasted often, attended the Church Service, the Sacrament, helped the Poor, refrained from gross Sins, &c. I should be accepted, and of the Righteousness of *Christ* I expected no more than, that in case I fell short it should help to mend my Righteousness. I did not believe any one had his Spirit, or knew Remission of Sins. My Heart had no real Benefit from his Death or Blood-shedding, more than a serious *Jew*; nothing that could make me happy or deliver me from the Fear of Death or the Power of Sin; my Nature remained the same, only I wash'd and made clean the Outside of the Cup and Platter, I garnish'd the Tomb and whited the Wall, but within I felt the old Stainings, the same bad Tempers and ill Affections. When I saw this, and knew with all my glorious Profession, I had not Faith, my Heart sunk, and I became more and more concerned and restless, till our Saviour gave me to Believe, and ended my Fears. In such a State as I was in before I experienced this, I would not have ventured to depart this Life for all the Gold in *Arabia*. *Faith in Christ* is not a light Matter, or what can be learned as any other Art. It is not consenting to the Truth of the Scriptures, or confessing *Christ*, or acknowledging the Mystery of the Trinity, and signing such and such Articles; for though all this is well, yet it does not save the Soul, it is not a *justifying Faith*, it is not laying hold on him, and getting his Righteousness; but all this can be held, and we remain, as touching the Faith, reprobate; therefore must the *Holy Ghost*, who only knows the Depths of *Satan's* Deceits, and the desperate wicked Hearts, convince us of this unseen and condemning Sin. He does not say, *He shall convince the World of Sin because of Drunkenness,*

ness, Idolatry, Disobedience to Parents, Murders, Adulteries, Witchcrafts, &c. for the Law has pointed out these, and cursed the Doers of them, and therefore is it said, *By the Law is the Knowledge of Sin*; but even this is meant only in relation to the Fruits, as the way to convince a Man that a Tree is bad, would be to shew him the bad Fruits, and his Mouth must be stopped; so the Law, to convince of the fallen and depraved Nature, condemns all Works of Darknes and Unrighteousness, but goes no farther; the *Holy Ghost* only lays *the Axe to the Root of the Tree*, and convinces us, that the Reason of all Sins and Offences is a Heart impure and corrupt, an unbelieving and faithless Heart, which does not believe to Salvation. Our Saviour has concluded all in Unbelief, and made it plain in the Gospel that we are not lost on account of *Adam's* Transgression, nor because we have sinned, for a Remedy is prepared, a Cure is found for both these; but who comes not to Him by Faith, who has not such a Faith by means of which they can know him, speak with him, receive him, and be washed and saved by him, he dies in his Sins and cannot enter into his Rest, and why? because of Unbelief.

Had a Man Faith in the Promises of *God*, then he could never scruple, If we can have the Spirit? If we can be born again here? If we can know our *Saviour* in the World and have eternal Life, and the Assurance of our Acceptance with God? Because these are the Benefits of the Redemption by *Christ*; and if we don't believe they are found in this Life, we believe nothing. The *Turks* speak of a Paradise in another Life, the *Jews* of going to their Father *Abraham*, the old Heathens boasted of their walking in *Elysian Fields* after Death; but it was only Dreams of Things of which they had no Certainty;

tainty; they died, and did not know whither they were going: So we, if we have not the Foretaste of the Power of the World to come here, if we have not the Kingdom of Heaven *within us*, and the Earnest of our everlasting Inheritance, we are also in the Dark and in Uncertainty, and are in no better State than those who never heard *Christ* named; for at last, all the real Hope we have must be, because we have lived sober or religiously, or been obedient, &c. and our Boast of trusting in *Jesus* and his Blood and Merits, will prove to have been only in Words. When the *Holy Spirit* convinces therefore of Sin, all the Self-Righteousness, all Dependance upon our Religion and Morality tumble like *Babylon* to the Ground, and poor, and naked, and blind, and miserable, the Soul thirsts for the Revelation of *Jesus Christ*, and for *those Times of Refreshing from the Presence of the Lord*. Nothing can satisfy such but the Whisper of the Redeemer to the Heart, *Your Righteousness is of me, I am your Salvation*; and till this is brought about, the *Spirit* helps to pray with Groanings which cannot be uttered; he teaches them to ask after the Will of *God*, and leads the Soul on till he has brought it to the Blood of *Christ*, which is the Well of Life, and then he bids it *drink, yea drink abundantly*. He lifts up the blind Eyes, which he had anointed with his Eye-salve, to the Cross, and shews the Ransom; He directs them to look and be saved; to believe and receive the Remission of their Sins.

This brings me to the second Thing which our Saviour mentions as the Work of the *Holy Ghost*, which is, *to convince of Righteousness, because, saith he, I go to the Father and ye see me no more.*

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As no Man can duly convince his Brother of the Sin of Unbelief, so neither can one assure another that he is righteous : This also is the Work of God.

