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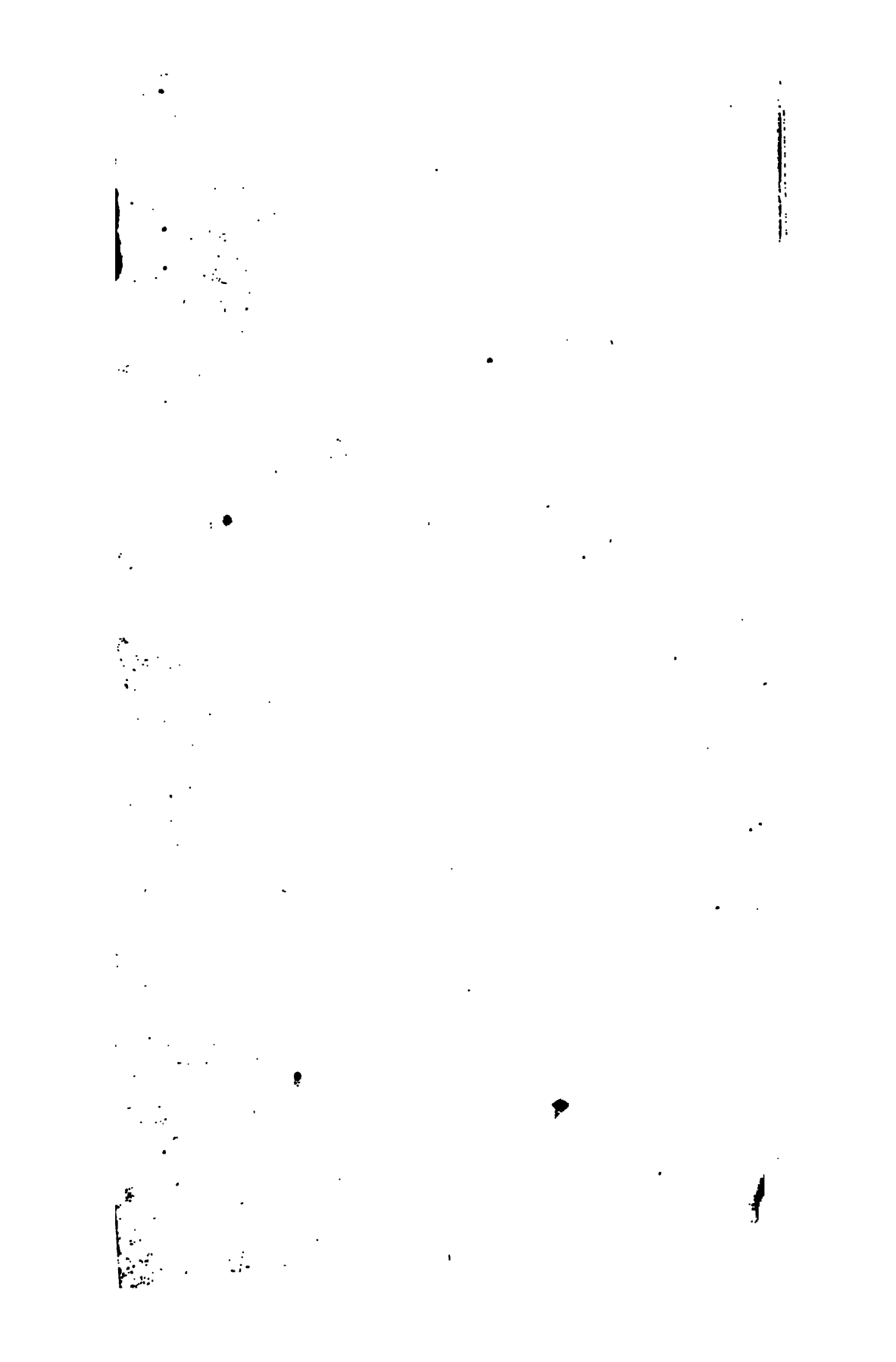


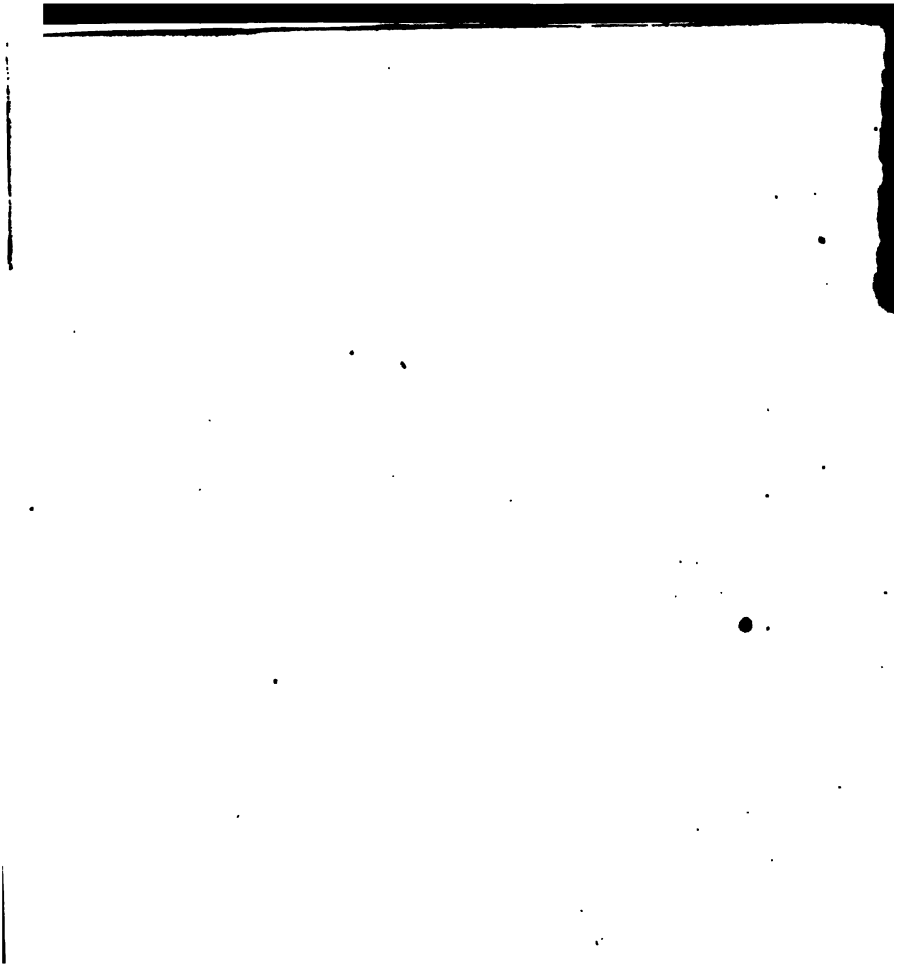
ANNEX











THE AMERICAN
NATIONAL PREACHER:

OR

ORIGINAL MONTHLY SERMONS

FROM

LIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES.

EDITED BY
REV. AUSTIN DICKINSON,
NEW-YORK.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that
publisheth peace.—Isa. lii. 7.

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FOR THE TWO YEARS COMMENCING JUNE 1834,
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SERMON CLXVIII.

BY JAMES RICHARDS, D. D.

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THE GREAT KING.

MALACHI, i. 14. *For I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts.*

THERE are few truths of greater practical importance than the one here announced; and none perhaps which men are more inclined to forget. Of multitudes it may be said, God is not in all their thoughts; and of others, that though they think of him, it is only as their Creator and Benefactor, *not* as their holy and eternal king. They choose to forget him in this relation, that they may avoid the conviction of their own responsibility. But forgetfulness of God, or of the relations he sustains to us, can never annihilate those relations. He is a king upon his throne, swaying a scepter of universal and uncontrolled authority. He is a great king, whose attributes it behoves us to consider, whose will it deeply concerns us to know and obey. This truth the prophet proclaims to the Israelites in the words before us, and proclaims it for the purpose of showing them the guilt of their hypocritical offerings. They had brought the torn, and the lame, and the sick, for a sacrifice, instead of animals "without blemish," as the law required. But what said the answer of God? "Cursed be the man who hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts; and my name is dreadful among the heathen." They had forgotten the majesty of Him with whom they had to do, and treated the great Lord of the universe with a species of disrespect which they would not have dared to offer to an earthly governor—a mere mortal like themselves.

To avoid treading in their guilty steps, let us constantly bear in mind the fact, that God is a great king—a fact immediately and emphatically asserted in the text, by God himself—and claiming on this account our special attention. Our object in the following discourse is twofold:—

VOL. IX.—1.

I. To consider in what respects God is a great king; and

II. To apply the subject to some practical uses.

In what respects, then, is God a great king?

1. He is so, first of all, in regard to the greatness of his empire. "Is there any number of his armies, and on whom doth not his light arise?" Cast your eye over the universe; stretch your imagination to the utmost; and can you tell where God's empire begins, or where it ends? You have seen the starry firmament, where unnumbered worlds roll through boundless space; you have felt lost in the immensity of God's works; but how *little* have you seen! and how little can you see, compared with what exists! It is but the threshold of Jehovah's kingdom that appears to the naked eye. Philosophy with her instruments reveals millions of other suns and other systems which lie far beyond. All that is visible to us bears no greater proportion to the whole of God's dominions, than a single grain of sand to the innumerable multitude which line the ebbing shore. How great a king then must God be, whose empire spreads through the boundless regions of his works—whose government includes in it every moral being in the universe—angels, men, devils, with all the inferior orders of creatures, wonderfully diversified in their natures, and crowding every part of the material world with their existence? Nay, how great a king must He be, whose government extends as well to inanimate as animated nature—who presides over every particle of matter in his vast dominions, and directs and controls its agency in the innumerable changes it is passing, or is destined to pass!

This wide and universal government of God the psalmist celebrates when he calls upon the whole creation, from its highest to its lowest forms, to praise the name of the Lord.—"Praise ye the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights; praise ye him, all his angels; praise ye him, all his hosts; praise ye him, sun and moon; praise ye him, all ye stars of light; praise ye him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens: Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded, and they were created; he hath also established them forever; he hath made a decree which they shall not pass. Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and vapor, stormy wind fulfilling his word; mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl; kings and all people, princes and all judges of the earth, both young men and maidens, old men and children; let them praise the name of the Lord; for his name alone is excellent, and his glory is above the earth and the heavens."

Every creature in the universe is here summoned to bear a part in God's praise, because a part of his empire and under his control.

2. God is a great king, not only as he possesses a great empire, whose

limits no imagination can conceive, but as he rules it by a power independent and absolutely uncontrolled.

We can easily conceive of a kingdom too unwieldy for its sovereign—embracing a greater variety of interests and agents than he is able to control. Many a king has seen his empire crumble to ruins from its vastness alone: his crown has fallen from his head, because his arm was not strong enough to wield a scepter over his wide dominions. The actors were too numerous for his eye, too powerful for his hand. It is far otherwise with God. He rules the whole with the same ease that he rules a part. For great as his kingdom is, He himself fills it, surrounds it, and pervades every part of it, in the most intimate and perfect manner. He is as intimately present with every atom in the universe, as with the seraph before his throne. Nothing escapes his notice—nothing can resist his hand. All power in his creatures is derived from him, and depends, every moment, upon him, while *His* power is absolute, boundless, and underived.

Other kings exercise government over an empire formed to their hand; their subjects are not properly their own workmanship; nor are any of the objects to which their power extends. They never gave existence to a drop of water that descended on their fields, nor to a leaf trembling in their forests. But God is literally the author of his own empire; he rules nothing which he did not create, and he created nothing which he does not uphold. Is he not, then, a great king? Who can conceive of his power in calling his kingdom into being? He had only to *speak*, and it was done—to *command*, and it stood fast. Ten thousand times ten thousand worlds, with their myriads of inhabitants, rose into existence at his call; and all these, from age to age, are sustained by his arm. Hence the Scriptures distinctly affirm, not only that all things were *created*, but are *upheld* by the word of God's power, and upheld by the same word which awoke them into being at first.

Consider then this universe—think of the power concerned in creating and sustaining it—and especially in superintending its diversified movements—bounding and directing them all to infinitely wise and glorious results; and can you help exclaiming, "*Surely God is a great God, and a great king, high above all the earth! What power is like unto his power? and who among the sons of the mighty can be compared with him?*"

But though God is independent and without control, he is not therefore *arbitrary*; though he does whatsoever pleaseth him in heaven above, and in earth beneath, it is not simply because he is almighty and irresistible. Which leads me to remark,

3. God is a great king because he is *wise in heart* as well as mighty in strength; he is *just* and *kind*, as well as powerful. Nothing controls

him but his own perfect will—perfect in *wisdom*, perfect in *equity*, perfect in *goodness*. In the government of his subjects, he enacts such laws and such only, as are adapted to their several capacities, and as invariably tend to promote their individual happiness and the greatest good of his kingdom. In all his measures he sets up his own glory as the highest end, and next to this, and conjoined with it, the happiness of his creatures collectively considered. These ends he steadily pursues, by means worthy of his wisdom, worthy of his goodness, and never derogatory to his holiness, equity or truth.

Such are the principles and such the character of his government;—yet it seems good to him often to take a path which we cannot trace—to pursue designs which lie too deep for the eye of his creatures; still this is his glory, that he is always wise, always just, always beneficent. Is there not then a moral greatness in his administration, which infinitely transcends that of all other kings, and invests him with a dignity and majesty worthy of his eternal throne?

4. Finally, God is a great king in that his kingdom is unchangeable and imperishable.

The greatest earthly potentates are often overthrown; and if not, they die and leave their scepter to other hands. But God is “the king immortal, invisible and eternal.” Ten thousand ages hence his crown will shine with the same transcendent brightness as at this moment; for he himself is the same, yesterday, to-day and forever. No lapse of time can in the least impair his authority—no combination of circumstances or events present the slightest barrier to his will. Who then can conceive his greatness, or glance a thought half way to his throne? Verily, “*He is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, which no man hath seen or can see, to whom be honor and power everlasting.*”

II. Having thus seen how great a king the God is with whom we have to do, let us now briefly apply the subject.

1. If God be such a great king, he may justly require us to worship him. This duty grows out of our relation to him, as his creatures, as dependents on his bounty, and as the subjects of his government. It is right and fit that we should “kneel before the Lord our Maker,” to thank him for our existence, to bless him for all our mercies, to confess our sins to him, and to implore his grace and benediction. It is right that we should daily acknowledge our dependance upon him, commit ourselves to his care, and never fail devoutly to express our sense of his transcendent glory and majesty. All this is due to God as our gracious and eternal king; and all this he must require of us, if he would not give up the order he has established among moral beings, and cease to maintain the rights of his throne. He owes it to himself and to the kingdom which he

governs—nay, he owes it to our own felicity, of which he is the natural guardian, to insist upon this worship—this constant homage of our hearts. If we are believers in revelation, we shall not for a moment question this duty; and even if we are not believers, what objection can we make to it? For if God be a *Father*, where is his honor? and if a *Master*, where is his fear? and if a *King*, a glorious and eternal king, where is his homage? Can you, as a reasonable man, admit these relations, and yet deny or neglect the duties which so obviously correspond to them?

2. But again; if God be indeed this great king, it is a matter of solemn consideration *how* we worship him. He will not be trifled with; he will minutely inspect our offering; and if it be not such as his word requires, such as becomes his glorious majesty and the relations he bears to us, he will assuredly frown upon the offerings we bring. He "is a *Spirit*, and they who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." He is a king, a great king, and they who approach him must do it with the profoundest reverence and humility. It was overlooking these important circumstances—the glorious attributes of Jehovah—his solemn commands, and the relations he sustains to his creatures—which led the house of Israel to bring the torn, and the sick and the lame for a sacrifice. They seemed to have forgotten that God was omniscient, omnipotent, infinitely pure, jealous for his honor, and that the hypocrite could not stand in his sight. Hence they profaned his altars with sacrifices forbidden by the law, and insulted his majesty with gifts which they would have been ashamed to offer to an earthly governor. But are we not chargeable with the very same thing, when we play the hypocrite in our religious services—not rendering to God the unequivocal homage of our hearts? What is it but the torn, the sick and the lame, when we present our bodies before the Lord, and leave our souls behind? when we go into the sanctuary or into our closets, carrying so much of the world with us as to disturb our devotions, and render them a hurried, unfeeling, insipid form, destitute of love and reverence for God, as they are of kindness and benevolence to men? And yet, what can be more unseemly in itself?—what more criminal and offensive in the eye of the great king? We should not dare treat a fellow worm in this manner, who had power to judge of the offence and to punish the insult.

Let us then often inquire as to the character of our devotions;—Are they constant? are they sincere? are they humble and profound? do they glow with disinterested love to men?

3. If God be so great a king, swaying a sceptre of infinite wisdom and almighty power, what reason have we at all times to confide and rejoice in his government?

Dark and distressing scenes may occur, but his hand controls all events: he will surely overrule them to his glory; and no less certainly for the good of all who trust in him. Nothing falls out without his no

tice, or aside from his eternal counsels; good and evil, light and darkness, joy and sorrow, with all their connections are alike in his hands, and are continually under his control. Hence we are assured that "the wrath of man shall praise him, and that the remainder of wrath he will restrain." There may be times when the wheels of his government move high and dreadful—nay, this is what we are to expect, if God be a great king, and the measures which he takes are like himself, above the comprehension of his creatures; but there can be no seasons when we have not abundant cause to rejoice in him, trusting in his unsearchable wisdom and power. With David we may say, in the darkest and most tempestuous season, when afflictions are ready to overwhelm us, "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice—the floods lift up their waves; but the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea: the Lord sitteth upon the flood, yea the Lord sitteth king forever."

4. If God be a great king, presiding over all things with boundless wisdom and power, it must be a crime of awful demerit to slight his authority and violate his law. All agree that sin is a transgression of the law, and that its demerit may be estimated in some measure by the dignity and glory of the lawgiver. A sin against a parent is greater than the same sin against an equal, and the more excellent the parent, the more heinous the sin. Were the parent clothed with kingly authority, any disrespect towards him in this relation, any violation of his command would involve deeper guilt, as the obligations contemned are more weighty, and the consequences of transgression more ruinous. What then must be the demerit of sin as committed against God, our holy and everlasting king? Think of the measure of his authority—the perfection of his attributes—the reasonableness and importance of his law—the tremendous consequences of rebellion in his kingdom, which, if not counteracted by his omnipotent hand, might sweep away all the good intended by his infinitely benevolent heart in giving existence to the moral universe.—Seen in this light, can you conceive of any thing more malignant, more base, or more presumptuous than sin? Is it not a contempt of the divine majesty? an invasion of the rights of his throne? What but an attempt to strike the crown from his head, and to wrest the sceptre from his hand? But the attempt is vain, and dangerous, as it is vain. For, in the next place;

5. If God be a great king, whose name is dreadful among the nations, it must be a dangerous thing to rise in rebellion against him. For he cannot do otherwise than vindicate his own authority, and tread his incorrigible enemies under his feet.

Is he armed with almighty power? and does the penalty of his law devote the transgressor to eternal death? How then is the rebel to escape?

Without repentance, escape is impossible, unless he could pull down omnipotence, or change the truth of God into a lie. He holds all the transgressors in the universe absolutely in his hands; and can destroy them with infinitely more ease than you can destroy a worm. On every supposition but one, their destruction is unavoidable. If they repent, he will forgive: if they believe in his dear Son, he will restore them to favor; but if they refuse and rebel, they shall die; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Which leads me to remark,

6. Finally; that since God is a great king, they must be *safe*; nay, *honorable* and *happy*, who become obedient subjects of his government, and thus heirs of his everlasting friendship.

They are *safe*; for what can eventually harm them, if under his protection, and sheltered by the wings of his almighty providence?" "The Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and are safe. Beneath them are the everlasting arms. No weapon formed against them can prosper; and every tongue that riseth against them in judgment, God will condemn." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," is the language which he pours into the ear of his saints, so that they may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear." They could not be more safe, did they themselves wield omnipotence.

They are *honorable*; yes, however poor or despised by men. They are sons of God, children of the heavenly king, born from above, and born heirs to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. They are allied to angels, those exalted spirits who have dwelt in the presence of Jehovah since the morning of creation; and who are quick as winged lightning to do his pleasure. Jesus Christ is their elder brother, and in his exaltation they have a sure pledge of their own. As he has overcome and sat down with his Father in his throne, so they shall overcome and sit down with him in his throne. This is their high and glorious destination, and the period hastens when they will stand forth in the presence of the intelligent universe as persons whom the King of kings delighteth to honor. And are they not then *happy*? Their sins are put away—their sanctification is *begun*, and will be *perfected*. God is their friend and their portion. Soon will they be released from sin and from suffering, and put in possession of joys unutterable and without end.

But who are these persons? and are we of the happy number? Let us decide this point for ourselves, and by an honest and faithful appeal to the word of God. The *righteous*—the *righteous*, they will be happy—the wicked, miserable. Let the impenitent consider this—let them contrast their miserable condition with the safety and felicity of the righteous—and now, while the king of heaven stretches out the scepter of mercy, let them touch and live forever. Amen.

SERMON CLXIX.

BY JAMES RICHARDS, D. D.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION OF GOD'S UNIVERSAL PROVIDENCE.

1 KINGS, xxii. 34, 35. *And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness; wherefore he said to the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand and carry me out of the host, for I am wounded. And the battle increased that day; and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even, and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot.*

I know of no doctrine either more absurd, or more impious, than that of fatalism; a doctrine which shuts out of the universe an intelligent first cause, and makes all events the result of a blind and irresistible necessity. So adverse is this to reason, that it would be difficult to find its parallel, except in the doctrine of Epicurus; the doctrine of chance, which equally excludes an intelligent cause from the government of the world.

But though both of these opinions have been embraced by men calling themselves philosophers, and exerting no little influence among their contemporaries, I have no apprehensions that they will be received by any in this assembly. We are too well fixed in the belief of an all-wise, almighty, and infinitely benevolent Being, to be drawn into errors of so bold and blasphemous a character. There is not one of us, I am persuaded, who does not feel assured that the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein; and that he made them for some specific and wise design. There is not one of us who does not believe that He who made all things, must of necessity uphold and govern all, and govern for the same end for which he created. Nor can any man doubt whether the Creator has power sufficient to reach the end which his wisdom and goodness at first designed. Still it may be a question, how far his providential agency is concerned in the government of the world? whether it extend to all things absolutely—to things small, as well as to things great? to things apparently casual, as well as to those which fall out according to some known and settled law; to the *volitions* and *actions* of men, no less than to the winds and storms of heaven, and to the rising and setting of the stars?

There is a doctrine in the world which gives God a general superintendence of his works; but which denies his providential agency in minute occurrences;—a doctrine which supposes it inconsistent with the dignity of the Supreme Majesty to attend to every mote that flies, and to concern himself with all the slighter changes which take place in the natural and moral world. But such an opinion, it is plain, overlooks an important article, in which the greatness of God appears; viz. that he can attend to the minute as well as to the vast; and that without the least labor or confusion; that while he presides over planetary worlds, over suns and systems, scattered throughout the immensity of space, preserving among

them the order which he at first ordained, he can fix his eye on every floating atom, as fully as if no other object engaged his attention. Nay it is this stupendous fact, that God literally takes care of every sparrow; every insect, every particle of dust—that he sees them perfectly, through every moment of their existence; while his hand continually sustains and directs them,—I say it is this stupendous fact, more than any thing else, which shows the immensity of his wisdom and power. For what must his capacity and energy be, whose eye is at the same time in every point of space; and whose almighty hand works throughout his vast dominions, controlling all things, and bringing them to such an issue as he at first intended? Such knowledge and power infinitely surpass our comprehension.

There is, however, another doctrine, which, while it subscribes to a providence thus minute and extensive, in the *natural* world, denies it in the *moral*. It doubts not that every thing in the natural world takes place according to God's holy, wise, and pre-determined counsel. The abettors of this scheme are not only willing, but desirous it should be so.—They think it better that all events in the natural world should be under the control of infinite wisdom and goodness, than that they should be left to chance or necessity. But they cannot admit this with respect to the moral world. I mean with respect to rational beings; their volitions, their actions, and their consequent destinies. To suppose a providence here, extending to every moral being, and to his every action; and extending in such a manner as to give certainty to his conduct, and to his final state, they think would overturn the liberty of the creature, and impeach the holiness of God. Thus they introduce into the moral world a system of chance, and hold that there is no certainty in the actions of the creature, arising out of the nature of his being, and the circumstances which surround him, because this certainty would infringe his liberty, and render him a mere machine. For if it be absolutely certain that he will act in one way, it is equally certain, say they, that he will not act in another way, and morally impossible that he should; which, in their view, is to establish a necessity in his actions, incompatible with freedom and accountability.

Plausible, however, as this appears, it is mere human speculation, and pointedly opposed to the revealed truth of God. With this sacred volume before me, I trust it can be made to appear that God reigns in the *moral* world, no less extensively than in the natural; and though his agency here may be different, because the subjects of it are different, yet it is no less certain in its results; so that nothing does or can take place among men or angels, without being embraced in his counsels, and controlled by his almighty providence. I hope to show from the scriptures, and from the soundest principles of reason, not only that such is the fact—but that it is a fact most consoling and encouraging, and ought to be cherished by every mind.

Let us advert to our text. "A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness; wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host, for I am wounded. And the battle increased that day, and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even; and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot." But I hear it asked, "What has this to do with providence? A man draws a bow at a venture, not knowing where the king of Israel is—or what cha-

riot he occupies in the opposing host, and the arrow passes between the joints of the harness, (that is, between the joints of the armor with which the king was clad,) and the wound proves mortal; but in this there is nothing miraculous—nothing in which the common laws of nature appear to be suspended, or contravened—nothing, in short, a whit more wonderful than what has a thousand times occurred; the most that can be said, is, it was somewhat remarkable that the arrow from a bow drawn at a venture, should have been pointed towards the king of Israel, while he was in disguise, and of course unknown to the archer; and that this arrow should have passed between the king's armor, and at a place where it would prove mortal;—still there is nothing here which evinces an extraordinary interposition of providence, or which shows that the event might not have happened, allowing the laws of nature to be what they are, though no providence at all were concerned." I admit the leading facts in this statement, and it is on the very ground of what is involved in it, connected with the history of the case, that I build the doctrine of a particular providence, extending to the minutest events of our lives. For if it can be proved that God's hand and counsel were concerned in the death of Ahab, and all the leading circumstances of it were ordered according to his sovereign will, then surely we shall have no cause to doubt that his hand and counsel are equally concerned in all other events relating to his creatures, notwithstanding the concurrence of human volitions and second causes, of whatsoever character they may be.

What, then, are the facts in this case? Is it not certain that God had determined Ahab should fall at Ramoth-Gilead? that he should fall in battle with the Syrians? and that the dogs should lick his blood on the very spot where dogs had licked the blood of Naboth, whose death he had procured, and whose vineyard he had seized upon with violence? All these circumstances, it will be recollected, had been distinctly predicted—and predicted not merely as events which should certainly come to pass, but as judgments which God himself would bring upon Ahab. "Behold I will bring evil upon thee," saith the Lord by Elijah, when he denounced against Ahab his displeasure for the murder of Naboth. And Micajah assures him, not only that the Lord had spoken evil concerning him, but that he had suffered a lying spirit to enter into the false prophets, for the very purpose of bringing that evil to pass. But though the death of Ahab was fixed upon in the divine purpose, and all the circumstances of it fully determined, yet we see no causes at work for its accomplishment, which at all interfered with the uniformity of the divine administration—none which touched the liberty of the creature, or which differed in any respect, so far as we know, from the ordinary method of God's government.

The first thing which we notice in the history, is the *ambition* of Ahab. After a three year's peace between Syria and Israel, Ahab begins to think of former injuries, and to meditate an attack upon Ramoth-Gilead, with a view to recover it out of the hands of the Syrians. At an interview which he had with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, he proposed to him to unite in this war, and to go with him to battle to Ramoth-Gilead. Jehoshaphat consented, but feeling more than Ahab his dependence on God, he said, "Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord to day." Willing to gratify him, Ahab gathered his prophets together, in number about four hundred—all of them, no doubt, the prophets of Baal—and said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth-Gilead to battle? or shall I forbear?" With one voice,

and with great confidence they answered, "Go up, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hands of the king." Nothing could have been more grateful to the pride and selfishness of Ahab than this answer; nor does he appear to have the least doubt of its being inspired by the God of truth, and the God of battles. But Jehoshaphat was not satisfied, and said, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we may inquire of him?" Ahab replies, "There is yet one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he doth not prophecy good concerning me, but evil." A circumstance, permit me to remark, which in all ages has occasioned the Lord's prophets to be but ungrateful messengers to some. Micaiah, however, was sent for, and after being adjured by Ahab to tell him nothing but was true, in the name of the Lord, he frankly assures him that his four hundred prophets were actuated by a lying spirit, whom God had permitted to go forth for the very purpose of persuading him to his ruin; and that he would eventually fall at Ramoth-Gilead. No other effect was produced upon Ahab by this awful prediction, than to awaken his anger against this prophet, already hated for his former fidelity. He commanded him, therefore, to be put in prison, and to be fed with the bread and water of affliction, till he himself should return in peace. But, poor deluded man, he never returned. Without any constraint upon his faculties, he *voluntarily* marched to the field of conflict, sanguine of success; and like many a warrior, perhaps, was already rioting, in imagination, upon the spoils he should take, and the glory he should win. No precaution on his part was omitted for his personal safety. His royal robes are laid aside, to prevent his being an object of attention to the enemy; and his armor buckled on, the common defence against arrows, and other missive weapons. But all was in vain; God had purposed his fall. The two armies meet; the battle is joined. What see we now? The Syrian captains turn aside to fight with Jehoshaphat, supposing him to be the king of Israel; for their master had charged them to fight neither with great nor small, save only with the king of Israel. But Jehoshaphat is protected amid a thousand arrows. The Syrians discover their mistake, and retire. But where is Ahab? Perhaps in some neighboring chariot, witnessing this disconcerted movement, and felicitating himself upon his policy in entering the field of battle in disguise. Who knows but in the pride of his heart he is smiling at the prediction of the prophet, confidently supposing that his precaution will prove an ample shield against the foe. But lo! "a man draws a bow at a venture"—a man who does not see the king of Israel in the crowd. But there is an eye which sees him; and which, without disturbing the order of providence, directs the arrow to the fatal point. Ahab receives a wound, of which he dies at even. The battle is lost to Israel, and the trumpet blown, requiring every man to return to his country and his city. The king is brought back from the field, and buried. And while his servants washed his blood-stained chariot and armor at the pool of Samaria, the dogs came and licked his blood, on the very spot where dogs had licked the blood of Naboth; thus fulfilling the word of the Lord by the prophet Elijah.

What think we now of providence? Does it not go into events pertaining to the moral world, no less certainly, no less minutely, than into events of the natural world? Look at the train of causes issuing in the death of Ahab; all of which were necessary as means to an end, and just as certainly determined as the end itself. Ahab must needs go up to Ramoth-Gilead, or he could not fall in battle there; he must go up *voluntarily*, or the

order of God's providence would be disturbed, and a part of his counsel defeated; for God had said, "Who shall persuade Ahab?" And if he must go voluntarily, there must be a motive of sufficient strength to determine him; for it is impossible for a free agent to act without such a motive. But what *was* Ahab's motive? It is found in his own ambition to recover Ramoth-Gilead, and in the united voice of his prophets, who bid him go up and prosper. How came these prophets to predict his success, and with such entire unanimity? A wicked spirit was permitted to go forth for the very purpose of becoming a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets. This is plainly asserted in the history; nor does it create any greater difficulty as to the holiness of God's government, than that Christ should have permitted the demons, at their request, to enter the herd of swine and hurry them down a steep place into the sea; or than that God should suffer wicked men to act out their violence on others around them. In neither case is God the author of the wickedness, but permits it, and overrules it for his glory.

As Ahab must go up to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, that the divine purpose may be accomplished—so must the Syrians come forth to meet him, with a full determination to resist his attack. And if the man who drew a bow at a venture had not been there, one link in the chain of causes appertaining to the king's death would have been wanting; or if he had drawn his bow at another moment, or given the arrow an hair's-breadth different direction, the death of Ahab might not have followed as the result. Here were a thousand agents at work, and for aught we know, millions of volitions concerned in bringing about the predicted event. But they were all in God's hands, and came at length to the issue, which he in his wise and holy counsels had determined. Nor can we say that any one of them was not necessary, and necessary in such a sense, that its absence might, without a miracle, have destroyed the influence of all the rest.

But whatever may be thought of this remark, two things here are certain:—1st, That God had purposed the fall of Ahab at Ramoth-Gilead, and that dogs should lick his blood, where they had licked the blood of Naboth. And 2d, That in the accomplishment of these events, three distinct orders of beings were employed, all of which acted freely, and without constraint. The evil spirit acted freely in becoming a lying spirit, in the mouth of Ahab's prophets; and whatever of wrong there was in this, it was all his own. The prophets of Ahab, and Ahab himself acted freely, in the part which they took in this affair, as did also the man who drew a bow at a venture. And the very dogs acted freely, though not as accountable agents, in licking the blood of Ahab at the pool of Samaria. No constraint appears any where. Every one acts according to his nature and circumstances; and the whole series of events embraced in this little portion of history, may be regarded as an illustration of that unsearchable providence which governs the world. True it is, that these events took place in an age of miracles, and that Micaiah, was employed to tell what was passing among the spirits in the invisible state; and both he and Elijah predicted the death of Ahab; but in the causes, chiefly concerned in the fulfillment of this prediction, there seems to be nothing aside from the ordinary course of providence, nothing more remarkable than what occurs in every period of the world.

Now, then, is it not manifest, that the free actions of creatures go as much into God's plan of operation, and are as much under his control,

as any events in the natural world? Does He not use them as second causes to bring about his purposes, as really and as extensively, as he employs the most insensible things in creation? I do not ask *how* this is done, or, whether you can comprehend the *manner* of it. My question is simply about the fact. Is not the fact certain? and is it not clearly revealed? Was not the volition of the man, who drew a bow at a venture, as really concerned in the death of Ahab, as the elastic power of the bow or the weight and sharpness of the arrow? Were not each of these embraced in God's plan, as means to an end, and alike under his control?

And farther, do we not perceive that the natural and moral world are intimately conjoined, so that events in the one depend on events in the other? The death of Ahab was a natural event, immediately produced by a natural cause—the arrow passing between the joints of his armor. But were there no moral causes inseparably connected with it? Where was the volition of the man that drew the bow, and where the volitions of Ahab, which brought him to the field of battle, and the volitions of other agents more immediately or remotely concerned? All these were included as parts of a series in the arrangement of Providence. If it were not so, it is perfectly obvious, that God could have no fixed plan of operation, even with respect to the natural world. Yonder is a city in flames, and hundreds and thousands are thrown as beggars upon the world. Had God's providence no concern in the event? Whose were those flames which burnt with such remorseless fury? Those winds which fanned them till they bid defiance to all human effort? Dare we say that this calamity did not take place according to the design of providence—especially when we read what Jehovah claims for himself as the supreme disposer of events? "Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it? Who is he that saith and it cometh to pass, and the Lord commandeth it not?" But allow that this calamity fell out according to the divine purpose—that it came as a righteous judgment upon the inhabitants of a guilty city, and I ask, when was this purpose formed? If God be unchangeable, "and all his works are known unto him from the foundation of the world," this purpose must have existed from eternity, and existed in view of the sins which this awful judgment was intended to chastise. The sin and the punishment were equally certain in the divine mind. But how came the city to be on fire? It was the work of an incendiary, who did it for the sake of reeking his vengeance on some hated individual, or perhaps for the single purpose of plunder. Did he then, or did he not, fulfill the purpose of God? Most assuredly God saw him and did not resist him. Nay, He knew from all eternity that he would perpetrate this deed, and he knew also the consequences. *These* we have admitted were a part of God's plan; for they were appointed as a punishment of the guilty. Can we then separate this calamitous result from the cause, and say that one made an item in God's counsel and the other did not? that one was previously fixed and determined, and the other left uncertain? You cannot, I am persuaded, reason in this way. Receive it then as a truth, that God governs both the moral and the natural world—the *free actions* of his creatures, whether good or evil, no less than events which occur in the material creation. Were it necessary to add farther proof, I might point to the history of Joseph and his brethren—where the wickedness of the latter in selling their brother into Egypt, is seen to be a part of God's counsel, in bringing about an important good. "Ye thought evil against me," says the forgiving patriarch, when his brethren

were humbled for their sin, "but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive."

I might also refer to the Assyrian king, whom God sent against the Israelites for their sins—but the fruit of whose stout heart he afterwards punished, because, though he fulfilled the divine purpose, in the calamities he inflicted, "*he did not mean so, neither did his heart think so.*" "It was in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few."

I might, especially, insist upon the facts connected with our Lord's crucifixion—by which it appears that his enemies acted freely in doing those very things, which "God's hand and counsel had afore determined to be done;"—facts which settle the question, if the Bible can settle it, that the free and responsible actions of men are embraced in God's counsel, and are under the control of his providence. But, it may be asked, how can these things be? How can an action be free and yet predetermined? Our answer is, The *nature* of an action is not altered by its being predetermined or otherwise. Every action is to be judged of by its nature, and this is to be ascertained by comparing it with the rule of duty. An action which is predetermined, is supposed to be made certain; and this certainty is often regarded as inconsistent with freedom. But is the fact so? It was previously certain that our Lord would persevere in a course of spotless obedience, notwithstanding the temptations which assailed him; nay, this was a matter firmly settled in the counsels of heaven. But did this certainty of obedience impair *his* freedom? or render his virtue less the subject of admiration? It is impossible, we are assured, for God to lie. But is he not therefore *free*, infinitely *free*, in his adherence to truth? And is not his unchangeable veracity one of the glories of his character? The mere certainty of action can surely never destroy the freedom of action. Were it so, there could be no sin in Satan, and no holiness in God. With regard to the former, it is not doubted that he will always continue unchangeably inclined to evil, and will do nothing but evil. Does this destroy his freedom, and render him henceforth only a mischievous machine? God and holy angels will doubtless retain their perfect rectitude forever; but do they therefore cease to be free? In our apprehension there was never a greater mistake than to suppose that uncertainty of action is necessary to freedom. For was not Ahab *free* when he determined to go up to Ramoth-Gilead, and to join in battle there, though the event of his going was made certain by the voice of prophecy and the purpose of God? Was not Judas free, when he deliberately betrayed his master, though this perfidious act was predicted by the Savior, and was one of the causes which led to his crucifixion—an event which God's hand and counsel had afore determined? (Acts ii: 23—iv: 27, 28.)

What is it to be free, but to act spontaneously, or from choice?—which is in no degree incompatible with the divine purpose, or with the most perfect antecedent knowledge in the case. But if the subject cannot be explained to our satisfaction, let it remain unexplained till the light of eternity shall beam upon us. Let us not, however, on this account, call in question either the fact that man is free, or that all his actions are subject to the divine control. Both propositions may be true, though we should be unable to reconcile them. They may stand firm on their own separate basis, supported by proof which is clear and unquestionable. What we know not, we should never suffer to invalidate what we do know. We know that we are *free*, because we are conscious of freedom, and because God treats us as accountable beings. We know that he presides

over all his creatures and all their actions, because he has plainly revealed this truth, and because reason itself teaches us that creatures must necessarily be dependent on their Creator, and their agency be limited and controlled by his. Now what if it be so that we cannot fully understand how these two propositions agree; must it follow that either of them is false? We cannot fully understand the mysterious relations involved in the Trinity; yet we do not hesitate to admit the fact of such relations. We know not how matter acts upon mind, or mind upon matter; yet we have no doubt, as in the case of soul and body, that they mutually affect each other. Instead of boldly questioning, therefore, what we cannot clearly understand, let us remember the weakness of our faculties, and humbly sit at the feet of Jehovah to learn. I deplore the rashness of the man who denies his responsibility, because he cannot reconcile it with his dependence on God, and in the language of ancient infidelity exclaims, "Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" I deplore no less the error of him, who because he is free and accountable, denies his immediate and absolute dependence on his Creator, and makes the government of God over his creatures, but a government of expedients—a government of chance. Let us rather believe, what God has so distinctly declared, That he "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"—that "the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain;" while at the same time, he "will bring every work into judgment," and "render to every man according to that which he hath done."

The subject now presented lays a foundation for several important inferences. I shall close, however, with very briefly touching upon some of them.

1. While we admit that the providence of God is a great deep, not to be measured by the short line of the human understanding, one truth is certain, that the universe is in his hands, with all its numberless movements, and every event, great or small, is under his control. Can any doctrine be more consoling to a reflecting and pious mind?

Who should have the government of the world if not its Creator? And where can all events be lodged so safely as in the hand of infinite wisdom? Is it not better that God should control the events of the moral universe—reigning throughout heaven, earth, and hell, with an energy which nothing can defeat, than that concerns of such infinite moment, should be left at uncertainties, and neither God nor creatures know what the final issue shall be? Without God on the throne, and a dominion absolute and universal, who could tell, but that "final ruin would drive her plowshare o'er creation?" But while he reigns, ye who love him have nothing to fear. You may be certain that there is no more sin, no more suffering in the world, than what he has wisely permitted and will overrule for his glory, that all the jarring opinions of men, and all the changes which occur in society, will be made to subserve the purposes of his government and to advance the holy and happy kingdom of his dear Son. In the language of David you may triumphantly say, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. Let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

2. The belief that God's government is universal, extending to all the actions of his creatures, furnishes special ground for submission under those painful dispensations in which wicked men are the immediate instru-

ments of our sufferings. David seems to have understood this, and to draw a powerful argument for submission under some of his heaviest trials, from the fact that they were appointed of God, though immediately inflicted by men. See him at that interesting moment, when he was driven out of Jerusalem by his son Absalom, and when Shimei on the opposite side of the valley cursed him to his face, and said, "Come out, come out thou bloody man, thou man of Belial." Abishai who stood by felt his anger kindle, and said, "Why should this dead dog curse my Lord the king? Let me go over I pray thee and take off his head." But David answered, "Behold my son, which came forth of my bowels seeketh my life—how much more may this *Benjamite* seek it? Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him." Such is the spirit we should feel when others injure us, whether by word or by deed—and the view we have taken of divine providence not only lays a foundation, but presents a powerful motive for the cultivation of this spirit.

3. Since all events are in God's hands, and he can order them as he will, we find ample encouragement for prayer. We perceive at once that there is nothing within the wide range of creatures or events, which he does not superintend, and which he cannot make subservient to his pleasure: of course, that we can ask or desire nothing which he is not competent to bestow—provided it accord with the purposes of infinite wisdom and love; and if it does not thus accord, we should most cheerfully relinquish it. But were the facts otherwise, and God's government did not extend to all the actions of his creatures, or did not extend to them with decisive and controlling influence—we might well fear that many of our petitions would be in vain, not because unseasonable or unimportant, but because beyond the reach of divine power.

Finally; If God reigns in the moral no less than in the natural world, and every creature in the universe is but an instrument of his power; how inconceivably important is his friendship, and how dreadful must be his displeasure? *There is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel—because there is no wisdom, nor counsel, nor might against the Lord. Those whom he blesses shall be blessed, and those whom he curses shall be cursed.* Fly then to him, ye children of men, as your security; take refuge under the shadow of his wings. This is a safe hiding place. No storms of earth or hell can reach you here—nothing can befall you, which an infinitely wise and gracious God will not overrule for your good. *For as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.*

But as to you, who will not embrace this shelter, what must be your end? God will move on the affairs of his kingdom without taking counsel of you. He will fulfill all his purposes: one of which he has declared to be, to destroy the enemies of his throne. You may complain that you cannot understand the principles of his government;—you may call in question his power and his right absolutely to control the events of his moral kingdom; but if you do not submit to his authority, trust in his mercy, and obey his will, he will make his power known in your destruction. Fall then at his feet, without delay, and accept the gracious terms which the gospel proposes, and which have a thousand times been pressed upon your attention. He does not mock you when he holds out the scepter of mercy, nor does he speak without meaning when he tells you, that his wrath shall sweep away all the finally impenitent. Amen.

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SERMON CLXX.

PREACHED APRIL 11, 1834, AT THE FUNERAL OF REV. EBENEZER PORTER, D. D.

BY LEONARD WOODS, D. D.

Professor in the Theological Seminary at Andover.

JOHN xvii. 4.—*I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*

THE work assigned to our Savior was immeasurably greater and more difficult, than was ever in any other instance assigned to man. But he accomplished it perfectly. He failed in no respect whatever. From the beginning to the close of his life, he never performed an action, never uttered a word, never had a thought or emotion, which varied from the will of God, the perfect standard of right. He unceasingly loved God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. He was chargeable with no waste of intellectual or moral faculties, of time, or opportunity, nor with any thing which his God and Father disapproved. If he could have lived again with the advantage of what experience and observation had taught him during the whole time of his abode on earth; if with all this advantage he could have lived for the same number of years again, he could have neither made nor desired any improvement. There was nothing in his youth or manhood, nothing in his public or private life, nothing in his most retired actions, or the inmost movements of his heart, which was not perfectly pleasing to God. In the whole frame of his mind, he was so pure and holy, that the most subtil and powerful temptations produced no

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irregular thought or emotion. "The prince of this world came and found nothing in him,"—no pride, no selfishness, no depravity in any form or degree. His object in coming into the world was to save that which was lost. This object he constantly pursued; and nothing could turn him aside from it. The work he had to accomplish was to redeem sinners from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for them. And how was he straitened till this work was fully accomplished! As a man, he was in the highest degree sensitive to suffering, especially to that kind of suffering which was allotted to him. His feelings recoiled at the prospect of drinking the cup which his Father put into his hand: But his recoiling was that of a pure and holy soul, and was accompanied with an entire readiness to do and suffer what the will of God and the salvation of men required. In the garden his agony was such as to produce prostration and bloody sweat; but his heart was perfectly submissive, and in the midst of his distress he could say, "Not my will, but thine be done." Thus, through labor and suffering, he proceeded to Calvary: and there on the cross, in anguish of body and spirit, forsaken of his disciples, and of his God, *he finished his work.*

Far be it from me to liken any man, even the most diligent and faithful, to this holy Savior. No prophet or saint ever glorified God and finished his work as Jesus did. Let any Christian on earth compare his life with the life of his Savior; and what can be the result, but shame and self-condemnation? The work which God has given us to do is sufficient to occupy every moment of our time from the beginning to the end of life, and to give active employment to all our powers. But what is the fact with Christians? How is it with him who stands highest among the saints on earth as to attainments in holiness, and diligence in the service of God? Has no part of his time been wasted in unlawful pursuits or indulgencies? Have there been no years, or days, in which he has forgotten God, and disobeyed his commands? Have not even his best actions been alloyed by a mixture of sin? How does every just view of God's perfect law spoil our fancied goodness, and instead of leaving any room for self-complacency, lead us to abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes! Of the most eminent Christians it is true, that they have not already attained, and are not already perfect. Perfection they know to be their duty, and they pant after it; but they do not reach it. They fall below not only the demands of God's spiritual law, but their own desires and aims. In many respects, what they would, they do not; and what they would not, that they do. There is still a law of sin in

their members, warring against the law of their mind. And when from the bed of sickness, and from the judgment seat, they take a review of their life, they will be astonished to see how little of their proper work they accomplished, and with the deepest emotion will acknowledge that they were always, even in their best estate, monuments of the forbearance and mercy of God.

