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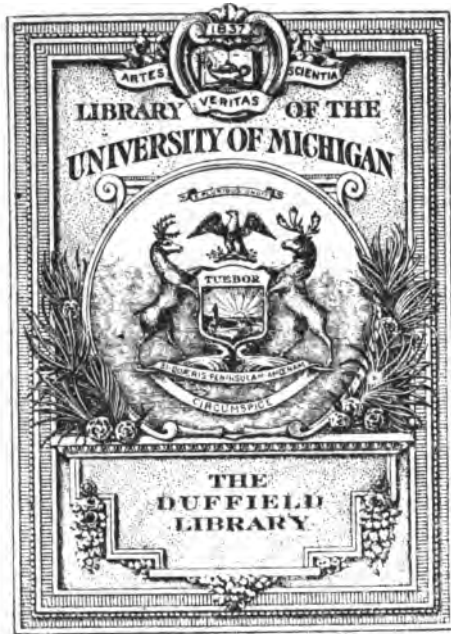
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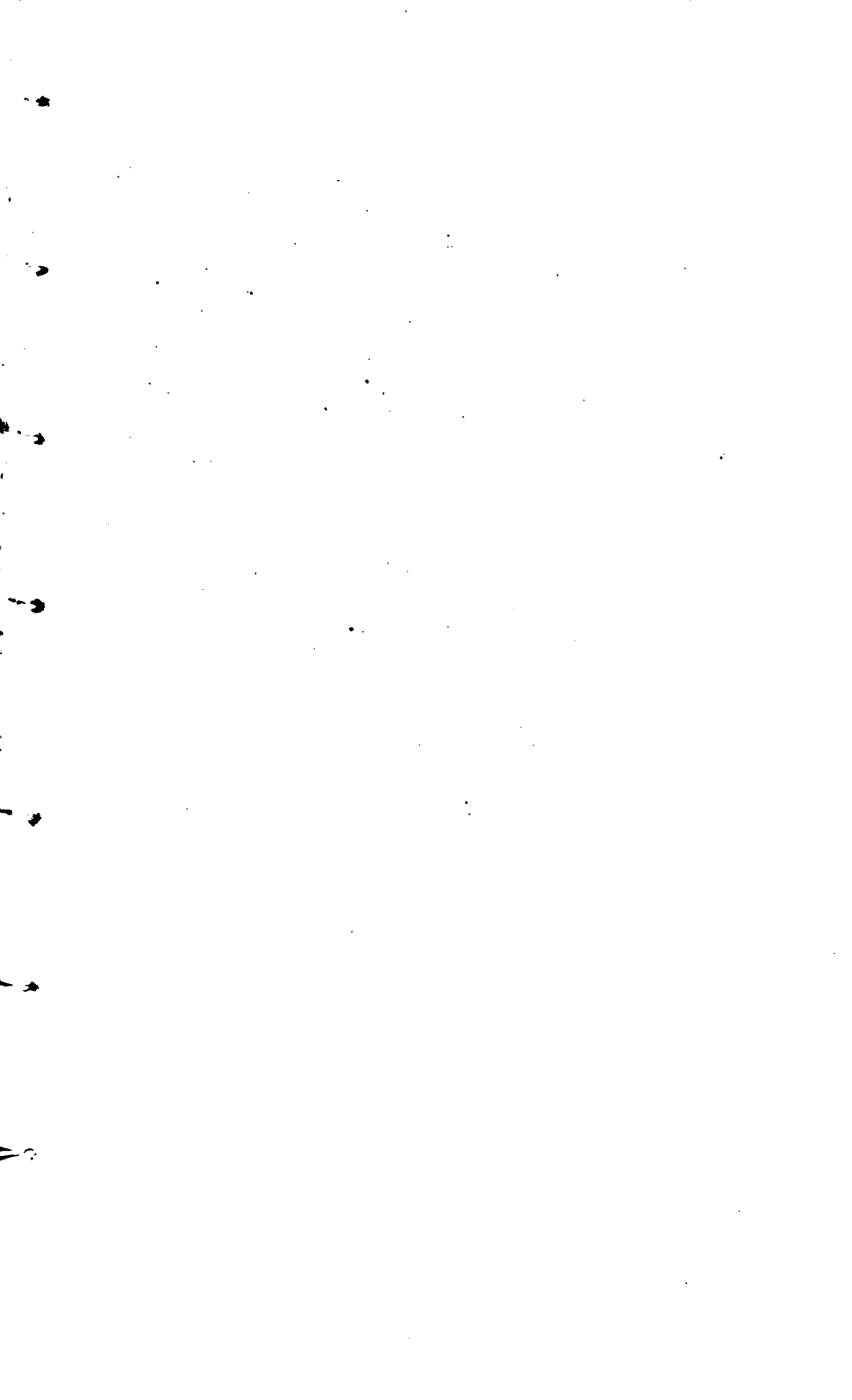