Whoever can be persuaded that he is a good Man and righteous is unwise, because he trusts upon Man, and builds upon the Word of Flesh, and has Men blind as himself to be his Comforters. *Miserable Comforters are they all.* But the *Children of God* have dug deeper, and though they have not seen our Saviour bodily, who is now gone to the *Father*, and will perhaps be seen no more till he comes in Clouds and every Eye shall see him, yet I say, though they see him not, yet believing in him, they have a divine Confidence and Feeling of his Love and Presence, as sure as if they did see him, and they rejoice in him with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory. *Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.* This Faith is the Gift of God, and keeps the Soul more blessed and unshaken than if their Eyes had seen or their Hands handled the *Son of Man*. If an Angel could appear to one and tell him of his being in the Favour of God, and beloved by Him, it would not have the Effect upon us which we at first might imagine ; for it would be easy afterwards to doubt and reason if it was not a Delusion, a Fancy, or *Satan* transformed to deceive us ; but the *Spirit is the Witness*, because the *Spirit is Truth* and cannot deceive ; and He does not only once or twice give us a Glimpse of the lovely *Jesus*, and Him crucified, but he makes our Bodies his Temple, he comes in and dwells with us, will never leave or forsake us, but will abide with us for ever. He comforts beyond all pious Friends, and glorifies our *Saviour* so before us as no Preacher can : He assures our Hearts, and writes and stamps his Mind there, so as no Angel can do it, and puts
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it beyond all Doubt, that *Christ* and his Righteousness are ours, that his Merits are imputed to our Faith, and we stand thereby without Spot and Wrinkle or any such Thing before the Throne, cloathed in this long white Robe. A Man through his Help can believe in *Jesus* as his true *Lord and God*; can trust all upon his Attonement, if he had ten thousand Souls; he receives the End of his Faith, namely, his Salvation, and is forgiven, washed, justified, and sanctified *in the Name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God*.

He believes and knows that he is a Child of *God*, and has therefore *the Spirit of Adoption* in his Heart. *The Spirit itself beareth Witness with our Spirits that we are the Children of God. He hath the Witness in Himself, even eternal Life*, and all this comes only through the Death and Obedience of our *Saviour, who is made to us Righteousness and Salvation* received through Faith, and manifested by the *Holy Ghost* to our unspeakable Joy and Comfort. From this Part of his Divine Office and Work, and because He allays our Fears of Death, Hell, and Judgment, wipes the Tears away, and eases us in all Trials, Temptations, and Burdens, and in our last Hours bears us up with an holy Confidence, and gives us, like *Moses* from the Top of *Pisgab*, to look over into our good Land and depart joyfully hence, that he has merited that Name *The Comforter*. Oh! may He be such a Comforter to you and your Children all the Days of your Life.

I come now to speak of the third Part of his Work, and that is, *He shall convince you of Judgment, because the Prince of this World is judged*.

The *Holy Spirit* does not only thoroughly awaken a Soul, and shew it the Righteousness of *Jesus*, &c. but makes them overcome by the Blood of the *Lamb*, and therefore, without Fear of being again seduced back into the Enemy's Hands, we may go forward, because he is bruised under our Feet. We are saved out of his Hands for ever; another *Lord* is our Master; we are in another Kingdom; we don't belong to the World; the *God of this World* has lost us with Equity, and the *God of Heaven and Earth* has bought and saved us, to be sold and lost no more.

We know now who has overcome the *Dragon* and his Angels, and has the Keys of Hell and Death, namely, he who is our best Friend, our *Lord*, our *Saviour Jesus*. In this Respect therefore does the *Spirit* comfort us, and seal us to the Day of Redemption. We shall not perish, *Satan* cannot pluck us out of our Redeemer's Hands, he is now judged to his Chains and Lake; the Verdict is given on our Side, we have overcome by the Blood of the *Lamb*. All Praise to his holy and blessed Name!

But before I conclude this Discourse, I must shew who have a Right to receive the *Spirit*: And lest any should suppose, because I am a Sinner and lived wickedly, I shall be excluded from so great Happiness, let me comfort such by repeating the Words of the Text, *The Promise is unto you and to your Children, and to all, even as many as the Lord our God shall call*. We may not dispute this Truth, it is too plain and glaring in the Scriptures, to be denied; all *may* and *must* have the *Spirit of Christ* in them if they will be saved. He strives and labours with all, *He is with you, and shall be in you*. Only open your Hearts and he will come

and sup with you, and you with him, *Open the everlasting Door and the King of Glory shall come in.*

If you but feel the Want of this heavenly Guest, you know what is written farther about this Matter, *Ask and you shall receive; your heavenly Father will give his holy Spirit to them that ask him.* May this encourage you all to seek and find this unspeakable Gift, and have him with you and in you to the End of the World! Yea, may a double Portion of this Spirit rest upon you henceforth for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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F I N I S.

A H Y M N.

I.

HOW sad's my State? I know not how
 To please the *Lamb*, or do his Will;
 Myself, and *God*, I want to know,
 Yet ignorant of both am still.

II.

I mourn, because I cannot mourn,
 I grieve, because I cannot grieve;
 I hate my Sin, yet cannot turn,
 I hear the Truth, but can't believe.

III.

Helpless am I and self-condemn'd,
 Incurable I see my Wound;
 I'd come to Thee, but am ashamed;
 O where shall Help for me be found?

IV.

Where shall so great a Sinner run?
 Dangers on ev'ry Side I see;
 I am undone, undone, undone,
 Unless our Saviour comes to me.

V.

Let Pity move Thee to appear,
 Sinner-receiving Son of God;
 In my Behalf be kindly near,
 And quench my crying Sins with Blood.

VI.

Reach out thy gentle Hand to give
 Salvation to a Wretch distress'd;
 Give, O dear Saviour, to believe,
 A weary Soul who wants a rest.

VII.

I know thy open Wounds afford
Eternal Refuge unto some ;
There would I fly, my dearest Lord,
O speak, and tell me there is Room.

VIII.

This if Thou dost, I ask no more,
Glad would I for thy Chariot wait ;
And when I stand on *Sion's* Shore,
I'll worship ever at thy Feet.

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