And yet Christians are in reality *followers of Jesus*. They have a degree of that holiness, which *he* had in perfection. They begin to love and obey that law, which he loved and obeyed constantly and entirely. And they begin to possess that moral purity, which he possessed without mixture. Thus having a real though a partial likeness to Christ, and truly following him, though at a distance and with faltering steps, they do, in their humble and imperfect measure, glorify God, and accomplish the great object of their existence. Through the constant aids of the Holy Spirit, they so far finish the work which God gave them to do, that they are, through Christ, accepted of him, and, as good and faithful servants, admitted to the rewards of grace. In this qualified sense, the apostle said, when the time of his departure was at hand, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," though he had always been conscious that he was not yet perfect, and the highest point he ever reached was to forget the things which were behind, and to press forward to higher attainments, earnestly desiring and laboring after perfection in holiness. And in this sense our beloved brother, whose funeral services we are now called to attend, could, we doubt not, have adopted the words of Jesus: "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do."

DOCTOR PORTER was born at Cornwall, Conn., Oct. 8, 1772. At the age of seven he went with his father's family to Vermont, where he remained till he commenced his preparation for a public profession. He was graduated at Dartmouth College, A. D. 1792. While a member of College, and through the whole period of his childhood and youth, he was remarkable for his regular and sober habits. During the time that he spent with his father, he acquired a taste for agricultural and mechanical labor, which proved of immense benefit to his health in after life. He had impressions, while young, of the importance and necessity of religion: but at what time he first gave evidence of decided piety, I have not been particularly informed. After pursuing theological study under the direction of two distinguished ministers in Connecticut, the Rev. Dr. Edwards, then of New Haven, and the Rev. Dr. Smalley, he entered on the business of the

gospel ministry, and was ordained as pastor of the church in Washington, Conn., in Oct. 1796. His pastoral relation to that church was dissolved in Dec. 1811, with a view to his accepting the appointment he had received to the Professorship of Sacred Rhetoric in this Seminary.

In common with other Christians, Dr. Porter stood in a variety of domestic and social relations. It is hardly necessary to say, that the original qualities of his mind and heart, together with his habits and manners, eminently qualified him to sustain these relations, and to perform the various duties involved in them, to the satisfaction and profit of others. And here let me say, what ought never to be forgotten, that a *good private character*, by which I mean a kind and amiable disposition, and upright and blameless conduct in domestic and social life, is essential to prepare a man for any important public station. Accordingly, when the apostle undertakes to describe the qualifications which should be found in a Christian minister, he insists particularly upon the importance of the domestic and social virtues. And sorrowful experience has often shown what a fruitful source of evil it is for a man to be put into the ministry, whose disposition is selfish, proud, resentful, or peevish, or who is wanting in probity, or fairness, or any of the qualities which constitute a good private character. The case of our departed brother happily illustrates the peculiar value of a benevolent, upright, generous, and conciliatory disposition, not only as it renders a man agreeable and useful in private, but as it combines its influence with other and higher attributes of character, to qualify him for usefulness in the most public station.

As a minister of the gospel, Dr. Porter was distinguished for the excellencies of his character. So he was regarded by the church and congregation to which he ministered. So he was regarded also by his brethren in the sacred office, and, to a great extent, by the community. He had that combination of intellectual and moral qualities, which constitutes a permanently useful preacher. His understanding was lucid and discriminating; his imagination fertile, and remarkably chaste; and his heart susceptible of strong and tender emotion. He was always serious and affectionate; and none who attended his ministry could doubt, that the principle which governed him, was love to Christ and to the souls of men. His habit of reasoning was logical and convincing; and his taste, uncommonly pure and classical. He felt an utter repugnancy to all affected grandeur and floridness of language, to every thing which savored of pomp or ostentation, or tended to obscurity. His style was simple, neat, perspicuous, and

dignified, suited to convey to his hearers the clear and orderly conceptions of his own cultivated mind. He was endued with an instinctive and delicate discernment of what was just and proper, whether in thought or expression. In respect both to the words and phrases he employed, and to their arrangement and sense, he always spoke in *pure English*. Where is the preacher or writer, whose style is more entirely free from every thing provincial, obsolete, pedantic, or ambiguous, or exhibits a more happy union of simplicity and ornament? As a speaker, he had many excellencies, and few faults. His sermons were *doctrinal* and *practical*. They set forth the truths of religion in their scriptural form, and carried them out into their practical uses. His appeals to the conscience and heart were direct and faithful, and often awakening and impressive. A good measure of success attended his ministry, both in the conversion of sinners and the advancement of believers in holiness; which last was as real an object with him as the former. He lived in a time of revivals, and had a marked agency in promoting them.

In February, 1812, he was introduced into the Bartlett Professorship of Sacred Rhetoric in this Institution, the office having been vacated by the resignation of the Rev. Dr. Griffin. Dr. Porter's previous acquaintance with the duties and trials of the pastoral office, together with his intellectual and moral qualifications, fitted him to enter, with pleasing prospects of success, on that department of labor, and to exert a most happy influence in training up young men for the ministry. In the variety of duties which fell to him in the Institution, he had ample use for all his talents and acquisitions; for all his accuracy, and taste, and judgment; for all his activity, patience, and skill. His usefulness was answerable to his peculiar qualifications, and to his habitual and persevering diligence. Any man who takes into view the good which he accomplished by his instructions in the Seminary, and the works which he published in relation to the difficult business of his department; and considers the intrinsic value of those works and the high estimation in which they are held, will see that he possessed powers and acquisitions of no ordinary character, and that his time here did not pass away without substantial results.

It was a matter of conscience with Dr. Porter to bend his efforts, first of all, to the appropriate objects of his own department; secondarily, to the general interests of the Institution; and then to the welfare of the churches, and the success of Christianity at home and abroad. It was his persuasion, and the persuasion was very just, that he was under imperious obligations as a Christian, and as a Professor

too, to do all in his power, consistently with his official duties, to promote benevolent societies, literary and religious institutions, revivals of religion, and every object relating to the salvation of men. Indeed he was well aware that the permanent usefulness of this theological establishment could not be secured alone, but was essentially connected with the general prosperity of the church, and the flourishing state of our various public institutions. To these institutions he had a steady, strong, enlightened attachment. And he not only felt an interest in them, and prayed for their success, but was always ready to aid them, to the full extent of his ability, both by his personal services and by pecuniary contributions. He gave liberally to charitable institutions generally. But he contributed more particularly to this Seminary, and the American Education Society. In each of these he founded two scholarships, amounting in the whole to four thousand dollars; besides the very generous aid which he afforded to the Porter Rhetorical Society in the purchase of its library. To the American Education Society he also gave the greater part of his property, by his Will. It ought to be added, that the example of pious charity which he exhibited, had a happy effect on the conduct of others. For such was the confidence of the Christian community in the soundness of his judgment and the purity of his motives, that his contributing to any object had an influence to secure generous contributions from many others.

In every part of the business which he undertook, he evinced a remarkable degree of *practical wisdom*. In regard to any object which was brought before him, he inquired not only whether it was *good in itself*, but whether it was *practicable*. His judgment on all questions of this kind, being grounded on just views of the interests of religion, and a very accurate discernment of the characters of men, was seldom mistaken. And it was by no means uncommon for those who were associated with him in important public transactions, to distrust their own opinion, as soon as they found it different from his.

Dr. Porter possessed the peculiar qualifications which are requisite in a *presiding officer*. He had kindness of disposition, and uncommon self-control; sterling intelligence, and Christian decision. He exhibited politeness without affectation, dignity without pride, and strict adherence to rules of order, without pertinacity. And he was distinguished for his skill and despatch in business. With these qualifications, he was often called to preside on public occasions. And when the office of President was established in this Institution, he was at once selected by his colleagues, as well as by the guardians

of the Institution, to fill that office. The manner in which he presided, both here and elsewhere, was always unexceptionable and entirely satisfactory.

He united two qualities, which sometimes exist separately, in different individuals, but which seldom exist together, so eminently as they did in him: I mean the ability to *devise* great and judicious plans of usefulness, and the ability to carry forward those plans to a *complete accomplishment*. Some men, possessing warmth of imagination without judgment, and zeal without either discretion or patience, are very fruitful in devising great plans of benevolence, but always leave the execution to other hands. Making schemes is more easy and pleasant to them, than patient, persevering labor. Not so with Dr. Porter. He was the man, whose wisdom was sought in devising plans of usefulness; and he was the man, to whom the full execution of them could be safely entrusted. And all with whom he was connected felt this to be specially the case, when the execution was attended with great difficulty, and called for more than usual skill, and resolution, and perseverance.

Dr. Porter was a man of *exemplary modesty and humility*. Who ever had reason to suppose that he thought of himself more highly than he ought to think? that in any respect he over-rated his talents, his influence, his services, or his piety? When and where did he expect an honor, which others were not ready to bestow upon him, or manifest the feeling that he was not held high enough among his brethren? It was far otherwise. He was so evidently unassuming and humble, that, although he was always, in all societies, placed among the first in point of influence, no one envied him, or felt the least uneasiness that his talents or services were estimated so highly.

At the present day, when there is so much self-seeking, and love of pre-eminence, and so much strife for influence and promotion, it is a happy thing, and a subject of lively gratitude to God, to find a man of high place in the Christian community, who is clothed with humility; a disinterested, straight-forward, and guileless man, who cares less for his own things than for the things which are Christ's; who will begin and end a great undertaking without any scheme for his own interest or honor; who will say just what he means, and do just what he says. Such was the man who has been taken from us. So he was regarded by all acquainted with him. His Christian integrity and disinterestedness were very manifest, both in his public and private life.

Dr. Porter was a zealous promoter of *revivals of religion*. His Letters on Revivals show how deeply he was impressed with the importance of the subject, and what he considered the characteristics of a true revival, and the proper means of promoting it. On this momentous subject he was well qualified to speak, having been associated with the most able and successful ministers in promoting the revivals which took place during the first part of the present century. In the above-mentioned Letters, he collects and arranges facts so skillfully, reasons from them so judiciously and conclusively, and exhibits a mind so alive to the interests of the church, that all Christians of a sober mind must be satisfied.

It was one of his most remarkable characteristics, that he so demeaned himself, as to *give no offence*. In all his conduct, whether in public or private, he was so free from self-importance and dogmatism,—he showed so delicate a regard to the opinions and feelings of others, and when he differed from them, made known the difference with so much respect and kindness, and was always so cool, and deliberate, and self-possessed, that I know not that he ever wounded the feelings of any good man. In this attribute of character, how widely different was he from some, who are possessed of great activity, and are capable of accomplishing much good, who yet have such faults in their temper and manners, that they are sure to hurt the feelings and excite the prejudices of others, and sooner or later to destroy their own influence and usefulness. Is not this a matter of more consequence, than is generally supposed at the present day? The Apostle Paul, for the sake of doing good, took special care to give no offence to any class of men, especially good men. In things not affecting the great interests of religion, he was always pliable and conciliatory. As far as he could without unfaithfulness to his Lord, he became “all things to all men,” for the very purpose of removing stumbling blocks and winning souls to Christ. In this he exhibited the lovely spirit of Christ, whose words, and actions, and whole character, were perfectly kind, and gentle, and attractive, and in whom no one was ever offended, except as the consequence of deep depravity and obstinacy of heart. Why is it that so many at the present day forget the example of Christ and his apostles, and seem to think that they are under no obligation to guard against giving offence? With such examples before their eyes, how can they allow themselves to do what will needlessly wound and grieve the disciples of Christ? There are indeed some, who are so unlike the Apostle, that instead of doing all in their power, as he did, to avoid giving offence, and to conciliate those of an opposite party,

seem rather to take pleasure in vexing them, and even to make it an object, by uncandid and sarcastic language, to provoke their resentment, and drive them to the bitterest hostility. When we witness such things, we are sometimes ready to exclaim, Where is that love which Jesus enjoined upon his followers, and which the Apostle describes as the most excellent of all graces; that love which suffereth long and is kind; which seeketh not her own; which doth not behave itself unseemly; which thinketh no evil; which hopeth all things, and endureth all things? Where is that wisdom which is from above, which is pure, and peaceable, and gentle, and easy to be entreated? Where is the *dove* which rested upon the head of Jesus, a beautiful and striking emblem of the sweet, gentle spirit of his religion? Why has the dove flown away, and birds of prey come in its place? This was a subject which lay near the heart of our departed brother. He ardently loved the *truths* of Christianity, and equally loved its *spirit*. He regarded a bitter, violent temper, though exercised professedly in defence of the gospel, as real *hostility* to the gospel. Both his judgment and heart adopted the maxim of the Apostle, that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." He had that meekness and gentleness, which showed that he had been with Jesus. Influenced by such feelings, he gave no offence to any of the contending parties of the day. A decided and unreserved declaration of his opinion, even on the most controverted subjects, was received with candor by those who differed most widely from him. Thus, instead of promoting alienation and strife among brethren, he used his endeavors to promote feelings of forbearance and kindness, and in this way to remove one of the chief causes of collision, and to bring about a more general harmony among the friends of Christ. His influence all tended to heal division, and to effect a cordial union. In this way he conscientiously fulfilled the duty to which he was bound by his inauguration promise, and which he was heartily disposed to fulfil without any such special obligation,—“on all occasions to consult the peace of the churches.” Happy would it be for the Christian cause, if the ministers of the gospel might be brought universally to copy such an example.

Dr. Porter was far removed from the spirit of a *partizan* in religion. He belonged to no *sect*; unless by some strange abuse of language, the great body of devout Protestants should be called a sect. Properly speaking, a sect in religion is a number of persons who separate themselves from the general body of Christians, and maintain some opinion different from the prevailing opinion. We know what are

and what have been the doctrines of evangelical Christians generally in this country. We know still more specifically what system of belief has prevailed for the last 50 years, among the ministers and churches of New England. These ministers and Christians surely are not to be regarded as a party. When, therefore, I say that Dr. Porter was no partizan, my meaning will not be misunderstood. He adhered to the views of Christian doctrine generally held in New England; the views exhibited in the writings of Edwards, Bellamy, Brainerd, Smalley, and Dwight. These authors are not sectarian and are not regarded as such. And Dr. Porter, who honestly embraced and ably defended these views, and whose religious and ministerial character was formed under their influence, was as free as any man living from the spirit of sectarianism. This institution, in which he was more than twenty years an instructor, is in no sense a sectarian institution. It was founded on the most liberal catholic principles; and in conformity with those principles, has actually received and gratuitously educated pious young men of six or seven different denominations. The creed appointed for the Professors is not a sectarian creed. It was in fact formed as a matter of compromise between men who agreed in the great doctrines of Christianity, but differed in the modes of thinking on minor points. Two sets of founders, previously unknown to each other, had devoted a part of their substance to the establishment of two Theological Seminaries; but, on becoming acquainted with each others designs, were desirous of uniting their funds in one great Institution; and, for the sake of such a union, were willing, on each side, to do all they could, consistently with a good conscience, to meet the views of those on the other side. Influenced by these kind, Christian feelings, they found that the difficulties in the way of union gradually subsided. After a free interchange of thought, and many sincere efforts, and many fervent prayers to the Father of lights, those concerned on both sides became entirely satisfied, and unanimously adopted the creed as it stands in the Constitution of the Seminary, with a special provision, that the Theological opinions of the Professors should correspond with this Confession of Faith, and that if any one of them should cease to believe and teach according to this symbol, he should cease to be a Professor. Dr. Porter was a hearty believer in the doctrines contained in this creed, and all his instructions, both public and private, were in conformity with it. His theological opinions entirely corresponded with the intentions and the express requisitions of the founders. I say this advisedly, having had the most intimate acquaintance with all the

facts in the case. And this my humble testimony I solemnly record; that, as far as Dr. Porter's views of religion are known, there may never, in future times, be a doubt respecting what the founders meant by the creed, or respecting the theological character, which they intended the Professors should sustain.

Dr. Porter's belief was *firm* and *uniform*. He was indeed far removed from pertinacity and bigotry, and was very accessible to the force of sound reasoning, and ready to adopt any opinion which was well supported by argument. But he had no fickleness, no fondness for what is new, and no tendency to be weary of an opinion, or to think less favorably of it, because it had long been held. His opinions on the great subjects of revelation were the result of much serious examination, and were decided in proportion as the evidence on which they were founded was clear. And as he did not adopt his opinions in haste, he was not in haste to change them. But the circumstance which most of all fixed him in the belief of the doctrines of our creed, (which are the common doctrines of evangelical ministers and churches,) was, that the influence of these doctrines was mixed with his most serious and devout exercises, and so the truth of them was a matter of personal experience, as well as of divine revelation. It was this which so wedded him to the great principles of religion, that no changes in others could produce any change in him. No wind of doctrine could turn him one way or another. He attained to such establishment in the faith, that, amid all the fluctuations of the present times, he remained steadfast and immovable. And while he was so firmly attached to the cause of truth, he was alive to the danger of error. We well know with what concern and grief he looked upon any speculations on the subject of religion which he considered unscriptural or adventurous, especially upon any thing like "removing the *land-marks*," as he often expressed it, and how painfully apprehensive he was of results which would be injurious to the great interests of the church.

It has often been alleged by those who are called *liberal*, that a steady, uniform belief of a particular set of doctrines is utterly incompatible with free inquiry, and with progress in knowledge. But it is perfectly clear that if the doctrines believed are true, free inquiry and progress in knowledge are not only *compatible* with a steady, uniform belief, but directly *conducive* to it. And does not the opposite opinion generally arise from the fact, that those who entertain it have been vacillating in their own creed, and have fallen into a habit of mind which is more or less skeptical? What can be the fair result of free

inquiry and intellectual improvement, but a growing acquaintance with the nature and evidence of the truth? If a man who believes divine truth acquires more knowledge; will he therefore renounce the truth? The use of increasing our knowledge is not to weaken and destroy our Christian faith, but to render it deeper and stronger and more steadfast. I appeal to sober judgment. Is not the truth supported by sufficient evidence? And can it be supposed that more knowledge of the evidence will lead us to reject or doubt the truth? Did Paul or Peter change his belief in the doctrines of Christianity in consequence of growing in knowledge? When we become Christians, we begin cordially to believe the doctrines of revelation. But our faith at first, though true and saving, is low and feeble in degree. It wants clearness and certainty, enlargement and strength. And these wants are to be supplied by increasing our knowledge. By this we clear away obscurity from our views of those Christian doctrines which we have embraced; we become more fully acquainted with their nature, with their mutual relations, with their length and breadth and depth and height. Thus our faith grows in strength and assurance, and in its power to sanctify and comfort the soul. It was so with our departed brother. I do not admit, that when he entered on his office in this Seminary, his belief as to the great principles of the gospel was erroneous, any more than that his belief was erroneous as to the existence of the earth and the sun. He had read and studied the Bible, and had done it, as we doubt not, with an honest and good heart, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The doctrines of the gospel had taken effect. Their truth was a matter of inward, spiritual sensation. He knew it by experience. He knew God. He knew Jesus Christ. He knew the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. If he was mistaken here, then our preaching is vain, and our faith is vain, and all our efforts to promote experimental religion, and to train up evangelical ministers, are vain; and all the labors and prayers of the Christian world are folly and madness, and will issue in disappointment and shame. But there was no mistake in this matter. The great principles of theology in which our deceased brother believed, are, I have no doubt, the principles of eternal truth; and I must regard it as a matter of gratitude to God, that they are to be taught in this Seminary in all ages to come. These sacred principles, which were dearer than life to our beloved brother, have nothing to fear from the most thorough examination, or the most powerful opposition. Nay, the more they are examined by honest and candid men, and the more they are opposed by the wicked, the

more clearly will it be seen that they are the doctrines of God's word. If the Bible stands, they will stand. Nor will it, I think, be long before the great question at issue among disputants will be, not whether the doctrines commonly called orthodox, are contained in the Bible, but whether the Bible itself is true. Let it come to this; Socinians, Neologists, and Infidels on one side, and evangelical Christians on the other. The sooner it comes to this, the better. Then we shall know where we are, and who our antagonists are. We shall no longer be at a loss as to the meaning of their words, or the aim of their arguments. All will be plain. There will be no more fighting in the dark. The battle will be in full day light, on the open field; direct, fair, honorable; a battle with little noise, and great power.—And heaven and earth will be witnesses of the strife and the victory. Our departed brother wished for the day when all contention should be reduced to this. He will not be here to take a part in the contest; but he will feel a deep interest in it, and with inexpressible joy will behold its glorious results.

As to Christian character, it would be difficult to name a man of more unquestionable piety, than Dr. Porter. The evidence he gave of this was the evidence to which the sacred Scriptures attach the highest importance; that is, *a life devoted to the service of God, and regulated by the precepts of the gospel*. His pious affections had both strength and ardor, though they were remarkably sedate and rational. I know not whether he was more distant from extravagance and enthusiasm, or from coldness and indifference. His religion exhibited itself as a *steady, active, holy principle*, and not as a *passionate excitement*. He had a uniform and most hearty aversion to all ostentation and display. And this, together with his humble estimation of his own piety, rendered him reserved as to his own religious exercises. He was indeed slow to speak of any thing which related particularly to himself. But there were times when he unbosomed his religious feelings with freedom. From his conversation at such times, from his circumspect example, and the whole development, public and private, which he made of his character, it was abundantly evident that he "walked with God," and made it his object to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. His enjoyments in religion, whether in health or in sickness, were, as we should naturally suppose from his general character, tranquil and uniform, rather than rapturous. Such was his habit of watchfulness and circumspection, such his balance of mind, his control over his appetites and passions, and his maturity of religious principle, and such his sense of God's all-seeing

eye, that he was less accessible, than most Christians, to the influence of temptation, and more perfectly prepared for conflicts. He endured his long-continued infirmities, and the distressing diseases with which he was frequently attacked, with an equanimity and patience almost unparalleled. I never knew a man who accomplished so much and enjoyed so much, with health so often interrupted and feeble, and with sickness and pains so severe and exhausting.

He had from the beginning a deep and habitual impression of his responsibility as an officer in this Institution. For his pupils he cherished a sincere and paternal affection, and was solicitous for their improvement in all respects, especially for their growth in grace; believing this to be absolutely necessary to prepare them to labor successfully for the real, spiritual interests of Christ's kingdom. In his conversation with his colleagues, and in his letters to them when the state of his health required him to be absent, he frequently and with great earnestness expressed his conviction, that the promotion of elevated Christian piety in the Seminary was of the first importance, and that whatever else was neglected, we ought never to intermit our labors and prayers for this. The Lord grant that the surviving Professors, and all their successors in office, and all whose duty it may be to guard and advance the welfare of this Institution, may keep in mind the paramount importance of *vital godliness*, and may ever regard it as the very life and soul of the Seminary, of the ministry, and of the Christian church.

Brethren and friends, a man has been taken from us of rare excellencies of character, both intellectual and moral; a man whose amiable disposition, pious example, and diligent, unremitting services have been and will be an inestimable blessing to this Institution, and to the cause of Christ. Our first duty, under this afflictive dispensation, is cordial, peaceful, entire submission to God, the only wise, all-perfect God, whose ways are just and right. It is also our duty, and our privilege, to lift up our souls to him who heareth prayer, that through the help of his Spirit we may profit by this affecting bereavement; not forgetting to render to him the warmest gratitude of our hearts, that he has been pleased to continue the life and usefulness of our dear brother for so many years, and so much longer than circumstances permitted us to expect. May this stroke of divine providence, though for the present not joyous, but grievous, lead us to abound in the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and so help to prepare us for an inheritance among the saints in light. How can we look at a life so full of activity, usefulness, and enjoyment, and see it brought to a

close, without feeling a new motive to work while the day lasts, and to do with our might whatsoever our hand findeth to do. In imitation of our departed brother, we ought first of all, to be sure to have our great work done, and done in season. To postpone any duty, whether it appertains to our own welfare, or the welfare of others, to a sick and dying bed, is insatiation. What can a man do either for his own soul, or for the souls of his fellow men, or for any important object, when he is sinking under the exhausting influence of disease, his vital energy spent, the pains of death getting hold upon him, and the power of speech and thought failing? To all the great purposes of life we may be *dead* long before we expire. Let us carefully remember this. And let us each day apply ourselves to the work which God has given us to do, under the impression that this may be our *last day*, and that we may now be doing our *last work*.

In this visitation of his providence, God has come near to the bereaved and mourning widow. The loss she has sustained I shall not attempt to describe. But she will utter no words of complaint, and will give place to no feelings of disquietude. She knows that God reigneth and doeth his will, and that his will is always wise and good: May her God, and the God of her husband, be graciously present with her and give her peace.

This is, we well know, a solemn and affecting scene to our respected and honored friend, the only surviving founder of this Institution, to whom our departed brother for so many years sustained a relation of peculiar endearment. Our prayer for him shall be, that the comforts of the divine Spirit may cheer and support him under this affliction; that God may be his present help, and still prolong his life, and health, and usefulness, and enable him to finish his work.

As to those who have been called to part with a colleague, particularly those of us who for more than twenty years were most happily united with him in all the labors and trials, the joys and sorrows, which have here fallen to our lot,—words are not adequate to express what we feel on this occasion. In the tenderness of grief we might be ready to ask; What shall we do without that long-trying and faithful friend and colleague, who has been taken from us? But we will rather say; "The Lord liveth, and blessed be our rock;" and in reference to the increased labors and cares and responsibilities now to come upon us, will earnestly pray that *his grace may be sufficient for us*.

It is well known what a high place the lamented President of this Seminary held in the cordial esteem and confidence of the Trustees

and Visitors, and of the members of the Institution, and of the many hundreds, now engaged in the service of the church in this country and in other countries, who once enjoyed his instructions and counsels; yea, it is well known what a high place he held in the love and confidence of ministers and Christians far and near. Our whole community will say, that he was raised up for a great work, that he has accomplished a great amount of good, and that his memory is blessed. But we trust he enjoys that which is infinitely more precious than the highest esteem and most cordial affection of man, even the gracious approbation of his Savior and Judge. Blessed is he, and he only, to whom the Searcher of hearts will at last say; "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THE PEACEFUL DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

OH for the death of those
 Who slumber in the Lord!
 Oh be like theirs my last repose,
 Like theirs my last reward.

Their bodies, in the ground,
 In silent hope may lie,
 Till the last trumpet's joyful sound
 Shall call them to the sky.

Their ransomed spirits soar
 On wings of faith and love,
 To meet the Savior they adore,
 And reign with him above.

With us their names shall live
 Through long succeeding years,
 Embalmed with all our hearts can give,
 Our praises and our tears.

Oh for the death of those
 Who slumber in the Lord!
 Oh be like theirs my last repose,
 Like theirs my last reward.

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SERMON CLXXI.

BY REV. BAXTER DICKINSON,
NEWARK, NEW-JERSEY.

" GROUND OF THE DIFFICULTY OF CONVERSION.

JER. ii. 25. *There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.*

THIS is the language of Israel, in a state of great worldliness and corruption. That corruption had been steadily waxing worse and worse. It had come to be characterized by great obstinacy of sin—an obstinacy that threw a deep gloom over their prospects, even in their own estimation. God had urged their repentance with intensity of interest. He had admonished; he had afflicted; he had tenderly invited. But amid these efforts of divine forbearance, they were unyielding; and seemed settling down to utter despondency, in view of the inveteracy of their own corruptions. *There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.* They were aware of their guilty estrangement from God. They recognised it as *voluntary*. They knew that appropriate means had been employed for their repentance, and employed long, but without effect. They could recur to solemn purposes so often violated, that they had now lost all confidence in good resolutions, and anticipated only a perpetual and willing slavery to sin.

The case forcibly illustrates the general fact, that,

IT IS VERY HARD FOR MEN TO BE CONVERTED AND SAVED. Let us look at some *proof* of the fact, and at *the ground* of it. In proof of the fact, we have,

1. *The testimony of the Bible.* See it exhibited in the parable of the marriage-supper. It was the festival of a *monarch*. The king had sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. He sent others to *press* the invitation: but they still made light of it; going their way, one to his farm, another to his merchandise. The same truth is exhibited in the more direct declarations of Christ: "Ye will not come to me that ye might

have life. No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him. How can ye believe which receive honor one of another? It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And when his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? Jesus said unto them, With men it is impossible; but with God all things are possible." What sentiment is more plainly revealed than the truth we are contemplating? The obvious design of Christ in such passages is to exhibit the obstinate aversion of man to the gospel scheme of mercy, and the utter hopelessness of his case except omnipotent grace interpose.

That it is very hard for men to be converted and saved is manifest,
2. *From the nature of the Gospel provisions.*

The provisions of the Gospel show that formidable difficulties still remain, even after the *foundation* of pardon is laid in the great atonement. The guilty and lost, in order to gain pardon and heaven, must "repent and be converted." And conversion from sin to holiness—from Satan to God—is a momentous change—a change to be achieved by no ordinary agency.

Notice the system of *means* God has put in operation looking towards this change. Why has he thrown such a flood of light upon your character, upon your relations to himself, and upon other topics connected with your immortal interests? Why brought together such mighty array of motives, if there was not something *great* to be done? something extremely *difficult* to be achieved? Who, in view of such preparations for reclaiming men, would question that God was aware of fearful opposition to be surmounted?

But he has not simply appointed this great system of *means* for the conversion of men. He has provided for the direct application of his own *omnipotence*. "That your faith might stand, not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." But if it be a small and *easy* matter for the degenerate to regain the divine image,—to pass from rebellion to loyalty—from Satan to God—from hell to heaven—if this involve no *difficulty*, why does omnipotence thus interpose?—why needful this special and direct application of that power which called worlds into being? Such interposition on the part of God is full of meaning. It evinces a case of mighty extremity. It presents most affecting evidence of the fact—

that it is indeed very hard for men to be converted and saved. If you deem it so easy a matter as to be the occasion of little or no anxiety, your views and those of God are very widely different.

3. The fact that men continue in sin *in decided opposition to their obvious interest*, shows the difficulty of conversion.

The interests at stake are infinite. They are well understood. And this great change is known, is admitted, to be an indispensable preparation for eternity. From infancy up to this hour, the testimony of the last Judge has thrilled your heart, and agitated your conscience ;—"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." And yet, with all this knowledge, under all these sober convictions, both of duty and interest, you persist in your waywardness, you run on in the path of death, and to all appearance, are soon to leap the tremendous precipice. But if there were no difficulty in taking up the religion of Christ, would you, with thousands upon thousands, thus go down to death without God and without hope? Are you, in other matters than religion, wont to be thus reckless of personal interest and happiness? And would you thus sacrifice peace, and hope, and heaven, if not urged and borne along by an influence you find it very hard to counteract? Would you go with the multitude that tread the broad road, did it really seem to you equally pleasant and easy to enter the straight gate?

Again; that it is very hard to be converted and saved is evident,

4. *From the testimony of observation.* The world's history confirms the statement of Christ, that "wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." But why this so general wreck of immortal interests? The *fact* itself shows that in the business of conversion and salvation there is some mighty obstacle to be surmounted.

The testimony from observation is rendered more plain, by a reference to *particular cases* in the history of men. They have failed of saving conversion, often under the most favorable circumstances. Look at the Jews, who received gospel truth from the lips of its divine author; and who had visible proof that the whole was from God, in his multiplied miracles. Look at the thousands who heard, without repentance, the heavenly message, as announced by inspired apostles. Look at Agrippa and Felix, who once heard with intense interest the preaching of Paul. Look at the fields that have shared largely in visits of the quickening Spirit. Have they produced only plants of righteousness? Look at that worldling of fifty or seventy years, who learned to pray while sitting in his mother's lap, and who to the present hour has lived impenitent under all the influences of the gospel. Ob-

ervation recurs at once to numerous cases like these. But men could not—would not—thus live impenitent—they would not die unholly in *such* circumstances, if conversion implied no obstacles to be surmounted.

Again; we have evidence that it is very hard for men to be converted and saved,

5. *From human experience*—the experience of both saints and sinners.

This testimony exists in different degrees of clearness in the case of different individuals. But no true Christian can probably recollect having come into the kingdom without a conflict—a conflict that seemed to hold his immortal interests in dark suspense. It was hard for him solemnly to review his life, and search his heart, and canvass his prospects for futurity. It was hard to admit the honest testimony of God as to his guilt and ruin. It was hard to listen to the rough lectures of conscience, and look at the realities revelation threw upon his eye. It was hard to admit frankly the justice of God's claims, and yield to the subduing influence of the Spirit, and sink down at the feet of his Sovereign, to be saved, if saved at all, as a matter of mere mercy from the throne. It was hard perhaps to check his enthusiasm for pleasure, or wealth, or fame. It was possibly hard to break up some endeared connections, and abandon some favorite pursuit, known to be inconsistent with Christian discipleship. It was hard to get loose from the grasp of his arch-enemy. And as he recurs to the severe, and perhaps protracted conflict, he looks upon it as a miracle of divine grace that he has the prospect of heaven. Even his Christian life is a *warfare*, and every step towards the hill of Zion is the result of *conquest*. What then must have been the character of the warfare and the victory, when the strongholds of sin and Satan, in the heart, were first assailed and carried by the Holy Ghost?

To the same effect is the testimony derived from *the experience of the unrenewed*. I might with safety appeal to those who hear me, and leave the question to their decision. Have you not found it hard to take up seriously the subject of preparation for judgment and eternity? Have you ever found the convenient time?—ever been free from embarrassments? Reason and conscience have sustained throughout the claims of the gospel; but have they maintained a ready and decided ascendancy? Have you not found difficulty in checking the common waywardness and folly of youth, and the worldliness of opening manhood, and above all, that fear of man which bringeth a snare? Have you not been sometimes alarmed at your complete captivity to passion or appetite? Can you not recur to hours of deep thought and solemn purpose—hours when, under the action of conscience, and revelation, and possibly the Holy Spirit, you felt that something must be

done effectually and soon to escape merited wo? And why were not those hours, so fruitful in promise, hours of repentance, and pardon, and salvation? What mean those stifled convictions, and broken vows, and cherished hopes of a more convenient season?—what, but that a sinner, the moment he looks seriously at religion as a personal and practical matter, is appalled by an array of difficulty? Trace back your experience on this subject to earliest childhood; and tell us if obstacles have not steadily accumulated, throwing you farther from repentance and hope, and deepening the gloom that has settled upon your prospects. And point us to a single *page* in your history that, of itself, holds out any rational prospect that you will ever be converted and saved.

II. After this varied and concurring proof of our leading proposition, we very naturally inquire, with interest, for the GROUND of all this difficulty. What are the embarrassments so formidable and threatening? Right views on this point are manifestly essential to right notions of human responsibility.

1. Conversion and salvation are not rendered hard, by any serious difficulty in sufficiently understanding the subject of religion.

God has adapted his communication to the intellect of those addressed. The Bible was designed to be a *light* to your feet and a *lamp* to your path. And to question its adaptation to your capacity, is to question both the benevolence and wisdom of God. Indeed it is a *revelation*, only so far as it may be understood. And where is the obscurity? It has indeed its sublime and mysterious truths; but even these are plainly thrown out before the world *as facts*—facts to be cordially admitted, though not fully comprehended. And where do you not find sublimity and mystery even in the material creation, and in the system of divine providence? “Behold,” says God, “I set before you the way of life and the way of death.” And who does not discern the difference? Who need be a stranger to his duty? Who, with the gospel in his hand, can fail to perceive his ruin, and the only method of relief? Who cannot learn the nature of repentance and faith?—the leading terms of pardon? You cannot plead ignorance as an apology for continuing in sin. Conscience says, no. And the Savior and Judge himself declares, “This is the condemnation, that *light* is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.”

The difficulty is not,

2. That *God* has thrown any embarrassment in the way of conversion. All his arrangements are of the opposite character and tendency. And he has brought into steady action a powerful system of moral influence for counteracting the perverse spirit of man, and restraining his wayward steps, and hedging up his path to ruin. He has given you

conscience for this purpose. He has given you the gospel and the varied religious institutions for this purpose. He has visited you with mercies and judgments for this purpose. And in urging your repentance by such means, he has dealt with you in perfect sincerity and frankness, as well as infinite kindness. The very *suspicion* of God's exerting some mysterious and irresistible influence against your repentance is flagrant injustice to his nature as a God of love, and can be regarded by him only with infinite displeasure.

The difficulty is not,

3. That religion is a matter in which men have no capacity at all to act.

They are subjects of God's moral government; and they have all the powers necessary to a perfect moral agency, and a full accountability. The manner in which they are treated by their Sovereign--the manner in which they are addressed throughout the Bible, is evidence of this. Their very consciousness affords decisive evidence of this. The fact that they do constantly act, though they act wrong, is evidence that they have the *power* of free moral action. You have intelligence, will, and conscience. And such faculties are the foundation of accountability; and while they exist, you can never rid yourself of the obligation to do right. It is your very *nature* to be active beings; and religion has made all its arrangements in perfect harmony with this feature of your character. Even the grace that brings down the loftiness of man, and breaks or melts the heart of stone, and throws into it something of the purity and peace of heaven, never interferes with any thing necessary to a perfect power of free moral action. It can surely *aid* your action, without suspending your activity. It can allay your prejudice and enmity, and kindle in your soul the love of God, and lodge a spirit of devoted loyalty in the heart, without prostrating for a moment one intellectual faculty, or interfering a moment with your responsibility. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

Which leads me to remark,

4. That the difficulty in question lies *in the obstinate depravity of the heart.*

In proof of this our text is directly in point: "There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." Israel was in a fearfully degenerate state. Their repentance was sought with great urgency. They were alternately invited and warned, blessed and scourged. Prophets bewailed their obduracy. Jehovah proclaimed their "neck an iron sinew, and their brow brass." And even themselves perceived, and felt, and frankly confessed their obstinacy. They became fully aware of the great secret of their prolonged apos-

tacy. And they fixed the difficulty of conversion to God just where we have said it lies, in the inveterate depravity of the heart. "I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." They felt the justice of God's claims, and the pressure of their obligations. They had resolved, over and over again, to yield to his demand and return to their duty. But they were in bondage to their lusts. They knew and acknowledged it to be a *willing* captivity; and yet it was so complete and firm as to drive them to utter despair. Without a single apology for their sins, they settled down to the gloomy apprehension, that they might never gain the mastery over their corruptions, and exhibit the character of true penitence at the feet of their Sovereign. They uttered not a syllable concerning any want of knowledge; they had not the most distant suspicion of there being any thing in God's arrangements to embarrass their repentance and salvation; they never dreamt of any defect or incompetency as regards the power of moral action. They frankly acknowledged the true ground of difficulty—*they loved strangers*; they had an inveterate aversion to the character, and law, and worship of God.

Here is a plain illustration of the ground on which men of every age have found it hard to be converted and saved. It has been hard just in proportion to the obstinacy of the will, and the strength of their depravity. They have loved themselves; they have loved the world; and could not part with their idols for God and heaven. The young ruler loved his possessions; and when called to part with them for Christ, *went away grieved*. Agrippa loved the parade of royalty; and could not yield to reason and conscience, though almost persuaded to be a Christian. Felix had his sensual indulgences as well as honors, which he could not relinquish, though convictions of duty and forebodings of wrath pressed upon his mind and urged repentance. The objection with them all lay in the unyielding perverseness of the heart. And it is the precise difficulty every sinner meets when agitating the subject of conversion and eternal life; and the very difficulty under which thousands of awakened sinners adopt the despairing language of Israel, *There is no hope: no*.

The subject furnishes lessons of very plain practical instruction. It shows,

1. The reality and nature of the sinner's dependence in religion.

Israel was in a corrupt and ruined state; and they were led to despair of recovery through their own strength. But not more forlorn was their case than that of a fallen world at large. If ever a sinner is raised from "the horrible pit" to holiness and happiness, it is "not

of man, but of God." The Bible, observation, experience, all proclaim it hard for him to be converted; too hard to admit the hope, that a single soul will ever break from the bondage of sin, and rise to purity and heaven, unless divine power interfere. The solemn reality of your dependence cannot be disguised. It is one of the very plainest truths in religion. If God's arm is not made bare for your relief, you will cleave to your sins, and sink under the curse for ever. No page of the Bible and no record of past piety points to any other source of hope.

But what is *the nature* of the dependence? In the case of Israel, it was occasioned by a perverse heart. "I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." In the case of every sinner, it springs from precisely the same cause. There is a stubborn *will* opposed to the authority of the Most High. There is a heart desperately at variance with the character and arrangements and claims of Him who is upon the throne. There is a loftiness that will not stoop so low as to be saved upon the terms of the gospel. You have intelligence enough; you encounter no embarrassments from any mysterious arrangements of God; you have capacity for moral action; but, alas! you are wedded to the world and to sin. "Inclined to evil—and that continually." "You will not come to Christ that you may have life." Mistake not, then, the true nature and ground of your dependence; but think of it, as the Bible contemplates it, originating in a "heart desperately wicked."

The subject shows,

2. The propriety of pressing upon sinners their obligation and responsibility. They are subjects of God's government. The relation involves duties:—duties to be promptly met. We know they have trampled divine authority in the dust. But has their apostacy annihilated their duty? Has their disobedience repealed the statute, and set them loose from all accountability? We know it is hard for them to return. But is the difficulty of a nature to impair at all their obligation? Is it any thing but stubborn rebellion?—a proud reluctance to seek mercy upon gospel terms? Is the conflict between the sinner and God any other than that of mind against mind? And if God be right, is not the creature wrong? And must not the Sovereign hold him responsible for the wrong? Must not the world be frankly told, that all the obligations and responsibilities of subjects of the eternal government rest upon them every hour? Because you find it hard to repent, does God excuse you from the duty? Because you find it hard to confess guilt, and seek pardon at his footstool, does he consent that you prolong the controversy? "God *now* commandeth all men everywhere to re-

pent." And he bids his ministers echo the command in every dwelling-place of man. And there is wo to him who proclaims license for a single hour's continuance in sin. God is upon the throne, announcing his unchangeable law; and the announcement defines the obligations of every intelligent creature. They must be felt. They must be promptly and cheerfully met. "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life."

3. The subject suggests a serious doubt of the genuineness of his experience who cherishes the idea that religion is an easy matter.

We have found abundant evidence that it is *hard* for men to be converted and saved. This sentiment is sustained by the Bible, by the nature of the gospel provisions, by observation, by the experience of the world, both saints and sinners. Something you may do in religion with but little sacrifice, and little sense of difficulty. But the work will be superficial, and the goodness like the morning cloud and the early dew. The change of character that prepares for heaven is a "great change." Appetite and passion do not yield their supremacy at a single nod. Principles of sin, that have been gathering strength from infancy up to this hour, are not to be displaced by a single word. The human heart never renounces the vain world, and rises to God, and puts on the "image of the heavenly," by any common effort. No; the great change is of God; and it is *purposely* wrought in such a manner as to teach the creature his utter ruin, and to draw from his humbled spirit a gushing tide of gratitude to Heaven.

Have you the hope that you have passed from death unto life? If it be genuine, you have found religion pleasant indeed; but you know, too, that you have encountered difficulty. You can perhaps recur to a period when, with all your anxieties and doings to gain eternal life, you felt that you were steadily receding from hope and heaven—"nothing bettered, but rather growing worse." You can perhaps remember, that, in view of the deformity and obduracy of the heart, you sunk down in utter despair of relief from yourself, from friends, from the world, and rested your last hope only on the grace and power of the Holy One. Is there something like this in your experience? It accords with the experience of others, and among them some whose religious influence has been felt by thousands, by millions. Look at the case of Paul; of the jailer, and every Scripture example of conversion in which the first awakened feelings are described. Read the Conversion of Edwards, of Bunyan, of Brainerd, of Payson, of Mills, of Eleanor Emerson, and others who shine as stars in the firmament. These all speak a language much less flattering to human

pride and false security, than that it is an *easy matter* to be converted and saved. They say with David—and the sentiment is reiterated by millions in both worlds—“He brought me up also out of the horrible pit and miry clay, and hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise to the living God.”

Finally; our subject solemnly urges sinners at once to make God their refuge and help.

Perhaps you have often felt the necessity of something being done more effectually for your salvation. You have been aware that your spirit and that of God were not in harmony. After all you have done, you have seen the necessity of some better training, as a preparation to mingle with the saved in heaven. You have perhaps cherished anxiety, and tried to repent, and tried to embrace Christ, and struggled to rise from the miry clay to a standing on the rock, and sought the aid of others, supposed to be acquainted with true piety, and to have power at the altar of mercy. And, possibly, after all, you are sensible of having labored without effect. And you have stopped and stood just where Israel stood, when pouring out the piteous lament, “There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.”

Derive from your experience, then, a lesson of instruction. Cease from the vain dependence upon yourself, upon your fellow-men. Cherish the impression of your lost condition, your utter unworthiness; and now look to the everlasting God, with the spirit of the publican in the temple, the leper at the feet of Jesus, the prodigal returning home, the thief on the cross, and Peter crying from the waves, Lord save me. God has the ability to save. He delighteth not in the death of the wicked. Judgment is his strange work. His very nature is love. He can rend the veil that hides his glory from your eye; and dislodge the power of sin and Satan in your heart; and give you spiritual liberty, and life, and joy. Make him your refuge. Look to him as your only help. Say that you are guilty—say that you are lost. And let the conviction be lodged deep and immoveable in your heart, that you must be saved only through infinite grace in Christ Jesus.

Come from the four winds, *O Breath*, breathe upon the slain that they may live. Be thine the victory, and thine the glory. *Amen.*

SERMON CLXXII.

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CHRIST DIED FOR MAN.