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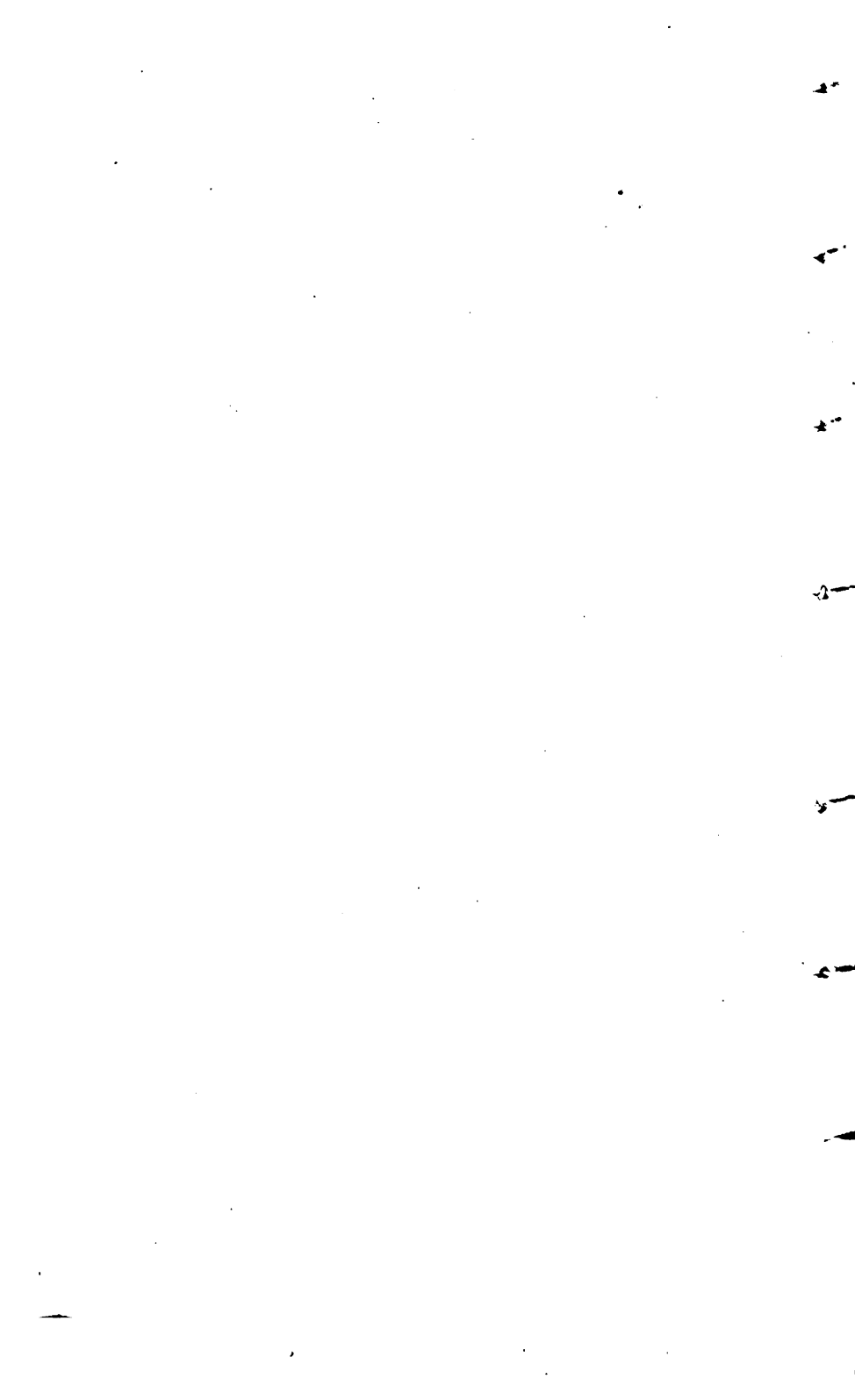
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THE LOVE OF CHRIST THE MOTIVE TO MISSIONARY EFFORT.

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S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN NORWICH, CONN., SEPT. 1842,

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

FOR

FOREIGN MISSIONS,

AT THEIR

THIRTY-THIRD ANNUAL MEETING.

BY WILLIAM R. DE WITT,

HARRISBURG, PA.

B O S T O N :

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## S E R M O N .

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2 Corinthians, v. 14.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINETH US.

It is only when men feel deeply, that they act with energy. The mere calm intellectual contemplation of an object will avail but little, in calling forth the energies of the soul in untiring action to secure its accomplishment. That object must seize hold upon the heart. It must break up its deep fountains of feeling, and bring the mind under the influence of its high and powerful excitement. Under such an impulse, men have gone forward in the successful prosecution of enterprises, which, to other minds have appeared embarrassed with difficulties, and encumbered with dangers, that would have rendered every attempt at their accomplishment the effect of childish folly or mad presumption. Superior eminence in any of the pursuits of life has usually been the result of an engrossing passion for that pursuit. No great moral

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or political revolution was ever achieved, without first awakening an enthusiastic devotion in its behalf.

Though this principle of our nature has been perverted by depravity, and men under the strong impulse of unholy feeling, have been borne onward, with indomitable energy, in the work of death; yet, in itself, the feature is godlike. Its prototype is found in Him, who is the perfection of excellence. It was not the mere calm intellectual contemplation of our apostasy, and consequent ruin, that led to the achievement of man's redemption. That achievement, in which has been made the fullest and clearest development of uncreated excellence, which has waked up the strains of the everlasting song, and which will yet fill God's holy kingdom with perfect and eternal blessedness, is the fruit of the throes of infinite love. It is to the strong impulse of this holy affection, that we owe the gift of God's Eternal Son; that we are indebted for those scenes of thrilling interest through which he passed during his voluntary exile from heaven, and for that dark and mighty, though ultimately triumphant conflict in Gethsemane and on Calvary. It is incarnate love, enthroned in heaven, that now holds the sceptre of universal dominion; and with an eye that never sleeps, and an arm that never wearies, is carrying forward to their consummation the purposes of infinite benevolence. This same affection, with a congruity so characteristic of God, he has made, not only the brightest ornament of Christian character, but the impulsive motive to every duty required of us as his followers. In the lives of the



apostles and primitive Christians, we are furnished with the best examples of its power. The love of Christ constrained them.

In this context the apostle is justifying the conduct of himself, and his fellow laborers, against the cavils of false and mistaken brethren, in the church at Corinth. They had represented their zeal as fanaticism—as the indication of a monomania, that rendered them incompetent to instruct and govern the church of God, in those periods of peril. The apostle seeks to correct the impressions made by these representations, by stating the principles, and the motives, that influenced their conduct. Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause; for the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that, if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him, who died for them and rose again. It is, we conceive, of little importance, whether we understand the apostle as referring to the love of Christ for us; or our love to Christ. If the former, it only becomes a motive to devoted effort in his cause, by exciting, in our hearts, a reciprocal affection. If the latter, (which, we think, the apostle intended, when he penned this passage,) it is ever the effect of Christ's love for us.

This affection, my brethren, is the fruit of the Spirit of God; and springs from a spiritual apprehension of the transcendent glory of the Redeemer's person; and from a deep sense of individual obligation to Him, for his unmerited mercy. It is an

affection which seeks its own nourishment, and grows strong and permanent, by daily meditations on the scenes of Gethsemane, and Calvary ; and by daily communion with its object at a throne of grace. Such was the affection which reigned in the hearts, and governed the lives of the primitive disciples of our Lord ; which bore them onward, through trials and persecutions, and led them to count not even their lives dear, in their efforts to bring the world under the holy and peaceful dominion of the Son of God. It was the love of Christ, transfusing its purity through their characters, and breathing its sweetness in all their actions, that gave them, under God, their efficiency, and crowned their labors with such abundant success.

It will not, then, I trust, be deemed inappropriate to the present occasion, to illustrate in a few particulars, the adaptation of this affection to our holy vocation, especially as called by the providence and the grace of God, to sustain an important agency in sending the gospel of Christ, as the richest boon of heaven, to every creature.

In the prosecution of this object, I remark in the first place, that the love of Christ is an elevating affection.

The missionary enterprise associates mankind, universally, with the destinies of an immortal existence. The results at which it aims lie above and beyond this world, and reach onward through the ages of eternity. It does indeed effect the improvement of their condition in this life. But this

is only an incidental good. The great, the ultimate object is, to bring them under an influence from heaven, that will enlighten and purify their souls, restore them to the knowledge and friendship of God, and prepare them for a deathless existence beyond the grave. This is an object, in which most men have no interest—for which the world at large has no sympathy. It is as far above the designs of its greatest philanthropists, as the heavens are above the earth; and it can be properly appreciated, and successfully prosecuted by those alone, whose views and purposes, and feelings, have undergone a corresponding elevation. Such an elevation, my brethren, the love of Christ secures, by bringing us into intimate communion with himself; by destroying, as far as it prevails, every low and selfish purpose; and by identifying our very being with his interests and with his glory.

The tendency of ardent affection is to mould, insensibly, the character after the image of the object loved. It seeks its own gratification in the intimacy of friendship; and dwells with delight on those attributes, which have called it into exercise; until the mind yields to their impression. Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, even from glory to glory. While this affection produces this conformity to the image of Christ, it destroys, as far as it prevails, every selfish purpose, and makes us one with Him. It identifies our interests with his interests—our glory with his glory. It elevates the thoughts and purposes of the mind above the current of this world's influences;

and associates them with the great objects of the mediatorial reign—with the scenes and the destinies of eternity, in which that reign will be consummated.

Brethren, the relations and the interests of time will ere long terminate forever. The fashion of this world is passing away; and soon the last ray of its glory will rest upon the bosom of that dark cloud, which comes charged with its final doom. But earth has interests connected with the councils of an eternity that is passed, and with the ages of an eternity to come. Over the ruins of our apostasy, the thoughts of the Son of God lingered, before the foundations of the world were laid, or the heavens were stretched abroad as a curtain. Even then, in anticipation of achieving the redemption of man, he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men. Immediately on the fall of man, he interposed his mediation to arrest the progress of the curse, and to bring the apostate race under a dispensation of mercy, which, in its final consummation, will realize all that infinite benevolence can desire. From that period he has gone forward in the prosecution of his plans. For this the world has been upheld in existence. Empires have risen, and fallen. Nations have dashed against nations. The earth has been one scene of wild misrule. But over this scene the Son of God has presided, ordering and directing all with unerring skill, for the attainment of his own ends. It was not until he had made, by his sacrifice on the cross, an expiation for sin, and thus laid a sure

foundation for his eternal kingdom, that his regal dignity was formally assumed, and publicly announced. Then, having spoiled principalities and powers, he visibly ascended, in his glorified humanity, to his throne in heaven. There he now reigns, and will reign, until he has put all enemies under his feet ;—until he has extended his mild and peaceful sceptre over a redeemed and subjugated world, and accomplished the purposes of infinite benevolence by gathering into his eternal kingdom the multitudes of the saved.