ROMANS v. 6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

THIS text brings to view the leading truth of the New Testament. *Christ died for sinners.* When men were "without strength," that is, when they were sinful, wicked, ungodly, Christ died for them. It is the leading truth of the gospel, because it is that with which every other truth in the scheme of salvation is connected, and on which the whole scheme itself depends. The gospel proposes a plan for saving sinners. In that plan, the atoning death of Christ is the pre-eminent part. It is the **GREAT FACT** of the gospel. *Jesus Christ died for sinful men.*

Let us, my brethren, for a moment, look at this fact. Christ died for man—not for fallen angels. There are in the universe of God other beings, besides mankind, who are sinners. But the Savior's death was not intended to benefit them. They, saith the Scripture, "are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." It is not with them a time of trial. They have not now a day of probation. Whatever might have been the conditions on which they, before they fell, occupied their heavenly seats, it is plain that no terms are now proposed to them for regaining those seats. The Savior did not die for their offences, nor was he raised again for their justification. His sufferings were endured for man, not for fallen angels—for those who have a day of probation, not for those whose doom is sealed—for prisoners of hope, not for prisoners of despair:

The Savior's death regarded man, also, in distinction from all holy beings. The angels of light and all other beings who have maintained their allegiance to God, have no need of a Redeemer's interposition on their behalf. And although from various parts of the word of God we learn that these holy beings cherish a deep concern for the affairs of men, and on this account, no doubt, looked with intense interest on Jesus' dying agonies, yet they could not feel that what they witnessed was necessary to their own enjoyment. They were happy without it, in the full enjoyment of God's favor.

But again—the Savior's death regarded man himself, not merely as an intelligent being capable of high attainments in knowledge and happiness, and of an exalted destiny; for other intelligent beings of as high

capacity as man derive no personal benefit from his redeeming work. Angels, both holy and fallen, have intelligent natures, are moral agents, and as capable of whatever is painful and wretched, and of whatever is desirable and felicitous, as man. But the death of Christ had respect to man *as a sinner*. It was only as a sinner that he needed a Savior. It was only as a guilty wretch, who had broken his allegiance to God, and had become a rebel against his rightful Sovereign, that man stood in need of One to make reconciliation between him and his offended Governor. Had man remained true to his duty and his God—had he continued to wear his original garb of innocence—had he never cast off the fear of God, and erased the divine image from his soul—had he not plunged into the pollution of sin and become abased and corrupted in the sight of Heaven, the Savior's atoning and restoring work would never have been undertaken.

Yes, it was for the benefit of man as a sinner, that Jesus Christ descended from heaven to earth, and expired on the cross. He gave himself up to indignity, suffering, and death for man, *because* man was sinful, because he had offended God, because he was exposed to all the horrors of eternal death, and could not otherwise be delivered. Jesus submitted to these sufferings to make man happy—to prepare a way for his restoration to the image and favor of God—to render it possible that the prodigal might return to his Father's house—to open heaven's doors, so that the lost wanderer might come in. Think of it, my hearers; think long and intently upon it, that Jesus endured the revilings of a wicked world, the hidings of his Father's countenance, the bitter anguish of the garden, and the torturing agonies of the cross, that sinful man might be saved—that the guilty rebel, who deserved a place in the prison-house of eternal despair, might have a place in heaven, and a harp of gold, and a crown of glory. Was ever love like this? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jesus so loved sinful men that he died for them. "*O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.*"

This simple and obvious train of thought lays a foundation for several very important reflections.

1. *The immense value of the human soul.* In no other way does this appear so strikingly as by contemplating the price paid for its redemption. We can, indeed, obtain an exalted conception of the worth of the human soul, by considering its nature—by looking at its capacities for intelligence and enjoyment—by contemplating its capability of exploring the vast fields of knowledge, the works of creation and redemption, and by reflecting on its adaptedness to increase in knowledge and felicity during eternal ages. In this way it is easy to understand, that the

soul of the lowest of the human race is capable of rising, in the long and distant periods of eternity, vastly higher than the present elevation of angelic natures, and of enjoying more happiness than all created beings have yet enjoyed, since time began. But when I inquire the value of the human soul, tell me not of its capabilities—tell me not of the intellect of Newton, which could trace the march of planets and systems, and explore the handiwork of God—point me not to the extatic joys of Payson, who, “swimming in a sea of glory,” began to warble seraphic songs on earth. Nor tell me even of the songs and allaluias of heaven where the redeemed see as they are seen, and know as they are known. All this is interesting, intensely interesting. But I learn the value of the human soul from another Teacher. I have the mind of God on the subject. He shows me that it is worth the sacrifice of his well-beloved Son. I look to the cross. There I learn what estimate God puts on the human soul. There I see the price paid for its redemption. This view supersedes immeasurably all other computations of its value.

2. *God has done more for sinful men than he has done for angels.* Without doubt the greatest gift of God to created beings is the gift of his Son. This is “his unspeakable gift,” and immeasurably exceeds all others in value. But this gift was made to man—to man as a sinner. Not simply to man as a creature capable of happiness, but as a transgressor deserving only misery. This gift was not made to angels. The holy angels could not receive it. They did not need pardon by the blood of Christ. And though God has given them all that is necessary for their complete and eternal felicity, though he may have given them capacities for intelligence and enjoyment of a higher order than he has bestowed on man; yet he has not imparted to them his greatest gift. *This came down to sinful man.*

O ungrateful men, look at this fact and wonder! Look at it and be filled with admiration of the exceeding riches of the divine goodness. Why should God bestow his greatest gift on the least deserving? Why should he make the most valuable benefaction that ever Heaven granted, to such as deserved his wrath—to poor, degraded, sinful man? This will afford matter of astonishment and gratitude for ever. Eternity will not be long enough to exhaust this theme of praise.

Just look at it, my hearers, a little more in detail. See that poor man, scarcely known among the busy multitudes of earth. Very few here notice him. His death would scarcely leave a blank, except at his own fireside, and in the place where, with others, he offers up prayer to God; and when he dies his fellow-men will hardly remember that he ever lived. Yet God notices that poor man. He gave his only begotten Son to die for him—a greater gift than ever he bestowed on the highest angel of glory.

Look again at that vile and loathsome profligate—a wicked wretch, who utterly casts off the fear of God, and sets his mouth against the heavens. He spurns the restraints, not only of religion, but of morality. He profanes the name of his Maker, tramples on every rule of virtue, and wallows in all the mire and filth of depravity. He is a disgusting nuisance among men. Yet that miserable man has an immortal soul. He has a capacity for whatever is great and good, and high and holy. He might be saved if he would repent and turn to God, and have his polluted soul washed in redeeming blood. But if he perish in his iniquity, as in all probability he will, yet God gave his Son to die for such men. Yes, God has given to the chief of sinners a richer gift than ever he bestowed on Gabriel.

3. *Redeemed saints in heaven have greater cause for gratitude than even the angels.* The simple reason is, that they have received the richest gift. In their songs there will be certain enrapturing strains which angels can never adopt. All the inhabitants of that blessed world may sing—"Worthy is the Lamb." But angels cannot add, as redeemed sinners will, "for he was slain for us." It was for sinners alone that Jesus died; and those of them who, through his redemption, shall be brought home to glory, will raise the most grateful notes heard in heaven, in praise to Him as their Deliverer.

One peculiar source of the happiness of the redeemed in heaven will be the contrast between their present and former condition. Once they were living on earth amidst all the temptations and dangers of a sinful world;—now they are in heaven. Once they were sinners, covered with moral defilement, vile in the sight of heaven and vile in their own sight;—now they are holy, no stain of pollution or guilt cleaves to them; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Once they were in a state of danger—they feared much that they should be lost for ever—they trembled and wept lest they should never be permitted to enter the gate of the New Jerusalem—they had, many times, awful apprehensions that they should be cast down, as they deserved, to hell. But now they are safe—their feet stand on Mount Zion—they have put on robes of perfect righteousness and crowns of unfading glory. Their fears and tremblings are all over. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them by living fountains, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." This contrast in their situation—this comparison of what it now is with what it once was, must, of course, contribute a large share to the overflowing fulness of their felicity. But angels, except by sympathy, cannot partake of this. They were never exposed to the snares of a sinful world. They were never sinners—were never afraid that they might fail of obtaining a place in heaven.

Heaven was always their habitation, and they did not gain it by tears and prayers, through the blood of the Savior. I do not say that angels are less happy than redeemed saints in heaven. All in that world are doubtless as happy as their capacities admit of. But those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, and have escaped the pollution of the world, have on this account a distinct and peculiar source of happiness. And they will feel it and rejoice in it for ever. They will feel that they have greater cause for gratitude than even angels have; and this will tune their voices and their harps, while they sing "the new song which none can learn, but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from among men—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

4. *They who sink to hell from Christian lands, will have a source of misery which even devils do not have.* It is not said that they will be more miserable than the fallen angels; for concerning this we have no adequate means of knowing. But that they will have some occasion of misery, some stings of conscience, some sources of regret and self-condemnation which devils do not have, is perfectly evident. They will remember that a Savior died for men, and that they might have had redemption through his blood. They will remember that they once had a day of probation, and the invitations of mercy. They will remember that they were forewarned of their doom, and urged to repent and lay up their treasure in heaven. And they will remember too that they neglected the great salvation, and brought all this wretchedness on themselves. Their reflections will go back to the time when, seated in the Christian congregation, Jesus Christ was evidently set forth crucified among them, and they were affectionately invited to become his followers and be happy—to look to his cross, and live.

But such offers of salvation were never made to fallen angels, and they cannot, of course, reproach themselves for having rejected them. No Savior died for them; nor have they, since they became sinners, had any offers of mercy and pardon. And though they may be filled with remorse at the recollection of their rebellion and apostacy; though their very existence may be rendered a curse by their raging passions and their enmity against God; though, when they look towards the seats of glory, which they might still have occupied, if they had remained firm in their allegiance to Him that sitteth on the throne, they may groan in unutterable anguish and dreadful despair; yet they can never reproach themselves with having trampled on a Savior's blood—their eternity will not be filled up with the self-condemning reflection, that they had an opportunity to regain the happy seats they had lost, but neglected it. Though they will be miserable and justly miserable for

their wickedness, yet it will not be a part of their misery that they turned away from the cross and rejected an atoning Savior.

This peculiar source of misery will be the portion of impenitent men. They alone will be tormented day and night with the remembrance, that once they had the offers of mercy through a Redeemer—once they might have obtained pardon and eternal life, if they would have complied with the gospel terms of salvation. And this reflection will be the keenest sting in the world of wo. Self-condemnation for having slighted the offers of pardon through a Redeemer will constitute the bitterest ingredient in the cup of misery.

Think of the reflections of the lost sinner as he casts his eye towards the heavenly mansions. He may say—'I might have occupied a seat in that happy world, if I had not neglected the great salvation. I might have been among them there, in those mansions of light and blessedness—I might have had a harp of gold and a crown of glory—I might have sung the song of Moses and the Lamb, and raised as high a note of joy as any of the redeemed, if I had not turned away from the cross of Christ and refused to deny myself and follow him. Oh, I might have been happy if I had not rejected offered mercy.—But now, alas! I am in the prison of despair. Now I have no offers of mercy; no voice of salvation reaches my ear. Here I must dwell for ever, and reproach myself with my own undoing, and gnaw my tongue for pain. And what adds intensely to my anguish is, that I am here, not simply because I am a sinner—for other sinners have obtained a place in heaven—but because I would not come to Jesus in an accepted time. I am here—not because I could not have avoided it, not because there was any stern necessity—but because I refused to hear when the Savior called; because I would not regard him when he stretched out his hand and beckoned me to come up to his kingdom and partake of his glory. Wretch that I am; I am my own eternal destroyer!'

And now, say, has not this wretched outcast a source of misery which devils do not have? May not they reproach him with a kind of guilt which does not belong to them? And will not the remembrance that a Savior has died for sinners, and that he refused to embrace him, be the keenest and most tormenting sting in the gnawings of the undying worm?

My dear hearers, will any of *you* be that miserable man? O do not, I beseech you. Go not into eternity to lament that you lived in a land enlightened by the gospel, and yet did not embrace a Savior. Put not into the cup of your misery the bitterest ingredient in the universe of God. Avoid, I pray you, such self-torture. Avail yourself, at once of the provisions of the gospel. Come to Jesus. Deny yourself, and take up your cross, and follow him. Do this, and be happy. Neglect to do it, and you perish for ever.

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SERMON CLXXIII.

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THE MAN THAT GATHERED STICKS ON THE SABBATH.

NUMBERS xv. 32—36.—*And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath-day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall surely be put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.*

THIS is truly, says the profane man and the infidel, a case of oppression. A man publicly put to death, and that too under divine authority, for so small an offence as gathering a few sticks upon the Sabbath day. And it would be well for the church and the world, if a similar sentiment of irreverence for God were not cherished, and in many cases extensively acted upon, even among the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus.

1. It is freely acknowledged that public opinion even in Christian lands will support the sentiment of the profane man and the infidel in this case, rather than the sentiment of the man of piety and devotion. But public opinion, though never to be despised, is very far from being always a safe rule of action. Public opinion, however correct, or however accurately ascertained, is only the aggregate opinion of the multitude which composes the community. The wisest and the best of men have been often very confident that they were in the right, yet have afterwards found and

acknowledged that they had been in the wrong. Paganism, and Mohamedanism, and all the errors and fooleries of the Romish church, have been extensively and for ages supported by public opinion. The slave-trade has been at no great distance of time and place supported by Christian Protestant public opinion. Public opinion as to the sanctification of the Sabbath, even among those who make no pretensions to religion, is very different in Boston or New-York from what it is in Paris or New-Orleans.

The gospel is preached to the world lying in wickedness—to a community of men which has for ages upon ages been in open rebellion against God. And the carnal mind, even in Christian lands, and in Christian families, and in a Christian man, is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. Nor has there ever been a more destructive principle acted upon in the Christian church, than the belief that in some cases, at least, men are to fall in with public opinion, though that opinion should be in direct opposition to the plain and express declarations of the law of God.

2. A law without a penalty is good for nothing, and a penalty annexed to the violation of a law, and yet not inflicted when the law is violated, is worse than useless. It is true that men are most effectually governed by persuasion; but it is equally true that punishment must also be inflicted, and is inflicted in the administration of every good government.

In all governments, and in every situation, from the government of a family to that of an empire, the maxim will hold good, that that government is the best, even the mildest and the best, where the penalty of the law is inflicted in every case of violation, without fear, or favor, or partiality.

Nearly the whole of British wealth, and prosperity, and power, at home and abroad, rests upon commercial credit. Hence a pardon for a person who has been convicted of forgery, whatever may have been his rank or character, or whatever may have been the circumstances under which the deed was done, is not known in British history. Every man knows that the strength of an army depends almost solely upon the principle of implicit obedience. Hence disobedience to orders, even though success may have attended the act, is punished with death. No man can read the case of Major Andre, in the war of the American Revolution, without feeling deeply for the unhappy victim of the law of nations. And yet no man will pronounce Gen. Washington to have been a tyrant for his firmness and decision of character on that occasion.

3. God has a perfect right to enact any law which he may please, and to annex to the violation of that law any penalty which his infinite wisdom may suggest. The God of the Bible and of the Christian is the God of the heavens and of the earth, and of all who dwell therein. He made and he preserves them all; and he, and he only knows them all; and he only is familiar with the infinite variety of relations which they sustain to one another, and to him as the Creator and Governor of all.

It is a fundamental and an invariable maxim in criminal jurisprudence, that the mere act by which the law is violated is no criterion by which you are to judge of the magnitude of the offence. It is a very little thing for a man to write his name on a small slip of paper. A forgery for a check of ten dollars is small when compared with a check of as many thousands; and a forgery upon a man of wealth, without any design of ultimately defrauding him, and that man your friend, who if he had known your needy situation would have cheerfully advanced you the money, rather than that you should have been exposed to the temptation, is a small matter when compared with an extensive arrangement to counterfeit the currency of a nation. But the law of forgery in England knows no such distinctions. Forgery is in every case forgery, and the punishment is death.

Every man is by his very nature a social being, and his every movement has an extensive influence upon the moral character and the destiny of a vast number of his fellow men. Nor are the consequences of a very small transaction confined to the circle of friends and acquaintances, or the neighborhood, or even to the men of the generation to which we belong. The God of the heavens and of the earth, and the Governor of all intelligences, alone knows the extent of the consequences of any particular act of any particular individual. Nor, till the consummation of all things, will even the higher orders of created intelligences have any adequate conception of the manner and the extent in which the character of millions upon millions of the human family were formed and fixed by the sentiments, and the conduct, and the character of those who lived and acted at a great distance of time and place from one another, and from those upon whom they exerted an influence. Hence in every case, where the plain and direct authority of a divine appointment is put in competition with the policies and conduct of the world in a state of rebellion, and darkness, and disorder, and moral degrada-

tion, there ought to be very little doubt, among Christian men at least, which side is the side of wisdom and safety.

4. Though the penalty (particularly in the divine government) should not be immediately inflicted, we have no reason to suppose that the law is abrogated or that the penalty is remitted. See Ecclesiastes viii. 11, 12, 13. Compare this passage with the reasoning of the apostle, 2 Pet. iii. 1—10.

Noah preached to the old world, and warned them of the approaching deluge one hundred and twenty years. The flood came at last. Men's mocking, and doubting the sanity of the preacher, did not invalidate his message. The Jewish nation was warned for generations, before they were carried away captives by the Assyrians and Babylonians, and before Jerusalem was finally destroyed by the Romans. In like manner every sinner, and every nation to whom the gospel is preached, is put for a long period under a dispensation of mercy. Time and space are given for repentance. But if repentance is not exercised, destruction sooner or later is inevitable. Hence, while the law is announced day after day, and generation after generation, though wickedness of various kinds may abound, and though many transgressors may go down to the grave without having their iniquities visited upon them, yet we have no reason from this forbearance and long-suffering of Jehovah to suppose, that the sanctions of the law are less heavy now than they were in former ages.

The divine government has in this respect, as well as in all other matters, greatly the advantage over the best code of laws and the best form of government as administered by men. The range of human authority is in cases very limited. The most atrocious criminal may in many cases elude the grasp of the most vigilant police; and death in every case releases the subject of human government from its authority. But in the divine government there is no evading the eye of Omniscience, no escaping the arm of Omnipotence; and under whatever circumstances the soul quits the mortal tenement, it passes immediately into the presence of its Judge to receive according to the deeds done in the body. The pains and penalties of the divine government will in every case be most severely felt, when the transgressor is beyond the reach of law as administered by men.

5. The mode of punishment may be greatly varied, and yet no remission or relaxation of the penalty. The resources of the divine government are infinite. What is said of the third commandment will apply also to the fourth and every other commandment. Though

the transgressor may escape punishment from men, yet "the Lord our God will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain." In some form or other, sooner or later, and frequently even in this life, the soul who transgresses shall bear his iniquity. Nor will it ever be known, till it shall be revealed in the review of the government of Jehovah, in the great and general settlement, how many of the disappointments and sufferings, in body and mind, in loss of property and character and life, which have marked the history of individuals and of families and of nations, have been inflicted and suffered as the punishment of the violation of the Sabbath. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," and it must be doubly fearful, when the long suffering mercy, which is calculated to produce repentance, only produces impenitence and false security.

6. The same God governs the world now who governed it from the beginning. This God is from everlasting to everlasting, and has been the dwelling-place of his people in all generations. It is freely granted that there have been great and various modifications of the divine administration; but the general principles of his government have been and always will be the same.

In human governments there are, from the very nature of man, great and radical changes. Every generation and every new set of men are supposed to introduce some new and important improvements. But we cannot, without blasphemy, think thus of the divine government. No radical change, either in the principles or in the mode of administration, can ever take place here. Hence, whether we can explain the fact or not, we must admit that every act of the divine government has been and will be rigidly just, and at the same time infinitely benevolent. Oppression or cruelty, or even mistake or misapplication of a correct general principle, can never occur in the administration of an infinitely wise and good Being.

7. The particular case immediately under consideration is an illustration of a general principle, extending further than to the law of the Sabbath. It is to be considered as a specimen of the punishment due to the sin of presumption, whatever may be the particular act or the particular occasion. Read the context, *vv.* 27—31.

Every mother and every child knows the aggravated nature of the sin of presumption, however trifling the act may be, and however unimportant the immediate consequences may be. The guilt of a direct insult offered to lawful authority is in fact aggravated, not diminished, by the smallness and insignificance of the action.

The Sabbath was to be a sign betwixt Jehovah and his people for-

ever; nor were the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, which hovered over the children of Israel in all their journey through the wilderness, a more distinguishing characteristic. Besides being incorporated in full in the summary of the moral law, written upon the two tables of stone by the finger of God, the law of the Sabbath is again and again stated in connection with the institutions and history of the church of God. It was noticed in connection with the giving of the manna. And while the giving of the manna continued, God gave them every seventh day the bread of two days, that every man and every family might rest on the Lord's day. It was particularly mentioned when directions were given for the building of the tabernacle, Exod. xxxi. 12—17. And if ever there could have been a plausible reason for employing holy time in manual labor, it would have been when all hands were more or less to be employed in building the tabernacle. In the busy and important seasons of the year, seed time and harvest, the Sabbath was to be religiously observed, Exod. xxxiv. 20. In Old Testament prophecy the Sabbath is also again and again referred to as a something which should be a distinguishing characteristic of the church and of God's people to the end of time. See Is. lvi. 3—8, and lxvi. 23.

Now apply all these and similar statements and references, and it will be hard to find a case of more heaven-daring and aggravated presumption than the case of the man who gathered the sticks upon the Sabbath day.

We close with a single inference, viz. The guilt of every Christian land, and of every Christian church, and of every Christian family, and probably of every Christian man, must be uncommonly great with respect to the law of the Sabbath. "If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" Truly, it is of the Lord's mercy that we and our people are not consumed. Let all those who profess to regard the divine authority consider and examine their ways. And when the Lord shall return again the captivity of Zion, evangelical repentance with respect to this matter will, without doubt, be deep, and general, and universal.

SERMON CLXXIV.

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THE SECRET COUNSELS OF GOD.

DEUTERONOMY XXIX. 29.—*The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong to us and our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

THE Bible is not designed to give universal knowledge to man; nor to bring within the reach of our feeble comprehension all the principles and purposes of the divine administration. On the contrary its declared object is to afford such information as to the great facts, in which we are essentially concerned, as may render us "wise unto salvation." Those doctrines and precepts, which it is important for us *thoroughly* to know, are clearly stated, lucidly explained, and urgently enforced by argument and illustration. But in making known those great mysteries of godliness, which are wholly beyond the ken of our dim intelligence, and which we are yet bound assuredly to believe, the sacred writers simply declare the facts under the sanction of, *Thus saith the Lord.*

It is thus evidently not the design of revelation to gratify curiosity or foster the pride of intellect; but rather to afford such glimpses of the great system of God's government as will bring the lofty looks of man in the dust, with a humbling sense of his ignorance; that the Lord alone may be exalted.

There are important reasons why God has reserved so much that is connected with the subject matter of divine revelation to himself, wrapped in an impenetrable veil from the view of mortals. Some things are secret, because with our present powers, we are utterly unable to comprehend them: and some, because a full knowledge of them is inconsistent with a state of probation. It seems to have been the special design of God to render the disclosure of truth sufficiently full and explicit to satisfy a humble spirit, willing to repose a filial confidence in divine wisdom and goodness—and yet to leave enough of mystery to cause a development of the real feelings of the un-sanctified heart.

If the great things of religion, and all the destinies of the spiritual world were fully unfolded to our senses, our state of probation would be at an end. As all men must know the truth of things thus revealed, whether they loved or hated them; such belief would be no evidence of the subjection of the heart to the fear and love of God. Whereas, now, we find it a remarkable fact, that truth is *so* revealed, that while the honest inquirer is fully satisfied, the captious objector finds ample materials for caviling—the proud heart very plausible pretexts for its opposition. The Bible, therefore, is so admirably adapted to be a decisive test of character, that a cordial belief in its doctrines is the best evidence of a renewed, humble spirit; while a disposition to raise objections evinces the predominating influence of the carnal heart which is enmity against God.

A further reason, why so small a portion of universal truth is actually revealed, doubtless is, that the grand development is reserved to form the employment of eternity. How absurd is it for feeble man, in this infancy of his being, to push his inquiries into those illimitable fields of knowledge, which are only to be opened by the angel of death, and whose survey will occupy his immortal energies through the whole of an endless duration.

Infinite wisdom, clearly discerning what degree, and what kinds of knowledge are adapted to our condition, and are adequate to our necessities in this brief existence, has imparted just so much light and instruction, as are exactly commensurate with our present exigencies and the proper exercise of our limited capacities. While at the same time, lest we should be elated by an abundance of revelation, we are effectually humbled by a reference to regions of truth which we cannot penetrate, and fountains of light not yet opened.

Thus the matters contained in the holy scriptures are divided into two distinct classes—the one consisting of subjects fully revealed—brought entirely within our comprehension; which we are required to understand and treasure up as the principles of our conduct and the very elements of our spiritual life. The other class consists of those high, mysterious doctrines, which we are neither required nor permitted fully to understand, but which it is the office of faith to receive simply on the divine authority.

A careful regard to this distinction is practically important, because it guards us against two opposite dangers. For as on the one hand it is criminal to undervalue the knowledge of those things which are fully revealed in the inspired volume; so on the other, it is offensive to God and dangerous to the souls of men to extend our speculations beyond the limits which divine wisdom has prescribed, or to attempt to investigate and decide upon those things in religion which the

Deity has not been pleased to make known. No language, indeed, can express the impious arrogance of those who resolve to be wise above what is written, and vainly attempt to break through the barriers which divine wisdom has erected to limit the inquiries of mortal man. It is a practical denial of the right of our Almighty Maker to decide what knowledge is attainable and necessary in this preparatory existence; and what subjects are unsuited to our present condition and are therefore wisely veiled from our examination.

As life is brief and time exceedingly precious, we have none to waste in needless, fruitless speculations; especially as those mental efforts which are thrown away in striving to penetrate the deep things of God, and to obtain clear views of those spiritual objects which no man can see and live, might be profitably and delightfully devoted to those plainly revealed doctrines, in the knowledge of which is life everlasting. These doctrines in which we are so abundantly instructed, and which are so solemnly urged upon our attention, furnish so wide a field, that the longest life and the mightiest intellect are insufficient for its full investigation.

In order properly to discriminate between those secret things which belong to God, and those revealed truths which belong to us, it is only necessary to remark, that the former are made known by a simple naked declaration of God's word; whereas the latter are commended to our attention by explanations and instructions. As to *those*, we are only to inquire what hath the Lord spoken, and to place implicit confidence in his word. As to *these*, we are to give all diligence to add to our faith knowledge, and to search the scriptures daily, that we may be as scribes well instructed in the things of the kingdom.

These preliminary remarks may be illustrated and exemplified by considering some of those *secret things*, whose existence and reality the Bible most forcibly declares, and yet whose *nature* and *essence* are not *so* revealed, as to be within the scope of human comprehension.

It is evidently an important object of the sacred volume to make known to men the divine existence and perfections. It holds up the character of God, and commands every intellectual eye to be fixed upon it with intense regard, and to contemplate it with overpowering emotions of reverence and love. But in what manner is this infinite object presented to our minds? Does the Bible make an effort to explain the divine essence? Does it attempt to lead men to find out the Almighty to perfection? Does it ever profess to bring down to the level of human comprehension the high and awful theme of God's eternity, or his all pervading presence and knowledge? Evidently not. These deep things of God are clearly announced to men, and they

are required, not to comprehend them, but to receive them on the divine testimony. If our hope of enjoying the divine favor depended upon our fully understanding the essential attributes of Deity, we must sink down in utter despair. But, though we cannot penetrate these secret things of God; we enjoy a full disclosure of every thing in the divine character and government, which it is important for us to know, and in which we are immediately concerned. His laws, precepts, promises and threatenings are so plainly stated, that a child can understand them. His holiness, justness and goodness are written as with a sunbeam; and the principles of his moral government are engraven upon our hearts as with a pen of iron or the point of a diamond. It is as absurd as it is impious for men to seek for profound explanations to accompany the revelation we enjoy of the nature and perfections of God. The proud skeptic asks, Where is the evidence that God existed from eternity and was before all things? Where are the witnesses that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth? It is obvious in the very nature of things that no such testimony can exist. We must receive these great truths on the simple declaration of God's word, or else, rejecting the only light we can enjoy, be left to wander in utter darkness.

Equally fruitless and presumptuous are all inquiries and conjectures as to the events or history of a past eternity. If the divine existence be without beginning of days, then an infinite duration had already passed, before the creation of our world. It is sometimes asked what transactions took place under the divine government, what was done by the Almighty, in that illimitable expanse of being which preceded the creation of our world! Why was not man created millions of ages sooner? Where is the history of the races of beings which constituted the subjects of the divine government in far distant periods of the past? To such questions it is evident that no answer can be returned—they may be urged and repeated, but heaven and earth continue silent, because they relate to secret things which belong to God. The Bible gives us no useless information—it instructs us in nothing as to which we are wholly unconcerned. Certainly it is not necessary for us to know what took place in the periods of a past eternity; and therefore we are left wholly in the dark upon the subject. Our condition in this world, so replete with danger and responsibility, requires that our undivided attention should be fixed upon the things which belong to our own everlasting peace; therefore, all disclosures in relation to other portions of the empire of Jehovah, and other periods of his government, are reserved for a state of being where guilt and fear and death shall be no longer.

It is another inexplicable mystery, which human reason in vain

attempts to fathom, that in the creation and moral government of this world sin and misery should have gained admission. Why, it is often asked, did not Omnipotence utterly exclude moral and physical evil from the system? Why did he not preserve our race from its pollutions? Why did he suffer the powers of darkness to effect their fell purpose and spread such desolation through our world? Why have not the ravages of sin been long since arrested, and the race of man rescued from its accursed dominion? These are questions which no mortal can answer; because they relate to secret counsels of God, which he has not been pleased to disclose. But it is as unreasonable, as it is wicked, to draw a conclusion from the fact that no reasons are assigned, that none exist. A child is very perverse and foolish who despises his father's proceedings because he cannot understand the reasons which govern them. Shall mortal man then be more just and wise than his Maker? Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? It does indeed appear awfully mysterious, that such a direful invasion of the holiness and happiness of the universe should have been permitted—that this fair world should have been suffered to become a theatre of rebellion—a moral aceldama—that so many millions of immortals should have been ruined forever by the great destroyer, and that the direful consequences of human guilt are to be perpetuated in the torments of eternal death. But may we not be assured that all our difficulties arise from our dim, partial, and limited views of the subject? As we always find in those affairs where the reasons of the divine conduct are given, that it is characterized by perfect wisdom and goodness; would it not be a fair inference that the same attributes are really present in those cases where the reasons which govern the proceedings, are not given? When we perceive that the Creator of the world, with all possible events fully in his view, and in the exercise of perfect benevolence, did see fit to permit sin to be introduced, with all its fearful consequences; does it not become us to rest perfectly assured, that such reasons for the divine conduct must have existed as to render it perfectly consistent with infinite goodness, and a supreme desire to promote in the highest degree the holiness and happiness of the intelligent universe?

Many volumes have been written and much mental labor wasted, in controversy whether the admission of sin was in accordance with, or in opposition to the divine will; whether such a system of mingled good and evil was chosen, as is on the whole promotive of the greatest good; or whether the principles of unholiness came into operation by their own uncontrollable force, the divine will and purposes to the contrary notwithstanding. But to what good purpose is the discussion? Nothing has been decided. It is one of the secret things which belong to God. All that concerns us in the affair is fully revealed.

We are distinctly informed that man came from his Maker's hand pure and holy, capable of perfect and endless blessedness. We are assured that the corruption and depravation of his nature was the result of wilful transgression, deliberate rebellion, and that in consequence of this wicked apostasy our whole race became polluted and guilty; inclined to evil and bent upon self-destruction. God's holy word declares that so far from being the author of sin, it is the abominable thing which his soul hateth. The gospel makes known to us the amazing sacrifice which divine love has offered, to satisfy the claims of law and purchase deliverance and pardon for guilty men, and proclaims the terms on which we may escape the direful evils in which we have involved ourselves by sin, and become heirs of everlasting life. With such plain directions as to the way of salvation, so full a disclosure of our condition as sinners and the provisions of divine mercy for our relief, what farther revelation is necessary? Our danger, our duty, and our way of escape are all made plain. And it were far wiser in sinful dying men to embrace immediately the terms of the gospel treaty by repentance and faith; to give all diligence to secure the blessings of the great salvation; and thus escape the wrath to come and lay hold on endless life, than to employ themselves in finding out doubts and objections about the origin of evil and its admission into our world. When they shall be required to create a world, it will be time enough for them to state their difficulties and urge the inquiry, how it can be made and kept perfectly holy. Our first great work is to get safe to heaven. If through rich grace we secure admission there, we shall have ample scope and opportunity to survey all the regions of light and knowledge which shall then be thrown open to our inspection. But at present we have more appropriate employment than fruitless speculations as to these secret things which belong unto God.

Another subject which is placed wholly out of the reach of our investigation, is the entire consistency of the divine purposes with the freedom of human agency. The question arises, How can it be that our uncontrolled and voluntary volitions and actions can be reconcilable with that predetermination of all events, or that absolute fore-knowledge which renders them equally certain, which the Bible ascribes to the moral Governor of the world? In this case, predestination and fore-knowledge amount to the same thing. For if an event be infallibly foreknown, its occurrence is just as certain and inevitable as it could be made by any possible decree. The fixed certainty of future events, and this invariable plan of action which exists in the mind of God are abundantly revealed in Scripture. The whole system of prophecy rests upon this basis, that all the acts of created

agents in all future times, have a present existence, a fixed certainty of taking place, in the divine mind. And these statements of revelation are in unison with the dictates of enlightened reason. It is impossible to conceive of an infinite law-giver, the Maker and sovereign of all things, without ascribing to him an all-comprehending view of all events, a perfect control of all inferior agents, and a clear discernment of the end from the beginning. It is thus abundantly taught in the Bible, that all events which take place were certainly and unalterably fixed in the divine mind. The Bible also declares with equal plainness, that we are entirely and justly accountable, that we act freely in view of motives, and that the divine decrees put no restraint at all upon our choice and determinations. And every man knows this is absolutely true. In every mind there is a consciousness of complete freedom of purpose and action. And however objectors may argue upon this subject, the pangs of remorse which follow crime, clearly prove that the transgressor has an inward assurance he has acted freely, voluntarily and wickedly. Thus the predestination of all events and the perfect freedom of human agency are clearly and fully revealed. The secret which is hidden from man is, the consistency of these with each other. It seems difficult to conceive how men can act freely in doing that which the divine purposes have already fixed unalterably: and yet we know it is even so. The hearts of Joseph's brethren were agonized at the recollection of their cruelty and wickedness in selling him into bondage, and yet God employed their guilty instrumentality in sending Joseph into Egypt to effect a great deliverance. The pangs of remorse and despair which rent the heart of Judas were not assuaged by knowing that his direful treason was certainly predetermined and foretold by the prophets of old—because he knew that his crime was voluntary and intentional. It was "by wicked hands" that our Lord was crucified and slain, although he was "delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God." The question thus arises, How can we be free and accountable agents, and yet act in invariable accordance with the divine predetermination? This is not revealed. It is a secret reserved to be disclosed by the light of eternity.

As the Bible reveals both these facts, and we cannot deny either without falling into the grossest absurdities, it is our wisdom to cherish an unshaken confidence in the divine declarations as to the truth of these seemingly conflicting propositions, and rest assured that in a manner very mysterious and above our present conceptions, the freedom of human agents is entirely harmonious with the foreordination of all their actions. We are moreover to recollect that the secret counsels of God do not form our rule of conduct: as we cannot know what those counsels are, we are not to be governed by them in our conduct, but to act at

all times with reference to the *revealed* will of God, *without any practical reference to his secret decrees.*

We find another of the secret things which belong to God, in those mysterious dealings of Providence, into which human wisdom and sagacity attempt in vain to penetrate. In these matters clouds and darkness are round about the Almighty, and man is manifestly shut out from the counsels of his hand. The seeming prosperity of wicked men and the afflictions of the righteous have perplexed the wise from the days of Job to the present time. Scripture history is replete with striking examples and affecting illustrations of this profound mystery. There is Potiphar in splendor, and Joseph in prison. Herod triumphs on a throne, while John the Baptist groans out his life in a dungeon. Nero exults in royal robes, while the apostle Paul is bound in chains. And often it has been asked with deep solicitude, How, under a government of infinite wisdom and rectitude, can these things be permitted? But the question is urged in vain. No response is heard from the throne above. Similar dispensations occur in our own age. We see the most useful, important members of society removed by death, and the lights of the world extinguished, while the profligate and worthless are spared to be a burden to the earth. What multitudes of our race just open their eyes in helpless infancy, and closing them forever, lie down in the grave. Innocent prattling childhood struggles in the tortures of disease and expires in agonizing convulsions, while the vilest of mankind enjoy health and spend their days in mirth. The young mother is torn from the cradle of her helpless babe by the ruthless hand of death, while the outcasts of society live to hoary hairs.

These judgments of the Lord are a great deep which no man can fathom. We tremblingly inquire the reasons for such dispensations; and the only answer from the lively oracles is, "What thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter." We must therefore "Wait the great teacher death, and God adore." Though we have the fullest confidence that all these inexplicable events will be fully explained in a future state, yet the whole subject is now shrouded by an impenetrable veil. The design of this concealment seems to be, to bring our feelings to the test—to ascertain whether we can repose implicit confidence in the divine goodness and rectitude, even when his doings appear most unequal, and no reasons are given to explain them. The great moral effect of the divine dispensations would often be wholly frustrated by the disclosure of the secret purposes of God. When Jacob's darling son was taken from him, the blessed effect of that chastening stroke would have been destroyed by the knowledge that Joseph was taken from him to be made chief ruler in Egypt. And Joseph himself would not have derived so much spiritual benefit from his impris-

onment, had he known it was preparatory to such high exaltation. It was needful for the trial of Abraham's faith, that he should suffer all the heart-breaking anguish which arose from his ignorance that another victim would be provided to be slain instead of Isaac. And the patience of Job would not have been so signally tested, if he had been apprised that his latter end would *be greater than his beginning*. We cite one more instance.

The Bible brings life and immortality to light, and makes known to us that we shall exist forever. But the nature of that future existence and almost every thing relating to the world of spirits are among those secret things which belong to God. God has made known to us that we shall have a conscious existence when separate from the body—that our bodies will be raised incorruptible—that body and soul will be reunited and stand before God in judgment; and that after judgment we shall enter upon an everlasting state of blessedness or wo, according to the character we form in this life. But after all, what is our knowledge of the invisible world and of the realities of future being? Literally we know nothing of the essence of the soul and of its separate existence. And we are equally in the dark as to the process of the resurrection and the nature of a spiritual body.

It seems to be the fixed purpose of God to limit our information to this state of being; and to say to human curiosity which would surpass these barriers, Hitherto shalt thou come but no farther. Some general, unexplained facts are declared, leaving all beside wrapped in a dark pall of mystery, never to be lifted but by that hand which opens to man the gate of eternity. It is indeed wonderful how entirely all increase of knowledge upon this subject is precluded. While information is increasing upon so many things, we have not advanced a jot in our inquiries as to the invisible world, beyond those of a former generation. While so many thousand millions of our race have gone through that dark mysterious passage which leads to the world of spirits, not a word of information has been returned; and that gloomy pathway is just as new and untried to every traveler now, as it was to Abel who first explored the fearful labyrinth.

It is worse than useless to indulge speculations, or pretend to any discoveries as to those things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which have never entered into the heart of man. The whole subject is involved in solemn secrecy which defies human investigation, and casts utter contempt upon a proud philosophy which aspires to be wise above what is written. The humbling truth is, we have deathless spirits within us, but we are very ignorant of their nature and properties—we talk familiarly of the intercourse of departed souls—though such intercourse is completely beyond our comprehen-

sion: we are constantly experiencing a spiritual influence upon our minds, while we cannot pretend to understand what spiritual influence is, or how it is exerted; and we are continually on the brink of entering the invisible world, while that world is shrouded from our perception and knowledge by an impenetrable veil.

Thus we have taken a hasty and imperfect survey of some of the secret things which belong to God. A few brief inferences will bring us to a conclusion.

1. The first reflection which arises from the views we have taken is, that after all we are of yesterday, and know nothing.

2. The subject which has now employed our minds is well calculated to produce deep humility.

3. We infer the folly and wickedness of those who doubt the truth of revelation because it does not afford them all the information they desire, and because it contains some things which to their limited understandings may seem inconsistent.

4. The views which have now been presented exhibit in a strong light the impious arrogance and senseless absurdity of those, who presume to demand that all truth must be brought to the level of their capacities, and who boldly declare they will believe nothing which they cannot fully comprehend. Upon this principle the articles of their creed must be very few; and if they practically conform to the decisions of their unbelief, their condition will be pitiable indeed. How, in consistency with their principles, can they act at all, as they certainly cannot understand how the volitions of the mind move the muscles of the body? How can they sow their fields, when the process of germination in a corrupting grain of corn is manifestly beyond their comprehension? While they are hopelessly ignorant of the operations of their own spirits, how can they consistently believe that they have souls at all? Nay, how can they believe they are alive, as they will not pretend to understand or explain the essence or the cause of animal life, or the constituent properties of vitality? In a word, if men receive as truth nothing which they cannot comprehend, they must take refuge in almost universal skepticism.

Finally, we may infer from the discourse, how irrational as well as desperately wicked those are, who are continually finding fault with the Bible because it contains mysteries; and how much wiser those, who "receive with meekness the ingrafted word which is able to save their souls."

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SERMON CLXXV.

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THE BEATIFIC VISION.

PSALM XVII. 15.—*I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.*

It is the peculiar glory of the gospel, that by it "life and immortality are brought to light." By it, and by it alone, is a future existence freed from the obscurity which else had rested upon it, and presented before the mind invested with circumstances of deepest interest, as the object of hope or fear, desire or dread. To the sinner it is declared to be a state of awful retributions; whilst to the Christian it is a world of light, purity, and joy. Of nothing may he have more complete assurance than of that "eternal life which God promised before the world was." In this particular, then, the holy oracles are graciously adapted to bring to the believer necessary support and inexhaustible comfort. There are seasons of perplexity, and temptation, and sorrow, to which he is here subject; during which how cheering, how animating, to be able to look within the vail—to pass these scenes of conflicts—and by faith to anticipate the hour of his enlargement—to survey the inheritance in the skies—to enjoy something of its bliss—to know that whatever be his trials here, he *shall be satisfied when he awakes with the Divine likeness.*

This psalm was written by David amid feelings of sadness, arising from the persecution of his enemies. He devoutly breathes forth his complaints, implores divine protection, and, in conclusion, fortifies his mind with the resolution still to walk with God, and cheers his heart with the prospect of the glory that was in reserve.

The phrases employed are beautifully expressive. "*To awake,*" by the sacred writers, is frequently used as in the passage before us, with reference to the *resurrection*, "Man lieth down and riseth not again till the heavens be no more, they shall not *awake* nor be raised out of their graves."

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"*With thy likeness*," denotes the moral image of God renewed in the believer, which consists in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. David, therefore, in this passage exults in the thought, that with whatever afflictions he might here be oppressed, the period would arrive, when he should triumph. At the resurrection morn, in the splendors of God's presence, and free from pollution, he should "*be satisfied*."

I propose to mention some particulars respecting which the Christian, although he may now be perplexed, shall be *hereafter satisfied*. "Now we know in part," and consequently can *enjoy* but in part; hereafter "we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known." Then the believer shall be satisfied—

1st. *With his own glorified nature: He shall awake with the divine likeness: with a body spiritual and glorified.* It is indeed impossible for us at present, to enter fully into the contemplation of this truth with an understanding of all that it includes. And if it were possible for us with "a mind drowned in sense and buried in matter," to comprehend the excellence of the spiritual state, the very thought of the glory which shall be revealed, would be overwhelming. That this mortal shall ever become, in the language of Scripture, partaker of the divine holiness, is an idea which surpasses the efforts of reason to conceive, although it may not exceed the power of that faith which rests on the sure promise of God. "It doth not yet appear," saith the beloved disciple, "what we shall be; but we know that when Jesus shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." We must therefore content ourselves with confessedly inadequate ideas on this subject, and live in the exercise of faith, until we *awake* to the complete perception and enjoyment of heavenly realities.

There are some particulars, however, concerning which cheering information is afforded us; sufficient to dispel our doubts, animate our faith, and encourage our diligence.

The glorified nature shall be perfectly freed from sin. That which causes the true believer his greatest affliction, and which excites in his bosom painful apprehensions lest it should at some moment overcome him, is indwelling corruption. With affections but imperfectly sanctified, and prone to sin, yet with a principle of holy love existing in his soul, his heart is here the scene of conflict; a warfare of opposing principles and desires. This embitters his peace and causes poignant grief; except at some favored hour when he seems to rise above all sinful passions and to enjoy the peculiar presence of God. Such seasons he may have; but more frequently is his soul burdened by the prevalence and power of corruption. But when the last earthly passion shall have died away, when the last remnant of corruption shall have been destroyed, and the

last, lingering sinful desire is hushed in the stillness of the tomb, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and the elements of a holy nature shall be fully developed. In the upper world no corruptions annoy, no temptations disturb. He has forever bid adieu to sin, and all tears shall be wiped from his eyes.

He shall also be made positively and perfectly holy. All the affections of his soul, which we have no reason to disbelieve he will carry forward with him into heaven, will be purified fully and prepared to move with vigor and delight among their appropriate objects. His perceptions will be quickened; nay we have reason to believe that all the faculties of his intellectual nature, all the affections of the heart, all the sensibilities of the soul, though enlarged beyond our present conceptions, and enstamped with the perfection of holiness, shall exist and exert themselves in the future world. Sin shall be eradicated. Then the intellectual and moral nature shall be exactly fitted for that state which is now the object of intense desire, and upon which at death the believer shall assuredly enter. Having become like God and like his Redeemer in holiness, his gross body being made spiritual, and its sinful passions and appetites all destroyed, and being thus prepared by grace to stand among the throng of holy ones who surround the throne, must not the believer be fully *satisfied*? Here he carries about with him a body of sin and death; *there* he shall be clothed with undecaying beauty, and mortality shall be swallowed up of life. Here he is exposed, his senses are seduced by a world of temptations; but into *that* place nothing shall enter that defileth. Here he is not only beset by sin, but at a distance from those objects that afford the strongest incentives to duty; *there* he shall live in the immediate presence of such objects, with a nature and capacity adapted for their complete enjoyment.

2d. *He shall be satisfied with the character and perfections of God.* He shall admire and adore the divine perfections which shall then be fully revealed. I do not intimate that the true Christian, even here, perceives any thing in the character of Jehovah with which he is dissatisfied. So far from this, the divine perfections are here the theme of his loftiest praise. Their manifestations in the works of creation and providence, as far as he can trace and comprehend them, and still more in the wondrous plan of redemption, fill his mind with adoring thoughts, and his heart with the liveliest emotions of gratitude and love. Nor can aught be suggested more congenial with his desires, than that he shall behold more of God, that he may admire and praise him more. His present views of the divine character, however, are comparatively very limited, and consequently his ideas of God, although at all times honorable to the divine nature, must evidently be quite inadequate, and in some respects

confused. He waits, in the exercise of faith and patience of hope, for fuller, clearer, more direct discoveries. He waits the hour when his spiritual vision shall be strengthened, and he shall stand amid the unveiled glories of the Eternal. Then what may now appear like conflicting attributes, shall all be seen harmoniously blending. What the mind now strives in vain to grasp and reconcile shall there be made plain. From the inconsistency, injustice, and cruelty with which the wicked have reproached the Eternal, God's character shall there be seen perfectly clear. In his perfections, as well as in his ways, it will be apparent to an admiring universe, that mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other.

We may imagine for a moment, how different must be the conceptions which are formed of God by the holy seraph who dwells in his immediate presence, and those formed by the Christian now far away from that blissful sight, with limited faculties, in this dark, dreary world. Although both may be honorable to the divine perfections, yet how much more distinct, enlarged, transporting—how much more like the reality must be the thoughts of an angel, than ours. Yet among that holy company the believer shall be numbered, and in that resplendent light he too shall look upon God; and he "shall be satisfied." "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face, now we know in part, but then we shall know, even as also we are known." An angel's place, an angel's sight, an angel's knowledge, shall all enkindle an angel's fervor: and glory, and honor, and thanksgivings, to Him who sitteth upon the throne, shall be the saint's undying song. There may indeed be new and different discoveries, and endless illustrations of the divine attributes occurring, as he travels on in eternity, which will increase the believer's admiration; but the first opening view of the heavenly world will satisfy him fully respecting God's perfection; and all doubt and difficulty will be forever at an end. It will then appear all brightness.

3rd. I observe, *the Christian shall be satisfied respecting God's providential dealings with him in this world.* We are furnished in some cases with a triumphant argument, from the actual providence of God, to vindicate his character and prove his purposes. Yet after all, we find ourselves often in circumstances where we are saddened by doubts and fears, and pressed with difficulties. We feel unable to trace the design of God, or connect his dealings towards us with any wise and good purpose or gracious end. We are placed in a labyrinth where all around us is enclosed in deep obscurity, and even the light is as darkness. We are forced to walk by faith: and amidst scenes of perplexity and peril faith sometimes staggers at the promise and faithfulness of God. This is undoubtedly to be attributed to our ignorance and corruption, and not

to any real incongruity in God's doings; as we sometimes clearly observe when God sees fit to lift the cloud and discover his purpose and its accomplishment. But in not a few cases the mystery is suffered to lie, and the difficulty for the full trial of our faith, is perhaps increased rather than removed. Each effort to solve it only involves us in greater obscurity, and we are obliged to be contented with the Savior's assurance, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Christian, do these remarks find no verification in your experience? Does their truth meet no response in your breast? Look back to the past, not to renew painful emotions, but that faith may carry you forward with steadier wings and loftier flight. That dark cloud of worldly sorrow that settled upon your fairest prospects—that storm of adversity that blasted your joys, that hurried away your riches, that blighted your reputation, or destroyed your earthly hopes—have you learned its purpose? The stroke of Providence that ravished from your sight the wife you tenderly loved, or hurried the child of your fondest hopes prematurely, and perhaps in afflictive circumstances, to the grave; the dispensation that has placed friends far from you and your acquaintance into darkness,—was it not painfully obscure? Or that affliction that has come near your own person, that has touched you with disease and deprived you of enjoyment—that has caused days of weariness and nights of sorrow,—do you ask *why* it is thus?—why these and a thousand such providences? Perhaps you may, perhaps you may not, understand it in this world. Perhaps you may soon see the way in which God leads you, and its wisdom. But if not here, yet from a more elevated station, with strengthened vision, and in a clearer sky, you shall look abroad and know, and understand, and admire it all. What is now dark, will then be light, and you "shall be satisfied," and an humble faith may surely confide in God's wisdom and goodness until the great revealing day.

4th. *The believer shall be perfectly satisfied with the conduct of God's grace*—with all that spiritual course, by which he has been led, and whose issue will then be seen to be a world of permanent and perfect happiness. Not less difficult of comprehension many times are the ways of God in his spiritual than in his providential dealings. With an utter abhorrence of sin, he yet permits it to remain in his children, and even suffers them to fall under its influence, and wander into paths of transgression. With a hatred of evil and love of holiness implanted in their hearts, he leaves them to the power of outward temptation and inward corruption. Amidst the darkest and most dreary scenes of earthly trial, and in the very hour of painful struggle with a carnal heart, he gives them to feel spiritual desertion—to endure, in perils and fears, a night of cheerless, starless desolation, in which no voice speaks gladness, no

sound, "*peace, be still,*" breaks from the throne to calm the swelling waves. Deep calleth unto deep. A long dreary way is to be passed while the heavenly guide seems to be withdrawn. Ah! by the true Christian, who has had experience of divine things, this description will be recognized, not as the picture of fancy, but as a fearful reality. Yes! though the worldly-minded may regard it with derision, the believer, who desires, because he knows what it is, to walk in the light of God's countenance, often feels this sad reverse. There is such a thing as spiritual communing with an unseen God, and deprived of this the sincere Christian walks in darkness and sees no light: Creation wears her most attractive smile in vain. Yes; upon the same principle by which a worldly mind, deprived of the object of ardent love and desire is rendered miserable, the Christian, in an evil hour, losing sight of the object of his supreme regard, is completely wretched. Yet even such sorrows and trials will serve but to sweeten the heavenly rest: their tendency and effect here, as observed in many instances, is to wean the affections from the world, and sanctify the heart. This at all times is unquestionably their design, and thus God's goodness is vindicated; and what respecting them remains doubtful shall hereafter be satisfactorily revealed. When it shall be seen that they have conduced to his preparation for heaven, that every pain and every tear was necessary, that but for these, as the means which God appointed, he might have failed of the prize of his high calling, at least that his place had not been so elevated, his crown not so resplendant—shall not the believer *be satisfied?* Shall he wish, shall he say, it were better that he had suffered one sorrow or endured one hour of darkness less?

Once more; I add—the believer shall be perfectly satisfied *with that world upon which he shall enter, and with all its arrangements.* It shall be a world of pure and endless felicity:—it shall be *heaven*, with whatever of true joy we are in the habit of connecting with that name; aye, it concentrates much more of the *riches* of glory, than our feeble minds can at present grasp, or our loftiest imaginings conceive. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The most glowing language, therefore, on this subject must be entirely inadequate. The humble believer shall ere long ascend the mount of God. He shall move among a holy company of redeemed ones, who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Holy angels, too, are his companions; and with his Savior he converses; upon God, glorious in holiness, he looks with the eye of earnest admiration. And these scenes of surpassing glory and beauty—this heavenly companionship, shall be his eternal portion.

Surely, he shall be *satisfied, fully satisfied, when he awakes with the divine likeness.*

And now, my brethren, let us, in conclusion, endeavor to gather up these thoughts and apply them to some useful end. *How elevating the prospect of the true believer.* Heaven—an eternal heaven is the inheritance which lies before him. When a few more days or years are numbered, he shall have passed his sojourn, he shall go the way whence he shall not return. But to him the assurance is, that he shall enjoy the glorious presence and the blessed image of God—mingling forever with the countless millions of pure spirits who surround the throne. Oh! how enlivening, how animating the thought!—When faith can grasp firmly the sure word of promise, and looking up to those eternal heights where the Deity resides, can say, “here is my portion and my home,” the Christian may well sustain the few delaying hours that keep him from that blessed rest. He can sustain them by thoughts “of his reversion in the skies.” Ah! my brethren, of these prospective glories, the reward of faith, how often are we forgetful! How little do we live as if we were pilgrims here below, expecting soon to hear the summons, “Come up hither.”

Again, with what *patience and submission* should we endure God’s will, and in all circumstances, how dilligently should we strive to promote his glory. This shall be our business through eternity: shall we not then be active now? O, my soul, be thou devoted here—“*for great is your reward in heaven.*”

And what, indeed, are the obstacles which oppose? How small, in reality, the difficulties which cause us so much pain. If we could but regard them in the light of heaven; if we could carry them upward, and look at them in God’s presence, even here we should be satisfied. *Let us attempt for one moment thus to view them.* Ascend, with me, Christian brother, to the upper world. Place yourself, in imagination, as a glorified spirit amidst the splendors of the holy city,—cast your eye around, and what do you behold? “Ye are come to the Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.” Cast your eye back over your path through this world, view its dark passages, its perplexities, its trials, its woes; and look upon the valley of the shadow of death, from which you shrunk with dread. What caused you pain is there illustrated by heavenly light; and from that glorious elevation is there aught in the retrospect with which you are dissatisfied? Has not God meant it all for good?—even your light affliction which is but for a moment? Be then submissive here; learn to adore God’s ways—*You shall be satisfied when you awake with the divine likeness.*

And, my *impenitent hearers*, in that future world to which you haste,

you too will be satisfied, though now you resist and rebel! Amidst the burning brightness which shall be poured around, you will not be able to question the dealings of God, or find fault with his ways towards you. Bitter as will be the portion of your cup, you will confess, every tongue will confess, that God is righteous, holy, just, and good. You will be satisfied that your condemnation is just, that you have abused eternal love, that your portion in hell is all deserved. But how awful the thought! Can your heart endure it? O, escape for thy life. Make God your refuge. Throw yourself upon his infinite mercy in Christ Jesus. For though he is love, and now waits to be gracious, yet "upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."

SERMON CLXXVI.

BY REV. THOMAS E. VERMILYE.

THE GUILT OF UNBELIEF.

JOHN XVI. 9.—*Of sin, because they believe not on me.*

THIS chapter contains a portion of our Lord's valedictory address to his disciples, and the tender and touching petitions he uttered for them before his final agony. He encourages their desponding spirits by the promise of the Holy Spirit the Comforter, and instructs them in the nature and necessity of his offices. For the consoling promise of this divine agent there appeared an obvious necessity. The Savior had announced that the ties of sacred fellowship which united them were about to be broken: their Master was to be taken away from them—his instructions and intercourse with them were to cease. He therefore imparts to them brighter hopes and cheers them with better promises. "I will not leave you comfortless. I will send the Holy Spirit unto you"—and by his influences, he declares, the world shall "*be reprov'd of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.*" Perhaps the declaration received its fulfilment primarily, in those wonderful attestations which the Holy Spirit gave to the character, divine mission and atonement of Christ, by the miraculous gifts shed up on the apostles and primitive disciples; these were manifest tokens of the

divine power, and were so many distinct attestations to the facts and doctrines of the New Testament. We are taught however, that the office of the Holy Spirit was to be perpetual, and that his influences should be enjoyed, through all ages of the church. The ascension gift of the Redeemer was *to abide with his people*. And our text may therefore be considered as denoting his continued operations to the end of time. The *sin* of which he was especially to reprove the world, was *that they did not believe on Christ*. Whilst he would convince of all sin, this was the point where guilt especially rested, and where it continues to rest with all its weight. "If I had not come," said Christ, "and done among them the works that none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sins." We are justified, therefore, in deducing from our text the doctrine, that *unbelief* in the character, mission, and atonement of Christ, is the great sin of those in the world who enjoy the gospel. *Belief* in the gospel acceptance, though a mental act, ever carries with it the cordial affections of the heart; it implies a personal, cordial, and entire reliance of the soul on Christ for salvation; and *unbelief*, or practical rejection of Christ, in the light of the New Testament, is emphatically and eminently *sin*. It is my object to show *why unbelief holds this pre-eminence in guilt*. And it will be obvious, my brethren, should we succeed in our purpose, that they who now exercise no faith in Christ as their Savior, are, on that very ground, deeply guilty before God. Would they might be convinced of this solemn truth!

I observe, then, that unbelief is eminently sinful, *because it is a grievous reflection on the perfections of God*. The heart in which unbelief reigns, is virtually arraying itself in dread opposition to the perfections and government of the Deity: and hence must be awfully guilty in his sight. For, in the first place, it implies a *denial of the divine wisdom*. In the Scriptures Christ is styled the *wisdom of God* unto salvation: Christ crucified, *is to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness*; but to them that are called he is the power of God and the *wisdom of God*. By these passages, and others of the like import, it is clearly intimated, that in the person and work of Christ as mediator, and especially in the work of atonement, which is often placed for all the rest, (the cross of Christ,) there is to be found the peculiar and illustrious display of the divine wisdom—"Christ crucified—the wisdom of God," by way of eminence. Fix your thoughts then upon the declaration, that it is *the cross of Christ—Christ crucified*, (which denotes the work of sacrifice for sins, and which exacts the reliance of the soul on him alone for pardon,) that embodies, and illustrates, and shows forth to the universe, *the wisdom of God*. That wisdom so infinite, methinks, is exhibited in a variety of wonders, through all the mechanism of nature—is unfolded in

each nice adaptation of created things to subserve their destined purpose; is observed in every spire of grass, in every leaf of the forest, in each function of the human frame, and in every star of heaven. But its mysteries were reserved especially for the cross of Christ, and its wonders are there developed to strike, to surprise, to astonish the beholder. In the sacrifice of Christ, there is a combination of means, the most wonderful, to accomplish the great work of human salvation, in entire consistency with the honor of the divine character and law. Here mighty interests are concentrated. Here infinite purposes are suspended. Here the problem is to be solved, "How can sinful man be just with God?" In opposition to the salvation of the transgressor, were arrayed, as it appeared, the divine veracity, the honor of the law, the stability of God's moral government. And how these interests were to be reconciled, no created mind could tell. But on God's plan all interests are secure; "Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other." This, then, is the consummation of wisdom: God declared it to be necessary and satisfactory. Now, *unbelief*, or the practical rejection of Christ, involves eminent guilt, since, in effect, it is a *denial* of this wisdom. For it implies very plainly, either that there was no actual necessity for Christ's sacrifice, or that God erred in adopting a plan which included the possible necessity of Christ's suffering, or that, admitting such necessity, this is not the best means of accomplishing the end. Thus *unbelief* rejects God's plan, and arrays itself against his wisdom. Otherwise why is not this provision of the gospel immediately and cordially embraced? There is evidently no medium on the part of a moral agent in relation to this point, between cordially accepting, *which is faith*, and perversely rejecting, *which is unbelief*.

Again: Unbelief is eminently guilty, because it is a virtual *impeachment of the divine justice*. We are told, in relation to the atonement of Christ, that God hath set him forth to be the propitiation for sin, that God may be *just* and yet the *justifier* of him that believeth. From this declaration we are clearly to understand, that God could not pardon the sinner, without such a propitiation as that which Christ offered, and yet retain his justice. This is the simple meaning of the passage, utterly as it overthrows all other schemes of salvation. The divine justice was at stake to demand that sin should not go unpunished. And why? Because every sin is a transgression of the law, which requires, This do, and thou shalt live; and denounces, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. It is evident that a law without a penalty, or of which the penalty is not to be enforced, is utterly idle. And surely this cannot be supposed of the divine enactment. Sin, moreover, is rebellion against the government of God, and

tends directly to subvert it:—God's justice, every attribute thereof, would require its punishment:—And God moreover was bound, if we may so speak, by his *positive threatening*, to inflict the punishment of death for transgression. From these considerations, we see that God's justice, which requires that every act should receive its true desert, did require the punishment of sin. And we have observed that there was infinite wisdom, in the plan of a suffering Savior, by which the law was not annulled, but magnified and made honorable. The sword of justice was bathed in his blood, by a wise and holy divine appointment, and by his stripes we are healed: In virtue of what he has done, God can be just, and the repenting sinner be saved. But *unbelief in Christ*, (a rejection of him whom God hath thus set forth,) is an impeachment of all this procedure of infinite holiness and justice. For it implies either that the law was unreasonable, and the government of God not an object to demand so great a sacrifice—both which God has said were to be sustained and honored by Christ's death; or that sin was not an evil of such magnitude and tendency as to demand such signal visitation; or that God was unjust to establish and place man under a constitution such as he has ordained; or, finally, the guilt of unbelief is attempted to be palliated by the plea, that it is not consistent with divine justice that the innocent should suffer for the guilty. In this latter case the innocence of Christ is readily admitted: and then with the facts before us that he did suffer, the objection is obviously nothing less than casting an odious reflection on the divine character. It is not my purpose at present, to reply to these objections; but simply to show the character of unbelief, which implies all these consequences, and thus arrays itself against the divine rectitude. The facts in the case are obvious; and it must be evident that unbelief is eminently sin, when it so clearly appears that God, by his acts, speaks one language in regard to his justice, and the impenitent by his acts speaks another. God requires that we should fly to Christ, and by faith receive the benefits of his atonement, and avert the terrors of his justice; and the transgressor hesitates, practically disbelieves, and wilfully rejects this offered Savior. The controversy, with its dread consequences, lies between God, who has ordained the plan and carried into glorious accomplishment its provisions, and the impenitent, who, in the pride of his heart, refuses to avail himself of this grace.

Again: Unbelief is eminently guilty because it is an *impeachment of the divine veracity*. With reference to this grand propitiation for sin, God has asserted again and again, the absolute necessity of faith in this great sacrifice, for pardon and eternal life. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." "This is the record that God has given us—eternal life—and this life is in his

Son." "He that believeth is not condemned: he that believeth not is condemned already." And again; "He that believeth, is passed from death unto life: he that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." In these solemn declarations, we perceive the contrast of character, present condition, and future prospects, widely varying as light and darkness, heaven and hell. And in another place it is said; "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." Now *faith* is the reception of the divine testimony: and, disguise it as we may, excuse it as we will, *unbelief*, in every form, is the *rejection* of that testimony, and thus an impeachment of the divine veracity. Again, the word of truth, the oracle from heaven, has solemnly declared, "Sin shall not go unpunished:" and it avers, that infinite mercy can reach us but in one way; and that is by Christ: by faith in him we escape the wrath to come, and are made heirs of the hope of eternal life. "There is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Now in opposition to this, what is the plain language of unbelief? Is it not, *I shall have peace, though I walk after the desires of my own heart?* And does not this pour contempt on all that God has so solemnly uttered? The man who continues in impenitence and unbelief, with whatever sophistry he may quiet his own heart, does practically say, that there is no necessity for the intervention of Christ's blood; that he shall be safe without the faith of God's people; that God will not carry into execution the threatenings he has pronounced against unbelief. And this too, even in the very view of that awful manifestation of divine justice, by which the sanction of the law was vindicated, in the death of Christ. If unwilling to be classed thus in opposition to God's truth, why stand in an attitude of apathy and unconcern? Of your disbelief, so long as it lasts, conscience will testify that this is the legitimate interpretation. And all holy intelligences who love their King—all in heaven and on earth, must unite to exclaim against such rebellion—against this questioning of God's word, "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

Again: *Unbelief* is in an eminent degree *sin*, because it is a *rejection of God's love and goodness, made conspicuous in the cross of Christ*. True it is, that on every unfolded leaf which notes the divine doings—on each bright page of creation and providence—is inscribed, in legible characters, "*God is love*." The man who looks abroad over the various fields of infinite power and skill, must also see in each the obvious proofs of divine benevolence. And cold must be the heart that cannot feel, frigid and barren the philosophy that does not delight to trace, the footsteps of such a God. But if in all that we behold about us, and experience from day to day, we possess such cheering inti-

nations, there is yet one field, from us not remote, in which *love, goodness, compassion, grace*, have their brightest, purest, holiest exhibition; which in a way of eminence seems to assert to itself the illustration of these attributes. It is the redemption of Christ. Here, emphatically, do we learn that "God is love." To perceive this, we have but to remember that in regard to this exercise of his love, God was under no obligation whatever, to interfere; that he gave his own Son to die, and that in behalf of those who had ungratefully rebelled against him; and that the whole plan, from its commencement to its consummation, was his own. Had he not deemed it necessary and worthy of himself, he would not have interposed: but how great was that love which thus prompted him, out of a rebel and ruined race, to bring many sons unto glory! Here, surely, is an expression of infinite benevolence, as well as condescension. In the language of the parable intended by our Lord to illustrate this point, "What more could he have done, that he has not done?" And is it not seemly, is it not the dictate of every generous feeling, that this love and concern on his part should be met by us with the utmost gratitude, and immediate acquiescence? But what is the language of unbelief? At best, it is a careless, unfeeling *disregard* of that which God has done for our salvation; of that on which he has bestowed such infinite care for our sakes. This is ingratitude truly. But the perverse continuance in sin and unbelief—the proud, self-willed putting away from us the faith of Christ, despite of light, and admonition, and entreaty—what is this but *rejection*, but *contempt*, of the goodness and love of God? He arrays before us the grand scheme of his love, to snatch us from perdition; he tells us it is the only way, and provided at infinite expense; and men are yet heedless; yet turn away, and will have none of it. What would you say, how would you feel, should one thus entertain your kindest offices of love? And think you God does not view it as the deepest guilt? While you remain as you are, you are practically scorning all his goodness.

But again: *Unbelief* is a sin of peculiar enormity, since it implies, in its very nature, that rebellion against God is an evil of little consequence, indeed that it is not at all an evil—at least, that it is not so, in our estimate; for if we regarded it as an evil, we should desire to escape from it. And whatever might be said of the past, if we felt that there was evil in a state of alienation from God, and violation of his law, we should not be willing to persevere in such rebellion, as we evidently are, so long as we do not repent and believe in Christ. It is not necessary to expend a syllable here, to prove that you cannot be unbelievers, and yet be free from the charge of rebellion against God. The Savior has declared, in language most explicit, that unbelief is opposition to the divine will, and will

incur all the consequences of rebellion. The evil of sin was so enormous in the estimation of Deity—the violation of a holy and good law, the disposition to dethrone heaven's Sovereign, the entire alienation of the heart from God, which it involves, so dreadful—that God has deemed it necessary to affix to it the indelible mark of his reprobation, before a wondering universe, in the death of his well beloved Son. But the declaration of every act, and of every hour of unbelief in Christ, and rejection of his atonement is, Sin is not so very great an evil as is intimated; the transgression of the law is not so very heinous a sin, and does not deserve the penalty denounced; and whilst all heaven looks down in suspense, while escape is offered, *you say*, It is not a matter of great moment whether we trust or reject Christ—it is more interesting to eat and drink, to accumulate the world's wealth to gratify self, than to cease sinning against heaven's Sovereign, and care for the soul's salvation. Is not this your language? Does it not treat alienation from God as a small matter? And is not this adding sin to sin?

Again: *Unbelief* is evidently sinful, because it is a *voluntary* neglect or rejection of the only proffered salvation. I have already said enough in relation to the atonement of Christ as the *only* way of life. There is no other way, we are assured on the veracity of God, who is to Judge, and decide our eternal state. This is certain, however the ingenuity of men may seek to pervert and disguise it. If your standing and mine be not on the Rock of Ages, we are infallibly lost amid the convulsions of the great day. But unbelief, or rejection of Christ, is *voluntary*, and therefore the more grievously criminal. It is impossible for one who hears the sound of the gospel, or who may hear it if he will, to resist the conviction that his unbelief is the voluntary act of his own mind. No other reason for it, we are warranted by the unerring oracles to assert, can exist. Christ declares, "*Ye will not come to me that ye may have life;*" "*This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.*" The voluntary rejection of divine grace and love, who can say is not deserving of the wrath, which God has revealed against all unrighteousness.

Again: The sin of unbelief is peculiarly aggravated, because it is an *ungrateful return for all the condescension of Christ*. It is cold unconcern, or a dreadful contempt of all his sorrows, and his death on our behalf. If we felt as we should the debt of love we owe, if we were truly grateful, affected as we should be by the amazing compassion and grace of Christ, we surely should make such emotions evident by a prompt and cheerful compliance with his invitations and commands. These comprise repentance, faith, and devotion to his service. There is evident reason in the text he has provided, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments;*"

for indeed it is by such fruits alone that we can ever be assured of the possession of true love. But unbelief rejects not only the service, but repels the grace; reflects coldly and cruelly on the love and compassion he has evinced, and practically says, "*It is a vain, and idle, and needless exhibition.*" All that Christ endured, all that he accomplished, all that he has promised, the full enjoyment of pardon, and present peace, and future glory, it represents as of no worth. If otherwise why not believe the record which God has given of his Son? Why not practically comply with the terms which God exhibits as of such absolute moment? To see the guilt of unbelief in its true colors, consider what Christ has done, and what he offers. Think of his condescension and love, his sufferings and ignominy, his bitter agony and death, and weigh well their amount. He has given himself to the death; he offers to you and to me, "*A pardon bought with blood, with blood divine.*" And does not your practical apathy, your unbelief, the uniform disregard you manifest, reflect bitterly on all this love? By it God is dishonored, and Christ is injured.

IN THE APPLICATION of this subject, I observe, that we may here perceive the reason why the New Testament dwells with such frequency and force on the duty of *faith in Christ*; and why *unbelief* is so solemnly condemned, and against it so many threatenings uttered. To the minds of men this often appears unreasonable, and unbecoming the holiness of God. Let us, however, consider that *faith* is the respect and homage of the heart due to God's method of grace to a wicked world; and *unbelief* is a practical reflection upon the rectitude of the divine character and administration, and a rejection of God's special and only method of pardon and life. It tends to make void the law; it impeaches the government of God; it would annul the truth and subdue the honor of the eternal throne; it is an ungrateful contempt of infinite love. This is the testimony of the New Testament. These enormities of guilt are involved in *unbelief*, and all tend to prove the holiness and propriety of the Scripture declarations, and to add solemnity and tremendous emphasis to the words of Christ, "*He that believeth not is condemned already.*" There is evident reason that the Holy Ghost should reprove of sin, because they believe not on Christ.

Again: the subject may disclose to such as are yet in unbelief the real nature of their conduct. The unbelief, practical unbelief, of multitudes, they are apt to regard as a matter of very small concern, and which will produce few evil consequences; or rather they are not in the least disposed to reflect upon the subject. Yet this easy unbelief in which you live, my impenitent hearers, is *the grand crying sin* which now rests upon you. I pray you, consider it not in the light of carnal reasoning, but through the medium of the inspired word. You reject the special display

of infinite benevolence; you reject the immeasurable love of Christ; you practically reject the demand of the New Testament written as with a sunbeam: and "how can you escape if you neglect so great salvation." Say not, we press the point beyond reason. Whatever be your ideas of its importance, we follow only the leadings of the word of God, which explicitly declares, "He that believeth not, shall be damned. Hence it is evident that there is an immensity of interest connected with this subject. From the very nature of gospel faith, *which is practical* from the very nature of the objects about which it is concerned, and from express declarations of scripture, it appears, this is the point on which are suspended life and death, blessing and a curse. Will you lay claim to the precious immunities of gospel faith, when yours has not the least practical effect upon you; for you live and act, just as you would, if there were no such demands upon you in the word of truth? How vain, how empty all your expectations of a heavenly inheritance. *Tell us not*, you are no infidels, and that you esteem it hard to be ranked as such. True, you have some respect for religious things, and profess to believe the Bible. But what is the *practical* influence of your faith? Does it *purify the heart and overcome the world*? Is it that humble, holy, self-denying spirit which fixes all your warmest affections on the cross of Christ? Or is it such as perfectly well consists with a supreme love to self and the world? O, be persuaded to examine this matter, and understand your real condition. Be persuaded to exercise that faith which is practical and saving. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" so believe, and your soul shall have peace; you shall be calm and serene amid the darkest storm—shall meet death with heavenly fortitude—and finally stand on Mount Zion above, arrayed in the splendor and likeness of your Redeemer.

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SERMON CLXXVII.

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BLESSINGS OF TEMPERANCE IN FOOD.

DANIEL I. 12—15.—*Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days, and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meats and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.*

DANIEL was prompted by conscientious scruples in making this request. He knew, perhaps, that the "portion of the king's meat and wine" which was sent them, had been previously offered in sacrifice to some idol god, and feared lest he should seem to connive at such idolatry. He had, moreover, doubtless observed, that such rich living, as must have been common in that luxurious court, operated unfavorably both upon body and mind. The result of ten days trial of a simple yet nourishing vegetable diet, making *their countenances fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat of the king's meat*, has been regarded by some commentators as miraculous: and so it seems to have been considered by the Babylonian eunuchs, who had the charge of Daniel and his companions. Indeed, the general opinion among the great mass of mankind, in almost every age, has been, that a diet of simple bread and other vegetable food, with nothing but water for drink, is not only most unfriendly to comfort and happiness, but inconsistent with vigorous health and fullness of muscle and strength. But the man who has perseveringly tried such a diet, after using one of a more stimulating character, sees in its effects upon these Jewish youth, nothing but the natural consequence of a return to the proper course of living. The more luxurious course

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urged upon them by the king, must have had a peculiarly unfavorable effect upon the health of these virtuous Jews, who had probably all their former days practised temperance; and very likely they had now become somewhat emaciated. A return to their former healthy diet, even for ten days, might therefore have perceptibly added to their muscular fullness, and especially to the fairness of their complexion. We need not, therefore, call in the aid of a special miracle to explain the result: or rather, it is one of those cases, (fortunately not uncommon at this day,) in which God commissions temperance to perform the work of a miracle, without any suspension or contravention of the laws of nature.

Such a case as this, therefore, may serve as a convenient starting point in describing the salutary effects of temperance in the use of food. And this is the use I shall make of it in the present discourse.

I shall take it for granted, that he who adopts a strictly temperate course in respect to food, is equally temperate in respect to drink; and that he abjures every alcoholic and stimulating mixture; using for his daily beverage, that pure and only fluid, which God has created and widely diffused for the drink of man and other animals. Let the community but adopt such a system of temperance, and the following blessings will be the result:

1. *Health and Longevity.*

I would guard against conveying the opinion, as some writers on this subject seem to have done, that even the strictest temperance in diet will *infallibly* secure to a man the blessings of health and longevity. For there are other causes of disease and premature decay, besides dietetic excesses; and to some of them we are all inevitably exposed; and we often expose ourselves to those that are not inevitable. There is exposure to vicissitudes of climate and weather; to the damps and chills of the night; to the prostrating heats of a vertical sun; to the unhealthy miasms of decaying vegetable and animal matter; to deleterious chemical agents in the processes of the arts; to the reaction of the soul on the body when the labors of the intellect have been too severe, or the nobler powers have been overdone with care; and above all, to the deadly influence of unrestrained consuming passions. He who has escaped all these influences, has been favored almost miraculously. But none do escape; and often they plant the seeds of disease in the constitution, too deeply for the strictest diet and regimen to eradicate. Yet temperance in diet, joined with appropriate exercise, and regularity in other habits, will, if any thing can do it, bring back to the invalid health and happiness. It will also fortify the system more vigorously to resist all morbid influ-

ences; and thus it becomes a chief auxiliary to health and longevity.

That these blessings must naturally result from temperance in all things, the laws of physiology would lead us to expect. God has constructed the machinery of the human system so perfectly, and adapted its moving powers with such admirable skill, that health and longevity are natural to it, and disease and premature decay unnatural. Nay, he has given to it an internal elasticity, by which it is able to resist, without permanent injury, the ordinary vicissitudes and morbid influences to which it is exposed. The moment an injurious agent comes in contact with the system, or is introduced into it, a multitude of springs and pumps and chemical affinities are at work to resist and expel the poison. And it is only when the morbid action is severe, or long continued, that a permanent injury results, and the delicate machinery becomes deranged, and the vital energy impaired. True, there is sometimes a malformation in the system—an original imperfect and deficient construction of parts—which infallibly entails disease and early death. But if once carried through the period of infancy, we may generally calculate, that with proper attention and care, the human constitution may last through the ordinary term of human existence. Not a few constitutions may easily be made to continue in play far beyond that period; and to number even a century of happy years. The reason why the period beyond three score and ten is usually labor and sorrow, is, that some kind of unnecessary exposure or excess, either in food, drink, or physical or intellectual effort, have overtaken the organs of the body, and exhausted the vital energies, and introduced disease. Now the system of temperance for which I plead, imposes upon the organs of digestion only that amount of labor which is necessary to give to the system, bodily and mental, the most perfect health and energy. It does not allow of overloading the digestive or assimilating organs in the least, for the sake of gratifying the palate. Consequently these organs are never oppressed, and disease is never the consequence of what is taken in the form of food and drink: because God has so constructed the human machine, that it can perform labor to this amount, without the slightest inconvenience. Unless, therefore, some extraordinary morbid influence intervenes, such a man's constitution will run on in perfect health, till that period of extreme old age, when, according to divine appointment, *this earthly house of our tabernacle must be dissolved* by the operation of natural laws—the same as those which limit the duration of other animals, and of trees, and the smaller vegetables. For a man to be assailed, while in health and vigor, with

fierce disease, and laid in the grave, is as really unnatural as for the tree to be cut down in its greenness and freshness by the axe of the husbandman. The operation of the ordinary laws of nature is in both cases equally interrupted by the intervention of a foreign and violent agency. And inasmuch as morbid influences are much more powerful when introduced among the delicate organs of the animal system, than when acting externally, we see the reason why intemperance in diet is so much more fatal to health and longevity than any other cause.

What the laws of physiology would thus lead us to expect, as the effect of temperance upon health and longevity, experience abundantly confirms. For there have been a few in all ages, whose practice has corresponded essentially with the principles of temperance which I have advocated in previous discourses.* Many of the ancient philosophers, especially the Pythagoreans, restricted themselves to a vegetable diet, with water alone for drink, and experienced the health, longevity, and vigor of intellect, which such temperance naturally brings along with it. The early Christians too, particularly those driven by persecution into banishment, by the practice of similar abstinence, were rewarded by similar blessings. Many a modern biography, also, of the great and the good, affords a demonstrative example of the truth of my position. But the case of one who, living and dying, bore a most beautiful testimony on this subject, is all that can be here exhibited. "I am now ninety-five years of age," says he, "and find myself as healthy and brisk, as if I were but twenty-five. Most of your old men have scarce arrived at sixty, but they find themselves loaded with infirmities: they are melancholy, unhealthy, always full of frightful apprehensions of dying: Blessed be God, I am free from their ills and terrors—I hold that dying, in the manner I expect, is not really death, but a passage of the soul from this earthly life to a celestial, immortal and infinitely perfect existence—It cannot be too frequently or too earnestly recommended, that as the natural heat decays by age, a man ought to abate the quantity of what he eats and drinks; nature requiring but very little for the healthy support of the life of man, especially of an old man. Would my aged friends but attend to this single precept, which has been so singularly serviceable to me, they would not be troubled with one twentieth of those infirmities, which now harass and make their lives so miserable. They would be light, active and cheerful, like me, who am now near my hundredth year. From these two evils (sickness and death) so dreadful to many, blessed be God, I have but little to fear. For, as for death, I have a joyful hope; that the change,

* Nos. 10 and 12, Vol. vii.

come when it may, will be gloriously for the better. And as for sickness, I feel but little apprehension on that account, since by my divine medicine, TEMPERANCE, I have removed all causes of disease; so that I am pretty sure I shall never be sick, except it be from some intent of divine mercy, and then I hope I shall bear it without a murmur, and find it for my good. All who have a mind to live long and healthy, and die without sickness of body or mind, must immediately begin to live temperately; for such a regularity keeps the humors of the body mild and sweet, and suffers no gross fiery vapors to ascend from the stomach to the head. And when, in process of time, and after a long series of years, he sees the period of his days drawing nigh, he is neither grieved nor alarmed—his end is calm, and he expires like a lamp, when the oil is spent, without convulsion or agony, and so passes gently away, without pain or sickness, from this earthly and corruptible, to that celestial and eternal life, whose happiness is the reward of the virtuous.”*

2. *Temperance softens down the fierceness and turbulence of the animal appetites and passions.*

It is over-stimulation that renders these appetites and passions ungovernable. But temperance furnishes them only with the stimulus that is necessary to enable them to fulfil the offices for which their Creator intended them. Temptation, therefore, in a great measure loses its power over the temperate man: while the self-denial which he exercises over one propensity to excess, strengthens his hands for holding in the reins of every other. On the other hand, he who is guilty of dietetic excesses, throws a firebrand into the midst of all that is combustible in the human constitution, and goads onward every thing in it that is excitable. By yielding up the reins to one appetite, he loosens also his hold upon every other. We may expect, therefore, as the result, a wild and irregular action among the animal powers, and fierce outbreakings of passion and appetite.

All this accords fully with experience. Is it the fruit of temperance that fills our weekly, and even daily public journals, with the details of intrigues, adulteries, thefts, personal contests, robbery and murder? The records of our courts of justice and of our prisons, testify unequivocally to the inseparable connection between intemperance and crime. And the records of social life, the records of every observing man's experience, give equally clear testimony to the amiable temper and conduct of those who are temperate in all things: who not only abstain from every intoxicating mixture, but have a proper regard to the quantity and quality of their necessary food.

* Life of Cornaro, p. 29.

Not only are they free from the grosser vices, but they stand aloof also from the thousand petty contests, jealousies, and heartburnings, that so frequently convert society into an arena of battle, and fill it with hatred and suffering.

The private history of the temperate man, also, testifies to his inward serenity and peace. Passions and appetites, like other men, he indeed possesses, which require to be watched over with vigilance and restrained with energy. But they have not acquired, through excess, giant strength and ferocity. The winds of passion and the currents of appetite are strong enough to keep the vessel in pleasant motion, but not strong enough to throw the waves into mountains, nor to form the devouring whirlpool.

3. *Temperance promotes clearness and vigor of intellect.*

This position, like those that have preceded, requires only an appeal to the laws of physiology and the experience of mankind to demonstrate it. If the functions of the brain be not in a healthy and vigorous state, equally unhealthy and inefficient must be those of the mind. Now there is no organ of the body so easily affected by irregularity and difficulty of digestion and assimilation as the brain. Excess in food, therefore, operates directly to cloud and impede the movements of the intellect. This is so well understood by literary men generally, that they never attempt any difficult investigations, nor powerful mental efforts, soon after a hearty meal. Few, however, are aware, that even slight excesses at the table, produce a permanent depression and stupor of mind. But where such excess is habitual, the elasticity of the mental powers is never sufficient wholly to free them from the incubus that bestrides them. Like the overloaded bodily organs, the mind is gradually more and more weakened, until great efforts are out of the question, and the whole physical and intellectual constitution sinks into premature imbecility. But rarely is a man aware of the difficulty under which he labors, until he ceases to overload his stomach:—then he finds such a buoyancy, clearness, and vigor of mind to be the result, as to astonish and delight, while at the same time it mortifies him, to find how long his nobler part has been made the slave of his animal nature.

Most strikingly coincident with these views, has been the history of intellectual greatness in every age. Indeed, that history will bear me out in asserting, that the highest and most successful intellectual efforts have ever been associated with the practice of those general principles of temperance in diet for which I plead. I am aware that there is a kind of literature, and very popular too, that is often successfully pursued by the man whose powers are subject to the morbid

excitement and horrid depression which intemperance produces. I refer to works of imagination; to poetry and romance. But success in these departments depends more upon strong excitability, and a lively imagination, than upon strength of mind, or patient thought. Hence productions of this description are neither to be regarded as holding a very high rank as intellectual efforts, nor as the most successful or useful. It is the mighty minds that have grappled most successfully with the demonstrations of mathematical, intellectual, and moral science, that stand highest on the scale of mental acumen and power: and it is such minds that have found strict temperance in diet essential to their success. I cannot refrain from adverting to the history of a few of these master spirits of the human race.

The philosophers of ancient times have been already noticed, as illustrious examples of temperance. The names of Hippocrates and Galen among ancient physicians, of Demosthenes and Cicero among the orators, and of Pythagoras, Plato, and Socrates among the philosophers—men whose temperance not only lengthened out their days, in most instances, long beyond the term of three score years and ten, but enabled them also to impress upon all coming times their characters as prodigies of intellect—must ever be regarded as standing at the head of the temperance phalanx of Greece and Rome. In modern times, also, the princes of the intellectual world have almost all belonged to the same sacred band:

Foremost on the list stands Sir Isaac Newton. The treatise of his, that cost him the mightiest intellectual effort of all his works, was composed while the body was sustained by bread and water alone. And in spite of the wear and tear of such protracted and prodigious mental labor as his, that same temperance sustained him to his eighty-fifth year.

Upon no one perhaps has the mantle of Newton fallen so fully, at least so far as learning is concerned, as La Place. And we have the testimony of biography that he "had always been accustomed to a very light diet; that he gradually reduced it to an extremely small quantity;"* and "that he was enabled to continue his habits of excessive application to study until within two years of his death, without any inconvenience, owing to his always using very light diet, even to abstemiousness."† He lived seventy-eight years.

Another distinguished mathematician was Euler. And he too, by strict temperance, not only lengthened his days to seventy-six years, but accomplished a large amount of most profound intellectual labor.‡

* Amer. Journal of Science, Vol. 25, p. 11.

† Journal of Health, Vol. 3, p. 204.

‡ Idem, p. 203.

The illustrious Boyle must ever be regarded as one of the fathers of modern science, particularly of chemistry. With a very feeble constitution he prolonged his days to sixty-five years; and it is testified that "the simplicity of his diet preserved his life long beyond men's expectations: and in this he was so regular that in the course of above thirty years, he neither ate nor drank to gratify the varieties of appetite, but merely to support nature."*

The writings of Chancellor Bacon bear ample testimony to his belief and vindication of the great principles of temperance in living; although, as it happened in respect to his moral and religious character, his practical exemplification of those principles was not always what could be desired. Still he was sufficiently strict in their observance to derive from them great benefit in the prosecution of his intellectual labors.

The celebrated John Locke, with a feeble constitution, outlived the term of three score years and ten by his temperance. "To this temperate mode of life too, he was probably indebted for the increase of those intellectual powers, which gave birth to his incomparable work on the human understanding, his treatises on government and education, as well as his other writings, which do so much honor to his memory."†

Another intellectual philosopher, who saw four score years, was the venerable Kant. "By this commendable and healthy practice," (early rising,) says his biographer, "daily exercise on foot, temperance in eating and drinking, constant employment and cheerful company, he protracted his life to this advanced period;"‡ and we may add acquired the power for his immense labors of mind.

Whatever be thought of his hypotheses and of his religious character, none can deny the possession of a mighty intellect and profound learning to Leibnitz. And when his biographer informs us that "he was temperate in eating and drinking, and lived on plain food,"|| we are let into one of the secrets of his success, and of his longevity.

A like gigantic grasp of intellect, and a brighter picture of moral loveliness, was exhibited by Dr. Thomas Reid: and his biographer testifies, that it was his "temperance and exercise" that kept those powers in play for eighty and six years.¶

The operations of Pascal's mind seem to have been too powerful for a material organization like the human body long to sustain. And it was undoubtedly owing to a temperance and abstemiousness so

* Aikin's Biographical Dictionary. Also, Thornton's Piety Exemplified, p. 650.

† Journal of Health, Vol. 3, p. 202.

‡ Aikin's Biography.

|| Same work.

§ Same work.

rigid that many would call them ascetic and needless severity, that his frail body endured so long.*

Few men have more fully established their claims to intellectual superiority of a very high grade, than President Edwards. But it was temperance alone that could carry him through such powerful mental efforts. "Though constitutionally tender, by the rules of temperance, he enjoyed good health, and was enabled to pursue his studies thirteen hours a day."† "By a sparingness in diet," says he, in his diary, "and eating (as much as may be) what is light and easy of digestion, I shall doubtless be able to think clearer, and shall gain time, first by lengthening out my life: secondly, shall need less time for digestion after meals: thirdly, shall be able to study closer, without wrong to my health: fourthly, shall need less time to sleep: fifthly, shall seldomer be troubled with the headache."

In like manner, by temperance, and fasting (sometimes not less than thirty-six hours,) did the powerful mind of John Calvin continue its operations in spite of a frail bodily organization, long enough to impress his character and name upon the theology of subsequent ages.‡

The same means enabled Martin Luther, though his days were stormy in the extreme, to make the moral world bend at his will, and to leave for posterity so many profound literary productions. "It often happened," says his biographer, "that for several days and nights he locked himself up in his study and took no other nourishment than bread and water, that he might the more uninterruptedly pursue his labors."

The records of English jurisprudence contain scarcely a name more distinguished than that of Sir Matthew Hale. And it is the testimony of history, that "his decided piety and rigid temperance laid him open to the attacks of ridicule; but he could not be moved." "In eating and drinking, he observed not only great plainness and moderation, but lived so philosophically, that he always ended his meal with an appetite; so that he lost little time at it: and was disposed to any exercise of the mind, to which he thought fit to apply himself, immediately after he had dined."||

Perhaps no man accomplishes more for the world than he who writes such a commentary on the Scriptures as that of Matthew Henry. And it is, indeed, an immense literary labor. But the biographer's account of that writer's habits shows that temperance and diligence were the secret of his success. "He was an early riser; for he would be in his study by four or five o'clock, and continue there till

* Piety Exemplified, &c. p. 531.
‡ Same work, p. 174.

† Same work, p. 591.
|| Same work, p. 517.

eight; then, after attending family prayer, and receiving a slight refreshment, he went up again till noon: after dinner he resumed his book or pen till four o'clock, and in the evening visited his friends."*

Another laborious and able commentator and scholar was Dr. Macknight. And his biographer testifies that "his uninterrupted enjoyment of health he owed, under Providence, to a naturally robust make, and a constitution of body uncommonly sound and vigorous; along with regular habits of temperance and of taking exercise, which he did by walking nearly three hours every day."†

The great diligence of Dr. Doddridge, as well as the great amount of his literary labors, although he had to husband a delicate constitution, are too well known to require detail. And his regularity and temperance in living corresponded to such a constitution and to such labors.

Few men have accomplished more than John Wesley. And it is gratifying to learn that it was "extraordinary temperance" which gave him the power to do so much and to live so long.‡

Who is not amazed that Richard Baxter, with a body apparently tottering continually over the grave, and living in the midst of fierce commotions in church and state, could have written so much and so well! But we ought not, perhaps, to wonder, when we are told by his biographer that "his personal abstinence, severities and labors were exceeding great. He kept his body under, and always feared pampering his flesh too much."§

In reading the works of Milton, we are not so much delighted with the play of imagination, as with the rich and profound, though sometimes exceedingly anomalous views, which he opens before us. The fact is, he was a man of powers and attainments so great as justly to be classed among the leading intellects of his generation. Nor were such powers and attainments disjoined from temperance. It is testified of him, that while engaged in the instruction of youth, "he set the example of hard study and spare diet to his pupils, whom he seems to have disciplined with the severity of old times."¶

Among the scientific men of modern days, who have risen high and accomplished much, is our countryman Count Rumford. And among his most prominent traits of character were temperance and a love of order. "His wants, his pleasures, and his labors," says Baron Cuvier, "were calculated like his experiments. He drank nothing but water—he permitted in himself nothing superfluous."