The love of Christ, my brethren, elevates the soul to communion with him, in the vast designs of his mediation. He, in whose heart it predominates, is absorbed in the greatness and glory of the achievement. To him it is not less real, than sublime. He sees around him the agencies, that are now in active operation in its accomplishment ; and he anticipates the grandeur of its consummation, with unhesitating certainty. The relations and the interests of time are lost sight of ; and he regards it as his highest honor, to be associated with Christ, though in toil, in suffering, and in reproach, in carrying forward his designs.

Such is the elevated spirit of our holy enterprise. Such was the spirit of the apostles and primitive disciples of our Lord. No one can read their lives without admiring their abstraction from the secular interests that surrounded them ; and the vivid impressions of eternal realities, under which they lived. Though in the world, they were not of the world. They lived above the current of its influences.

They gazed upon the visions of eternity. At Jerusalem, at Athens, or at Rome, surrounded by the imposing ceremonies of their ancient faith, by the proudest monuments of art, by academic groves, or by the splendors of the eternal city, they lost sight of all, in the absorbing anticipations of their Redeemer's glory, when he should come to gather into his kingdom the purchase of his blood, and seal up the doom of the lost. Regardless of reproach and toil, they prayed, and wept, and entreated men to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life, as though they were listening to hear the sound of the last trumpet, the wailings of the lost, and the triumphant shout of the glorified.

Such was the spirit of faith, and love, that glowed in their bosoms; that elevated them above the world, and bore them onward in the duties of their high calling. In proportion as the church has possessed this spirit, has she enjoyed the blessing of her exalted Head, and been honored with success in her efforts to extend his kingdom. May this spirit be ours, brethren, in its largest measure, that we may be prepared to go forward to the achievement of that glorious destiny, to which God is now calling his church.

II. In the second place, the love of Christ is admirably adapted to the peculiar exigencies of the missionary enterprise, as it is not only an elevating, but also a self-sacrificing affection.

It is the nature of love to seek its highest gratification in the happiness of its object. Love lives

in the enjoyments it bestows. This is the element of its existence. It delights in occasions of manifesting its strength, by the extent of its sacrifices, in promoting the good of those that are loved. The eye, brethren, can linger upon nothing more beautiful than the manifestation of this affection. The heart can be subjected to no influence richer in the purest enjoyment. The brightest emanations of Deity, ever contemplated by created minds, are the out-goings of this affection toward our guilty race, by our Lord Jesus Christ. He loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for our sins. The gift was the most costly that could be bestowed. The treasures of the universe are nothing in comparison with it. To comprehend its magnitude, we must comprehend the nature and the resources of the godhead; for its fullness dwells in him;—we must comprehend the infinite delight of his own bosom, as he surveyed, from his exalted throne, myriads of holy beings, to whom his power had given existence, brightening and exulting, in the sunshine of his complacency, pouring forth the song of extacy in his praise, and bowing down, in solemn adoration, at his footstool. And from these celestial heights, we must descend, through all those stages of deep humiliation, and those scenes of unparalleled sufferings through which he passed, until, on the cross, he exclaimed, It is finished, and bowed his head in death. Though there were seasons, when pressed down under his extreme agony, he prayed, that if it were possible, the cup of bitterness might pass from him;—he knew, from the be-

ginning, what he must endure. He knew that poverty, toil, reproach, and persecution, would be his constant attendants ;—that upon him would be poured the fury of the powers of darkness, and the wrath of offended Heaven ;—that smitten, afflicted, and forsaken of God, he must die in untold agonies on the accursed tree. Yet, such was the strength, and the devotedness of his love, that he willingly came. He delighted to enter upon his work. He pressed forward with holy impatience to the darkest hour of his agony ; and bared his own bosom to the sword of eternal justice, that man might be saved. Such, my brethren is the love of Christ ; the grand example, the exalted pattern, after which, God will mould, in eternal assimilation to himself, the subjects of his holy kingdom. The minds of the apostles were absorbed in admiration of this love. In their solitary musings it was the subject of their devout meditations. It was the theme, the burden of their public ministrations. It woke up in their bosoms a reciprocal affection, that sought its highest gratification in pleasing Christ ; and rejoiced in occasions of manifesting its strength and devotedness, by the greatness of the sacrifice made in behalf of his cause. For Christ, they forsook all. They cheerfully suffered the loss of earthly friendships, riches, and honors ; and endured poverty, reproach, sufferings, and death itself. Nay, they gloried in tribulation, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. It was the impulsive influence of this self-sacrificing affection, that bore them onward from land to land,



and from shore to shore, amid peril the most imminent, though the Holy Ghost bore them witness that bonds and afflictions awaited them wherever they went. But none of these things moved them. No regard for their own personal safety, nor the solicitations of weeping friends, restrained them from pressing forward into thickest dangers, where duty called them. They counted not their lives dear unto themselves, that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry they had received of the Lord Jesus.