* Piety Exemplified, p. 498.

† Piety Exemplified, p. 680.

‡ Aikin's General Biography.

§ Macknight's Commentary on the Epistles, p. 7.

¶ Orme's Life of Baxter, Vol. 1. p. 359.

Whatever may be thought of his phrenological speculations, no one can doubt but it required powers of the first order and efforts of the most vigorous kind, to establish in so many countries, in spite of prejudice and ridicule, a system so much at variance with received opinions as that of Dr. Spurzheim, and to write so much and so ably in its defence. Nor could he have done it, had not his "temperance and abstemiousness," in the language of his biographer, "been very remarkable." "We have seen him sitting down to sumptuous meals provided in honor of him, and have seen him fasting for the want of food adapted to his simple taste." "At evening, a tumbler of milk and a cracker, or a piece of the simplest cake, satisfied the demands of his athletic and commanding frame, and left his fine intellect without a cloud."*

Europe as well as America has been filled with the fame of Franklin: and no less wide spread is the history of his temperance. Early in life he adopted a vegetable diet; and thus he not only gained time for study, but "I made the greater progress," says he, "from that greater clearness of head and quickness of apprehension which generally attend temperance in eating and drinking."† And "though he afterwards relaxed in the austerity of his diet, the habit of being contented with a little, and disregarding the gratifications of the palate remained with him through life, and was highly useful on various occasions."‡

I must not omit the shining example of John Howard. Says Dr. Aikin, "The bare recital of what Mr. Howard did in the cause of humanity, is sufficient to place him among the greatest benefactors of mankind, as well as the most extraordinary private characters recorded in biography. Accustomed to the most rigorous temperance, so as to discard from his diet animal food and fermented liquors, he found no difficulty in living in the poorest countries. In all other respects his mind was equally master of his body, and he incurred hardships of every kind without repugnance. Economical in private expenses, he knew no bounds in his expenditures on objects of public utility, and regarded money only as an instrument of beneficence."

How easy would it be to protract to a volume this history of eminent men who have been most decidedly temperate! But I forbear. I shall, however, be met with the case of Dr. Samuel Johnson, as a triumphant proof that strong mental powers and great efforts may be connected with great excess in eating and drinking. Let it be recollected that the most laborious and successful of this man's literary

* Amer. Journal of Science, Vol. 23, p. 369.

† Library of Ent. Knowledge, Vol. 3, p. 224.

‡ Aikin's General Biography.

labors, were performed before he had acquired the means of intemperance; while yet stern poverty and obscurity imposed upon him a necessity of being abstemious. Let it be remembered, also, that afterwards he found it necessary to be temperate and even abstinent periodically; and here lay the secret of his mental strength.* "By abstinence from wine and suppers," says he, in his *Prayers and Meditations*, "I obtained sudden and great relief; and had freedom of mind restored to me, which I have wanted for all this year, without being able to find any means of obtaining it."† Nor should it be forgotten how dreadful were the sufferings of this powerful mind in consequence of intemperance: how it rendered him gross in his manners, excessively irritable and overbearing in his temper, and how it kept him, *through fear of death, all his life-time subject to bondage.*

The influence of intemperance upon the character and happiness of other men of literary distinction, in modern times, were there room here to exhibit it, would serve to impress the reader more deeply with the importance of temperance; especially to men whose labors are chiefly intellectual. What dreadful havoc did excess in eating and drinking make upon Pope, and Byron, and Burns, and Dryden, and many other authors of distinction, alas! who might be named! Who would desire their fame; if he must possess their unlvely characters, and endure their dreadful sufferings! Had they been temperate, how happy might they have been in life, and how much higher might they have enrolled their names on the scale of genius and learning! To them life seemed to be for the most part only a curse, and death only a *fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.*

4. *Temperance is eminently promotive of cheerful, healthful piety.*

An unruffled and serene state of mind is one of the most common, as well as most happy results, of temperance; as an opposite state of mind almost infallibly attends intemperate habits. The genuine calmness and self-possession of philosophy can never be enjoyed, except by him who refrains from unnatural stimulants of every kind, in food as well as drink. Nor can the pious man, who indulges his appetite beyond the demands of unsophisticated nature, escape those morbid and irregular actions of mind, which now lift the feelings into the region of enthusiasm, and now sink them into the abyss of despondency. So irregular, indeed, will be the emotions of such a man, that he can never judge correctly of their nature, nor determine whether they result from the excitement of the animal constitution, or from the opera-

* Madden's *Infirmities of Genius*, Vol. 1, p. 178.

† *Journal of Health*, Vol. 3, p. 202.

tions of grace and truth. Hope, therefore, will be feeble and unsteady, and his whole religious character will partake of the morbid irregularity of the physical powers, and want that healthful vigor and steady consistency, which give to Christian example its greatest force. If that healthiness and vigor of piety are not exhibited by the temperate Christian, it will in almost every case be his own fault—an unnecessary and self-inflicted calamity.

Another effect of thorough temperance is to banish, or at least counteract in a great measure, a tendency to gloom and dejection of spirits. "The great majority of those complaints which are considered as purely mental," says a distinguished physician, "such as irascibility, melancholy, timidity and irresolution, might be greatly remedied, if not entirely removed, by a proper system of temperance, and with very little medicine." Now it is this melancholy, timidity, and irresolution, that render the piety of multitudes of professing Christians gloomy, unlovely, and repulsive. And in nine cases out of ten, their despondency would be changed into holy joy, and their sluggishness into untiring activity, were they to come up to the true standard of temperance in their dietetic habits. The most devoted piety, (if, indeed, it can exist along with excess in food,) can never expect this joy, nor practice this activity, until it be conjoined with thorough temperance. But it is incredible what a mountain it takes off from the soul to withhold from the stomach a few ounces of improper or unnecessary food. He who has made the trial, will feel how necessary and important is the caution of Christ; *Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged (borne down) with surfeiting.* The heart does, indeed, feel the pressure of excess in food more sensibly than the body: and it was not merely owing to his exalted piety, but in part because he *kept under his body and brought it into subjection*, that the heart of Paul was always so buoyant under the heaviest trials, and his hands so busy and strong in accomplishing his gigantic work. And it was the most thorough experience that led him to lay down the general principle, that *every man, that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things.*

Says one, nearly an hundred years old, who had been eminent for temperance, "Whereas many embrace a holy and contemplative life, teaching and preaching the great truths of religion—which is highly commendable—O that they would likewise betake themselves wholly to a regular and temperate life! They would then be considered as saints indeed upon earth, as those primitive Christians were, who observed so constant a temperance and lived so long:—And they would besides enjoy constant health and spirits, and be always happy within

themselves; whereas they are now too often infirm and melancholy."

5. *Temperance greatly increases a man's means of usefulness.*

It gives him firmer health and greater bodily vigor: and thus enables him, uninjured, to sustain a greater amount of physical and intellectual labor. The want of this corporeal energy meets us at almost every step, as an apology for scanty and inefficient efforts in the cause of benevolence and religion. Every man, therefore, whose heart burns to do good, and to push his conquests as far as possible into the usurped empire of sin and Satan, will feel it to be an invaluable blessing to be free from the invalid's debility and irresolution. And in a large majority of cases, men have only to practice the temperance which I advocate, in order to secure that vigor of body which can cheerfully and safely cope with efforts the most intense and protracted.

Nor is vigor and clearness of mind less essential to great and successful exertions in the cause of benevolence. And this too, is the fruit of temperance. The man given to dietetic excesses in a peculiar sense sees through a glass darkly; and the movements of his mind are sluggish and inefficient. But temperance takes off the incubus and imparts an almost unearthly elasticity to the intellect. And here is the grand secret of the astonishing amount of labor performed by some men of feeble constitution in past days. They have left behind them an influence that has already been felt in the four quarters of the globe, and which will descend to unborn generations.

Temperance tends likewise to impart a deeper tone of piety to the soul, and thus to rouse it to more efficient action in the cause of religion and humanity. And a low standard of piety is the grand reason why most Christians scarcely touch the cross with one of their fingers. Lift a man out of the slough of excess, and out of the murky atmosphere of animal indulgence, and the beams of the Sun of righteousness will shine bright and warm into his soul, through the cloudless medium of temperance. And under the genial influence the plants of holiness and trees of righteousness will expand, and bloom, and bring forth much fruit.

Finally, temperance enlarges a man's pecuniary means of usefulness. Who was ever thoroughly and habitually temperate and not industrious? And rarely does increased industry, in our country at least, fail of a pecuniary reward. Nor are Christians in general at all aware, how the curtailing of their unnatural bodily wants, would fill their coffers; nor how many unnecessary expenditures in furniture, dress, and equipage, would cheerfully be given up, were they to

become truly and universally temperate. They now feel that their stinted charities to the treasury of benevolence are as great as their means will allow. But I doubt not that the day is at hand, when, through the redeeming influence of temperance, they will cast in ten times the amount, and feel it less than they now do their insignificant donations. Let temperance but prevail in the church of Christ, and it would be easy to fill the treasuries of all our benevolent societies, so that there should henceforth be no lack of money. O how delightful a change, to see every Christian, by means of greater bodily vigor and more elasticity and clearness of mind, and a more ardent love to the Savior, and a resolute rejection of all superfluities, multiplying his efforts and means of doing good in a ten-fold ratio. Blessed fruits of temperance! Would that the bright vision might enkindle every disciple's heart, and arouse him to labor for so glorious a consummation!

Two inferences, and I have done.

First: *The world can never be converted till Christians adopt the general principles of this system of temperance in all things.*

The primitive Christians adopted and acted upon these principles; and, therefore, they found the means, the strength, and the courage, to carry the conquests of the Redeemer's cause into nearly every habitable land. Christians at the present day are engaged in the same glorious enterprise: but although their numbers and means are multiplied a hundred fold beyond those of Apostolic times, the work of the world's conversion moves on comparatively slow. We do not come up to the effort with the physical and moral preparation of primitive times. The standard of self-denial and labor and pecuniary sacrifice is yet among most of us exceedingly low. We know but little of the meaning of the phrase, *Holiness to the Lord*, which God commands us to write upon our possessions and ourselves. Nine-tenths of what God claims as his, we inscribe, *Devoted to the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life*: devoted to the luxuries of the table—to dress—to entertainments—to equipage. In order to keep up even the present tardy movements of benevolence, it is necessary to keep in action a complicated and powerful array of agencies, and to press the cause upon Christians, (to their shame and humiliation be it spoken,) as though it were in a desperate state. And it must be so, until the principles of universal temperance and correspondent retrenchments are adopted by the church. Men cannot do much more than they now do, until they make this reformation. But in order to accomplish the world's conversion, they must increase

their donations and prayers and self-denial a hundred fold. And it is matter of joy that temperance brings in her train the means for making such an increase. Oh what a day of triumph to this degraded and benighted world will that be, when Christians shall have learnt thus to send forth streams of salvation from the pure fountains of temperance! For,

Secondly: *The prevalence of universal temperance will usher in the millenium.*

And whatever else may be understood by the millenium, it certainly means the world's conversion. Now when the soldiers of the cross shall become also the soldiers of temperance, men enough can easily be obtained for this mighty work; men too, not merely prepared by hardihood of constitution for the enterprise, but with clear heads and pure devoted hearts. Nor will money be wanting; when men shall pour their superfluities into the treasury of the Lord. And when Christians enter into this work with the capability of physical endurance and the entire self-consecration of Apostolic times, that blessed divine influence which alone gives life and success to means, will go along with them from one conquest to another, until speedily *great voices shall be heard in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever.* Happy, thrice happy period, when temperance and religion shall have poured their life-giving streams over every land! The principles of God's government do not permit either of these to complete the work alone. But issuing from the sanctuary in the same channels, they sweep away the strong holds of sin and Satan, and, at the same time, cause the wilderness to bud and blossom as the rose. The wail of human suffering is drowned and hushed in the general anthem of holy joy and praise. Man will still find, indeed, enough of sin and sorrow to show him that he does not inhabit a perfectly holy and happy world. But he will find, nevertheless, that where temperance and religion prevail, they neutralize the bitterness of that curse, which rests upon our fallen world; and bring back the essence of Eden's joys. Oh, Christian, gaze upon this heavenly vision, until you feel its inspiration, and are led to exhibit in your example, a transcript of MILLENNIAL TEMPERANCE, MILLENNIAL PIETY, and MILLENNIAL HAPPINESS.

[*The subject to be concluded.*]

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SERMON CLXXVIII.

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ZEAL IN RELIGION.

GAL. iv. 18.—It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.

The truth of this maxim is readily admitted in every thing but religion. All commend zeal in the affairs of this world, and seem to expect strong excitement wherever great interests are at stake. Who censures a resolute pursuit of wealth or learning, of honor or power? Would you reproach the philanthropist for his zeal in behalf of the suffering, or the patriot for his ardor in defending the liberties of his country? Where life or health, property or reputation is in jeopardy, wakeful solicitude is not only allowed, but demanded. At the death-bed of a friend, amid the perils of an ocean-storm; on the eve of a battle that must decide not merely the fate of an army, but the destinies of a nation or a continent for ages, could any man refrain from deep emotion?

But the maxim of our text is far more applicable to religion. If the interests of time so powerfully excite us, how ought the realities of eternity to rouse, and thrill, and agitate our inmost souls! Surely a concern touching our dearest hopes both for this and the coming world, should awaken the strongest emotions.

Let us then reflect on some of the reasons for such excitement in matters of religion.

I. *Man was MADE to feel deeply.* His very nature requires excitement. He is neither a snail, nor an oyster, but a being whose element is activity, and whose nutriment is emotion. His mind rusts by standing still, and cannot remain long in a state of entire repose. He must and will have excitement of some kind; and if he finds it not in the service of God, he will seek it in the vices or the vanities of this world. Can we hesitate which to choose? Is not the excite-

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ment of a Christian preferable to that of a worldling, the rapture of saints and angels in heaven to the deathless agonies of devils and damned spirits in hell?

II. But look at *the obvious DESIGN of the gospel*. Is there not in its history and its principles abundant evidence of its having been intended to pour through every bosom a tide of strong and exquisite emotions? If God has taken such pains to reveal his will by patriarchs, and prophets and apostles; if he has given up his Son to the death of the cross for our redemption; if he has sent his Spirit to transform us into his own pure and blessed image; if he has appointed his ministers, his Sabbaths, and all the means of grace to impress his word on our minds with saving efficacy; if he has brought before us the most powerful motives that heaven, earth and hell can suggest, and pressed them upon us in a thousand forms; does he design by all this to produce on our sensibilities no deep, no abiding impression? If he intended no excitement, why provide so much fuel for the flame, and then send coals of fire from heaven to kindle it to an intense, an everlasting blaze?

III. Consider, also, *THE TENDENCIES OF DIVINE TRUTH*; and say whether the gospel is not *adapted* to excite strong emotion. Contemplate the character of God, radiant with glory, and endeared to all holy beings by the displays he has made of himself in the works of his creation, providence and grace. Must not these touch the heart? Can we gaze unmoved on his infinite power and wisdom, on his inflexible justice, on his spotless purity, on all the matchless wonders of his love to fallen man? Will that character whose transcendent loveliness waked the psalmist's lyre, whose awful glories overwhelmed the prophet's soul, before whose overpowering splendors all the seraphim veil their faces, and bow in transports of admiration and praise—can such a character fail, when properly contemplated, to kindle our hearts into high and delightful emotion?

Look at the *atonement* with its cluster of wonders; see mankind so ruined, that no created arm could rescue them from endless woe; behold God so loving the world as to give his only begotten Son for their redemption; see the Lamb of God bleeding on the cross to atone for their sins, and restore them to his full and everlasting favor: is there nothing here to melt the heart? If the very name of a Howard has thrilled the bosom even of those who had never been blest by his philanthropy; if when the father of our country died, the nation wept in grateful sorrow; if his companion in arms, on visiting our shores after the lapse of half a century, was hailed by all with every possible

demonstration of respect and gratitude; can we refrain from emotions far deeper, while contemplating the grace of Him who, being "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," and consented there to be wounded for our transgressions, to be bruised for our iniquities, and to bear that chastisement by which alone our peace is procured?

In the same way I might glance at all the truths of the gospel; but take only the subject of regeneration, with its kindred and inseparable doctrines. If the Bible represents man as an apostate, as a rebel; as fallen, polluted, ruined; as alienated from God by wicked works, and so utterly dead in sin, that he must be created anew in Christ Jesus, before he can taste the joys of heaven; is it possible for any one to bring such truths as these home to his bosom without being strongly excited? Must they not touch the very main-spring of his soul?

IV. All this excitement, moreover, is *required by the INTERESTS at stake*. What are those interests? Property or reputation, health or life, the friendship of man, the favor of monarchs, thrones and diadems, all the riches, honors or pleasures that this world can give? No; something more than all these—the favor of Him whose smile is heaven, whose frown is hell; an immortality of ever-increasing joy or wo; interests high as the throne of Jehovah, deep as the bottomless pit, lasting as eternity; interests, in comparison with which all that can be crowded into the utmost limits of earth and time, dwindle into nothing.

Would you faintly conceive the value of these interests? Ask not the worldling; he has no arithmetic for such calculations. Ask the sinner when wrung with remorse, and trembling in fear of the wrath to come; ask the recent convert while clasping to his bosom those hopes which he would not exchange for the whole world; ask the advanced Christian while sweetly communing with his heavenly Father, and rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory; ask the man whose spirit hovers on the brink of eternity, just ready to plunge into the pit, or to soar on angel-wings to celestial bliss; ask the saints above as they bow before the eternal throne; ask Him who made the soul, and knows its capacities for endless enjoyment or suffering; or Him who came from heaven to the cross for its redemption: then go down to the world of despair, and ask those

whose doom is shadowed forth by the worm that dieth not, and the lake that burneth with quenchless fire: pass down the stream of endless years, and, when myriads after myriads of ages shall have carried you far beyond the utmost point that imagination can now reach, pause there, and ask the sufferers in hell, and the glorified in heaven to tell you, if they can, the value of those interests which are suspended on the gospel.

With such interests at stake can we fail to be excited? Go bid the mother feel not while her first born, her only child is expiring in her arms; bid the fond father and husband feel not as he sees his house and whole family wrapt in flames, and hears their wild shrieks for relief; but tell not him whose immortality is at stake, to smother his feelings on a subject that fills all heaven with deep solicitude? Sooner put your foot on the raging volcano, and bid its fiery bosom cease to heave.

V. But reflect on *the NECESSITY of strong emotion*. Without it the gospel can never accomplish its great design of preparing a fallen race for heaven. Can rebels against God be reclaimed from sin, and transformed into his image, without touching their sensibilities? A sinner regenerated, a Christian sanctified, and united to God, without melting his heart! Can you weld cold iron?

Look at the essential elements of piety. Its seat is in the heart; its very aliment is emotion; and as well might you talk of vision without light, or of fire without heat, as of a Christian without excitement. Examine his spiritual exercises, and see if they are not all exciting. Is there no emotion in that godly sorrow for sin which is unto life? None in that faith which works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world? None in the returning prodigal, none in the humble publican, none in every one of the graces that characterize a new creature in Christ? While attending on the various exercises of devotion, while passing through the conflicts of his spiritual warfare, and going on from one degree of grace to another, till he attains the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus, can the Christian be unmoved? As well might you live without breathing. Piety without emotion is utterly irreconcilable.

VI. Look at some prominent *EXAMPLES of true religion*. Here we see its essence bodied forth in visible and living forms. And were they all cold as ice? Did piety, in the days of its greatest purity and power, produce no excitement? Did it touch no chord of deep and exquisite sensibility in the bosom of patriarchs, prophets and apostles? Was the royal penitent unmoved while pouring forth the confessions

demonstration of respect and gratitude; can we refrain from emotions far deeper, while contemplating the grace of Him who, being "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," and consented there to be wounded for our transgressions, to be bruised for our iniquities, and to bear that chastisement by which alone our peace is procured?

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repentance, and faith, and new obedience, and this conflict between the gospel and human depravity would forever cease.

2. Far be it from me to plead for an improper kind, or an excessive degree of excitement in religion. It should ever be holy, constant, well-regulated. It should spring from intelligent and disciplined piety. It should be lighted only at the altar of God, and be kept alive only by the truths of his word, and the influences of his Spirit. It should be constantly increasing to the end of life. The zeal that is hot to-day, and cold to-morrow, that blazes in a crowd, but dies in solitude, that thinks by the fidelity of a month to earn the privilege of a year's apathy and sloth, is worse than useless. Ours should be, not like the flashes of a fire-fly in a summer evening, or the lurid gleams of lightning at midnight, but like the sun pouring down a ceaseless flood of genial light and heat. I have no sympathy with that sort of zeal which wakes up at the commencement of a revival, and coolly calculates on going to sleep again at its close. I plead only for that which will keep the Christian awake through life, and make his soul, even amid a general declension, like the land of Goshen during the darkness that brooded over all the rest of Egypt.

3. Object not the impossibility of sustaining such a spirit of zeal. I know how exhausting are the excitements of guilt; they create in the bosom a whirlwind that convulses the soul, and shatters its tenement of clay. But is it so with the fervors of holiness? Did the zeal of prophets and apostles derange their minds, or waste their energies? Will the excitement of heaven exhaust the glorified spirits there? Such excitement, so far from enfeebling our minds, jading our spirits, or undermining our health, would continually impart fresh vigor to them all.

4. Reflect, then, on the fatal delusion of those who make their religion to consist simply in cool exercises of the intellect. Could you speak with the tongue of men and of angels; had you the gift of prophecy, and understood all the mysteries of religion; had you the highest degree of knowledge, and a faith sufficient to remove mountains; what would you still be without those warm emotions of love to God and man which the gospel requires? Sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal. Hast thou faith? Be it so; but can faith alone save thee? Dost thou believe there is one God? Devils also believe that, and tremble too. Dost thou assent to the entire system of truth revealed in the Bible? So has many a sinner that still went down to his grave impenitent. Hast thou even professed Christ before men? So had they who are represented as pleading before their final Judge,

“We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.” But he will reply, “I never knew you; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.”

What then must we think of men whose sensibilities are all asleep on the heart-stirring themes of the gospel? Knowledge, indeed, they may have; that knowledge which puffeth up; philosophy, falsely so called, that starts a thousand foolish questions, and genders an abundance of strife and vain babbling; that pries into mysteries never revealed, displays a wonderful skill in threading the labyrinths of a metaphysical theology, and contends fiercely enough, if not for the faith once delivered to the saints, yet for its own favorite dogmas. But is this religion? If a man thus makes his head a sort of ice-house to keep his heart in a state of perpetual coldness; if his soul can slumber over those truths and glories which fill all heaven with transport; if he can sleep over a world perishing in sin, at the dawn of the millennium, and in view of such motives as drew the Son of God from his throne to a cross—can he possess the spirit of apostles, or of the divine Lord and Master?

5. Here we find a full answer to the charge of excessive zeal in religion. Its *quality* may be wrong; but there is no danger of there being too much of the right kind. Is it possible to feel, or sacrifice in this cause more than the gospel requires, or its spirit would prompt; more than our own immortal interests, or those of a perishing world imperiously demand; more than prophets, apostles and martyrs actually did? Who is more fired with holy enthusiasm than Paul was? or more than saints and angels in heaven will forever be?

Beware, then, how you censure a degree of zeal which you do not reach, and cannot fully appreciate in others. Look first to yourself; for a cold heart is a bad judge in such a case. With the spirit of Christ glowing in your bosom, would you censure them? Take care lest you betray your own deficiencies, contravene the whole tenor of the Bible, and reproach some of the best men that ever lived. Measure the intensity of that love which brought the Savior from his Father's bosom to the cross; drink, yourself, a few draughts from that tide of holy, rapturous emotion which will pour through paradise forever; inquire of the martyr as he gazes on the opening visions of eternity, and in his chariot of fire mounts up to glory; ask all the worthies of the church in past ages, all the master-spirits of heaven; and then say, if you can find, even in this excitable age, a degree of zeal equal to the exigencies of the case.

But whence these charges of enthusiasm? From the sincere, devoted follower of Christ, or even from men who would fain extinguish all enthusiasm, or censure that of the student and the poet, the orator and the patriot, or frown on that spirit of enterprise which is hewing down our forests, and constructing our canals and railways, whitening every sea with our sails, and wafting home to our bosoms the riches of every clime? Yes; go to the man who is daily straining all his powers to reach a high point of professional eminence; go to the devotee of pleasure who feeds his jaded sensibilities with novels, theatres and other fashionable amusements; go to the miser who sacrifices himself, soul and body, a whole burnt-offering at the shrine of Mammon; go to a man like the late ravager of Europe, his bosom a volcano of enthusiasm, whose lava desolated a continent; and these are the very men whom you will find, though all ablaze themselves in chase of this world's vanities, yet loudly reprobating enthusiasm in matters of religion.

6. But *genuine* zeal is the grand desideratum of the age. A thousand voices from every quarter of the world, from heaven, and from hell, are calling loudly for a far higher degree of it than the church has ever reached. God enjoins it. The Savior expects it. The gospel deserves it. Motives from three worlds plead for it. Six hundred millions going down to their graves in sin cry aloud for it. All the benevolent enterprises of the day most deeply need it. It is indispensable to sustain revivals of religion, and prepare the way for that revival of a thousand years which shall one day encircle the globe, and send its saving influences into every human family. The angel having the everlasting gospel to preach, is waiting for it. The promises of God in his word, the openings of providence, the dawning glories of the millenium, all most imperiously demand it. Breathe the zeal of prophets and apostles, the spirit of Christ himself, only a small portion of heaven's enthusiasm, into all that bear the Christian name; and how soon would the hosannahs of our whole race blest with the privileges of the gospel, rise to mingle with the anthems above unto Him who hath loved us, and given himself to die for us—unto whom be glory forever. AMEN.

SERMON CLXXIX.

BY. REV. GEORGE C. BECKWITH.

DANGER AND FOLLY OF DELAY.

ACTS xxiv. 25.—*Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*

HERE is a specimen of human folly. When Paul “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled” under his bold and pungent appeals; but, while conscious of his guilt, fully apprised of his danger, and urged by the strongest motives to instant compliance with the terms of the gospel, he coolly resolved on persisting in sin, and postponing repentance to such a time as he should himself deem convenient.

Impenitent sinner! do you not see in this example an image of yourself? Reflect. Do you purpose, *never* to repent? Do you really mean to die in your sins? No; you expect one day to accept that gospel which you have heard and slighted so long. Against this delusive expectation, so fatal to thousands and millions, we have often warned you; but you heed not our warnings, because you fondly hope to find a season for repentance more convenient than the present.

No matter what excuses you plead for this delay. I shall not stop now to examine them, or even to inquire why you put off this grand business of life, and leave your immortal interests afloat on the uncertainties of a future season. I wish to learn how you contrive, while living in sin, to cherish the hope of ever preparing for heaven. If

unwilling to repent now, what reason have you to expect that you will EVER repent ?

1. *The state of mind which leads you to hope for a more convenient season, is the main obstacle to your salvation.* It is the nucleus of all your sins ; the sheet-anchor that holds you in rebellion against God ; and, till you renounce it, he must look upon you as a determined rebel. You may imagine, that your purpose to repent some time or other is a virtual compliance in prospect with his demands ; but what does he require of you ? To repent next week, next year, in old age, in sickness, on the bed of death, just when it may chance to suit your convenience or your wishes ? No ; God insists on immediate repentance ; and your delay is direct disobedience to his plain and oft-repeated commands. Your purpose to repent, not now, but at some future day, is the very point which he requires you to abandon ; and if you entrench yourself in this purpose, you take the readiest way to seal your everlasting ruin. If unwilling to repent now, you are in fact unwilling to repent at all ; nor would you, with your present disposition, repent in old age, in sickness, amid all the agonies of death, amid the brightest glories of heaven, or the deepest horrors of hell !

2. *But delay will only aggravate this state of mind.* It is increasing your reluctance to repent. Repetition confirms all our habits. So with the voluptuary, so with the miser, so with the devotee of ambition, so with every class of transgressors ; and you need not trace their progress far, to discover that sinful habits grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength. Is the delaying sinner exempted from this law of our nature ? Can he continue impenitent without increasing his reluctance to repent ? Is not every day, every hour, bringing him nearer and nearer to a degree of obstinacy that will prove fatal to his soul ?

3. *Meanwhile the external obstacles to repentance are multiplying.* The world, the flesh and the devil are daily augmenting their power over the heart, and twining around the sinner cords more and more

difficult to be broken. Business, cares, pleasures, temptations of every sort are thickening along his path.

Delaying youth! if you cannot surmount the obstacles which now obstruct your return to God; if you cannot now deny your sinful appetites and passions; if you cannot now break from your irreligious associates, and stem the tide of influences adverse to your immediate conversion, when will you? Are not these and similar obstacles continually increasing? While the world is thus gaining every day a stronger hold on your heart, do you expect ere long to break away from her enchantments?

Will the pleasures of youth soon pass away? Very true; but they will be followed by cares still more urgent and absorbing. Most of you are already too intent on worldly schemes to think much, if at all, of your souls. Engaged on your farm, in your shop, your study, or your counting-room, you find no time, you feel no disposition to repent. Will continuance in such a course prepare you for repentance? Ask the student long devoted to his books, or the miser grown gray in search of wealth, or the devotee of ambition still eager in the chase of honor and power. Do you find them more disposed than formerly to accept the overtures of redeeming love?

4. *But delay will render the work of repentance more difficult, by increasing your guilt, and confirming your habits of sin. Your transgressions are more numerous now than they were one week ago; and every day, every hour, every moment is adding to their number and aggravation. Your habits of impenitence may eventually become inveterate. Sinful habit is often well nigh invincible. It is not a thornbush that springs up in the night, and may be cut down at a blow in the morning, but a sturdy oak winding its roots around the rocks, lifting its head above the clouds, and there bidding defiance to the peltings of the storm, to the fury of the tempest, to the hottest and heaviest thunderbolts of heaven.*

If you know the power of habit, would you think to overcome it

by continued indulgence? Would you attempt to reclaim the drunkard by allowing a still freer use of ardent spirits? But no better reason have you to suppose, that continuance in sin will prepare you to repent. When you shall have wasted the morn of your days and the vigor of your powers amid the vanities of earth; when age shall have marred your enjoyments, your passions become torpid, and there shall be no more treasure to gain, or honors to win, do you hope to find in the vale of life both a season more convenient, and the work of repentance more easy? Fatal hope! it has ruined millions, more perhaps than all other excuses put together.

But you sincerely intend to repent. Alas! so did many a sufferer now in hell; and this very purpose just lulled him to sleep, and kept him asleep till he woke in perdition. If unwilling to repent now, quiet not your fears with the hope of repenting at some future day. That day may never come; and if it should, it would probably find your reluctance to repent strengthened almost into obstinacy, all the obstacles to your conversion increased, your iniquities multiplied, your habits of sin fearfully confirmed, and the work of repentance thus rendered so difficult as to be well-nigh hopeless.

5. All this time, *the only means of conversion are losing their power over you.* Know you not what means God has provided for this purpose? The light of nature, the dictates of reason, the whispers of conscience, the instructions of the Bible, the services of the sanctuary, all the privileges of the Sabbath, the warnings of Providence, the example and admonitions of pious friends, the various channels through which divine truth reaches the understanding, the conscience, and the heart; all these are means of grace designed to promote your repentance and salvation.

Now, is not delay continually diminishing the effect of these means upon you? Do they now affect you as deeply as they once did? How long then before you will utterly destroy their power

over you? When will you feel their transforming influence? After continued resistance shall have hardened your heart into adamant? In old age? In sickness? On the bed of death? That is indeed an honest hour, full of terror to an impenitent soul; it makes even the infidel turn pale; it sent dismay to the heart of Hume and Voltaire; it wrung tears from the eye of Paine himself; it will probably recall *your* sins, and set before you the dread realities of eternity; but will it prepare you for heaven? A death-bed hope, in nine cases out of ten, is a fatal delusion!

All the motives of the gospel, too, are losing their influence over you. These come thronging upon you from three worlds. When reading your Bible, or musing in solitude on the things that belong to your everlasting peace, or listening to the pungent appeals of some faithful preacher, or passing through the scenes of a powerful revival, or bending over the death-pillow or the fresh grave of one dearest to your heart, or stretched, to all appearance, upon your own dying bed—did you never at such times feel the motives of the gospel pressing you to an immediate acceptance of its offers?

You will not deny it; but have you not withstood all these motives till they have ceased to affect you? Can you not now stand unmoved in view of death and judgment, of heaven and hell? Gladly would I urge some new motives to arouse or melt you; but whither can I go for stronger than those you have so often resisted? Heaven, earth, hell, all have been tried; the universe can furnish no more.

And do you *expect* any more means or motives? Are you waiting for another Bible, for another Savior, for another God, for new terms of salvation, for stronger motives to repentance? Will God reveal a heaven of more surpassing glory to allure you, or a hell of deeper horrors to alarm you? What then is to reach your heart? What can bring you to repentance? Will your vows so often broken, your conscience so long stifled, all the means of grace continually abused,

all the motives of three worlds thus far resisted—will these, so powerless hitherto, will these hereafter soften your heart into penitence?

I know you hope for heaven; but whence that hope? From the word of God? Encouragement enough does it give to the believer, but not a solitary promise to the delaying sinner. Gladly would I speak some peace to your soul; but how can I cry, Peace, peace, when God hath said, There is no peace to the wicked? Gladly would I promise you a more convenient season for repentance; but did Felix find such a season? Did Esau? Will you? Alas! the Bible assures you, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," and solemnly forewarns you, "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Which leads me to observe,

6. By delay you may *grieve the Holy Spirit to depart from you*. He will not always strive with the delaying sinner; and you may provoke God to withdraw his influences entirely, and leave you to take your chosen course. Then may you embrace such errors—there *are* such errors—as will ruin your soul. You may even deny the existence of God, and spurn all his offers of mercy, and laugh at his direst threatenings, and shut your eyes against all the realities of a future state, and sin without remorse or fear, and lull your conscience into slumbers so deep, so deathlike, that eternity alone can break them.

Is all this fiction? No; I have been describing the actual history of a man who once became almost a Christian. The Spirit of God strove with him powerfully; he was deeply convicted of sin; his conscience smote him till he thought its stings too terrible to be borne; and in a paroxysm of anguish, in a delirium of agony, he prayed the Spirit to depart, and leave his troubled bosom at rest. That prayer was heard; and when he rose from his knees, the Spirit had fled forever, conscience ceased to sting, and the man went

down to death, apparently with no remorse for the past, and with scarce a fear for the future.

But you hope to recall the aggrieved Spirit of God, whenever you please! So thought this very man, and so hoped a youth who in time of a revival appeased his conscience and fears by resolving to repent at a future time. He went so far as even to write his resolutions, and fix the time. That time began to draw near, but disaster came a little before it, and death stared him in the face. Now he thought of his resolution, read it with solemn interest, bathed it in tears, longed for the feelings he once had, and prayed for the Spirit to return; but the insulted Spirit came not at his call, and that youth died in utter despair!

Delaying sinner! are you not taking the same course? Should you come to such a death-bed, you may call in vain for the Spirit so often grieved. You may call too late. The Spirit may have taken his everlasting flight; and the Savior himself may then say, "Because I called and ye refused, and set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, therefore will I laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind."

7. Let all these considerations be riveted more deeply on your mind by *the shortness and uncertainty of life*. Your life is at best but "a vapor, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Hold your breath twenty minutes, and your soul is in hell! Your whole eternity is suspended on the thread which any one of a thousand accidents may cut in a moment, and let you sink into the abyss!

Can you still be at ease? Can you swing securely over eternal burnings? Can you—*will* you—*DARE* you cling to the hope of a more convenient season? Has God promised such a season? You *hope* for it! So have millions, and perished by the delusion. You *hope* to live! So do many on the bed of death. Are you young and

vigorous? Be it so; but may not death still be aiming at your vitals? Do you purpose to repent next year, next month, next week, or even to-morrow? This very night you may be in eternity; and of what use will be your purpose to repent, when you may be lifting up your eyes in torment?

Will you then stake your immortal interests on a delusion so fatal as the hope of a more convenient season? Shall no considerations arrest you? Will you still sleep in sin, on the brink of hell? While God is warning you, and the Savior inviting you, and the Spirit perhaps moving on your heart, and angels waiting to rejoice at your repentance, and dangers thickening around you, will you still persist in rebellion, and harden your heart against every motive to repentance? Will you, can you shut your ears against the wailings of the pit, the songs of heaven, and the sweet voice of redeeming love? *"If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it."*

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SERMON CLXXX.

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A GOOD WIFE A HEAVENLY GIFT.

Prov. xix. 14. *House and riches are the inheritance of fathers; and a prudent wife is from the Lord.*

Our present life, though frequently and justly styled a life of sorrow and disappointment, is also one of great and varied enjoyment. The earth is full of the goodness of Jehovah, and all the departments of life, and every individual in every department have their full share of this goodness. And one of the great sources of nearly all the sorrow and anxieties, in social life particularly, is, that many men know not the full value of one single blessing which they possess—that is a good wife.

Among the many never failing sources of enjoyment connected with the present state of things, the exercise of the social affections holds a distinguished place. The phrases “a good neighbor, a good father, a good mother, a good sister, a good brother, a good son and a good daughter, and a good companion,” are well understood by all, as full of meaning, and full of enjoyment, but no human tongue can express all the enjoyment which they contain, or even communicate.

And in the wise and the good, and extended and comprehensive arrangements of Providence, all these, and all the enjoyments derived from them, spring from one common source—a good wife and a good mother. By the very constitution of our nature, the whole character of civil society, from the smallest family to the largest empire, is formed by the aggregate character of the mothers and wives within the district.

By a figure of speech common in all languages, and among all classes of men, all the qualifications of a good wife and a good mother, are in the text expressed by one term, viz:—*prudence*. Prudence, in its strict and proper sense, has a particular reference to the choice of fit means to accomplish a particular end, in the easiest and safest method possible. And with a good wife, not only the possession, but the daily exercise of this invaluable gift is indispensable. There is in fact no individual, in all the branches of society, who has such constant, and daily, and hourly use for this quality of mind.

The management of the family falls chiefly upon the wife, and whatever may be the state of the family resources, or the character of the members, the wife is responsible for the whole. She has to manage children of every age, and in every state of health and sickness, and of every kind of temper and disposition. She has to manage servants who are always more or less to be instructed and watched, as well as directed, and who are frequently very

fluctuating and irritable. Her house is also more or less open at all times to neighbors, and friends, and strangers, who in many cases require extensive and varied attention. And add to all—it not unfrequently happens—that the daily business of the husband is by no means well adapted to the convenience either of his wife, or of any of his friends—so that his regular visits to the bosom of his family, are to *receive*, rather than to *give* assistance and refreshment. And this, where there is no lack of affection.

It is thus, that the best arrangements of any family which has the least intercourse with the neighborhood, or with the world, is almost daily liable to interruptions, and all the members of the little republic are continually changing their relative position to one another, and to others. And thus the temper and patience, and expedients, and resources of the woman, who is at the head of the establishment, must be continually tried, and in many cases tried most severely. Of what importance then to any man, and to society at large, must be the enjoyment of “a prudent and efficient wife.”

I. Let us attend to some things included in the phrase “a prudent wife.”

1. A good wife must possess a large share of what is called “common sense.” She must know by a kind of instinct how to act on every emergency—catch as it were by inspiration, the leading features in the characters and dispositions of the individuals, old or young, friends or strangers, to whom she is introduced, and with whom she is to act stately or occasionally. Without this, every other talent she may possess, and every attainment she may have acquired, will be of little use either to herself or to her family.

2. A good wife must be distinguished for self-command. A wife is at the head of a little society, in which are all the elements of every kind of society. But all these elements are here, in an unformed, and forming, and most fluctuating state. Hence, the first and most important lesson to be studied, and to be acquired by the individual who presides over a society in this state is, that she have, on all occasions, the most perfect command of herself.

3. Industry and economy form a third distinguishing feature in the character of a good wife. This is the leading feature in the detail which is given us by the Spirit of inspiration, Prov. xxxi, 10—end. It will be well for our country, and for our world, when this passage of holy writ shall be fully understood by every mother and every daughter of our land. Happy would it have been this day for the British nation, and for these United States, had this passage been made the text-book for female education, instead of the large importations which have been made of teachers, and of systems of education, and of maxims and habits from Italy and France.

The industry and economy of a wife, is particularly exhibited in having all the intervals of time, within the whole range of her government, filled up with some necessary and profitable employment, and in taking special care of fragments of time and fragments of property.

4. A good wife is an affectionate woman. The law of love and sincerity is written upon her heart; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. Every domestic, and every friend, and every stranger, and the friend of every distant friend and acquaintance, finds himself immediately at home while under her roof, and while partaking of her hospitality. Nor in all her intercourse with strangers or with acquaintances, does she cherish a thought, or willingly utter a syllable with the design of injuring the feelings or the character of a single human being. She will not take up, much less will she give circulation to a reproach against her neighbor, though this reproach should be brought to her table or whispered to her in her bed-chamber.

5. A good wife is of domestic habits, and of a domestic disposition. She enjoys herself nowhere so well as under her own roof, and while attending to her own private affairs. Her husband and her children, and the daily ordinary cares of the family, occupy her chief earthly attention. She is a good neighbor, and can always enjoy a good neighbor, whether at home or abroad.

But her own family is her peculiar and special province, and she has no desire to meddle with the domestic arrangements of any of her sister sovereigns. When she enters a neighboring family, it is to administer in some form to their comforts, not to embarrass them with their friends. Let wives, and mothers, and young women who expect soon to be at the head of households, read and study attentively, 1 Tim. v, 9—14.

One sinner destroys much good. One busy tattling woman, whether married or single, is enough to destroy all the social comforts of many families. And on the other hand, one prudent woman may be worth a thousand in preserving all that is valuable in the social intercourse of a village, or city, or neighborhood. Read and study the history of Abigail, 1 Sam. xxv, and of the woman of Tekoah, 2 Sam. xiv, 1—20, and of the wise woman mentioned in 2 Sam. xx, 16—22.

6. All these and similar qualifications in the good wife, must be associated with the possession and the exercise of genuine and ardent piety. The description of a good wife in the Bible, already referred to, closes with these important words: "Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

Infidels themselves, with very few exceptions, acknowledge the importance and necessity of piety among females. Take a sense of religion from a female, and she is an object of abhorrence even to those who are themselves polluted with every crime; and while many wicked fathers are by both precept and example initiating their own sons, and other young men, into all the elements of irreligion and debauchery, they shudder at the very thought of their wives and their daughters not being under the influence of the religion and morality of the Bible. If a little of this good thing then, be of such vital importance, even with those who personally know nothing of its value, of what value must it be, when it shall be the leading and the commanding principle of action in those upon whose fidelity, and activity, and daily and hourly labors, the welfare and the enjoyment of the whole community, must in every generation and in every state of society, from the very nature of things, depend? If a man is to be happy any where on earth, it must be in the bosom of his own family, rejoicing with the wife of his youth. And we repeat it, if a little of genuine piety, or of what may be only the semblance of genuine piety, be of such value in the estimation of those who personally know nothing of it, of what value must that wife be to her husband and to her family, whose piety is always ardent, and incorporated with all her plans and all her movements?

Genuine and ardent piety is of the utmost importance for the personal support and comfort of a good wife. She has in all her plans and in all her movements, her peculiar difficulties—difficulties which in many cases he can communicate to no human being—and difficulties also which when known to others, can be removed or alleviated only by the favor and the goodness of the Almighty. To her Father who is in heaven she must often look for direction and assistance, when neither father, nor mother, nor husband, nor any earthly friend can help in the least degree. Every pious wife and mother is familiar with the experience of the psalmist, "when my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul."

Nor can the affection and piety of the husband, however sincere and ardent, relieve the mind of the wife in numerous cases of anxiety and difficulty. It is written, "Confounded be all they who serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols. Worship him, (that is Jehovah,) all ye gods." In every case, in exact proportion as the heart of a good wife is given to idolatry, she will be disappointed in the quarter from which she expected deliverance.

Genuine and ardent piety is indispensable in the character of a good wife.

for fulfilling the great and continued and extended plans of Providence. Under God, mothers form the character and the destiny of the whole human family. As the infant, the boy or girl is, so, with very few exceptions, will be the full grown man or woman. The great and leading features of the mother's character, are indelibly stamped upon every son and daughter of Adam. It is the great law of our nature, "Like everywhere produces and cherishes and perfects its like." Had it not been for the continued operations of this law, meekness, and gentleness, and goodness, and all the amiable and endearing qualities of humanity would probably have long ago been extinct, and utterly unknown in all those countries where the gospel is unknown. And in those countries and districts which have enjoyed the gospel, the influence of the pious and active wife and mother, has at all times been seen and felt and acknowledged by all, as one of the principal means by which generation after generation have served the Redeemer. The prospects of every particular church and congregation, have always been encouraging, as to the continuance of the gospel among them, just in proportion to the good character of the majority of the mothers.

Nor can there be any other individual so well qualified for forming human character, as a pious mother. Her affection for her own offspring is sincere and strong and lasting. She knows the value of the human soul; and is not unacquainted with the state of the world, and the realities of eternity. She has access to the understanding, and to the heart, and to the conscience of her children, as no other human being can have. She knows in her own experience, the truth of God's promise, and the efficacy which Jehovah has been pleased to attach to the prayer of faith. How often has she the opportunity of whispering in the ear of her child, and into the ear of her God at the same time, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me. As for me, this is my covenant with them saith the Lord; my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."

A worthy father in the ministry, who has seen much of domestic society in all the departments of life, has said, that he has yet to find a respectable family of sons and daughters where the mother was an ignorant or imprudent woman; but he has seen and known many respectable sons and daughters whose fathers were worthless, but whose mothers were the excellent ones of the earth.

We now consider,

II. In what respects a good wife is peculiarly and specially from the Lord.

1. The woman was originally formed to be an essential and special help to the man. Read and study attentively, Genesis ii, 18—20.

The man was set at the head of the lower world; he was made the lord of the earth, and of all that it contained—was to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; but he could have no enjoyment of any one of these, or of them all collectively, till another being was made. There was not as yet in the whole range of creation, an help meet for him. Hence woman, the last and the best and the noblest of all that was created, was formed. And was formed expressly to fill up the blank, and to supply the deficiency, and to put man into a situation in which he would be capable of enjoying his ample domain. And infinite wisdom and infinite power and infinite goodness adapted all belonging both to the body and to the mind of the woman, to that high and dignified rank, which was originally allotted to her in the scale of being. She commanded the heart of the man, and held in her hand the property and the destiny of millions upon millions. And if woman has ever been degraded, and rendered *unfit for such a dignified station*, it has been by the mutual transgression of

the man and the woman. It has been because our common nature has lost its original dignity, and has become depraved and corrupted.

2. Almost every pious man can trace very distinctly a special providence, in the arrangement of the circumstances, which connected him with the woman of his choice.

"House and riches are the inheritance of fathers; but a prudent wife is from the Lord." The son may know at a very early period of life, and long before he is of age, what will probably be the amount of his earthly inheritance. But he knows not till he has obtained her, what kind of wife he is to have; and in cases without number this great and important matter is settled very expeditiously, and without much reasoning and reflection—in the common language of men, it is wholly a matter of feeling and of accident; yet the pious man who has been blest with that best of earthly blessings, a good wife, will often review with astonishment and gratitude, the manner in which a vast number of otherwise unconnected contingencies were at that most important period of his sojourn here below, all over-ruled, and all concentrated towards that one object.

Again, "House and riches are the inheritance of fathers; but a prudent wife is from the Lord." It makes no matter how extensive, or how valuable the landed, or the funded estate of the young heir may be. Unless Jehovah in his goodness shall bless him with a prudent wife, it soon may be squandered to the four winds. The destiny of thousands upon thousands in high life, may be appealed to for the illustration of this fact.

What a caution is here suggested to parents, while they are making prospective arrangements for their children! How important also is it that young people should early acquire the habit of acknowledging God in all their ways; and that they be particularly urgent, and make it a matter again and again of special prayer, that they may be directed in their feelings and in their social intercourse with one another!

3. It is by the special arrangements of Providence, that a good wife is continued to any man, and continued as a blessing and enjoyment.

When we take into view the daily and nightly fatigues; the cares and anxieties which in many cases fill up the whole life of an affectionate and active wife and mother, it is a matter of astonishment that so many of them maintain their vigor and activity to the last stage of their earthly existence. There certainly is a sense in which the woman is not the "weaker vessel." There is certainly in the very constitution of most of women, a something which fits them for enduring labors day after day, and night after night, which would crush in a very short period the most robust constitution known among men.

Consider again, that the whole domestic happiness depends upon an infinite variety of modifications of little things, and that all these little things, in all their various modifications are agreeable, or disagreeable, according to the temper, and disposition, and habits of the wife. All the world over, just in proportion as the wife is in good humor and has the full command of herself, is the enjoyment of the husband, and of the children, and of all the domestics. But he who commands the heavens and the moving of the mighty deep, can only effectually command the movements of the human heart in either man or woman. How important then is it, that a good husband should daily and hourly pray for his affectionate and pious wife; and how important is it, that every son and daughter should offer up sincere and fervent, and continued prayers for their mother.

III. We attend to the practical improvement of the whole subject. And,

1. Some of us once had good mothers, who are now in glory. We knew not their full value when we were under their care and protection. Nor can we at this day form any proper estimate of what we daily enjoy, as the fruit of their labors and prayers. What shall we render to the Lord for all his

benefits towards us? Let each of us say, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid."

The most of us who are young have still good mothers. Let us tremble at the thought of rejecting their authority, or treating them in any degree, or on any occasion with disrespect. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

It is presumed that the most of us (who have wives) have good wives; but if any of us are not so comfortable in that connection as we could wish to be, it may be well for us to remember, that the blame may be in the man rather than the woman.

And to all, whether young or old, married or unmarried, the admonition of the apostle applies: "Brethren the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it. For the fashion of this world passeth away."

2. The subject suggests the importance and necessity of an extended and perfectly Christian course of education, for the female mind. The Redeemer always has made, and always will make, extensive use of females in his great and extended plans of mercy. The whole plan of salvation has for its object the restoring of our lost race and our apostate world, to something like their original dignity and glory. Hence we have every reason to believe, that the whole body of women will be renovated and elevated, as an essential and efficient part of the great system of means for accomplishing this great and glorious end.

Were all the mothers within the bosom of the church, the good mother of the Bible, all the children of the church would be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and every family would furnish in a very few years, one or two missionaries for the heathen world.

Were all the mothers in the land, the industrious, economical, and pious mother of the Bible, the whole face of society would be changed to the better in half a generation, and the government of the nation, the conducting of all national affairs, would become a very simple and easy operation.

3. To any husband who has lost by death a good wife, and to any children who have by death lost a good mother, the subject suggests not only a reason for the most cordial resignation, but reasons also for holy joy and elevation of mind.

A pious lady, whose husband had died in the evening, being asked next morning by a friend, *how* she felt, answered: "I have just been thinking how happy my good husband must be this morning, as he has been *one night* with the Redeemer in glory."

It was your new covenant God, who gave the good wife and the good mother, who made her a blessing and comfort, while she was continued here below. And she was preserved and made a blessing, under the protection of the prayer of the Mediator, "I pray not that thou shouldst take her out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep her from evil." And when she had served her God in her day and generation, she was removed in answer to another prayer of the Mediator, "Father, I will that she whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that she may behold my glory which thou hast given me." And it is no mean honor to have a wife and a mother thus exalted.

And heaven is the home of the great family of the redeemed. They shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. And thrice happy will that mother and father, and those sons and daughters be, who having been united in the closest ties on earth, shall as an *unbroken family*, become a constituent part of that one great assembly above.

SERMON CLXXXI.

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THE SABBATH A NATIONAL BLESSING.

Mark ii. 27. *The Sabbath was made for man.*

No one, who believes in a future retribution and makes the Bible the basis of his sentiments, can fail to see that the Sabbath is associated with all our dearest interests for eternity. The command to keep one day in seven holy unto the Lord is grateful to his heart, because he is deeply sensible of the value of such a season of spiritual refreshment. It is on the Sabbath, more than on any other day of the week, that he rises above the world, holds fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, and ripens for the rest which remaineth for the people of God. On this account every real Christian prizes the fourth precept of the Decalogue, and is ready to offer his devout prayer, that its authority upon the minds of the community may never be weakened.

Thus far all is plain. But has the Sabbath no blessings to scatter along the path-way of men, through the life which now is? Is this institution so exclusively spiritual in its character and aims, and so entirely blended with the high concerns of eternity, that it bestows no regard upon mankind as dwellers upon earth? Every attentive reader of the Bible, every candid observer of passing events will answer, that the Sabbath was intended to exert, and actually does exert, a most benign influence upon all the personal, domestic, and social relations of the present life. No individual or family, no neighborhood or community, ever kept the Lord's day holy without reaping rich temporal blessings from it. So well established is this truth, that the sanctification of the Sabbath may be forcibly urged, without taking one step over the confines of our civil and social enjoyments, or casting a single glance at the awful realities of the world to come.

The minister of the gospel can indeed take very high ground in enforcing the observance of one whole day in seven, as a season of rest. He may point his hearers to the clouds and darkness which enveloped Mount Sinai, and bid them listen to the voice of the Almighty, saying: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." He may come forth to his people encompassed with arguments from the bed of death, the scenes of the last judgment, and the bliss or wo of the eternal world. These are the most cogent motives he can urge. But why should he not, for once, change his position, and trace the influence of the Sabbath upon the every-day, the fireside, the temporal condition of mankind? This is not divesting religion of its sacredness; it is only spreading that sacredness over the surface of society, so that its benefits may be apparent even to worldly men.

The Sabbath, our Savior says, was made for man. This is true, not in the sense of those who advocate so liberal an exposition of the fourth commandment as to rob it of its hallowed character; but as understood by those who regard the day as, in every point of view, an inestimable blessing to the world. This sacred season was scarcely less intended to cheer our residence on earth, than to prepare us for a better residence in heaven.

My sole object, on the present occasion, is to show that the Sabbath is peculiarly adapted to raise the character and improve the condition of men: *this world.* I beseech you to hear me candidly and patiently, and then regard whether the Lord's day is not fairly entitled to the affectionate regard

all those, who would identify themselves with the great interests of public and private happiness. If religion is deemed of little account, I solicit your attention on other grounds. My appeal is to you as philanthropists, as patriots, as genuine republicans, as citizens of this free and favored land, in behalf of an institution which, as will be shown, stands connected with the welfare of our common country. You are called upon to see what respect you ought to pay to the Sabbath, and what efforts you ought to make to preserve it from desecration, from the relation which it bears to your dearest earthly comforts. My train of reasoning will be simple and unambiguous.

1. The provision which the Sabbath makes for rest from labor, is in itself a great blessing.

This is confessedly lowest in the scale of considerations for the observance of the Sabbath, but no benevolent man will affirm that it is a consideration unworthy of regard. We all feel more or less the effects of the curse: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;" and it ill becomes us to turn away in disdain from the very institution which was designed to alleviate that curse. It is owing to the goodness and mercy of our God that we are permitted, every seventh day, to rest from the cares and toils in which the "fall" has involved us.

Man is so constituted that he cannot be incessantly putting forth his energies, without almost necessarily bringing upon himself premature debility and decay. This point has been decided, again and again, by the unerring test of experience. There must be seasons of relaxation for the laboring classes of society, regular days on which the mental and physical powers may unbend, or they soon lose their strength and elasticity. Both mind and body have their limit of care and toil, and the God who made them knows just what suspension of effort is necessary. This exigency of man's nature he has mercifully consulted, in the appointment of the Sabbath as a day of entire and uninterrupted rest from every secular pursuit and concern.

Go to the industrious, enterprising farmer, mechanic, or merchant, and ask his opinion on this interesting subject. He will tell you, from his own experience, that six successive days are long enough for close and constant exertion, and that one seventh part of the time is not more than is requisite to recruit his exhausted strength. He rejoices when the cares and perplexities of the week are ended, so that he may withdraw himself for a little from life's busy scene. On the Sabbath he can lay aside every worldly labor and anxiety, go to the house of God, mingle with kind friends, and have his mind occupied with cheering and refreshing truths. Thus passes away the day, and he rises the next morning with a peaceful bosom and an invigorated frame, to resume the duties of his proper calling. Such an one, mark it when you will, can accomplish more for this world than he who sets at naught the institution of the Sabbath. One of the most distinguished civilians of our country has given it as his deliberate and fixed opinion, that six days in a week for either labor or study are better than seven.

There is no lack of competent and credible witnesses to testify to the truth of these remarks. The late excellent *William Wilberforce* declares, that at one period of his parliamentary career, his duties were so multiplied and exhausting, that his health must have been utterly prostrated, had it not been for the seasonable relief which the Sabbath afforded him. The stillness and serenity of this holy day refreshed his spirits, after they had been jaded by the arduous debates of the British senate. It is encouraging to see a man, every where regarded as an honor to the land which gave him birth, and a benefactor of the race, paying such decided homage to the Sabbath, and acknowledging his deep indebtedness to its gracious provisions.

Still more important is this arrangement to that portion of the community, whose time is very much at the disposal of others. One reason, and a permanent one too, why the Israelites were required to observe the Sabbath was, *that their man servant and maid servant might rest as well as themselves. How merciful is the aspect of such a requisition towards all the poor and*

dependant in the land. The return of the Sabbath rescues them, for a season, from every thing painful in the inferiority of their allotment, and reminds them that whatever be the depression of their civil condition, they may still be the Lord's freemen. They visit the same sanctuary, and join in the same songs of praise with those who in other respects are above them. The happy influence of such an arrangement upon the minds, the habits, the sense of self-respect, and the feeling of contentment of those in the lower walks of life, can scarcely be sufficiently estimated. The effect of the Sabbath here is twofold. It blunts the edge and smooths the asperity of authority on the one hand, and on the other, it begets such a temper that submission itself becomes pleasant.

We are not, however, to stop here. The God of the Sabbath condescends to notice the very cattle which minister to our gratification, and provides for them a season in which they also may enjoy repose. Truly his tender mercies are over *all* the works of his hands. A day of rest for these inferior animals is kind and compassionate, even when they are in the hands of men of humane and tender feelings. But it is not every man that regardeth the life or the comfort of his beast. The owners of these creatures, in multitudes of cases, are cruel and mercenary to the highest degree, and disposed to push them far beyond their real strength. How important then that such men should be restrained by the strong arm of God's authority! Whatever be their dispositions, there is one day of the week on which they may not, under pain of the divine displeasure, employ one of their beasts for any secular purpose at all. Rides for amusement, and journeys for business cannot be taken, without flying in the face of an explicit command of the Most High.

But will men be losers by obeying God in this particular? Far from it. If we had nothing further in view than to have our horses clothed with strength, and our oxen firm for labor, we must yield to them that portion of time, which the Decalogue prescribes. This point was fully proved in the recent inquiries in the British house of commons, in reference to the better observance of the Lord's day. It was then ascertained, by the testimony of the most extensive and respectable stage proprietors, that a horse can perform more service, and will enjoy more health and spirits, in a given number of years, by giving him every Sabbath as a season of rest. All the *gain*, therefore, is on the side of godliness.

No—it is not in anger, but in love that God requires a stop, a complete stop, to be put to all business on this sacred day. The good of the community requires that the sound of a tool, the prancing of a hoof, or the rattling of a wheel, for secular purposes, should not be heard from one end of the land to the other. All should be quiet and tranquil, as on that blessed morning when God himself rested from all his work which he had made.

2. The worldly interests of mankind are promoted by a careful observance of the Sabbath.

It is not affirmed that every one who keeps the Sabbath holy, will as a thing of course become rich, or great, or honorable, in the common acceptation of these terms. But the proposition to be established is, that the due observance of the Sabbath has a direct and palpable tendency to improve a man's temporal condition.

Hear what the Scriptures say on this subject. "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments and do them, then will I give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage unto the sowing time, and ye shall eat your bread to the full. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people."

These are specified as some of the happy results of keeping the Sabbath. But let us look at the reverse of this bright and animated scene. "If ye will *not* hearken unto me, and will *not* do all these commandments, ye shall *not*

your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall flee when none pursueth. And I will break the pride of your power, and make the heaven as iron, and the earth as brass. And your strength shall be spent in vain, for the land shall not yield her increase, nor the trees their fruit. And I will walk contrary unto you, and I will punish you seven times for your sins. And I will bring the land into desolation, and it shall enjoy her Sabbaths."

It is in this way that God himself speaks. Without reference, however, to any particular interposition of Providence in the case, it may be shown that the proper observance of the Sabbath tends to prosperity as a natural and obvious result. The hallowed influence, with which this day comes attended, cannot but operate favorably on the whole character and habits of man. Not only does it refresh him for labor, but by its lessons of industry and sobriety it always disposes him to turn that labor to good account. Will a man go away from the sanctuary to squander his estate by extravagant arrangements and expenses? Will he depart from the courts of the Lord, to forget that diligence in business is a duty, as well as fervor of spirit? Will he be seen one hour in the temple of God, and the next in the tavern or the grog-shop? Will he lose sight of the claims of his wife and his little ones, while he hears from the pulpit that such a man is worse than an infidel? This, as a general thing, is not to be expected. If he becomes a spendthrift, an idler, or a follower of strong drink, you will soon see him bidding adieu to all the ministrations of the Sabbath.

There is one fact, which serves to set this subject in a strong, but just light. Every unsanctified Sabbath is likely to be attended with those extra expenses which idleness and vice seldom fail to create. One of these days devoted to amusements, costs more than five, or even ten of them occupied with their appropriate duties. Desecrated Sabbaths stand at the head of those avenues which lead directly to the abodes of infamy, intemperance, and death. There is nothing to be *gained* by breaking the fourth commandment. You could not multiply the number of squalid, miserable, and vicious poor, faster than by blotting out the remembrance of the Sabbath from the minds of men. Such a measure would be sure to infest our streets with noisy beggars, and fill our hospitals and prisons with hapless inmates.

But some one may still ask, whether the preacher is prepared to make good the assertion that all labor on the Sabbath is unproductive? Will he maintain that the immense business which on this day is driven forward on our rivers, canals, and rail-roads, is always unprofitable? Is it his idea that no man can enlarge his estate by taking the Lord's time for the doing of his own work? These are fair questions, and they deserve a candid answer. Let it then be conceded, that since the present is a state of trial and not of recompense, the most wicked individuals in the community, who neither fear God nor regard man, are sometimes suffered to increase in wealth, until their eyes stand out with fatness, and they have more than heart could wish. But does this prove, as a general principle, that there is any natural connection between impiety and prosperity? The owner of a stage-coach, or a steam-boat, may accumulate thousands, and yet run them every Sabbath day; but how is it with the pleasure-loving throng, who are thus enticed from their families and their homes? Does it put either money into their pockets, or contentment into their hearts? All the advantage here, if advantage there be any, is on the side of the few, while the loss falls upon the many. Even this, however, is not stating the whole case. The wisest and best observers of human events tell us that, if we follow along the path of these men, we shall generally find that the end of it is covered with darkness. Their sun, after all, is wont to set in a cloud.

Especially is the Sabbath the poor man's friend. Its uniform tendency is to encourage those industrious and frugal habits, which are so inseparably connected with the comfort and respectability of the humbler classes of society. *You cannot ordinarily consign to want, ignorance, or vice, the individual who*

regularly attends upon the ordinances of religion. You can scarcely prevent the respectability of that family, which we see, Sabbath after Sabbath, coming up to the courts of the Lord. Let wicked men say what they will, there does come an influence from such scenes, to beget a feeling of self-respect, and ward off the evils of poverty and depression. This point is susceptible of the clearest demonstration. The house of God, all the country over, is the radiating point of light, and peace, and industry, and contentment, for the whole neighborhood in which it is placed. So true is this, that our poor rates could be lessened in no way more effectually, than by bringing about a universal observance of the Sabbath.

3. The Sabbath, when rightly observed, furnishes the very best school of virtue and good morals.

All the most respectable infidels have been ready to acknowledge, that there is no code of laws for the regulation of human conduct, like that of the Bible. According to the testimony of the eloquent, though depraved and infidel Rosseau, it is madness to compare Socrates with the Son of Mary, in this respect. The precepts of the Bible surpass all other precepts, because they are intended to control the heart as well as the conduct, and to make the tree good, as the first and most effectual step towards the production of good fruit. Only let this blessed book rule in every bosom, and men will do to others just as they wish others to do to them. Injustice, fraud, and oppression, all meanness, duplicity, and over-reaching, would be done away at once, and done away for ever.

But when are these laws to be expounded, and applied to the various duties of common life? As it respects the bulk of mankind, the Sabbath is almost the only opportunity they have for any careful and thorough attention to this deeply interesting subject. On this sacred day, however, they are detached from all earthly concerns, and their minds are free to attend to nobler pursuits. From week to week they are collected in a school established for the inculcation of heavenly wisdom, and thus one-seventh part of their whole life is spent in learning their duty to God and man. What an opportunity is this for improvement in all that is excellent, and lovely, and of good report. The man who dies in middle life, is furnished with five full years; and if he lives to old age, with ten full years of instruction, exactly adapted to make him a better husband, a better father, a better neighbor, and a better member of the community. For a class-book the Bible is put into his hands. God himself is the teacher, and every lesson is dictated by that wisdom which cometh from above. Every precept, every promise, every threatening is alike replete with a sound and healthful influence. Here it is that the laws of the Most High are brought home to the bosoms and business of men, and they go away to lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.

In accordance with these remarks, you will always find the purest and most elevated morality among those who keep the Sabbath holy. This assertion is made without the least fear of successful contradiction; and you are invited to test its truth as often as you please. Ride through the country, and examine its towns and villages—mingle with the inhabitants of every grade, and become acquainted with their feelings and habits,—then tell me candidly where you find most industry, most love of order, most contentment, most sobriety, most purity, most freedom from low and debasing vices. I anticipate your answer. These are virtues which grow under the genial influences of the Sabbath, and among the people who love the sound of the church-going bell. But can you point me to one disturber of the peace of society, to one idle, dissolute family, to one single vicious neighborhood, that regards the Lord's day? This will not be pretended. *Sir Matthew Hale* says, "that of all the persons convicted of capital crimes while he was upon the bench, there were a few only who were not ready to confess that they began their career of wickedness in a neglect of the duties of the Sabbath."

It cannot be otherwise than that virtue and good morals must disappear when the Sabbath is forgotten. In every instance where this memorial

creation and redemption is treated with neglect, a strong and resistless tide of iniquity is seen to set in. Look where you will over the earth; if the Sabbath has become a desolation, there is little of domestic comfort left. Let this day be once made like the rest of the week, in our own country, and all the foundations of social happiness will be broken up. A single half century would suffice to carry us back to the rudeness, and atheism, and vice of the dark ages.

This matter is entitled to the fullest investigation. We will suppose that you are in search for a quiet, contented, and prosperous neighborhood. But you never can find it, if you travel beyond the influence of the Lord's day. You are looking for parental tenderness and filial obedience. But these are seldom met with, where no holy time is recognized. You are inquiring after domestic purity and all the endearments of social life. But they are not to be found where the Sabbath gives no tone to moral sentiment. You wish to reside in a place where life is valued, and property is secure. But no such place exists, where the restraining energy of the fourth commandment is not felt. Make the inquiry as often as you please, and you find that virtue and sound morals decline just in proportion as you recede from the illuminations and restraints of the holy Sabbath. Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.

I am confident that this subject has never yet received a due degree of attention from the men of this happy land. Suppose that the Sabbath was abolished, our religious temples burnt to the ground, the public preaching of the gospel interdicted, and all the ministers of the sanctuary driven into exile, what would be the result? Why, you may tell by a visit to those countries where there is no Sabbath, no house of God, no teacher of the way of life. In every such case, without a solitary exception, ignorance, vice, and misery, overspread the entire surface of society, and affect its very vitals.

But will it be deemed unsuitable for me to add, that the Sabbath is the least expensive, as well as the best school? This is especially true in our own country, where the people choose their own pastor, and assign him such support as is deemed by both parties competent. We have no ecclesiastical revenues, no mitred heads, no superb palaces for the clergy, to drain away the scanty earnings of the poor. Here a multitude may receive instruction at a cost which bears hard upon none, and which returns even in kind more than it receives. Many families pay as much for a few lessons given to a single child, in some ornamental branch of education, as they do for the yearly religious advantages of the whole household. It is unpleasant to add that the little which religion costs is not always cheerfully paid. The fact however is obvious, that no instruction whatever can be had at so small an expense, as that which relates to piety and good morals. But the Sabbath school, also, as well as the pulpit, illustrates this idea. What an amount of talent, and energy of character, and real consecration of heart to a good object, is to be found among the tens of thousands of teachers in this blessed institution. They are giving of their time, and often of their money too, most liberally to this hallowed service; and though in most cases they receive but little honor from men, God himself will reward them openly. Such gratuitous efforts for the upbuilding of his kingdom shall not be forgotten.

4. The personal and social character of man is elevated by a proper observance of the Sabbath.

One of the best safeguards to an upright course of conduct is to be found in a deeply rooted, and well regulated self-respect. The man who has a due regard for his character and standing in society, will generally strive to merit and secure the good opinion of those around him. But there is no season when this sentiment is so strengthened, and brought into such wholesome exercise, as on the Sabbath. Every thing connected with this sacred day, the events to which it looks back, the prospect which it opens, and the feelings which it fosters, are all adapted to give dignity and elevation to man's character. He will indeed be sensible of his own littleness, but he cannot

forget his immortal existence and high destiny. Every time he attends upon the services of the sanctuary, there will be sure to be something to expand his mind, and purify his affections, and raise him above ignoble pleasures and pursuits.

It is literally impossible for a person to attend seriously to the duties of the Sabbath and not be benefitted. Those who stately come up to the house of the God of Jacob, that they may be taught his laws, will never fall into total neglect and obscurity. No individual, or family, or neighborhood, ever pursued this course without securing some degree of respect and consideration by it. They will be improved both in their minds and manners. There will be more of neatness in their apparel, and cleanliness in their manner of living, of order in their habitations, and of decorum in their intercourse with each other. As a mere matter of taste and refinement, what can be so lovely as to see a whole community flocking together Sabbath after Sabbath to the house of God. There is something here on which the eye of philanthropy may look with delight. Met together on a holy day, and in a sacred place, and united with a devout assembly, in worshipping the God of heaven, men must improve in every good feeling and purpose. They may be poor, but there will be a charm of peace and contentment spread over their character, which goes very far to rob poverty itself of its sharpest sting. A sort of sweet serenity will be seen to dwell with such as love the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.

Think also how the Sabbath is calculated to check and repress all the unamiable traits of human character. What can the pride of rank or fortune find to feed upon, where men are gathered together in the presence of the infinite Jehovah? How shall the wise man glory in his wisdom, or the rich man in his riches, at the throne of Him before whom all are upon the same level? The glare of fashion and the pomp of wealth are annihilated, when men find themselves mingling with their poorer neighbors in the service of Almighty God. They all sing one song, meet at one sacramental table, and the little differences of external condition are lost sight of. There it is that the loftiness so natural to wealth and honors is bowed down, and all haughtiness laid in the dust, and the Lord alone exalted.

In this view of the subject, the Sabbath seems to be truly republican in its aspect. At any rate, its provisions exactly correspond with the spirit and genius of our free institutions. Never was there a louder cry raised in favor of equal rights and privileges than at the present time; but it may be doubted whether the best method of attaining these important blessings is generally understood. The requisitions of the fourth commandment would blend the different classes of society together in a happier manner than any which mere human wisdom has devised. We do not wish to see such a levelling produced as is witnessed when our great men mingle with the low and worthless in groceries and bar-rooms, for the purpose of influencing the ballot-box. This is a sort of equality to be sure; but it is an equality effected not by raising the inferior classes up, but by sinking the others down. Such an amalgamation is likely to do more harm than good. But the Bible shows us a more excellent way; and happy for us will it be, if our leading political men should come at length to perceive the adaptation of the sanctuary to promote the healthful action of every part of the body politic. There the rich and the poor can be brought together in a way that shall bless both. The high can be taught condescension, and the low self-respect, without the operation of Agrarian laws, or the adoption of any measure to blot out the necessary distinctions and gradations of life.

5. The due observance of the Sabbath is a distinguished blessing to nations.

On this subject the Bible speaks too plainly to be misunderstood. This holy book assures us, that there can be no such thing as permanent success by taking counsel against the Lord; and that no people can abandon his Sabbath without being abandoned by him. We have here, moreover,

detailed account of the divine dealings with one particular nation, in regard to this very matter. So long as the Jews were careful to observe the Sabbath, they were made—to use the beautiful language of inspiration—to ride upon the high places of the earth, and were fed with the heritage of Jacob their father. But no sooner did they come to set at naught this blessed institution, than their affairs, civil and ecclesiastical, began to verge towards speedy ruin. At length their city was destroyed, their altars demolished, their temple burnt to the ground, and the whole nation carried into a seventy years' captivity, on purpose, as God informed them, that the land might enjoy her Sabbaths. They lost their liberty by attempting to rob God of time which he had claimed as his own.

Perhaps, however, it is thought that there was something so peculiar in the condition of the Jews, that their history cannot illustrate the duty of nations at the present day. This no believer in the Bible will admit, yet our argument is complete without a reference to their case. Pause, then, and inquire, what has been the secret of the immense wealth and gigantic power of the people of Great Britain, now for centuries in succession? How is it that that little island, surrounded by the mighty ocean, and constituting but a mere speck on the surface of the globe, has been able so to mould the destinies of the world? That nation is not blessed with a richer soil, or a brighter sky, or a more salubrious clime than their neighbors. This amazing prosperity must be owing to something which enters into the ingredients of the moral character of that people, and places them in so commanding an attitude as it regards the rest of the world. That something, no one acquainted with their history can hesitate to say, is the Christian religion, with its Sabbaths, and its temples, and its ministry of reconciliation. On this point there can be no dispute. Even Hume himself expressly declares that the freedom which the British constitution guarantees to the subject, is to be traced to the noble efforts of the Puritans to be unshackled in serving God.

This case is the more striking from its contrast with that of a naturally gallant and high-minded nation in the very neighborhood. France, during the awful period of her revolution, was led on from one step of impiety to another, until at length she solemnly decreed that there should be no Sabbaths. The temples of religion were deserted, and her altars laid in the dust. But what was the consequence to the character, the morals, and the prosperity of that people, of thus publicly defying the God of heaven, by abolishing this most important of all his institutions? You may see it in the scenes of distress and wretchedness, carnage and blood, into which the nation was plunged. It would really seem as if God, by this example, intended to let the world know, what communities must expect, when they openly trample on his ordinances.

There is, however, no nation under heaven for which the Sabbath has done more than for ourselves. What was it that brought our pilgrim fathers across the trackless ocean, to these distant and then dreary shores? They came here, as you all know, to enjoy religious liberty, and to make a fair experiment of what the pure simple gospel could do to bless mankind. This it was that nerved their arm to prostrate the mighty forest, and raise up towns and villages amidst hosts of savage foes. What was it also that enabled this infant republic to wage successful war against the mightiest nation on earth? Ah! none in that tremendous conflict, which tried men's souls, stood firmer at their post than those who had learned their duty at the altar of God. But for such elements of character as had been generated by the commanding influence of the Sabbath, the far famed *Declaration of Independence* would have proved a dead letter, and we should have become a prey to all the anarchy and misrule of the South American States. Examine the events of those times: trace these events up to their causes, and then say how much we owe to the fourth commandment. We never should have gained a permanent footing in this land, or become a free and independent nation, had not the men, who have now been long sleeping in our valleys,

possessed a character which had been formed under the influence of the Sabbath.

When shall this point be understood? You may look the earth over, in its length and breadth, and you will see men understanding and enjoying civil liberty only under the illumination of the holy Sabbath. The fact is, such a people cannot be enslaved. Opinion has a power which even the bayonet has not. These are not the materials out of which some ambitious demagogue can form bands to tread down the liberties of his country. The Sabbath will teach a nation to appreciate its rights, and nerve its arm to defend those rights.

Now, if these things are so, it must be a spirit of hostility to all our dearest interests to oppose, or in any way to abuse the Sabbath.

The sacred observance of this day is intimately connected with every personal, domestic, and social blessing; and not less connected is it with the welfare of our common country. It is then a momentous inquiry—in what colors is the future history of this nation to be written? Is the Sabbath still to maintain its power over the minds of the community? Is the pulpit to send forth its hallowed instructions? And are the fountains of society to be purified by the spirit of the gospel? If so, we are safe. Families will be kind and peaceful, neighborhoods moral and orderly, States magnanimous and conciliatory, and this great confederacy present such a spectacle of quietness and prosperity as the world has never yet beheld. But alas! there is much to fear. In less than half a century, according to the present ratio of increase, there will be found forty millions of souls in this land, located in different States, each possessing sovereign power, and under the influence of separate interests and feelings. Now I ask, what is to continue to hold together this immense multitude? We acknowledge no autocracy here to urge the people to obedience at the point of the sword, willing or unwilling. Ours is a self-government, a government resting entirely upon the moral sense, the intelligence, the integrity of the people, and it cannot live a single month in any other way. Destroy individual, household, and neighborhood virtue and morality, and the country is ruined at once. The question then recurs, and it is one which must come home to every heart, how shall we do without the soothing influence, the kind feeling, the genuine piety of the Sabbath? I have no disposition to bring a railing accusation against any one, but surely the men who would drive away the light and lessen the power of this holy day, know not what they do. They may see no evil in turning the full tide of their example against the high command of heaven. They may dream of no disaster to the morals of the community from a desecration of these sacred hours. But the fact is, by thus corrupting private virtue they are taking the surest course to overturn the liberties of the country, and leave it a heap of splendid ruins.

It is not always wise to inquire why the former days were better than these, but it may be useful for me to turn parents back to the lessons of their own early years. You well remember what your pious fathers told you of the quiet and undisturbed Sabbaths of former times. During that golden period,—golden at least so far as this matter is concerned—each town and village in the land, was as serene and tranquil, as quiet and noiseless, as the summer's evening. It would have shocked the feelings of your venerated ancestors, to see a steam-boat emptying the dregs of one of our large cities, upon the surrounding country, on this holy day. They would have trembled to witness the bustle and movement of our loaded cars and canal boats, as they hasten forward during all the hours of the Sabbath. But these are things with which your eyes and ears have become familiar. And do you never inquire after the result of all this? Have you no fear for the future safety and comfort of the little ones, that are now the joy of your hearts, and the pride of your houses? Arise then, and do your duty. Command your children, and your household after you, that they keep the way of the Lord.

As patriots too, you have a deep interest in securing the proper observance of the Sabbath. It must be admitted on all hands, that we owe more to our religion, than we do to our soil, our climate, our policy, or our courage. We are too apt to glory in our resources, in the immensity of our territory, in the freedom of our civil institutions, and in our multiplying millions. But is there no example of a nation's breaking down merely by its own weight! It was this that brought proud imperial Rome to the dust, after she had long been known as the mistress of the world. The hour too of Israel's pride was the hour of her downfall, the period from which her glory became dim, and she fled before her enemies. Nor can any thing save the land in which we live, but the Sabbath. How eloquently then should every patriot plead for this heaven-born institution! He should always identify the proper observance of the Sabbath with the high interests of his beloved country, and seek her prosperity mainly through this sacred channel.

But philanthropists also are deeply concerned to promote the sanctity of the Sabbath. You wish well to man, and would rejoice to see some kind hand wiping away the tears from the face of this sad and gloomy world. All that can be done, however, is to heal some of the bitter waters. And this you will best accomplish by bringing the influence of the Sabbath to restrain the vices of men, to elevate their character, to inspire them with right sentiments, and to mingle mercies in every cup. Begin then by taking a gauge of the misery which comes upon the community by a profanation of this day. Turn aside a little to some abode of crime and wretchedness, and ask its inmates what it was that first brought a cloud over their prospects. Visit our prisons and penitentiaries, and inquire of their inhabitants how it was that they came to violate the laws of God and man. Then go and do your duty. Encourage the spirit of the gospel. Honor the men who fear God. On all occasions, and in all companies, be the firm and decided advocates of the Sabbath.

Finally, if these things are so, all the friends of morality and good order should make an effort to correct public sentiment in regard to the Sabbath. As for legislation, either from the States, or general government, in favor of this day, it is not, in the present condition of things, to be expected. It would be well indeed if the whole weight of governmental influence were not against the Lord's day. But our statute books might be filled with enactments for the better observance of the Sabbath, and they would serve no good purpose whatever, unless energy was imparted to these enactments by the correct moral sense of the community. What then can be done? Appeals to our rulers would probably avail nothing. We must begin by humbling ourselves before God as individuals, and families, and congregations, for our own, and the nation's sin of Sabbath breaking. This step sincerely taken, may propitiate heaven on our behalf. But having thus carried the cause to God, we must go forth, through evil report and good report, and give to the Sabbath all the aid of a correct example, and all the influence of earnest decision. There is, it is hoped, a redeeming spirit in the land, if good men can only be aroused from their slumbers. The enemies of the Sabbath, and of all its salutary appendages, are, it is true, carrying matters with a high hand, and in every part of the land are perverting the bounties of God's providence into occasions for provoking his displeasure. But the land-marks of Christian morality are not yet swept away, and men of virtue may make a stand. Now is the time for a vigorous effort. If the Sabbath ever becomes a by-word and a reproach in the land of our fathers' sepulchres, what is to become of liberty? and especially what is to become of the Church of the living God? Must the ark be removed from the hill of Zion, and look for a resting place in the isles of the sea, or on the shore of some heathen country? Let us indulge in no unfounded dreams of security. The Most High can easily cast us down from our proud eminence, and cause us to perish by the blast of the breath of his nostrils. His decree has gone forth, *it will be executed—The nation and kingdom that will not serve me shall perish.*

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SERMON CLXXXII.

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DISASTROUS EFFECTS OF LITTLE SINS IN CHRISTIANS.

Ecclesiastes x, 1. Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor.

THE love of reputation is natural to men. God has implanted this love in the human heart to subserve a benevolent purpose in the present scene of our being. And the individual who has so far perverted this part of his original constitution, as to feel no regard for the good opinion of the wise and the virtuous, is prepared to become the pest of the community, and the perpetrator of the foulest deeds of darkness. To the native desire of the individual for the esteem of others, may be referred much of that courtesy and common kindness which diffuse their blessings over the various circles of society. But no man, in this country especially, *is born* to the inheritance of a good name. He must *merit* it by his real or supposed virtues, before it will be awarded to him. And it is not a rare or solitary act of goodness, however imposing, that will secure to the individual that "good name, which is better than precious ointment." As it is with care and caution that the apothecary compounds and prepares his precious perfume, so a fair reputation can only be obtained by combining in their just proportions, and exhibiting in their fulness and harmony, those elements of character that meet the approbation of the better part of society. But while such is the difficulty and delicacy of establishing a character for wisdom and honor, it may be easily lost, utterly lost, without destroying all or any of its great and prominent qualities. "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a bad savor"—yet these flies bear but an exceeding small proportion to the whole substance of the ointment in which they are lodged. Character, like perfume, then, may be destroyed without a destruction of all its principal component parts. Let but a little folly attach to him who is in reputation for wisdom and honor, and it may utterly ruin his influence. This is the truth exhibited for our contemplation in the text.

The object of the remarks that follow shall be—first, TO NOTICE SOME EXEMPLIFICATIONS OF THE TRUTH, THAT COMPARATIVELY TRIFLING DEFECTS DESTROY THE REPUTATION AND INFLUENCE OF A PROFESSING CHRISTIAN—and secondly, TO INQUIRE INTO THE REASONS OF THIS.

I. First, then, we are to notice *some exemplifications of the truth, that comparatively trifling defects destroy the reputation and influence of a professing Christian.*

Every professor of religion is at first, by his very profession, in reputation for wisdom and honor. He is supposed to have taken a wise step, to have assumed a lofty stand. He has claimed connection, intimate alliance with

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the source of all honor and moral excellence. Must he then be guilty of some flagrant violation of the divine law, before he can lose his character and influence?—No; a *little* folly will destroy them both. He may not break the Sabbath, nor swear profanely, nor steal, nor be chargeable with falsehood, nor with gross and palpable injustice, nor with habitual neglect of the social and secret worship of God. He may not be impure or intemperate, a railer or false accuser, an unruly or insubordinate member of the church. He may neither be quarrelsome nor insolent with his neighbors; and yet he may have that in his character which will as effectually destroy his influence as though he were guilty of much greater enormities. Let him be reckless and imprudent in the minor points of Christian conduct. Let him heedlessly or wilfully postpone the claims of justice, even in little matters. Let him have a little of self-confidence, and a meddlesome forwardness—some share of self-will and unyielding pertinacity of opinion—some irascibility of temper that cannot brook contradiction, or bear to be overborne by the opinions of a majority of his peers, without throwing him off his balance and causing him to speak unadvisedly with his lips;—any one of these may be amply sufficient to destroy his influence, though that charity that hopeth all things and believeth all things, may both hope and believe still that he is a Christian. Or take a professor of religion, otherwise irreproachable, but who has the unhappy habit of giving the highest coloring to his representations, of using great exaggeration, of making loose and *somewhat* distorted statements, of taking a little poetic license in the narration of facts; and though no court, ecclesiastical or civil, could convict that man of palpable lying, yet there is a fly in the ointment, and the savor is offensive. The man's Christian character and influence is a perfect nullity. Take another, in other respects unblameable, but who is known in his business transactions to go just as far as the *letter of the law* will permit in getting the best of a bargain—who evinces a peculiar shrewdness, not to say *cunning*, in calculating the bearings on his own interest of certain unsuspected legal phrases in a contract—who can satisfy his own conscience, and attempt to justify to others, the advantage he has thus gained by saying that it is *perfectly legal*—that the other contracting party acted voluntarily and with his eyes open. Now, though such a one can neither be convicted by a church session nor a civil court, of *illegal* bargaining or *dishonesty*, yet his reputation as a professing Christian, and his influence in the church of God, are somewhat worse than a cipher! Again: suppose an individual, who is not chargeable with any approximation to overreaching in his dealings with others, and whose reputation is respectable in the eyes of men generally, except that it is known that he loves exceedingly to retain what he has honestly acquired, irrespective of any demands of God or man on his substance: let it be known that he always receives applications for contributions with a mal-grace: that, when the object presented for his liberality is one of unquestioned propriety and benevolence, he admit it, but fill his mouth with objections: that he will resort to apologies and excuses, the weight of which it is to be suspected he does not himself feel: let it be known that to all questions of this kind he has a set of negative answers—answers which show that he clings inordinately to his gold—that he loves it *in itself*, instead of as *the means of doing good* to a dying world; that he is somewhat, at least, inclined to avarice and covetousness; and though this be not regarded as a disciplinable offence by the church—(and I do not see why it should not be, for the New Testament declares it to be IDOLATRY;) yet what is that professor's character worth in the estimation of an enlightened Christian community? Worth just as much as his treasures will be to him, when God takes away his soul. And even where there is not such an approach to downright covetousness—where there is no such approximation to that "love of money, which is the root of all evil!"—no such *idolatrous* attachment to riches, yet it is possible for the individual to be guilty

of a littleness of soul—a parsimonious meanness and management in pecuniary affairs, that will as certainly undermine and destroy the character and influence of a professing Christian, as avarice and covetousness in their grossest forms.

Let us now contemplate a professing Christian, free from all these defects of which we have spoken, but prone to a certain unbecoming levity of spirit. Such a one may not attend theatres, operas, balls, or dancing and dashing parties. He may frequent no haunts of dissipation and mirth—nay, he may not be habitually found in the society of the trifling and the thoughtless. But there may be a certain effort at dress and fashionable appearance, a certain love of attracting attention and winning admiration, a prevailing desire to be witty, a love of showing off a little, an unrepressed gayety and levity of spirit, a disposition to trifling and puerile conduct in the absence of customary restraint, moments of frothy conversation and vain jestings, and some leanings occasionally to very thoughtless companionship. Now, though the individual to whom these things attach, never proceeds to such lengths as might at all make him liable to the formal discipline of the church, yet what effect have they on his reputation and influence as a professor of religion? It is true, they leave him in his place, untouched by discipline as a member of the church, but the fragrance of his good name they have not only destroyed, but caused that name to send up an odour highly offensive to all that is grave, dignified, and consistent in piety.

Or suppose an individual to be at a great remove from all that is gay and trifling, suppose him to be serious and punctual in all external observances, sufficiently grave in all his intercourse with the world, possessing a moral character of no positive faultiness, somewhat zealous and enterprising in benevolent efforts; yet let him be inclined to a murmuring, restless, dissatisfied spirit, rather disposed to censoriousness, mostly or always differing in opinion respecting the most simple matters from the majority around him, greatly alive to the defects and blemishes of others, complaining that every thing in the church and the world seems to be going wrong, and disposed to innovation and change, provided it be of his own dictation. Now in all this he may do nothing really worthy of disciplinary stripes. He may not in the judgment of the candid bring his own personal piety into doubt, and yet his salutary influence as a Christian is as utterly destroyed as though he had been guilty of some heinous offence: there are at least enough of “dead flies” in the ointment to destroy its fragrance, if not to cause it to send forth a positively bad odour.

We may now examine the effect of a little folly in one who is in reputation for wisdom and honor as a father or head of a family. Such a one, in order to lose his character and influence, need not be destitute of natural affection, he need not be a stern and arbitrary tyrant in the domestic circle, imposing the iron yoke of his despotism on the weak and unoffending necks of his wife and children, and inflicting brutal violence on those whom God and nature require him to protect and cherish. Nor on the other hand, need he neglect all discipline and yield up the reins, and leave his children to run without restraint in the course which their ardent and wayward desires may dictate. He may not allow them to spurn his authority in the graver matters of their duty, to break over the restraints of an external morality, and violate the Sabbath, or profane the name of God, or steal, or utter falsehood, or frequent places of gaming, and drunkenness, and lewdness, and riot. He may not permit them to offer a direct disobedience to any of his positive and prominent requirements as a father, and yet there may be a little folly attaching to him in this relation which will destroy his own influence and ruin his children, as inevitably as more glaring delinquencies. Let him fail to exercise a vigilant inspection over the *forming habits* of his children; let him yield his authority, contrary to his own conviction of right, to the persuasive im-

portunity of his child; let him connive at the child's ingenuity to avoid collision with his known will in a given case, and yet to carry its own point; let him sometimes accept a partial and reluctant obedience; nay, let him even hold the reins of his parental government with an *unsteady hand*, and what will be the effect on his reputation as a Christian father, and what the influence on his children? The evidence of his folly, however small it may appear to himself, will come before the public as soon as its effects have ripened into maturity in the character of his children. Whatever may be his other excellencies, the world will not respect him as a judicious *Christian father*. His little folly is sufficient effectually to destroy the fragrance of that good name, which attaches to the exalted character of a discreet, consistent, *Christian father*. And it will equally destroy his influence on his own children. Having learned that they may, in some instances, succeed in avoiding a cordial and unqualified obedience to his reasonable requisitions—that they may carry their point by management and persuasion—their reverence for his parental authority is gradually weakened, the strong ties of filial respect and fear become loosened, the charm that bound them in implicit obedience to a father's will and wishes is at length dissolved, and the progress to insubordination, recklessness of all restraint, and to ultimate ruin, is neither slow nor uncertain. The destruction of character and hopes amongst the children of professing parents, is never effected by great and crying parental delinquency. A "*little folly*" in those who are in reputation for wisdom and honor as Christian parents, hath done this! "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

Once more: the truth of our text is strikingly exemplified in the case of some *ministers of the gospel*. The more delicate the perfume, the more easily destroyed by a small ingredient of an offensive kind. So the higher and more sacred the reputation for wisdom and honor, the more easily ruined by a *little folly*. To lose his character and influence, it is not necessary for the minister to be infected with gross heresy, or to be guilty of gross immorality; he needs not be chargeable with indiscretions as palpable as those that mar the character of ordinary Christians. Nay, he may preach *the truth* eloquently and fervently; he may have a general honesty and uprightness of intention; some degree of sincere desire to do good. He may be laborious in his official duties; an example of liberality to the poor, and to all objects of benevolence; industrious and careful in his studies; attentive in his visitations to the sick, and to his flock generally: but let him be known as a man of somewhat rash and imprudent temperament, or as possessing a hauteur and ill-judged independence, wounding to the feelings of others; or let him be prone to occasional levity, excessive fondness for anecdote, and an unrestrained indulgence of his sense of the ludicrous; or let him be known as a little inclined to be insidious and managing; a little disposed to the compromising and turning of a merely secular policy; somewhat desirous of the praise of men, or at least a little too sensitive respecting his own popularity: any one of these, however small, if persisted in till it become habitual, will undermine and ultimately blast his reputation, and blot out his name from the records of a respectable and useful ministry. How many men of talents are at this day wasting and waning under defects entirely too trifling to be made the objects of an ecclesiastical process, or even to bring their personal piety into doubt. Dead flies are, however, in the ointment, and its original purity and fragrance only serve to enhance their offensive odour. The very *transparency* of the consecrated vessel that contains them, serves to magnify those impertinent intruders in the eyes of the spectator, and prepares him to receive the greater offence from their ill savour. It may well make the serious mind to tremble, and the sensitive heart to sink in anguish, to think how a *little folly* may utterly destroy the character and influence of him who is in reputation for wisdom and honor as a minister of Jesus Christ.