Brethren, with this spirit of self-devotedness must the church be deeply imbued, before she will be prepared to discharge her solemn obligations to her ascended Lord. We cannot do what God requires from us in the conversion of the world, abiding in our ceiled houses, enjoying the pleasures and luxuries of wealth and refinement. Nor shall we approximate to the measure of our responsibility, by offering up a few prayers for the success of missions, and giving a few dollars of the increase of our substance to aid in sustaining them. The work indeed is the Lord's, and cursed is man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, whose heart departeth from the living God. But now, as ever, the agencies by which he will accomplish this work, he has intrusted to his church; and upon her has he imposed the solemn responsibility of employing these, in humble dependence on his blessing. Who, as he surveys the moral condition of the world, in the light of God's word—of his promises and commands—and contrasts with it the efforts that have

been, or are now making, to reclaim it from its guilt and degradation, is not painfully convinced that the church, as yet, is far from having any adequate views of the extent of her obligations, or possessing in any adequate measure, the spirit of her high vocation. If, with her numbers, her wealth, her political and social influence, and the facilities she now enjoys, for employing the means ordained of God, for the conversion of the world, the church possessed the same spirit of self-sacrificing devotion to the cause of her Redeemer, which distinguished her primitive members, how soon would she realize the brightest visions of prophecy respecting her future glory! Under the influence of this spirit, ambition and pride, and the love of worldly ease and pleasure would disappear. Wealth, now held with a miser's grasp, would be cheerfully consecrated to God. Talent and learning, now devoted to vain speculations in philosophy, and to the bitterness of unhallowed controversy, would be devoted to the affectionate and earnest preaching of the gospel, in the fullness of its blessings. Thousands, and tens of thousands of devoted youth, would come from the soul subduing contemplations of the scenes of Gethsemane, and Calvary, with hearts filled with the love of Christ, ready to part with all for his name's sake; to endure toil, suffering and death itself, if need be, to make known the provisions of eternal love to a perishing world. Then, from united and believing hearts, importunate supplication would continually ascend to the throne of God, for the interposition of his almighty arm, and

the communications of his Holy Spirit. That arm would then be made bare for salvation ; and that Spirit poured out from on high ; and the earth would soon be filled with the knowledge and the glory of the Lord.

III. In the third place : another attribute of this affection, which commends it, as peculiarly adapted to the missionary enterprise is, that in its greatest strength, and to whatever sacrifice it prompts, it is a reasonable affection.

Though, as has been said, it is only when we feel deeply, that we act with energy ; yet, in order to secure the permanency of such action, our feelings must be sustained by a sound judgment, and meet with an approving response from an enlightened conscience. These are their appointed arbiters ; and there are seasons, of frequent occurrence, in every man's life, however borne forward by strong emotion, when they will vindicate their high prerogative, and sit in judgment on the character of those affections which excite and control their actions. Unless these affections meet with their decided sanction, there will be misgivings that will cool their fervor, repress their energy, and induce that hesitancy which must ever be fatal to the accomplishment of results embarrassed with difficulties.

The Christian, and especially the Christian missionary, can have none of the excitements to effort which the world administers to its votaries. To him it is of the utmost importance, that the motives

which induce him to enter upon his self-denying and often perilous career, should be sustained in those seasons of retirement, when thrown back on his own sober reflections, they undergo the scrutiny of a sound judgment, and an enlightened conscience.

The love of power, and the prospect of earthly renown, feed the fires of unhallowed ambition, and nerve the soul with energy, in the prosecution of difficult and dangerous enterprises. The field of battle is the field of earthly glory. There, amid the perils of the conflict, are displayed those energies of mind, which, with stern composure, control the fury and direct the storm of war; and the proud and haughty bearing of the victor, shows that he is conscious of the world's admiration, though he has crushed beneath his feet every sentiment of justice, and every feeling of humanity. But the Christian toils in obscurity. He wastes his energies in unre-mitted efforts to do good, without attracting the notice of the world. He tears himself from home, from kindred, from the sympathies, and the privileges of Christian society; goes to unfriendly climes; seeks an abode among the dark and degraded heathen, and, exposed to the most imminent dangers, he toils, and suffers, and dies, that he may bring to them the knowledge of salvation, and direct them in the way of life. But no trumpet heralds his fame; no garlands are wreathed to deck his brow; no festive board is spread, as the tribute of admiration for his self-denying deeds of beneficence. Reproach, instead of honor; denunciation as a madman or a fool, are the only rewards bestowed

by an ungodly and a misjudging world. Even from the bosom of the church, where he had a right to look for that sympathy, and that encouragement, which are his sweetest earthly solace, he sometimes meets with a repulsive apathy, far worse than direct opposition. Thus is he thrown for support on his own deep and sober conviction of the reasonableness of the motive by which he has been actuated, and his confidence of its approval at the bar of God. This conviction, and this confidence, brethren, will not fail to yield their support if the love of Christ has been the constraining motive. In the hour of its greatest trial, and under the severest scrutiny, it will receive the sanction of reason, and meet with the approving response of conscience. The more calmly the Christian weighs the claims of his Saviour, the deeper will be the conviction of his obligation, and the more reasonable will appear that affection which constrains him to withhold nothing, but cheerfully to consecrate his all to his blessed service. In those seasons of sober reflection, it is not what is given, but what is withheld, that troubles an enlightened conscience. To be entirely relieved from perplexing embarrassments, and fears, and doubts; to enjoy the fullness of that liberty with which Christ blesses his people, the heart must let go its hold on every thing else, and cling to him in the strength of its love. Then, the conflict between the convictions of duty, and the power of selfishness and unbelief, ceases; and there is peace, quietness, and assurance, forever. Never was there a cup of cold water given, from love to

him, without its reward ; and the greater the sacrifice we make, the more will his consolations abound in the soul. There is no man that has left house, or parent, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting.