II. Let us now, in the second place, *inquire into some of the reasons why it is that a little folly will thus destroy the character and influence of a professing Christian.*

1. One reason of this is, that *the Christian, by his profession, creates large expectations respecting his character.* His profession lays claim to all those exalted and ennobling attributes which belong to regenerated human nature. He professes to have experienced a great moral change, so radical in its influence on his being, that the sacred scriptures denominate it a "new creation"—a "being born again"—a "passing from death unto life"—from "darkness to light"—from sin to holiness. He professes to be the friend of God, the disciple of Jesus Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost. He affirms by his profession that he has solemnly "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty;" that he has thrown off the spirit and maxims and customs of a guilty world, as no longer to interfere with, or influence his conduct; that he is actuated by a higher and holier principle—by that supreme benevolence to God, and that impartial love to man which the sacred scriptures require; that he has adopted rules of life so gloriously pure and rigid, that they require him, under the most solemn sanctions, to "abstain from all appearance of evil." In a word, that the great law of his renewed nature is strenuously to aim to be holy even as God is holy. All this, and other specifications that might be added, are involved in a public profession of religion. Is it not natural, that such a profession should create large expectations in the world respecting the character of him who makes it? He gives an illustrious hostage to public opinion—a pledge that he will sustain no ordinary reputation for wisdom and honor. The world have accordingly high expectations; and, forgetting that the Christian does not profess present perfection, they regard him as though he did. Now where there is such a high profession on the one hand, and such enlarged expectations on the other, it is manifest that a comparatively trifling defect attaching to such a character, will be as the dead flies in the ointment of the apothecary. The same obliquity which, in the case of one *not* in reputation for wisdom and honor, would pass wholly unobserved, will be amply sufficient in the case of the Christian to destroy his character and influence. Nor does it matter that the world are unreasonable in their requirements, and expect too much. We must take human society as it actually is, not as it should be, when we are examining the reasons of trifling defects on the reputation of the Christian. If men are unrighteously severe in condemning the Christian for a little folly, it is not the less a fact that his reputation with them is destroyed, and his influence neutralized and lost. The want of charity in the world to overlook his slightest faults, ought only to prove a more powerful stimulus to him to avoid the very appearance of evil.

2. A second reason why comparatively trifling defects blast the Christian's reputation, is to be found in the fact, that *most men judge, whether right or wrong, that little things often furnish a clew to the general character.* That this is true in many instances cannot be doubted. Hence the adage, that "straws indicate the current of the ocean." And it would be true in regard to a little folly in the professing Christian, were there not certain counteracting influences in the very principles of his renewed nature. Were there no humiliation in view of the least perceptible folly that attaches to him; no sincere penitence on its account before God; no resistance offered to it; no habitual resolves and efforts in divine strength to overcome it, then that little defect would furnish a proper clew to his whole character for piety. But the world sees not the operations of this counteracting influence. The Christian's *folly* is before the world, openly; but the deep humiliation which it occasions, is an exercise of his soul in retirement. The tears he sheds over it are wept in secret, and seen by none but the omniscient eye; the resistance he opposes to it is amongst the secrets of his own heart; the resolves and

efforts which he makes to conquer and to root it out from amongst the habits of his soul, are not matters of public observation. Hence the men of the world take the little folly which they see attached to him as the proper data on which to form their estimate of his whole character. All his excellencies are thus tarnished and go for a thing of naught. They attempt to explain them away, or account for their existence in the professing Christian, through his hypocrisy, or his love of the praise of men, or it may be his fear of falling under the censure of the church, or his desire to promote by such fair appearances some secular and selfish end. Thus it being assumed that these visible though small defects are a proper clew to his general character, that character is destroyed, and the Christian's influence worse than lost, in the judgment of such men, by a little folly.

3. A third reason of this fact is, *that the world abounds with that envy which is anxious to reduce all excellencies of character to its own level.*

There are some men who live only to be tormented by the good name of others. Of small capacities and very stunted virtues, they are nevertheless gigantic in the single desire of fame. Popular esteem is their idol. With the love of this as their ruling passion, when they find themselves consigned to an unnoticed mediocrity, their disappointment and chagrin speedily distils the bitterest envy. If genius or moral worth rises within their view, and soars and sheds glory from its wings—like the crows in pursuit of the eagle they must need chatter at it, though it is far aloft beyond their range on its shining way toward the sun. There are those who consider all others that are in better reputation than themselves as their rivals and natural enemies. No matter what species of excellence it may be for which the individual is distinguished, it is sufficient to secure for him their envy and hatred. These passions burn like the smothered fires of the volcano, and struggle for an opportunity to break forth and blacken the reputation of that individual, till it is of the same hue as their own. Such men have adopted *the equality principle* in regard to the characters of others, and are determined never to rest till they have done what they can to reduce them to a level with their own.

Now as envy cannot exist without some materials, fabricated or existing in fact, you may judge, my hearers, with what avidity it seizes on the trifling defects of the Christian, and commences its diabolical work of ruining his good name. But for these defects it would lack all the materials that could afford any probability of success to its infernal machinations. *With this little folly in him who is in reputation for wisdom and honor, as the basis, envy can construct its stories, throw out its surmises and insinuations, and ruin a name otherwise better than precious ointment.* While then our world is the theatre of the dark and guilty passion of envy, this will afford one reason why comparatively trifling defects in the Christian will serve to destroy his character and influence.

4. A fourth and last reason of this may be found in the fact, *that wicked men hope by magnifying these comparatively trifling faults of the Christian, and injuring his reputation, to quiet their consciences in view of their own grosser sins and deformities.*

There are some men who fear no disturbance to their consciences so much as that excited by the consistency and pre-eminent holiness of the lives of Christians. They can hear the finest theories of religion, and listen to the most overwhelming evidences of its truth, and still strive to persuade themselves and others that it is *but a theory*, not capable of being actually reduced to practice. They may be warned by all the terrors of the Lord of the wickedness of their way, and of the woes in which it will terminate, and yet if they see no marked difference in character between themselves and those who profess religion, their consciences can still repose in quiet. But if the holy and unblameable life of a Christian—one whose character is as free from

Imperfection as even the world can reasonably expect it to be—throws its light in upon their darkness, conscience is troubled. These men are then afraid that there is such a distinction of moral character as the Scriptures assert, between the righteous and the wicked. And if there be, they know that their case, while they continue what they are, is hopeless and deplorable beyond expression. To silence conscience then, they must do one of two things—either repent and be converted, and become holy, or endeavor to persuade themselves that there is not much difference between the character of those who are highest in reputation for piety and their own. The latter is the easiest and the most grateful to the depraved heart, and withal the least humbling to its native pride. Accordingly such men seize on the little folly connected with the Christian, though it be but as the spot on the disk of the sun, to shield the eyes of conscience from the tormenting splendors of full-orbed Christian character. They withdraw their attention from all his preponderating excellencies, and fix it strongly on his most trifling defects. These they exaggerate and magnify, and make the foundation of more sweeping conjectures and suspicions, till, through the deep deception of their own hearts, they persuade themselves, and would fain persuade others also, that the best Christian is after all little if any better than themselves. Thus wicked men feel as though their peace of conscience were staked on the success of their efforts to make a *little folly* in the professing Christian the means of destroying his character and influence. How effectually they succeed, the bleeding cause of Christ in our world abundantly shows.

And, my dear Christian friends, it is vain for us to complain of such a constitution of things. God permits it, to impose on us the necessity of the highest possible attainments in holiness of which our present condition is capable. God holds up all these reasons, which we have been exposing, to show us why it has been and always will be true, that “as dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor, so doth a *little* folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor.” A truth big with terror to the thoughtless, uncircumspect Christian, as it is with infinite disaster to the interests of piety in the world.

We may infer from this subject, then, *the obligation of Christians to be peculiarly circumspect in regard to things that may seem as trifles compared with the more prominent and imposing parts of Christian character.*

My Christian friends, it will not suffice for us to be careful that we are not guilty of any direct immorality—that no one shall be able to lay palpable and flagrant sin at our door. The restraints of society, and our regard to public opinion, will ordinarily save us from any thing gross and revolting in our moral conduct. It is not here that we are to double the watch and fortify the walls of our religious character. The towers and battlements may all be stable and strong, while the wicket-gate to the heart may be unbolted and ready to open at the touch of the enemy. It is against the *little* obliquities of Christian conduct that we are most sedulously to guard. It is *here* that the sternest circumspection is required. We have seen that our religious character and influence can be as effectually destroyed by a *little* folly, as by more flagrant crimes. We have seen that there are many reasons why this must be so. We have seen that the very profession of the Christian, on the one hand, and the exorbitant expectations of the world on the other; that the habit of judging of general character by little acts; that a leveling envy, and a desire of quieting conscience amongst the wicked by exaggerating the faults of Christians, are all operating as so many causes to take advantage of a *little folly* in him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor, for the destruction of his good name and influence in society. What then is the manifest and imperious duty of Christians thus situated? Verily, that they walk circumspectly in *little things*—not as fools, but as wise to foresee the fatal consequences to their reputation, if they neglect this duty. With what

care ought they to set themselves to the task of watchfulness in this respect! Conscience is feebler, less sensitive and wakeful, in proportion to the estimated littleness of these defects, in themselves considered, and without reference to the mighty sweep of their destructive power on Christian character and influence. How necessary then to stir up our vigilance and circumspection, by looking at the inevitable consequences of what may be softened by the name of mere *frailties* or *failings*! They will in the end, if not arrested, work out a destruction of our Christian reputation and influence, as certain, and deep, and dreadful as the most palpable immoralities could do. They will leave us as mere spots in the church's feasts of charity—as clouds without rain, to shut out the moral sunshine and dews of heaven from this parched and barren world. In themselves they may be little things, but in their destructive power on our good name, they “do the work of tempests in their might.” “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, be sober, be vigilant, gird up the loins of your minds, see that ye walk circumspectly,” in that which *is least* as well as in that which *is greatest*—remembering that the world waits to receive its deepest convictions of the purity of your conscience, the strength of your religious principle, and the influence of the love and the fear of God on your hearts, *from your scrupulous regard to LITTLE duties.*

Finally—We may remark from this subject, *how strange it is that professing Christians should be so insensible to the guilt of what are deemed LITTLE SINS.*

If the preacher inveighs against profaneness, or intemperance, or lewdness, for Sabbath-breaking, or theft, or fraud, or falsehood, or any of the grosser crimes, they are willing to hear him, and to shudder for that professor of religion to whom aught so flagrant can be applicable. They think that if they were in his condition they would be overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, and would give up all hope. But when the man of God dwells on the blemishes, or the petty defects of their Christian character, there is scarcely enough of sensibility in their consciences to keep their attention to the subject. They look away from these to the more prominent and imposing excellencies of their character as abundantly counterbalancing them. Why, brethren, why such torpor of conscience amongst Christians about little sins? If they are sufficient to destroy your good name, and your Christian influence on a dying world, why may they not suffice to put conscience in an agony till penitence and the blood of Jesus remove them from the soul? What is your existence worth to God or to his universe, when you are as salt that has lost its savor—when you are stript of the reputation and the influence of a Christian? What though you may get to heaven at last, and be “saved so as by fire?” Will you have fulfilled the high responsibilities of your standing on earth—your connection with mortals? Did God design that on your way to immortality you should be a mere negative thing—should exert no permanent goodly influence? And yet such must be the certain result of *little sins* indulged. And does it constitute any *palliation*, that you barter your name and influence at a price *so small*? Oh, can conscience sleep over those little things, which yet are so great in their consequences as to disrobe you of the exalted attributes of a *consistent* Christian, and throw you as a dead weight on the struggling energies of the church, and finally dismiss you from the world as little better, perhaps, than a cumberer of the ground! My dear Christian friends, wherever else conscience may sleep, Oh, let it not do this over *little sins*. Here let it wake up, and weep, and lead to fervent, agonizing prayer, till, through abounding grace, you may stand confessed before the world, “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke.”

SERMON CLXXXIII.

BY REV. D. L. CARROLL.

THE WISE RECKONING OF TIME. A NEW-YEAR'S SERMON.

Psalm xc, 12. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

THE course of time has ever been the subject of sublime and melancholy musing. The sacred writer, in the context, introduces this topic by some of the most tender and beautiful imagery. Whether the lapse and vicissitudes of time would bring upon an unfallen spirit that impression of poetic sadness which we feel, it is not easy to determine. Did the mighty current of years roll on over a sinless world, it would probably associate to the minds of the inhabitants nothing but images and anticipations of brightness and glory. But upon apostate man, time, in its flight, casts a deep shadow from its wings, and awakens emotions of strange and undefinable sadness. The great changes that have been effected, the decay and ruin of the proudest monuments of human power, the wreck of generations gone by, and the unrevealed mysteries of the future, fill the mind with associations mournfully sublime. How little and impotent does man appear, as he views himself, borne along on the tide of years, as the leaf on the bosom of the mighty river, without any power to arrest or direct its course. We might, my hearers, to day yield ourselves up to mere sombre musings on this subject; but the psalmist has shown us "a more excellent way" of improving the swiftly passing moments. "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." What a suitable prayer in view of our hurrying existence here, and of its infinite and enduring issues hereafter. If life is so brief, so fleeting, Oh teach us, thou Author of our being, so to estimate what remains, as to make of every moment the best possible use.

Brethren, on this first Sabbath in the new year, may not we, with great propriety, make this prayer of the psalmist our own. "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." As Christians, then, how shall we make a wise computation of time? Such a computation will require us to have some reference to the present circumstances of society, and to the prospects opening on the world.

I. I remark, then, first, that we ought, as Christians, to appreciate the opportunities presented, of *making great progress in knowledge—in intellectual improvement*. Inspiration has decided, that "for the soul to be without knowledge is not good." There have been periods, however, when knowledge and intellectual culture were not so manifestly demanded of Christians as at present. In those periods the enemies of religion had no means of being in advance of believers as to general intelligence. On the other hand, they were indeed, for the most part, their inferiors. Knowledge then was looked upon very much as the monopoly of the church, and the little that did exist was to be found principally in her monasteries and her schools, such as they were. Most opinions, instead of being judiciously weighed, were inculcated and received on mere authority. But time in its progress has brought a very different state of public sentiment. The intellectual elements of the civilized world seem to be stirred with an unwonted commotion. The flood of ages has swept away a multitude of barriers that once limited the range of mind. And the improvements in the arts and sciences furnish facilities now for extended and intense intellectual action, such as the world has not

witnessed. Such an action has really commenced. The claims of every system of doctrine—the claims of every form of government—of every institution, social, political, or religious, are now subjected to the investigation and scrutiny of a mass of minds unawed by authority. *Public opinion* is now becoming the great arbiter in all questions. Every thing is tending to show, that the human race will soon be under no other government but that of *mind*: that, whatever may be the instruments which it shall use, *intelligence* will be the *arm* that will rule the world. And every form of ecclesiastical, political, or social order, which cannot be supported by reason and obvious truth, is destined to be subverted and remodeled by the omnipotence of *mind*. Men of the world are aware of this, and are numbering their days with reference to it. They are ceasing to glory in war, and in mere animal prowess, and are striving to possess themselves of disciplined and vigorous intellect. They see that the future battles, which are to distinguish our world's history, are to be the mighty conflicts of mind—marshalling its forces, and meeting in the shock of a gigantic strife on the great line that divides truth and reason from error and absurdity. The mighty struggles of *antagonist principles*—principles, anchored in the depths of capacious and richly stored minds, are to constitute the materials for the future historian in his book of the wars of men. Now what is the duty of Christians amid circumstances and prospects like these? Ought they not to cherish ardent desires after knowledge and intellectual improvement? Ought they not to redeem more time for this object? How will religion maintain her supremacy at such a period, if its professors are inferior in knowledge to the mass around them? Nay, how will they long retain the territory already enclosed within the limits of the church, if *they* are indolent while the hosts *without* are “running to and fro,” and increasing in knowledge? Those hosts may come and “take away their place and nation.” And why is it that worldly men can be such untiring devotees in the pursuit of knowledge? Is the love of intellectual power or of literary fame a motive to exertion stronger than those which the gospel presents to Christians? By no higher ends than earth can afford, a multitude of unsanctified minds have been stimulated even to death in the career of mental improvement. Time, health, riches, life, have been sacrificed in the overreachings of their souls after knowledge. But every Christian has infinitely higher motives to impel him to make acquisitions of true science. If he be asked why he is laboring to obtain stores of knowledge, he can answer, because “*the Lord hath need of them.*” He knows that he can bring every acquisition, and lay it down, an acceptable offering, at the feet of Jesus. He knows that *mind* is the great instrument through which the Redeemer is to effect those eternal purposes “that pertain to his kingdom and glory.” He knows that every capability developed, every item of strength gained, is giving power to this instrument, and fitting it to be wielded with greater effect by the hand of the master. Who that thinks of the great ends which the infinite God accomplished by Moses, and the part which his mind, “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” performed in the stupendous drama of the world; or, who that has looked upon a Paul going from the feet of Gamaliel with all his intellectual treasures to the cross, and from the cross travelling in the greatness of his mental strength to the ends of the civilized earth, a chosen vessel bearing infinite blessings to millions, can help feeling the irrepressible risings of a holy emulation to grow in knowledge, and grasp every intellectual attainment within the reach of mortals?

Would that Christians now, with far brighter prospects, might so number *their days* as to apply their hearts unto wisdom! Let it not be said that such great attainments are reserved for the favored few that appear at distant intervals. This need no longer be the case; and would no longer be the case, were not the church culpably ignorant or negligent of her high privileges. There is no necessity that the great mass of Christians should remain com-

paratively unintelligent. Every church might now be organized into classes for mutual instruction. Adult Bible classes might be *everywhere* established. Why not as extensively as the Sunday School system, if the church felt as she ought, that knowledge was power? And I see not, in view of the signs of these times, why all the more intelligent members of the body of Christ do not owe a solemn duty in this respect to their less informed brethren. Every Christian family, and every Christian church, ought to be organized on the plan of imparting the greatest possible amount of instruction, and of raising to its greatest elevation the intellectual standard of the members. I am persuaded that the most happy results would follow the organization of churches into classes for mutual instruction and improvement, where those of all ranks in society should mingle together. It would destroy invidious distinctions—would prevent the jealousy of the poor toward the rich, and impart a very important kind of information to the rich themselves: it would make them acquainted with the habitudes of thought and feeling amongst their humbler brethren, and exhibit to them the peculiar forms which piety wears in the common walks of life. Some of the first statesmen in the world are directing their efforts to the diffusion of knowledge amongst all classes. The late Lord Chancellor of England, it is said, projected the plan of the Penny Magazine, which has now a circulation of some hundreds of thousands weekly. An example worthy of our richest and ablest citizens. But how long shall “the children of this world be wiser than the children of light?”

The great facilities for communicating knowledge to all ranks at the present day, point out, as with the finger of God, the duty of the church to be up and doing. The religious periodicals, tracts, and varied forms of useful intelligence which mark our day, put intellectual improvement within the reach of all. And the ease with which a livelihood may be gained in this country, and the labor-saving improvements in machinery, afford more or less time to all to be devoted to this purpose. And let it be remarked, that the humblest and most obscure Christian in the church knows not what progress he may make in knowledge, if he will only prize it more than money, and number his days wisely with reference to its attainment. In illustration of this, permit me to give you the history of a case that occurred in the place of my own nativity. A lad of fourteen years was, by the providence of God, left an orphan, without any one sufficiently interested in him to offer him a home or employment. After the burial of his mother, he went to a neighboring town and hired himself to an innkeeper as a hostler. He had, as may be supposed, but a partial English education. He, however, found some Latin books, and redeemed moments to attempt their perusal. He was not afforded even a candle, but he used to gather shavings during the day, and burn them on the kitchen hearth at night to pursue his studies. Yet such was the progress he made, that when it was first discovered that he had turned his attention to Latin, he was able to read Horace, one of the principal Roman authors, with ease and accuracy. He was then taken by a benevolent gentleman and fitted for college—no hard task. He entered the college at Princeton, and graduated with the first honors. He then studied theology, afterwards became the president of a college in Pennsylvania, and at the age of thirty was called from earth, as we trust, to a sphere of far more elevated usefulness and glory.

Let not, then, the humblest individual here to-day, despair of great attainments in knowledge; they are within reach. God made your mind for knowledge, as much as he did your eye for light. And the “day-star” of intelligence hath emphatically visited us. Set your aim high this year, and follow where it leads, and your “path may be as that of the morning light.”

II. In numbering our days wisely, we ought to count upon the opportunities presented for *forming an elevated religious character*.

Mere knowledge, valuable as it is when connected with holiness, when severed from this, is but the strength of Samson deprived of his eyes. We

shall have numbered our days to little purpose, if we do not make broad calculations of growing in *grace* as well as in knowledge. And, my hearers, the signs of the times in reference to this object deserve very serious consideration. No period, perhaps, has ever furnished such elements for forming a high order of moral character as the present. It is admitted that those truths of God that have remained the same in every age, are the basis of religious character. The Bible and the Holy Spirit are God's instrument and agent in the sanctification of a revolted world. But it is equally true, that *circumstances* may greatly facilitate their operations in transforming the character of man. Let it be remembered that the agency of the Holy Spirit, and the nature of God's truth, are such that they can and do lay hold of all the great and complicated events of time as auxiliaries in their work. The effect of imposing and exciting events, in developing talent and forming worldly character, is so universally acknowledged, that it has given rise to the adage, "that man is the creature of circumstances." Now it cannot be supposed, that the great moral events that crowd into a particular period will have less influence in forming religious character, when coupled with the combined agency of the Spirit and truth of God. There have been periods when the current of years flowed on without any striking incidents adapted to effect remarkable changes in human character—dark ages, when a shadowy stillness seemed to hang over the stream of time, beneath which the mind of generation after generation slept away its being, unagitated by any of those strong excitements which give new lineaments to the heart of man. But such, it will be admitted, are not the days we are now numbering. This appears to be the seed-time of a new and higher order of religious character in the church of God,—the time that has prospective reference to the millennial harvest. This we might infer from the very condition of the world around us. If the future historian gives this portion of the nineteenth century its appropriate name, he will call it "*the age of INTENSITY*" in every department of enterprise and activity. There seems to be an amazing waking up of the powers of human nature, preparatory to some great changes in the condition of man. The mechanic and the merchant feel themselves to be under some new and undefinable impulse, that is driving them onward in an enterprise and speculation of which they once had scarcely a conception. Statesmen are grasping the subject of politics with almost the energy of desperation. The walks of literature are becoming crowded with a jostling and breathless throng of aspirants. And even vice and atheism themselves are assuming something of that boldness and intensity which characterize them in hell. Now piety, if it exist and be in exercise at all, living in the midst of such unwonted excitement, ought itself, by the very force of circumstances, to become more intense. Yes, it may and ought to assume a loftier and more decided character, from the spirit of the times.

But there are other events at present more peculiarly adapted to form a high order of moral character. One of these is *the awakened attention and increased facilities for studying the Bible*. The disastrous eclipse which had obscured some of the great truths of revelation for ages, has now passed off, and they are coming out on the vision of the church in unveiled splendor. At no time since revelation was completed, have there been such means and opportunities of a wide spread and intimate knowledge of the oracles of God. Now, if the truths of these oracles, more dimly seen, formed such characters as Luther and Calvin, Baxter and Flavel, and others of like exalted attributes, what transformations may not their unclouded lustre now effect, under the influence of the Holy Ghost?

As another event in these times, adapted to form religious character, we may notice in some respects a *salutary change in the ministry of the gospel*. It is now freed from many of the incumbrances of former ages, that destroyed its power on the conscience and the heart. The ministry has become, in

some measure, what God always designed it to be, a great organ of deep and practical impression on the human mind. It has become a lucid expositor of the claims of God on the immediate services and affections of men—holding up his unchangeable law, exhibiting in a clear manner the *true* grounds of the sinner's guilt, and condemnation, and dependance—holding out a full, free, sincere offer of pardon and eternal life to all without exception—putting the responsibility of the sinner's choice of life or death just where God puts it, and where it properly belongs, *on himself*; and charging him with the guilt of rebellion against God for every hour that he delays repentance and cordial obedience to the gospel. The ministry now, instead of exhausting its powers to engage professing Christians in an unholy war for mere rites and forms, brings the precepts of Christ, that respect the practical, everyday graces and duties of life, directly upon the conscience and the heart of the church, and labors to form Christians to *habits* of untiring and holy activity. It is *active*, rather than *mere contemplative* piety, that is now inculcated—a *benevolence wide as the world*, rather than *the love of a sect*—the luxury of blessing a sinking race, rather than the mere enjoyment of insulated and solitary religion. Now it is easy to see, what an influence such a ministry is adapted to exert in forming a high order of religious character.

Another fact bearing on this point is, that the days which we are numbering, are days in which "*the glorious ministration of the Spirit,*" in that form *which it took after the ascension of Jesus, has become more pervading and effective than it has been since the day of Pentecost.* It is now, indeed, "searching all things, yea, the deep things of God;" it is proving a "discerner of the thoughts and intents" of many hearts; it is making an extended application of its regenerating and sanctifying power to multitudes of minds in Christendom, and sealing the blessings of redemption on a scale more commensurate with the tremendous exigencies of a dying world. Under such an administration of this great author of the Christian graces—this transformer of the human mind, the Spirit of God, increasing in manifestations of power and efficiency as we approach "the last times," the moral character of the church may and ought to assume a new intensity and glory.

In addition to all these, we must not overlook the obvious influence on Christian character that may be exerted *by the vast system of benevolent enterprises* which have been originated in our day. What an influence have great political schemes exerted on individual and national character. Does not all analogy, then, lead us to suppose that the great moral plans of this age may exert a moulding power upon religious character? Both the intellect and the heart of the church are beginning already to be dilated with the lofty conceptions, and the overwhelming emotions, associated with the work of filling the world with Bibles; of flooding it with religious tracts; of training, for all its perishing millions, an adequate ministry; and sending into its deepest recesses of darkness, the missionaries of light and love, of peace and salvation. This state of things in the church is too recent to exhibit, as yet, those great results in the formation of religious character which it is adapted to effect. But who does not see that it furnishes the elements of an order of moral character amongst Christians, such as the church has not witnessed since her apostolic days?

In view, then, of all the circumstances mentioned, does it not become us, in wisely numbering our days, to make a new and mighty reach after greater attainments in holiness? What is to prevent us from taking a far higher rank in the scale of moral character than the generations that have preceded us? What shall hinder us from rising above the mists of past centuries, and shining in all "the beauty of the Lord our God?" What shall hinder young Christians in our day from mounting, as on wings of eagles, and soaring nearer and nearer, with more than the eagle's strength of vision, to the Sun of righteousness,—bathing themselves in the living light of his beams, and

becoming "changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord?"

III. In numbering our days wisely, we ought to count upon *exerting a far more widely extended influence as Christians*. Such are the laws of our intellectual and social being, and such are the relations and connections of one mind with another, that an influence of some kind we must and shall inevitably exert. The *kind* of influence exerted, and the direction which that influence shall take, will be one of the most solemn items of man's last account to his God. The elements of Christian influence are knowledge and holiness. The degree of knowledge and holiness, particularly of the latter, will measure the extent of the Christian influence which an individual or a church may exert. This indeed is an argument why we should number our days with a reference to intellectual and spiritual attainments. But those treasures of mind and heart which we acquire are not to be hoarded as the miser's heaps of gold. The times that are passing over us constitute the great *working* period in the history of our world—the *practical* age of the species, when *utility* takes precedence of all theory and speculation. Capitalists are now making larger and more advantageous investments. Politicians are grasping at a more extended influence over the popular mind. The business and pleasures, the wealth and elevation, and advancement of the human race, are now projected on a mightier scale than at any former era in the chronicles of time. Does it not become Christians, then, with their eyes on the signs of these times, to count with a holy enthusiasm on a deep and vastly extended *Christian* influence over their fellow-men?

I am persuaded that we have too low an estimate of the possible power of Christian character. In numbering our days, then, with reference to a large investment of the capital of Christian influence, let us look at what has been accomplished by some uninspired men of no very remarkable mental endowments. Who does not feel an emotion of the sublime, as he contemplates the immeasurable impression which Richard Baxter made on his generation, and on succeeding ages, though he lived in an intolerant and stormy period of the religious world's history? What a controlling sway he held over the consciences and hearts of multitudes! How wide, and deep, and enduring the influence which David Brainerd exerted, even in the state of society which existed in this country almost a century ago! And what shall we say of a Mills and a Martin, a Hall and a Payson, "who being dead yet speak?" It is hardly presumptuous to say of such spirits, that, like the language of the planetary orbs on high, "*their* line has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." Now the time must come, nay, it *has* come, when we ought to consider these cases not as *exceptions*, but as *the legitimate measure* of Christian influence, and fix *our* aim accordingly. Let us remember, too, how many more facilities of making our influence to be felt we possess, in our day, than did these holy men. What an easy, rapid, and extensive intercourse can we now have with society, compared with that enjoyed half a century since. With what a multitude of minds can Christian character come in contact in a comparatively short period. How much more available is the power of holy example now than in those past days, when population was more sparse, and the means of personal intercourse more restricted. What an organ of extended Christian influence does the religious press constitute. This, under God, is to be the angel of Christendom, "standing in the sun,"—the great dispenser of the church's moral light to the world. Think, too, what instruments of power are put into the hands of Christians by the organization of the great benevolent societies of these times. They can thus truly extend themselves, in an important sense, "beyond their own measure,"—can stretch out the arm of mercy and pour light on the darkness and miseries of the whole earth. We can cause our Christian influence to be felt alike in the regions of the rocky mountains in our

own land, and along the rivers and bays, the hills and valleys, of Asia and Africa. Besides, that very excitability of the popular mind, which we have already noticed, furnishes a peculiar facility for an extended Christian influence. There is a *strange moveableness* in the general mind of society. An illustrious exemplification of this is to be found in the history of the temperance reform. The popular mind has become susceptible of being set in motion now, by causes that a quarter of a century since might have exerted all their power without attracting notice. Society craves excitement of some kind, and will have it. Why, then, should not the representatives of Christ—the lights of the world—make their influence to be felt *extensively*? The world is not “without souls”—men have consciences and hearts—they have hopes and fears respecting an eternal hereafter. Why, then, should not the exhibition of the high attributes of Christian character—the power of pre-eminently holy example—if brought in earnest upon the mass of ruined yet immortal mind, begin to make that mass heave and move under the impulse, heavenward! Has not that Christianity which we profess, the elements of a mightier excitement to the popular mind than commerce, internal improvement, politics, literature, or the arts? It certainly had, as *lived out by Christ and his apostles*, and primitive followers. It superseded the excitement of Judaism at Jerusalem, of philosophy at Athens, and of arms at Rome, and became the object of absorbing interest to the then known world. Christianity is still unaltered, and that human nature on which it is to operate is the same. If the solitary influence of Paul, then, circled half the civilized world, what a mighty reach combined Christian influence might now make on the ready excitability of the general mind! Let the church of God, then, wake up, and in wisely numbering their days let Christians count on an indefinite extension of their moral power. Let them aim at nothing less than an influence which shall break up the monotony of sin and death, and move the entire fountains of the great deep of thought and feeling, in human society. This is the only excitement that is safe for man, or that will satisfy the popular mind. All the agitations and tumults of the race prove that the soul of man, mighty even in its ruins, is blindly reaching after those objects of exciting magnitude and glory, which can alone be found in pure Christianity. Let us determine, then, by the grace of God, to send out a Christian influence in a length and breadth that shall control these infinite but ill-directed aspirations of the immortal mind!

Another consideration to urge us to aim at extending our Christian influence is, that *the world in these days is held in a general expectation of some vast movement about to be made by Christians.*

The world does not calculate that the standard of Christian character, and the measure of Christian influence, will long remain what they have been and now are. It is presumed that *piety* will feel the impulse that is urging onward, with such momentum, every department of worldly activity. The community has heard much about the church's resurrection from the sleep and moral death of ages! The public mind has been turned to the recent marshalling of her forces. Infidel jealousy is watching the effect of her comprehensive plans of influencing the moral destinies of the race. A multitude of unsanctified hearts are brought within the reach of her deep and mighty sympathies for the miseries of the whole world, and a multitude of minds are eagerly contemplating her recent purposes and resolves, that that world shall be redeemed. Worldly men see that the mind of the church is beginning to be turned in expectancy and hope of a coming millennium: that there is a pervading apprehension of the near approach of that grand crisis in which “the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the saints of the Most High God.” They know that Christians regard the present as *the Saturday evening of time*: that they are saying one to another, The Sabbath, the great Sabbath of the

world "draweth on." Worldly men, then, expect to see the disciples of Christ coming forth in that energy of character, and that extended sweep of Christian influence, which will prepare themselves and the world for such a sublime consummation.

My Christian friends, what should prevent us from determining, in reliance on God, that we will meet this expectation of the world? Nay, is not the honor of our holy religion periled if we fail to meet it? The measure of former attainments, and of former efforts, will no longer sustain the credit of Christianity. If we would honor Christ and sustain the interest of his cause, we must overtake and go beyond the anticipations of the world on this subject.

Lastly: As a motive to numbering our days wisely, with reference to a greatly extended Christian influence, let us frequently and solemnly call to mind *one grand end which God has in view in his eternal existence.* God lives and reigns with *this*, amongst other great ends in view, viz., *that he may exert an influence in kind like that of pure Christianity.* It is one great aim of his being, to bring forth and impress on the minds of his rational creation, the eternal truth and purity of his own character. He administers the affairs of the universe with the steady view of exerting the highest and best moral influence over its intelligent millions. Is it not wise, then, in Christians, to count upon exerting the greatest possible degree of the *same kind* of influence?

Beloved brethren, carry with you through this year, and through life, the undying conviction that *progress in knowledge, in holiness, and in enlarged Christian influence, is your great business—the grand object to be counted on in your estimate of time.* And though your days may be few or many, spend them all under the soul-animating and heavenly influence of such an object. We know not who of us are appointed unto death *this year.* But for such as are, will it not soften the dying pillow to sink down upon it, not in indolence and mental stupor, but in the *increasing swiftness* of our Christian career? And will it not add unspeakably to our eternal joy, to be able to say in death, "I have fought the good fight, I have *finished* my course, I have kept the faith?"

"The world can never give
The bliss for which we sigh,
'Tis not the whole of life to live,
Nor all of death to die.

Beyond this vale of tears
There is a life above,
Unmeasur'd by the flight of years—
And all that life is love.

There is a death whose pang
Outlasts the fleeting breath,
Oh! what eternal horrors hang
Around the second death!"

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SERMONS CLXXXIV. AND CLXXXV.

DELIVERED IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT ANDOVER, FEBRUARY 1, 1835.

By LEONARD WOODS, D. D.

ON THE DEATH OF LYMAN, MUNSON, AND OTHERS.

HEB. 12: 10, 11.—*For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby.*

THE difference between the chastisements which we receive from God, and those we receive from earthly parents, is here presented to view as worthy of the most grateful acknowledgment. Even the best earthly parents have a mixture of imperfection in their feelings towards their children, and especially when they administer correction. But our heavenly Father has unmingled, perfect goodness. And he exercises this goodness whenever he visits his children with chastisement. He chastises them because he loves them. The Apostle, in the context, suggests another important thought, which relates particularly to our duty. If, notwithstanding the imperfect goodness of earthly parents, their children reverence them, and submit to their correction; how much more should we reverence our heavenly Father, and submit to his chastisement, administered, as it always is, in infinite wisdom and love, and designed for our spiritual profit.

This subject is introduced at the present time on account of the mournful events which have recently taken place in the circle of our Christian friends. Since the commencement of our academic year, we have received the tidings of the death of five young ministers, who were lately members of this Institution. Three of them died of sickness in our own land, and two by the hand of violence in a foreign land.

These awakening dispensations, dear brethren and friends, are addressed particularly to us. And if we open our ears to the monitory voice of these providences, and by fervent prayer seek the influence of the Holy Spirit, we shall experience the blessed effects of divine chastisement.

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Wishing to render the occasion as profitable as may be, I shall take the liberty to apply the subject to different classes of persons, and to press upon their notice severally, those particular views which are suggested by the late mournful events.

I shall first apply the subject to *the members of this Institution*. The beloved young men, whose early death we have been called to mourn, recently lived, as you now do, within these consecrated walls. Here they pursued their studies, and were constant at our daily exercises. They joined with us in our morning and evening devotions, and assembled with us to worship God in the sanctuary, and to commemorate the dying love of Jesus. They had entered upon the active duties of that holy calling, for which you are now preparing. One of them had just preached his *first sermon*, which proved to be his *last*. Affecting, indeed, is the departure of so many young ministers in so short a time, and in such a manner. The great question with you is, how you shall profit by these affecting dispensations; what lessons they are designed to teach you, and what blessings they are adapted to secure.

Let me say, then, that these dispensations impressively inculcate the importance of *Christian diligence*. They remind you that the time is short, and urge you to do with your might whatsoever your hand findeth to do. Could those brethren, who have so soon closed their labors on earth, speak to you now, they would certainly exhort and press you to apply yourselves in earnest to every duty, to make the most intense efforts to cultivate your minds, to acquire useful knowledge, and to fit yourselves for your sacred calling. They would tell you, that the greatest diligence and ardor which they ever exhibited here in pursuit of their object, instead of being excessive, fell far below the proper mark. I have no words to convey to your minds the impression which I have, of the vast importance of diligence and ardor in theological students. It is to this, far more than to original talents, or to advantages for education, that the attainments and usefulness of men are owing. If you, who are here preparing for the ministry, would all apply yourselves to the business of theological study with proper diligence and zeal, casting off all indolence, keeping the powers of your minds fully awake, and under the right guidance in your daily employments, watchfully guarding against all hindrances,—if you would come to this,—my heart swells with joy to think what you might *be*, and what you might *do*. Your improvements while in this seminary would be double, yea, fourfold, to what is common; and your usefulness afterwards might be increased in a like proportion. Even if your life should be short, like that of those who have so soon been taken away,—if only a few years should be allotted to you; still, in those few years, you might accomplish as much as is generally done in a long life. And if the major part of you should

be continued in active service to the common age of ministers, who can tell the amount of good you might accomplish for the cause of Christ? Your acquisitions here made, and your habits of diligence here formed, all carried into your sacred calling, would, under God, produce such results, that your fellow-beings would be filled with wonder to see what a few men can do. What better use, then, can you make of these mournful dispensations, than to regard them as incitements to increased diligence and zeal in the appropriate occupation of theological students,—diligence proportioned to the greatness of the object before you,—diligence rightly directed, suited to the measure of your health, and wisely distributed among your various duties. Such diligence is imperatively required of you by the precepts of God's word, and by the admonitions of his providence; and, coming out to view as the prominent characteristic of this Institution, it might prove a salutary example to other seminaries, exciting them to exercise a higher degree than before of the same Christian virtue.

In the second place, these events of providence may help to furnish a just answer to several important questions which frequently arise among students, and which are sometimes answered without due consideration. One of these questions is, *what should students make their first and chief business during their residence in a Theological Seminary?* Had the young ministers lately deceased a voice to speak to you on this subject from the eternal world, they would exhort you to make that your chief business here, which is in reality the chief business of life. And what is this, taken in a personal view, but to repent, to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and to secure an inheritance among them who are sanctified? You will by and by tell your fellow-men, and will tell them truly, that this is *their* great concern. It is equally *yours*, and yours *now*. Amid the variety of objects which solicit your attention, you may be tempted to neglect your own soul, and to substitute something else in the place of personal piety. Consider, then, how you would feel on this subject if you expected to die in three months, or in three years, after leaving the Seminary. And if you knew that you were to live *thirty* years, what reason would you have for any difference of feeling? When the time of your departure arrives, whether sooner or later, you will know for a certainty, that salvation was always your great concern. Your judgment will then be right. These shadows will all be dissipated; delusions will be gone; and objects will be presented before you in the light of truth. There never was a sober man who, in view of approaching death, had not a perfect persuasion, that the salvation of his soul was infinitely more important to him, than all other interests, and who did not feel, that reason and truth, as well as the authority of God, require every man to strive with all his heart to enter in at the strait gate; and to cut off

a right hand, and pluck out a right eye, and, if necessary, to sacrifice every earthly pleasure, for the sake of eternal salvation. Place yourselves in imagination, where you will soon be in fact, near the close of your probation, with death and the judgment just before you; and you will have the sentiment fixed deep in your hearts, that the care of the soul is the one thing needful for you, while you are members of the Seminary, and at every other period of your life; and that, if you neglect this, you neglect what is more important to you than all things else, and are guilty of a folly and a sin, for which no tears or sufferings can ever atone.

It is also obvious, that the present care of your soul is a duty which you owe not only to yourselves, but to your fellow-men; inasmuch as it is the best way, and the only way, to prepare yourselves for the highest degree of usefulness. Such I well know was the sentiment of those devoted young men who have so soon finished their earthly labors. And the sentiment is most evidently just. Suppose a theological student says within himself: *I am so deeply engaged in cultivating my intellectual powers, and in acquiring knowledge of the various subjects connected with my future profession, that I have little time for prayer, and improvement in spiritual religion; and as I am proceeding in this way for the sake of fitting myself to do good, I hope I shall be excused for my neglect of personal piety.* Such a student has fallen into a mistake which is most pernicious in its tendency, and which neither Christ, nor the church, nor his own conscience will ever excuse. What! shall a man forsake God to prepare himself to serve God? Shall he neglect his duty to qualify himself to perform it? Shall he turn his back upon the cause of Christ, to qualify himself most successfully to promote it? Shall he forsake prayer, that he may be fitted to teach others to pray? It is utter absurdity and sin. The very benevolence which prompts a man to prepare himself to do good, will prompt him to seek first of all to abound in the fruits of the Spirit. A student who cultivates his understanding, and neglects his heart, is not influenced by a pure desire to do good. He is influenced by worldly wisdom, by ambition, by selfishness.

But there is another question which the present occasion may help you satisfactorily to answer. Suppose the paramount importance of practical piety to be admitted; *what are the particular branches of intellectual improvement which demand the chief attention of theological students?* Could you have put this question to our deceased friends a short time before their death, what think you would have been their reply? Or suppose that, within one or two years after entering on your profession, you yourself should be laid on a dying bed, and that a younger brother of yours, about to join a theological seminary, should ask you, what particular studies will be most in-

portant, and what branches of knowledge ought to command his chief attention; can you doubt what answer ought to be given to such an inquiry? Those studies, you would say, are most important, and most worthy of attention, which are most intimately related to the great interests of religion:—those which lead most directly to the knowledge of the word of God, and which will help you most fully to understand the essential truths of Christianity, and most effectually to teach them to others; those, in a word, which will fit you to do most towards accomplishing the grand object for which the Savior came down from heaven, and lived and died.

There is one more question, which the present occasion may help you to answer: namely, *what are the things which theological students ought most carefully to avoid?* Could this question have been proposed to our departed friends during their last days on earth, how united and forcible would have been the answer from their lips! How earnestly would they have warned and intreated you to avoid every thing in disposition, in thought, in word, and in deed, every thing in public and every thing in private, which is forbidden by the holy precepts of revelation, or which would interfere with your growth in knowledge and grace, or your usefulness to the church. Your own experience has taught you, that there are certain companies and amusements, certain kinds of reading and conversation, certain emotions and trains of thought, certain indulgencies of the natural appetites, certain kinds of business, and certain modes of doing business, which prove hinderances to study, to prayer, and to spiritual enjoyment, and bring pollution to the soul. Every thing of this nature should be avoided with more resolution and vigilance, than that which would destroy your health or your life. Do nothing which would leave a bad impression on your character or your heart, and lay a foundation for regret and sorrow in after time. Keep yourselves free from the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. Do nothing to defile *the temple of God; which temple ye are.*

Turn your attention now to another point, on which the present occasion may give you serious instruction. Those five brethren, whose early death has been announced, have been subjected to a decisive trial as to *the soundness of their conversion.* They now know for a certainty, whether their hope of salvation was well founded. The time is near, when *your* hope will be tried in like manner. A *sincere* repentance, a *sound* conversion, prepares men to die, and to appear before God. But a spurious conversion, a superficial religion, though it may answer for worldly purposes, and may bear the test of a worldly inspection, will be worthless in a dying hour, and will vanish like a vapor at the judgment seat of Christ. Consider this subject now, while a mistake may be corrected. You are soon to go forth to the duties and trials of the ministry. And you are soon to go forth to

meet the Lord Jesus, the almighty Savior and Judge. Behold, he cometh. Arise, and trim your lamps; and take heed that you be not like the foolish virgins, who found, too late, that they had no oil in their lamps. May not theological students and ministers be found, who have nothing but a false conversion, a counterfeit religion, and whose hope, quivering and ready to fail even now, will perish for ever when God taketh away the soul? The voice of those who have lately gone before you into the eternal world, and who know what it is to have their hope tried by him who searches the heart,—their voice now cries aloud in your ears: "Ye who are studying where *we* lately studied, and praying in those closets, and those public places, where *we* lately prayed, and are about to enter on that sacred work which *we* began and ended so soon; remember, that *it is a serious thing to die*. Examine yourselves, then, whether ye be in the faith. And do this with your eye turned to the hour of death, and to that day of account, when God will bring to light every work, and every secret thing, whether it be good or bad."