With what striking and beautiful illustrations of this truth are we furnished in the biographies of our missionaries. Sometimes, brethren, when I have thought of them, as far off, surrounded only by the darkness and the degradation of heathenism, suffering every privation, toiling from year to year under every outward discouragement, with no friendly voice to animate them, and no sympathizing bosom on which to repose their aching heads in the hour of despondency and gloom ;—when I have thought of the delicate, the refined, the enlightened female missionary, the dew of her youth expended in ceaseless anxieties and unremitted toil—when I have followed her, in my imagination, to some secluded spot to which she is wont to retire, perhaps in the stillness of the evening hour, to think of her home, and to recall the looks, and the affections of those from whom she is separated until they meet beyond the vale of death, where parting is unknown ; and when I have there witnessed the deep, convulsive throes of her heart, while the tears chase each other over her pale and care-worn cheeks—I have said, in my haste—It is too much—can, does God require it?—But when I have read of their love for their work, and how their consolations

abounded in the midst of their trials ;—when I have read of their holy enjoyment in God, of their sweet peace of mind, of their ardent aspirations after heaven, as faith unfolded to their enraptured vision the brightness of its glory ;—when I have read of their composed, of their peaceful and triumphant deaths, and thought of the unfading brilliancy of that crown, which shall encircle their brows—I have said—It is not a vain thing to serve the Lord ;—whatever sacrifices it involves, its rewards are infinitely preferable to earth's highest honors, and purest pleasures.

IV. In the fourth place : the love of Christ is an affection peculiarly adapted to the exigencies of the missionary enterprise, as it is the bond of union among the followers of the Redeemer, and thus prepares them for efficient co-operation in the advancement of his kingdom.

Union to Christ, and their participation in common of one spirit from him, as their living head, is the only firm and enduring bond of union among his people. To those thus united to Christ, he is the common foundation on which they all rest, as lively stones in one spiritual temple. He is the vine to whom all adhere as branches, receiving from him those vital influences by which they live, and grow, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness. He is the common object of their faith, their hope, and their love. In his cause centre all their interest ; and his glory is the end at which they all aim. The one spirit they receive from Christ, is

pre-eminently the spirit of holy love. It uproots, as far as it prevails, the pride and selfishness of the human heart. It abolishes private and separate interests, and unites them in cheerful and self-denying efforts to advance the kingdom of their common Saviour.

The manifestation of this spirit is among the means ordained of God to convince men of the divinity of the gospel. It illustrates, more than any thing visible, its power over the otherwise unconquerable dominion of human depravity; and it demonstrates its heavenly origin by bringing the victims of this depravity from the collisions and strifes of pride, and selfishness, and lust, into one peaceful brotherhood of holy love.

How intensely was the heart of Christ fixed on this union among his people! It was the burden of his petition in his last prayer for his church. Neither, says he, pray I for these alone, but those also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me.

Can we hope, brethren, for the conversion of the world to God, while the Christian church presents the spectacle it now does—organized into various sects, whose separate interests, too often advanced



by artifice and slander, are guarded with sleepless vigilance?—while the professed friends of Jesus, instead of combining their efforts to advance the common cause, are marshalling under the banner of party rivalry, and exhausting their strength in mutual hostilities?

At the close of the last century, when Christians first began to unite their efforts for advancing the kingdom of their Redeemer, it seemed to some in the advance of Christian hope, as the very dawn of the millennium. “Astónishing spectacle!” said one at that time, “The spell of party is broken; the antipathies of the cradle expire; the strife of ages ceases; and a sweeter harmony of heart and of measures is produced in an hour, than has been granted to the entreaties, the labors, and the prayers of the best of men for centuries.”\*

Oh! that this union, so auspiciously commenced, had been permitted to go on, until consummated, in that blessed result for which the Saviour wept and prayed and died. But, alas! after the expiration of nearly half a century, what do we witness, in portions, at least, of the church of Christ? The spell of party, and the antipathies of the cradle are revived; the strife of ages is renewed; and the fond anticipations of pious hope are blasted, by the bitter animosities and strifes that have been engendered by the ambitious, and the violent, who, regardless of the prayer of the Redeemer, have torn asunder the cords of Christian union; and given

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\* Sermon of Rev. J. M. Mason, preached 1797, before the New York Missionary Society.

occasion to the common enemy to glory over the wasted and ruined heritage of God.

Among the fallacies which the arch deceiver has imposed upon the minds of some, in this divided and weakened condition of the church, is the one, that separate and sectarian action, will effect more for the conversion of the world, than the combined efforts of the consecrated host of God. It is unnecessary to suggest even an argument in confutation of a position so at variance with the whole genius and spirit of Christianity—with the dictates of sound discretion, and with the experience of ages. Is it too severe a judgment to affirm in regard to such an opinion, that it is the spirit of party, seeking its own justification by virtually repudiating the magnanimous spirit of Christian love?

There is, brethren, but one remedy for all these evils in the church of God. It is the love of Christ shed abroad in the hearts of its members by the Holy Ghost given unto them. United to Christ in the bonds of this pure affection, we shall be united to each other. Individual and sectarian feelings and interests will all be merged in that love which seeketh not her own, but the things of Jesus Christ. Then the prayer of the Redeemer will be answered; and one in affection, one in purpose, and one in effort, the living members of his spiritual body, his church, will go forth, in the spirit of might, to accomplish the predicted glory of Zion.

V. In the fifth place : This affection is of the utmost importance in accomplishing the great object

of our association, as it involves a spirit of holy dependence on Christ, and of earnest, believing prayer for his blessing.

Love is a confiding affection. The Christian in whose heart the love of Christ glows, delights in reposing on the almighty arm of his Saviour, and in seeking directly from him the blessings he desires, and giving him all the glory in their reception and enjoyment.

It is, my brethren, a question of great practical importance whether, in this age of comparative zeal, and benevolence, for the spread of the gospel, there is cherished in the hearts of Christians, that deep sense of dependence on God, and that habit of holy, earnest, believing prayer in secret, which are essential to secure that blessing, without which all the efforts of the church must be vain. While there is a beautiful consistency and harmony, according to the economy of grace, between the spirit of unceasing and laborious activity in the cause of Christ, and the spirit of entire dependence on him, and earnest, believing prayer; yet, it cannot be disguised that, owing to the imperfection of Christian character, we need to watch constantly, lest in the cultivation of the one, we overlook the other. The apostles united both. They gave themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. Unceasing, and self sacrificing as were their labors, it was with them a practical truth, that pressed with all its weight upon their hearts, that whosoever planted, and whosoever watered, God must give the increase. They felt, that, of themselves they could

do nothing—that all the instrumentalities they employed, though mighty through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds of Satan, and building up the kingdom of Jesus Christ, were feeble, were weakness itself, without his co-operation. With what confidence, then, must they have reposed on the arm of their almighty Saviour, as they girded themselves for the conflict, and went forth to contend, not merely against flesh and blood,—not merely against the organized forms of evil on earth, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. With what holy importunity, must they have borne on their agonizing hearts before a throne of grace the cause of a world perishing in sin. They prayed without ceasing. They continued instant in prayer. They went from their knees to their work, and intermitted that work only to seek the blessing of God their Redeemer in prayer. This, unquestionably, was the one principal cause of their success. They prayed like Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel of the covenant, and would not let him go without the blessing. They prayed like Abraham, when he plead for Sodom, and prevailed with God.

The same spirit of earnest prayer was a striking characteristic of the reformers. The age of the reformation was an age of mighty intercession with God. And the whole burden of prophecy intimates that the church will be deeply imbued with this spirit, as she enters upon her millennial glory. What can be accomplished, brethren, without the arm of

the Almighty? and what can we not achieve, if that arm be made bare for salvation? The results that have been already secured, are the earnestness of what he is willing to grant. When the people of God, reposing with unlimited and affectionate confidence on the arm of their almighty Saviour, and pressing his throne with their ceaseless supplications, go unitedly forward, in the spirit of self-devotement, to the work of their high calling; how soon will they exclaim in holy astonishment at the result of their own efforts, "Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows?" Then, says God, thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shalt fear, and thou shalt be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee. The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee."

Finally, brethren, The love of Christ is an affection adapted to the great object of your association, as it is itself the essential element of successful effort.

"Knowledge is power," is the saying of one of the most gifted of mankind. But a greater than Bacon has taught, and demonstrated too, that love is power. The Author of our being, has interwoven with the very fibres of our existence, a strong susceptibility to its influence. Depravity must indeed have wrought a fearful ruin in the soul that is steeled against its impressions in every form. It may be doubted whether such a monster is permitted to live in this world, as yet the scene of moral probation. Before such a consummation takes place, the soul

is removed to those dark regions where malignity reigns unrestrained, and despair, with raven wings, broods over its immortal destiny. Go where you will, among the most debased, the outcasts, of mankind, and you will find, amid the ruins that sin has effected in their moral natures, there still lingers a chord responsive to the manifestations of goodness. Nay, where reason itself is dethroned, and the darkest images of horror haunt the mind, or maniac rage distorts the features, the love of kindness has subdued the soul to gentleness, and won the heart to confidence and gratitude. It was this that gave to Howard his power over the reckless and the violent. Beneath his look of benignity, the heart of the hardened convict relented; and at his voice of kindness, the dawn of hope gleamed over the sullen gloom of the desperate in wretchedness. What influence has wrought that wonderful, that almost miraculous reformation, among the inebriates of our land? Our statute books are crowded with penal enactments against the drunkard. Society frowned indignantly upon his vice. The respectable loathed his appearance, and turned him with disgust from their doors. Argument and expostulation were tried in vain, until the friends of temperance wearied with their fruitless efforts, gave over the confirmed inebriate to a hopeless doom. But love interposed. She sought, with tears of pity, the poor degraded outcast, in the dens of pollution and infamy. She took him from the loathsome gutter, and addressed him with the voice of kindness. She whispered hope to his heart—inspired him with confidence, and

thus redeemed him from his degradation, and restored him to respectability and usefulness.

Amid the ruins of the fall, the susceptibility to the power of love remains in the human soul, to save it by the grace of God, from utter abandonment, and bring it back again, under the dominion of holiness, that it may eventually be prepared for the purity and the bliss of Heaven.

It has not with more eloquence than truth been observed, that " God, who knew what was in man, seems to have known, that in his dark bosom there was but one solitary hold, that he had on him, and that to reach it, he must put on a look of graciousness ; and tell us he had no pleasure in our death ; and manifest toward us, the longings of a bereaved parent ; and even humble himself into a suppliant in the cause of our return, and bid his messengers to bear, through all its habitations, the tidings of his good will, to the children of men. And now that every barrier which lay across the path of acceptance is levelled by the power of Him who travailed in the greatness of his strength for us ; is the voice of a friendly and beseeching God, lifted up without reserve, in the hearing of us all ; and this one mighty principle of attraction is brought to bear upon our natures, that might have remained sullen and unmoved under every other application." \*

And, brethren, with a congruity so like God, he has intrusted the publication of his loving kindness not to angels' lips of burning eloquence, but to the

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\* Dr. Chalmers.

children of depravity and wretchedness, whose hearts have been won and subdued and blessed by the power of this love; that from the fullness of their own experience they might testify of its truth and richness to their brethren in depravity and wretchedness. Then it is, when subdued, and burdened with a sense of their personal obligation to their Saviour, they go as redeemed sinners, to speak of his infinite goodness; to commend him as the hope of the guilty and the wretched, and urge them with tears of tenderness and love to confide in his mercy;—then it is, that their words find their way to the hearts of their hearers, subdue them to penitence, warm them into love, excite them to confidence in God, and fill them with holy peace. And, when the hearts of the ministers and members of the church of Jesus Christ are bathed in the pure fountain of a Saviour's love; when they live, and pray and preach; and labor under its constraining influences, it will not be long before, from the mount of God, they rejoice with joy unspeakable, over a redeemed, and regenerated world.

If these things be so, beloved brethren; if I have not unduly estimated the importance and adaptation of this holy affection to our high vocation—especially as called by the providence and grace of God—to sustain an important agency in sending the gospel to every creature, then it only remains that I urge you, not forgetting my own obligations, to cultivate this holy affection. How numerous and how solemn the motives that press upon us this duty! The claims of that Saviour who loved us, and gave



himself for us ; the vows we have made before God and man ; the condition of a perishing world ; the signs of the times ; the shortness of life ; the approaching retributions of eternity, and the importance of being fully qualified to achieve, under God, the high destiny to which we are individually called—all, all urge us to cherish the love of Christ in our hearts, as the controlling motive of our lives, and to devote ourselves unceasingly to the advancement of his kingdom.

Brethren, there is one thought connected with this subject, to which, I trust, the occasion will justify me in alluding. We are not left without the most delightful examples of the power of this sacred love to incite us to its cultivation ; and the place where we are now assembled, on this return of our Anniversary, brings to our remembrance the names of many\* who here imbibed this spirit, until, constrained by it, they tore themselves away from their weeping friends and kindred, to go and carry to the benighted heathen the tidings of salvation. There are few places where we could meet with so many hearts connected by the most tender recollections, and the most solemn associations with our holy enterprise. There are many here, honored of God, who have resigned the cherished objects of their fondest earthly love to the claims of Christ and the heathen. Some of these are now in the field of labor, bearing with cheerfulness the burden and heat of the day ; while others, having finished their

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\* The city of Norwich and its immediate vicinity, has furnished twenty-eight missionaries for the heathen.



work, have been called to their reward in heaven. The very places consecrated by the prayers and tears of these devoted servants of God, where, constrained by a Saviour's love, they first gave themselves to the cause of missions, are full of interest. Around these places we could linger, musing on their bright example, until we caught a portion of their spirit, and were incited to emulate their devotedness.

But, brethren, there are places and scenes of far deeper interest, that invite our attention. It is among the deep shades of Gethsemane, and at the foot of the cross on Cavalry, that we must linger, and meditate, and pray. It is here, in the contemplation of the love of Christ for us—a love, the height, the depth, the length, and the breadth of which, no finite mind can measure, that we must learn to estimate the extent of our obligations, and imbibe the spirit which will prepare us to act our parts in achieving the vast results of his mediatorial reign. Toils and sufferings, in the prosecution of our work, may be ours. We may not see what our eyes long to see, before our lips are sealed in death, and our bodies descend into the grave. But the kingdom of the Redeemer shall be triumphant. The diadem of the nations shall adorn his brow. At his feet shall bow a ransomed world; and in the day of his glory, among the myriads of the blessed as they ascend, with the shout of triumph, to the kingdom prepared for them from the foundations of the world, shall all appear who have here yielded their hearts to the constraining influences of his love.