Finally: Endeavor to make these affecting events the occasion of *special advancement in the divine life*—the occasion of rising to higher fervor and constancy in your devout affections, and in your religious duties, than you have ever attained to before. There have been special seasons in the life of eminent Christians, when, under the impression of some divine truth, or of some remarkable providence, with the gracious help of the Holy Spirit, they have made uncommon progress in the work of religion; when they have gone forward in their warfare against sin with new courage, and have gained victory upon victory in rapid succession;—seasons when they have done more to subdue their evil propensities and to grow in grace, in a few days, than they had done in years before. Could your five departed brethren speak to you on this subject, methinks they would say: "Oh, that our early death may be the means of raising you to higher degrees of faith, and love, and devotion! Then we shall feel that we did not die in vain." Members of this sacred Institution, turn your thoughts in earnest to this momentous concern. Let all low, earthly desires die away, and your souls be fired with holy, heavenly ardor. And let it be your humble but firm resolve, that you will impartially look into your spiritual state, and see what has been done, and what remains to be done, in your great work for eternity, and that, in reliance on divine help, you will make this a season of special advancement in your religious character; that you will strive with all your heart to attain to that habitual warmth and elevation of piety, which you have heretofore contemplated only as a distant and almost unapproachable object of desire, and to those holy joys, for which you have only panted before. Perseveringly do this, and you will learn from happy experience, as well as from the holy Scriptures, that God is able to do exceeding abundantly for you above

all that you can ask or think ; and in all future time you will, with hearty thanks to God, look back upon this Sabbath, and this week, and this academic year, as *a new and happy era in your Christian life.*

So, through the great mercy of God, may it be with all the Students and all the Instructors of this sacred Institution.

SERMON CLXXXV.

IN the forenoon my address was to the students of this Seminary generally. My present remarks will be adapted to those who contemplate engaging in the missionary service, and to others interested in the great cause of evangelizing the world.

First, to those particular students whose purpose it is to engage in the missionary service. We rejoice, dear friends, and give thanks to God, that your hearts have been moved with compassion to the perishing heathen. You have already made it a matter of frequent inquiry, what are the necessary qualifications of missionaries, and what is the spirit of mind which they ought to cherish. On this subject, which is too large to be particularly discussed at the present time, I shall aim only to impress upon your minds a few of those thoughts which are suggested by this very solemn occasion. An event of a sorrowful and appalling character has been announced to you,—an event unknown in the history of missions of late years, and of very rare occurrence for many centuries. Two young missionaries, of amiable manners and unexceptionable character, and urged on by Christian love to seek the good of those who are perishing in ignorance and vice, have been suddenly cut off by an act of the most shocking barbarity. Consider this, ye who have devoted yourselves to the service of Christ among the heathen. By this event you are carried back to primitive times, when it was nothing uncommon for missionaries to suffer martyrdom. How fondly have we been hoping that such times were for ever gone by. And the feeling may have found a place in our hearts, that as there are fewer trials and dangers to be encountered now, than formerly, lower qualifications in missionaries will be sufficient. If so, then may not God have permitted the awful event for the very purpose of correcting this hurtful mistake, and making a more just impression on our minds as to the proper character of missionaries, and the views and feelings which should govern their conduct? You now see, perhaps in a more striking light than ever before, that as they who engage in the missionary service must die, and may die at the very commencement of their work ; those who are looking forward to that service ought, by all means, to be in a state of preparation for the kingdom of heaven. And you well know that the grand article of preparation is, that you be truly converted men, born of God, living Christians,—having your hearts so purified by faith, and so changed into the holy image of God, that you may be at all times ready for your departure. You see also, that as peculiar difficulties and perils may lie in your path, you ought to be armed with invincible courage and patience and trust in God, and so be prepared for trials the most sudden and severe. To prepare yourselves

for the self-denying and laborious work which you contemplate, accustom yourselves to strict self-denial and hard labor. Banish for ever the love of praise, the love of promotion, and a worldly spirit in every form, as totally ungenial to the nature of the missionary enterprise. Let your heart be possessed with so strong an affection for the heathen, and so earnestly pant after their salvation, that the difficulties and sacrifices associated with the missionary work may lose all their terror, and even become attractive. Do you think that Lyman and Munson were afraid of danger and suffering? Had they known the mortal violence that was coming upon them long enough beforehand to make it a subject of deliberate reflection, would they have repented of having devoted themselves to the missionary service? Now, while preparing for that service, ponder well the trials to which you may be exposed. Count the cost. Regard sacrifices and sufferings as constituting a substantial part, and not an unwelcome part, of the life of missionaries. Be ready to follow Christ to prison and to death. The true missionary spirit showed itself in Paul, when he said to his sorrowing friends who were anxious for his safety,—“What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus;” and again, when he said to the Philippian Christians,—“Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice, and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.” If you would achieve great and noble deeds, prepare for great and severe trials. If you would be *strong to act, be strong to suffer*. Never think of enlisting in this holy warfare without a cordial readiness to endure affliction. Let your minds be so thoroughly informed and settled on this point, that no danger or suffering can ever move you. Have that steady faith in God, and that unquenchable love to the souls of men, which are proper to the ambassadors of Christ; and then what has taken place on the island of Sumatra will have no power to disquiet your minds, or turn you back from your holy enterprise. The world is to be converted; and the last command of the risen Savior is, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” It is not,—Go preach the gospel *so far as you can without exposing yourselves to suffering and death*. It has no such condition. It is peremptory. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”—The early propagation of the gospel cost thousands of lives. The mere profession of Christianity, even when made in the most noiseless, inoffensive manner, was attended, in instances which cannot be numbered, with deprivations, imprisonment, tortures, and death in its most frightful forms. But did the prospect of such sufferings prevent ministers from preaching the gospel, or private Christians from adhering to it? Did their conscience bend or their hearts grow faint under persecution? No, never. Persecution did indeed help to draw the line between true and false professors. When afflictions came on account of the word, those who were not of the fold of Christ, generally drew back. So it would be now. Should dangers and troubles multiply, and should the powers of the world and the powers of darkness gain the ascendancy in every missionary field, and breathe out threatenings and slaughter against the preachers of the cross; what think you would be the effect of all this upon the number of missionaries? Weigh the question well. Would their number be increased, or diminished?—It is not to be doubted, that such a prospect of persecution and suffering would intimidate and drive back those,

who had contemplated the missionary work from worldly, selfish motives. But would it intimidate the true soldiers of the cross? Would it turn back those whom God has called by his grace to go forth in his name? Do you not speak of the courage of the warrior, who meets undaunted the opposing army, and faces the cannon's mouth? But the courage of the Christian missionary is of a higher order. It springs from nobler principles. It is sublime and heavenly. Nothing can subdue it. It is in close alliance with the omnipotence of God, and can no more be overcome, than Omnipotence itself. The prospect of persecution and suffering, instead of disheartening those who have the true spirit of ministers and missionaries, would quickly rouse them to new fervor of prayer, to new zeal, resolution, and effort. And such a prospect would exert a most happy influence also upon many private Christians. It would cure their worldly spirit. It would strengthen their faith, and raise their love to a higher, purer flame; and thus would induce them to come forth, and join the host of missionaries and martyrs. The only loss then, which would be likely to result from persecution, would be the loss (if loss it would be) of those who never loved the cause of Christ, and were not worthy to be intrusted with the treasure of the gospel; while there would be great gain from the increase of holy zeal and resolution in those already devoted to the work; and gain too from the awakening of that purer and stronger affection in private Christians, which would induce many of them to make a free-will offering of themselves to be the messengers of Christ to the heathen.

Had I time, I would recite to you what the Apostle says to the Hebrews of the sufferings of the people of God in still earlier periods; how they were tortured, not accepting deliverance; had trial of mockings, and scourgings, and imprisonment; were stoned, were sawn asunder, were slain with the sword; wandered in deserts, in mountains, and in caves; being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Those sufferings were repeated in the apostles' days, and afterwards; and Christians patiently endured them. And is not Christianity the same now as it was formerly? Is not faith the same? Is not love to God and to the souls of men the same? Nay, rather,—*is not the power and grace of Christ the same?* Do you think, then, that the prospect of danger, and even the most violent storm of persecution raised against ministers and missionaries, would prevail to turn them back from the service of Christ? No, through the grace of God, severe sufferings would produce the contrary effect. Is not this the very thing that is needed to break us off from our vain worldly hopes, and to bring us up to the measure of primitive faith and devotion? And if missionaries, and all the friends of the missionary cause, were only brought up to the proper measure of piety; they would do more to advance the real, spiritual interests of the church in one year, than has been done for many years past, amid all the zeal which has shown itself in the cause of human salvation.

Again: Permit me to say, that the recent events of divine Providence contain lessons of serious moment for *our Missionary Board and its Officers, and for all the friends of missions in our community.* God never administers chastisement without a reason. The various trials allotted to *individual Christians*, are unquestionably such as they need, and such as will, in the end, conduce to their spiritual good. **And does not the church and the religious community, and every**

society of Christians, as obviously need correction from God in their associate capacity, as Christians do in their individual capacity? Having long been connected with the BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS and its Executive Officers, and having been intimately associated with them in their efforts to evangelize the heathen, I may be allowed to say, that I never knew a body of Christians who exhibited more of the upright and disinterested spirit of our religion, or deserved more of the public confidence. But yet that same Missionary Board, and its Officers, and the religious community which they represent, are all, in the sight of God, very far from perfection, and all need chastisement from his hand. They certainly need it, or God would not administer it. What then are some of the wrongtendencies which appear among the particular friends and promoters of our Foreign Missions, and which the late mournful events are suited to correct? and what are the ways in which these events may be rendered profitable to them?

First : These events should teach us and our fellow-Christians *to be humble, and to acknowledge our dependence on God.* The friends and patrons of the Missionary cause are, like other good men, exposed to *pride* and *self-confidence*. Who does not know the effect of prosperity upon the human heart? Those divine favors, those manifestations of the love and grace of God, which ought to excite the purest, warmest gratitude, are frequently turned into occasions of self-complacency and vain boasting. This is the case, more or less, with all Christians, and even with ministers of the gospel. Let any one of them be distinguished a little for his gifts or his services; let him have a little more success than others in doing good; or let him see more than others of the glory of divine power and grace in the conversion of sinners; and in all probability, his heart will soon begin to swell with feelings of self-importance and vanity; and by and by he will make it manifest, that he thinks highly of himself, and expects to be esteemed and honored above his brethren. Those commendations from man, and those favors from God, which should make him feel that he is nothing, inflate him with pride. It is not in man, even when sanctified in part, to enjoy continued prosperity, or to possess any thing which is excellent, without danger of being lifted up. How was it with the Apostle Paul, when he was caught up to paradise, and saw and heard unutterable things? We might suppose, that so eminent a saint, after having been favored with such privileges, would always maintain the most exalted views of God; and that after having seen himself brought before the glorious Majesty of heaven, he would ever after appear little and vile in his own eyes, and would exercise a more profound humility than ever before, and be in no danger of pride. But he frankly tells us that, *lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelation*, there was given him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet him, *lest he should be exalted above measure.* He must have something to keep down pride. Brethren, let us bring the matter home to ourselves. When we read, or think, that the Foreign Mission from America commenced here; that this Seminary has been distinguished for a Missionary spirit,—(though alas! we have really had but a small portion of that spirit,) when we think that the greater part of the missionaries have been educated here, and that some of them have been eminent for their talents, piety, and usefulness; and when we are told to what an extent the dependence of the Board for Missionaries is still upon this Institution; have

not some feelings of sinful self-complacency stolen into our hearts? We ought to render thanks to God for his goodness in giving us an opportunity to do any thing for the spread of the gospel; and, at the same time, to be penitent and humble that we have done so small a part of what we ought to have done. But, instead of this, have we not at times been disposed inwardly to congratulate ourselves, and to lift our heads high, as though we were entitled to special honor? Has not God's all-searching eye beheld more or less of this sin in our hearts? And has he not seen it necessary, on this account, to visit us with severe chastisement?

Farther: When the Missionary Board, and the religious community that have sustained their operations, have seen the great work going on from year to year with increasing success; when they have heard of the hundreds of thousands contributed to this object, of the hundreds of missionaries employed, the great number of stations occupied, and the high estimation in which our missionaries and our labors are held in other countries; have they not been conscious of some stirrings of heart contrary to the lowliness of Christian piety; some of that arrogance which God's soul hateth? And has not God, in the recent dispensations of his providence, been doing just what was necessary to correct this sin, and to make his people feel that they are nothing, and that he is all in all? Is it not for this purpose, that so many of our missionaries have been left to sicken and die? that in some of our missionary stations there has been so little success in converting the heathen; and that some of our missionaries have failed to exhibit that zeal, and self-denial, and persevering diligence, which we expected of them? Is it not for this purpose also, that in less than fourteen years God has taken away three Secretaries of our Missionary Board,—a WORCESTER, an EVARTS, and a CORNELIUS,—names that will ever be precious in the annals of the church? * And is it not for the same holy purpose, that the late heart-rending stroke,—the violent death of our missionaries,—has come upon us?

And is it indeed so, that our vanity and self-confidence, and our unmindfulness of the grace of God, have rendered it necessary that we should be visited with these severe and awful chastisements,—the death of so many missionaries, and of so many chief agents in the missionary cause, and the disappointment of so many hopes as to the success of the gospel in pagan lands? Let the thought of this fill us with shame and penitence, and bring us upon our faces before God. And henceforth may we, and all the friends of missions, *be clothed with humility*,—the only garment which it will ever become us to wear.

The events which have occurred are eminently suited to withdraw our confidence from every arm of flesh,—to check undue reliance upon human instruments and human efforts, and to bring us to look to God alone, and to put all our trust in him.

If we could look to no higher power for the conversion of the heathen, than the power of missionaries; what would become of our hopes, when missionaries die? Far from our minds then be the thought, that the salvation of those who are lost, depends ultimately on these feeble, frail instruments. God could, if he pleased, work without any instruments whatever; or if he employed instruments,

* Had this sermon been delivered a fortnight later, it would have been the painful duty of the preacher to add the name of our respected and beloved WISNER to the list of deceased Secretaries. Three have now been taken from us in four years.

he might employ those of far higher qualifications, than imperfect, dying men possess. Why then has God chosen to make use of imperfect, dying men, as agents in carrying on his work of grace? Is it because he has not sufficient resources in himself, and stands in need of our help? Why, really, it seems to me, brethren, that for God to take such poor, weak, sickly things as we are, and make us in any measure fit for his service, and then sustain us in it, costs him, (if I may so speak,) costs him far more, than it would to do the work himself, without any agency of ours. Certainly the infinite God, if he pleased, could at once, by a special revelation, communicate the knowledge of the gospel to the minds of the heathen, and by his Holy Spirit could effectually induce them to accept it, and so give them eternal life, without making any use of the labors of gospel ministers. Let him only speak the word, and all this would instantly be done: just as he said, "Let there be light, and there was light."—For God to take human beings, so ignorant, so sinful, so unfit for his service, and to prepare them for the work of the ministry; to bear with their pride and unfaithfulness, with their mistakes, and all the faults of their character; to support them in their labors; to call them back from their wanderings; to watch over them and guard them every moment, and by the exertion of his own omnipotence, to render their poor services successful;—all this is surely a great work. Yes, I repeat it,—for God to make use of such feeble, imperfect instruments in saving souls, requires more agency on his part, than to save them without any instruments whatever. Evidently, then, his employing such instruments cannot be designed to diminish his own agency. It does in fact greatly increase it. For now, according to the plan which he has adopted, he does *himself*, by his own special agency, convert and save perishing men,—(which he might easily do at will, without any instrument.)—and in addition to this, he takes us, who are "but dust and ashes," into his service, and by his great power and mercy helps us along, constantly working in us to prepare us to act for him, and then working in the souls of sinners by us,—and that, too, when our miserable labors are frequently nothing but a hinderance to his own gracious designs. No, brethren, God does not call us into his service to supersede or diminish his own agency. He does it for exactly the opposite purpose. It is the very *nature* of God, and the *pleasure* of God, to *act*. And to act as he does, is his *glory*. It costs him no effort, like what *we* call effort, to put forth his almighty agency. It is easy for God to create millions of worlds, and to sustain them by his arm, and move them in their orbits for ages of ages, without any cessation. It is perfectly easy for him to do all this, and to do it for ever, if he pleases. Most surely then, the infinite God, in accomplishing the work of redemption, does not bring the power of men or angels into action, to prevent the necessity of exercising his own power; but for the very purpose of *exercising it on the largest scale*,—for the purpose of *putting forth his own wise and benevolent agency to the most glorious extent*. For God to act thus is to act like himself. According to this exalted principle, so different from the narrow, scanty principle which governs man, God did not choose that plan which would require the *least* of his agency, but that which would require the *most*. The whole complicated machinery of the natural world, in great things and in little things, is such, as constantly to call forth and display the infinite power of God. He loves to exert his infinite power; and he loves to *display* it too,—not indeed for his own benefit, but for ours. Accordingly, if God is pleased to make use

of instruments in saving sinners, we are not to imagine that he will choose those of the highest order—those indued with perfections the nearest to divine; because, if such exalted agents should come out between God and us,—small and feeble as we are,—the grandeur of their character, and the dazzling splendor of their operations, might completely fill the narrow field of our vision, and hide the glory of God from our view. We are rather to conclude, so far, at least, as the benefit of human beings is concerned, that God will choose instruments which have no overpowering grandeur of character,—instruments stamped with insignificance, (such as we are,)—instruments altogether inadequate, of themselves, to accomplish the work designed,—instruments so imbecile, and so manifestly insufficient, that the whole world shall be compelled to look through them, and above them, to a divine agency, and to give glory to him “who worketh all in all.”

It is nothing against these views, that the angels are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation.” They are indeed ministering spirits. But their agency is all concealed from our view. For what reason? Why are we not permitted to behold those benevolent beings who are thus active in doing us good, that we may love and honor them, as we do the ministers of the gospel? May not the reason of this be found in the imbecility of our nature, and in our danger of being overawed by the majesty of angelic appearances, and of being drawn into idolatry? Who of us could guard against agitation and terror, and maintain composure of mind, if, like some saints of old, we should have a vision of angelic beings? Angels can behold angels, without danger. They have stronger minds than we. When the most resplendent instruments come out clearly to their view, they can see God through them, and in them,—and can see more of God, because the instruments he employs are more glorious. But is it not otherwise with us? Are we not always in danger of looking even upon a mortal like ourselves, if a little distinguished by the lustre of his character, with an excessive and idolatrous veneration?

The principle above stated is exactly the one which the apostle brings out, when, speaking of the gospel ministry, he says, that “God has committed this treasure,” not to creatures of exalted rank, as he might have done, but “to *earthen vessels*,”—for this very purpose, “that the excellence of the power may be of God, and not of us.” The weakness and frailty of the instruments are to turn off the eyes of all men from them to God, and to make it manifest, that he does the work, and deserves all the praise.

Such is the view which the scriptures give of the agents that God employs, and the reasons why he employs them, in the work of saving sinners. Such, also, is the view inculcated upon us by the events of divine providence, particularly by those which have recently taken place. The missionaries whom we send forth are “*earthen vessels* ;” the most healthy and vigorous of them are frail as the grass. They may be quickly wasted away by sickness, or still more quickly cut off by the violence of men. And those of them who are most conspicuous for their piety, are subject to many weaknesses and imperfections. Let us, then, never place our reliance upon feeble human agents, but upon God, the Almighty Agent, “of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things.”

But let not the events which have come to pass, however painful and humbling, have any effect to *discourage* the devoted friends of

the missionary cause. These events are appointed as the means of improving their characters, of increasing their fitness for the great work, and so of leading on to greater success in the end. There is something very animating in that principle of God's providence, which makes great disappointments, adversities, and sufferings,—events which try the souls of men,—the means of bringing about great results. We see that no enterprises of extraordinary moment are carried forward smoothly and easily. Nor is it in this manner that men are prepared for such enterprises. Greatness, whether in character or in the objects accomplished, is invariably associated with difficulties, and often with what the world calls disasters. May we not, then, be permitted to indulge the cheering thought, that the various adverse and painful events which have met us in the missionary enterprise, are in reality expressions of the divine favor, and are clear indications, that the work in which we are engaged is one of singular grandeur, and that our humble endeavors for the salvation of the heathen are to be crowned with ultimate and glorious success?

The present occasion leads us to contemplate a *profound mystery of divine providence*,—a mystery as great and unfathomable, as any of the doctrines of our religion. At the present day, almost two thousand years after Christ made propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and after so much has been done by apostles, and martyrs, and other servants of God, and so many prayers have been offered up for the spread of the gospel, and when we have been inclined to think that the darkness is almost past, and the universal reign of Christ near at hand,—there is still on the island of Sumatra a tribe of cannibals,—a million of human beings so savage and cruel, that they murder their fellow-men, even those who come to them on an errand of the purest love, and then, horrible thought! devour their mangled, lifeless bodies.—Where now,—we might be ready to ask,—where is the God of infinite power and grace,—where is the God who has all hearts in his hand, and who has mercy on whom he will have mercy,—that men should any where be found possessed of a character so unutterably base and dreadful? Or if they are found, where is the God of justice, that they are not instantly cut off?—But this mystery does not end with the cannibals existing in Sumatra, and in other parts of the earth. It extends, in all its unsearchableness, to the whole heathen world. Why is it,—(I do not utter the words irreverently, but to show that we are of yesterday and know nothing, and that God's ways are past finding out,)—why is it that even at this day three fourths of the human race are left in heathen darkness, having never known the name of the only Savior of lost men? Why has not God caused them to hear the glad tidings, when at any time during the ages of darkness that are past, he could have raised up unnumbered ministers, and sent them forth into all lands, and could have made the gospel preached by them, effectual to their salvation;—yea, when he could have saved them with infinite ease, if he had seen fit, without the labor of any ministers? Why has he suffered so great a part of this world to remain a barren, frightful wilderness, when it has been in the power of his hand to make it a fruitful field?

It explains no part of this mystery to say, *that the heathen are moral agents, and that God treats them as such*. It is indeed very plain, and what no man ever doubted, that the heathen are *moral*

agents. But what if they are moral agents? They are no more so than *our own forefathers* were. But when God sent the gospel to our idolatrous forefathers, and converted them, he surely did it without injuring their *moral agency*. And if he had pleased, he could just as easily have converted any other part and every part of the heathen world. Who can suppose that any greater measure of divine influence, or any greater display of divine grace, is necessary to save those who are now pagans, than was necessary to save our pagan ancestors? There can be no doubt, that the Almighty God, had he chosen to do it, could long since—could at any time—have given to his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and brought the uttermost parts of the earth to submit to his peaceful reign. The question which involves the mystery is, why has not God *chosen* to do it, and why has he not put forth that act of his power and grace needful to bring it to pass?

Nor does it clear up the mystery at all to say, that *the Christian world has been in fault*; that if they had been as benevolent and active and faithful, and as fervent in prayer, as they ought to have been; the sound of the gospel, accompanied with the power of the Holy Ghost, would long ago have reached all nations. I admit this. Still the great question remains: Why has not God *made* the Christian world thus benevolent, and active, and faithful, and fervent in prayer? Why has he not actually raised up well qualified ministers in sufficient numbers to accomplish the mighty work of the world's conversion? He raised up Paul and the other apostles; and he raised up Luther and Calvin, and a multitude more. And he could have raised up others in any numbers he chose, as easily as he raised up these. He could have raised up a hundred as easily as ten, and a thousand as easily as a hundred. God has had power to carry his word and his saving work long ago into the midst of China. He has had power to turn the heart of the Emperor and of all his officers to embrace the Christian religion, and to labor for its diffusion through the empire. He has had power to establish churches, schools, colleges, and seminaries there, which should long before this have raised up millions of devoted Christians, and educated thousands and thousands of faithful ministers,—yea, enough to supply the whole empire, and to send the gospel to all the surrounding countries. The mystery of mysteries is, that God, with his infinite power and wisdom and love, has not done this. And the mystery of mysteries this will doubtless be to us, till we have minds large enough to comprehend the infinitude of God's attributes, and the whole system of his works through all past and all future time. The inspired writers do not answer, and do not attempt to answer, the questions which may be raised respecting this subject, or respecting the conversion of some sinners in Christian lands, while others are passed by. They attempt to solve no part of this great mystery. They teach us, what is highly important for us to know, that God, in all these things, *acts "according to the counsel of his own will," and that his will is infinitely wise and good,—and there they leave the subject*;—and they leave it there, that the loftiness of man may be brought low, and that God alone may be exalted.

I shall touch upon one point more, and that is *the true spirit of the Christian religion*—so widely, so totally different from the spirit of the world. A tribe of cannibals in Sumatra have inhumanly killed and devoured our beloved brethren, who went there from the purest

benevolence. What now shall we do to avenge the innocent blood of these missionaries? Shall we petition our government to send forth an army to inflict signal punishment upon those monsters of cruelty, and to teach them, that American citizens cannot be injured with impunity? Or shall we pray God to send down fire from heaven to destroy them? No, brethren. The God whom we worship, is *the God of love*. And our Savior, infinitely merciful himself, requires all his disciples to copy his example, and to cherish a benevolent, compassionate, forgiving temper towards the worst of the human race. And when, after his resurrection from the dead, he commissioned his apostles to go forth to preach the glad tidings of salvation to all the world, he directed them to *begin at Jerusalem*, where so many prophets and messengers of God had been killed,—yes, he directed them to begin the work of benevolence *at Jerusalem*, in the midst of those who hated him, and had shed his blood! Behold the true spirit of our religion! It is the spirit of meekness, gentleness, and forgiveness. It is the spirit of love—love to enemies, to persecutors, to murderers. Guided by this spirit, let us meditate no return to those who have massacred our beloved missionaries, but to labor and pray for their eternal welfare. Let the officers of our Missionary Board take special pains to send the precious blessings of the gospel to the island of Sumatra, and to the Batta territory in the interior of that island, the place where LYMAN and MUNSON were slain. And let the missionary, selected for the purpose, be solemnly instructed to preach the gospel to the inhabitants of Sumatra, *beginning at Batta*. With holy confidence in God, let that missionary go forward to his work of mercy among those poor, wretched cannibals. And let him search out the very men who murdered our brethren,—yes, let him be sure to search them out, and begin with *them*. As they are first in guilt and wretchedness, let him first seek their good. With a heart that pities them, and longs for their salvation, let him proclaim to them the glorious gospel:—*Behold I bring you glad tidings. Open your ears to the message of divine love. Jesus died for sinners, for the chief of sinners; and he is able to save to the uttermost. I offer you pardon in his name; pardon for blood-guiltiness, and for all your crimes. Those Christians who sent me to you, have no feeling of revenge. They ask nothing of you, but that you would look unto Jesus, and be happy for ever in his kingdom.* Thus let him preach to those degraded, miserable heathen, the unsearchable riches of Christ. And if the grace of God should touch their hearts, and bring them to repentance,—and if they should at length be seen at the feet of Jesus, weeping for their sins, and weeping too at the thought of his dying love, and devoting their whole souls to him, and then going about to tell their companions in guilt, that they had found the SAVIOR, and proclaiming his abounding grace to all around them;—Oh! this would be a spectacle, at the sight of which angels would rejoice, and the report of which would fill the hearts of ten thousand believers with holy gladness. And could those two missionaries, now we trust in heaven, hear the blessed tidings of the repentance of their *murderers*, how would they join with the angels in their rejoicing, while with a pure, Christ-like spirit, they would feel willing to go down again to earth, and bear the pains of a hundred deaths, for the joy of beholding such precious fruits of God's Spirit, and such glorious triumphs of his grace, in the salvation of sinners!

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SERMON CLXXXVI.

BY REV. JOEL MANN,
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THE OBSTINATE PERVERSENESS OF MEN.

JEREMIAH viii: 5.—They hold fast deceit; they refuse to return.

THIS solemn accusation was made by the holy and heart-searching God, against his professed people. It was delivered by the prophet, in the language of Jehovah himself. The message of which this forms a part, begins thus;—"Moreover thou shalt say unto them, thus saith the Lord, shall they fall and not arise? shall he turn away and not return?" That is, if a man has made a misstep and fallen, will he not immediately endeavor to arise? Will he contentedly lay prostrate on the ground, and give up the object he had in view? If he has fallen into a pit, will he not endeavor to get out as speedily as possible? Or, if a man is on a journey and has lost his way, will he not return into the right way as soon as he discovers his error? If he has turned away into a wrong road, will he not abandon it, and return to the right without delay, when he is correctly informed? In such cases men are thankful, when their error is pointed out and they are assisted in correcting it.

Why, then, said the Lord, is this people slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit; they refuse to return. Here was a strange case. In regard to duty, the Lord's people would not act on the principles of common prudence and discretion. They had back-

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slidden and fallen, and would not endeavor to recover themselves. They were contented to lie in the dirt and filth of sin. They had wandered out of the right way and were in the road to destruction, and would not forsake it. When kindly admonished by the Lord himself, they would not return to the right way. They persisted in the wrong, knowing it to be the wrong. They held fast deceit and refused to return.

I hearkened and heard, saith the Lord, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. The great God who had condescended to instruct and warn his people, listened to hear if any among them began to confess and repent;—if any began to reflect on his conduct, and to say, what have I done? But they spake not aright. They did not come with humble confession. They did not cry unto the Lord with deep self-abasement. They did not forsake their evil ways; but every one turned to his favorite course, and rushed on, heedless of danger, as the ignorant and furious horse rusheth into the battle. Such were the professed people of God in days of old.

We live in a brighter age. We enjoy the instructions of the Lord from heaven. Our privileges far surpass those which were conferred upon the ancient church: and more abundant and precious fruits of piety may be expected of us. But, as I apprehend, the same disobedience, unfaithfulness, and backsliding are to be found in the professed people of God now, as in those days, when the prophet Jeremiah wept, and warned, and prayed. Let us look at the proof of this; and let us not be stiffnecked as they were of old; but solemnly regard the truth of God and faithfully apply it to ourselves. The same charge is doubtless true to a great extent, concerning professors now, which was delivered by the prophet against the Jews. 'They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.

1. Professors of religion are guilty of this, *when they refuse to repent of their backslidings and neglect of duty*. They often acknowledge that they are imperfect, and sometimes feel that they ought to do differently. They go to a religious meeting, and conscience is a little aroused, and they perceive that they have no engagedness in religion, and nothing of the true spirit of prayer. They know this is wrong. But, instead of humbling themselves at once for this sinful departure from the Lord, they harden their hearts more and more. They satisfy themselves that they are as good as other professors, and perhaps lay the blame of their deadness and negligence upon their brethren. They think they should not have sunk down into this state of awful declen-

sion, if others had not done the same. Ah, brethren, do you flatter yourselves that you who know your Master's will, shall be excused because others do not perform it? Is the conduct of others the rule of duty for you? Be assured, such excuses will avail nothing for your justification in the sight of God. He will not ask you what your brethren have done, but what you have done or neglected to do.

Perhaps you have been saying to yourselves, "This time of declension is no good time to repent or reform. We must remain as we are, until God pours out his Spirit and revives us." This is just making one sin an excuse for another. And, furthermore, it is an attempt to throw off the blame of your continuance in sin from yourselves upon the holy God. Is it indeed a time of religious declension? Then it is a time which calls for immediate repentance. If you are guilty of backsliding, then you should come down with deep self abasement before the Lord, and commence within yourself a thorough reformation. A full proportion of the guilt of this declension lies at your door. You may not then wait for your brethren; nor have you a right to wait for God to impel you to do your duty. To put off repentance in the midst of backslidings and negligence, is to hold fast deceit and to refuse to return. It is to act over the sinful conduct of the Jews, for which they were so solemnly reprov'd.

2. Professors hold fast deceit and refuse to return, *when they disregard divine reproof and misimprove the means which are employed to reform them.* A very large proportion of the Bible, and especially of the New Testament, is addressed to professed believers. Numerous admonitions and reproofs, commands and exhortations are given, to guard them from error and to quicken them in duty. Let the halting, wavering, slothful christian open the sacred volume, and admonitions and awakening instructions will meet his eye on every page. If he disregards these and goes on in slothfulness, he holds fast deceit and refuses to return.

The ministry of reconciliation is one of the most important means which God hath instituted for the conversion of sinners and the perfecting of the saints. But how often do faithful ministers, like the prophets of old, deliver God's messages to his people, and show them their sins, without inducing them to repent and reform! How often, not only on the sabbath, but on other occasions of solemn convocation, do they labor to arouse the members of the church and to prevail on them to come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, and see these labors resisted and made ineffectual. How often do they stand, and plead, and warn in the name of the Lord, before any signs of life can be perceived. The slumbers are so profound, they seem like the

sleep of death. The love of ease and selfish enjoyment produces such an insensibility to spiritual things, that it seems impossible to quicken the soul to holy action. When some vigorous efforts are made to break up these leaden slumbers, objections and excuses are perhaps started. The complaint of turning the world upside down, is again renewed, and the call for *order* is echoed from every dozing professor. O, how they hold fast deceit, and refuse to return! The language of their hearts is, a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep. God often grants such the desires of their hearts, and lets them sleep until the pangs of death take hold upon them.

3. Professors of religion hold fast deceit and refuse to return, *when they are not aroused and reformed by the afflictive and trying events of divine providence.* God has various ways of trying and proving his people. He tried his people of old that it might be seen whether they would be obedient unto him, and cleave to him in all circumstances. And they turned back, and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.

So it is now. Sometimes he sends sickness and causes them to take a serious look into eternity. Sometimes he sends misfortunes, and removes the idols of wealth and pleasure to which they have given their hearts. Sometimes he suffers their reputation to be assailed by the tongue of slander to show them their sin in seeking the praise of men more than the praise of God. Sometimes the church is brought into peculiar difficulties,—its numbers are greatly diminished, and the frowns of Heaven are evidently upon it. Contentions arise, and opposers employ their weapons to weaken its friends and destroy its interests.

Now, then, if professors are not aroused and reformed by these trials; if they are not humbled under a sense of their sins;—if they are not made more faithful in duty, more prayerful and believing, it is a sad indication of great alienation from God. It is certain they are holding fast deceit. Just so it was in the days of Jeremiah, the prophet. Said he concerning the Jews, “O Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock; *they have refused to return.*”

4. Professors are guilty of the sin specified in the text, *when their conduct is manifestly in opposition to their prayers.*

Do not people often pray for holiness, and yet neglect the means which are necessary to obtain holiness? Do they not refuse to deny

themselves in things which are unsuitable and wrong,—such as the indulgence of pride, or appetite, or jealousy, or ambition? Do they not avoid self-examination, and thus neglect the state of their hearts? While they pray to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, do they not neglect the study of the Bible and contemplation on divine truth? Yea, while they pray for holiness, do they not indulge in foolish talking and jesting, and suffer their minds to be filled with vanities, and their hearts to be occupied with impure associations? Is it not evident in such cases,—cases in which they pray for one thing and pursue after a directly opposite thing—that they hold fast deceit and refuse to return?

Do not some people pray to be kept from temptation and the snares of the devil, and then put themselves directly in the way of temptation, and step into the net which they know is spread for their feet? Do they not spend their time in the mere pursuit of pleasure, or at places of public resort where the profane and intemperate hold their revels? Do they not sometimes ask to be kept from the way of the wicked, and then go right into their way,—adopt their principles and yield to their practices? And is not this holding fast deceit? Of what benefit was it for Judas to pray to be kept from evil, and then go away and take counsel with the enemies of Christ, and sell himself into their hands to accomplish their wicked designs? As little will it profit us to pray, unless we strive to live in a manner corresponding with our prayers.

Persons under serious impressions, will pray that they may submit to God and do their duty, and yet stand out against God and resist all the motives which he has presented to induce them to perform their duty. They will seem to sigh for deliverance from sin, and at the same time be unwilling to part with sin and commence a life of holiness. How awfully do such provoke God by holding fast deceit and refusing to return!

Again, professors often pray for a revival of religion and the conversion of the impenitent; when yet nothing can prevail on them to remove obstacles which prevent a revival. Nothing can move them to perform the duties which are necessary in order to such a desirable state of things. One has a difficulty with his fellow-christian, and will not do what he can and ought for the settlement of it. Another has not walked orderly with the church according to his covenant vows, and will not make the proper acknowledgment and reform. Another is grieving his brethren by pursuing an improper business, and will not abandon it. Another is wilfully, or carelessly, or evasively *withholding honest dues*. And another is contending about principles and modes of operation of comparatively little importance; and will not unite heart and hand for the promotion of a revival. Thus while they

pray for the prosperity of religion, they are standing in the way of its prosperity, and exert their whole influence to prevent it.

So the Jews prayed for the coming of the Messiah and for the prosperity of his kingdom, and yet rejected him when he had come. They hated his doctrines and his movements, and did all they could to prevent the progress of his kingdom. Our Savior, therefore, in his plainness, styled them hypocrites, who strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel;—who tithed mint, annise, and cummin,—were precise about certain things, but omitted the weightier matters of the law;—who in fact would neither enter into the kingdom themselves, nor suffer others to enter.

Men hold fast deceit when they refuse to pray as God requires them to pray. Every one knows that formal, heartless, unbelieving prayers are offensive to God, and yet, how many continue to offer such prayers from week to week. The Lord has expressly forbidden such unmeaning performances. He says, “bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear.” And yet, how many persist in offering vain oblations unto the Lord, and weary him with their heartless, unbelieving prayers. They will not renounce their wicked unbelief. They will not shake off their stupidity. They will not come down into the dust and plead with importunity and faith. They know they ought to do this;—that they ought to approach God with the confidence, and affection, and earnestness of needy children, and yet they will not do it. O how do such hold fast deceit and refuse to return!

5. Those are chargeable with this sin, *who will not cease to be conformed to the world;—who will persist in their supreme attachment and devotedness to it.* No man can serve two masters, especially when they require directly opposite things. The love which God requires, as due to himself, is supreme, and is to be manifested by serving him in preference to every thing else. But how can such love and such service be rendered by those who are devoted to worldly things; who prefer the enjoyment of sensual pleasures to the performance of duty; or who would rather be rich and honorable than to have the favor of God?

What would you think of a servant who should come to you in the morning, very seriously, and ask you what you would have him do through the day, and profess to be very ready to serve you exactly according to your pleasure; who should go directly away and disregard all your orders, and spend his time in seeking his own pleasure, or in

attending to his own interests in opposition to yours? Suppose he should come to you, morning after morning, in the same manner, and having obtained your instructions, should go and spend the day in slothfulness and self-indulgence! Would you not dismiss him as an unfaithful and treacherous servant?

But, how many there are, who, when they have ascertained the will of God, go and live in direct opposition to it. How often do people pray to be holy, and to be directed in duty, who will by no means renounce their sinful conformity to the world, and who are entirely unwilling to walk in the path of duty. How many professed disciples of the Redeemer there are, who are so absorbed in worldly pursuits and worldly enjoyments, that they can scarcely find time to pray at all. O how many ask to be *weaned from the world*, and yet cling to it with a grasp like the grasp of death! Weaned, indeed! Just as the Israelites were weaned from the leeks and flesh pots of Egypt, when they were longing after them continually. Let it be remembered, that an inspired apostle declares, "if any man will be the friend of the world, he is the enemy of God." The first transgression consisted primarily in withdrawing the confidence and affections of the heart from God, and choosing sensible objects in preference to him. This has been substantially the ground of the controversy between God and men, down to this day. He teaches us, saying, love not the world, nor the things of the world;—seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;—lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; be ye holy, for I am holy. But, how many there are, even among professors of religion, who make the attainment of holiness, the favor of God, and eternal life, matters of secondary importance! Yea, rather, these things, which involve their interests for eternity, engage but a small portion of their attention, and seldom rouse them to any vigorous and self-denying efforts. Thus do they hold fast deceit and refuse to return.

This subject teaches us, that *an obedient temper is the great thing necessary*. When Saul spared the best of the spoil taken from the Amalekites, contrary to the command of God, under the pretence of offering it in sacrifice, Samuel said unto him, "hath the Lord as great delight in burnt sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." The offering of sacrifice is solemn mockery, if the heart be not obedient. It is a mere task, performed to quiet conscience or to purchase the favor of the Most High.

Religious services, however numerous and imposing they may be, will not be acceptable, unless the heart be right with God; unless there

be a willingness to renounce every sin, and to obey in all things the divine will. The holding fast of any favorite sin shows a disobedient temper,—an heart not yet weaned from its idols;—an heart not fully set upon serving and honoring God. As an holy Being, therefore, he cannot be complacent to such, nor accept their offering. Says David, “if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” The Savior has taught us most impressively that “not every one who saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

Here, then, we may perceive what is necessary to acceptable and prevalent prayer. *It is a love of holiness and a willingness to obey all God's commands.* Thus saith the Lord, to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word. Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desires of thy heart. The holy Sovereign of the universe regards with infinite complacency those who so believe his truth as to regulate their conduct by it;—who so believe his threatenings as to hasten their escape from the coming wrath; and who so believe his promises as to make them the basis of their hopes, and incentives to the faithful performance of duty. Yea, if we delight in the perfections of Jehovah, and in his perfect government, and the way of salvation by which those perfections are manifested; the desires of our hearts will be for things agreeable to his will, and therefore, they will be granted. With a benevolence which infinitely surpasses that of earthly parents, he bestows good gifts on those who obey and honor him. Accordingly, John says, “whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing to him.” This he declares as a matter of actual experience. His brethren, also, knew it to be a fact that they did receive the things they asked for; and the apostle tells them, that the reason of it was their obedience to divine commands,—their habitual doing of the things which were pleasing to God. Let the same conscientious obedience to divine instructions prevail in the church now, and the world would soon cease to doubt the efficacy of prayer.

The subject shows us *one reason why religion is not more prosperous.* Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that he cannot save; neither is his ear heavy that he cannot hear; but our iniquities have separated between him and us, and our sins have hid his face from us. God is ever willing to bless his people when he can do it consistently with his glory. But he will not bless them in a way that will encourage them in their slothfulness and sins. They must put away their sins;—they must cease to hold fast deceit; and they must return unto

the Lord with full purpose of heart. Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. God is ready to fulfil his promise. He will not fail to do it, when the conditions are performed on our part.

If, then, the present favor of the Most High is not enjoyed, we are the cause of this most lamentable deprivation. If he hides his face from us, we make it necessary for him to do it. If the influences of the Spirit are withholden, we have shut up the heavens and made them as brass over our heads.

Who, then, will lay this to heart, and now return unto the Lord? Why should not this be a year of unprecedented mercy and of abounding grace to the churches? Why, beloved brethren, may we not see the visions of the prophets realized, when it shall come to pass that the church shall awake and put on her strength, and deck herself in her beautiful garments; when the watchmen shall lift up the voice, and with the voice sing together, and when they shall see eye to eye;—when the waste places shall break forth into joy and sing together;—when the Lord shall make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God? Who will dare to stay this blessing by holding fast deceit and refusing to return? Who, this year, will do his part toward securing such rich spiritual mercies, by his holy obedience, his fervent prayers, and his persevering efforts?

SERMON CLXXXVII.

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DYING THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS

NUMBERS xxiii : 10.—*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*

A MARSHAL of France, mortally wounded in a great battle, exclaimed in madness,—“*I will not die.*” He invoked the name of Napoleon, as if the mighty emperor could save him from death. But he *died*. “No man hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit: neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war.”

“What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?” Die, we all must. We hear of dying like a hero—like a philosopher—like a man. We also hear of dying like a Christian.

It may be profitable to inquire, why *we* may wish “to die the death of the righteous.”

1. *Not because there is no pain in his death.*

The separation of the soul from the body, is usually attended with great agonies. Every one has been taught to anticipate suffering, perhaps intense and indescribable, at the termination of life. Death is often styled the “king of terrors,” and eloquence, both in poetry and prose, has often made its highest efforts in a description of the inevitable hour. God has so ordained it, that there is no essential distinction in respect to physical anguish, between the death of the just and that of the unjust. Although some good men have passed so quietly and calmly into the eternal world, that we might say of them, that “like the morning star,” they “melted away into the light of heaven;” others have suffered pain the most excruciating and intolerable. We are not then to desire the death of the righteous, because we shall thereby obtain any exemption from the struggles, and spasms, and throes of expiring mortality.

2. *Neither because there is no suddenness in his departure.*

Sometimes a lingering, chronic disease slowly wastes away the system, and the dying man is warned “to set his house in order.” In general, however, whether death comes by the instrumentality of some fatal accident, or by the assault of some destructive disease, it comes unexpectedly, and therefore *suddenly*. The hour of the dreadful visitation is unknown to all, whether righteous or unrighteous. No vision or angel announces to the child of God that his days are soon to be finished. And melancholy examples show us, that Christians are often found sleeping, when the voice of the Son of Man is heard at their door.

3. The death of the righteous may be desired, *not because there are no violent and distressing Sunderings of earthly attachment.*

The Christian may have many ties, which bind him to life. He may have relations and friends, most near and devoted. Often he leaves a bereaved wife and children to the cold mercies of a selfish world. From these he is summoned away, and it may be under circumstances most trying to the sensibilities of natural affection. The separation is like tearing the heart-strings into shreds.

4. We may wish to die the death of the righteous, *not because the chamber of his disease is well furnished with earthly comforts.*

The good man is often poor in every thing but piety,—destitute of all treasure, save that which is laid up in heaven. His bed may be of straw or of earth. He may have no cordials to alleviate his bodily sufferings—no earthly friend may give even a cup of cold water to cool the fever of his burning frame. All this, and much more may be true of him ; or it may be, that he is surrounded with all the luxuries of affluence. Whether the one or the other be his condition, depends not upon the fact, that he is a good man. He may be a friend of God, whether in worldly circumstances he is like Lazarus or like Abraham.

5. We may wish to die the death of the righteous, *not because there is renown in his death.*

The “everlasting remembrance of the righteous,” is in heaven. Some, indeed, who have died the friends of God, have left a memorial, which gathers fresh glory, as it passes down from generation to generation. But of very many whose death was “precious in the sight of the Lord,” it must be said, that they died “unnoticed, unhonored, and unsung.” While the bard and the orator, the painter and the sculptor, have vied with each other in efforts to perpetuate the fame of some splendid miscreant,—a thousand holy men, of whom the world was not worthy, have risen to their thrones of light, without receiving from these heralds of celebrity the passing tribute of a glance. How little of sacred dust sleeps in abbeys and mausoleums ! How few are the statues and portraits of the redeemed, in the galleries of sculpture and painting, or in the saloons of the rich and the noble !

6. We may wish to die the death of the righteous, *not because he dies without enemies.*

Seldom does the upright man escape the calumnies and aspersions of the malignant; however pure his motives and unexceptionable his conduct, it is rare that the most pious citizen of any community goes down to his tomb with unanimous benedictions upon his soul and his memory. It does not silence the tongue of detraction ; and the grave is not the burial-place of enmities.

They who die in the Lord, may leave behind them a legacy of virtuous example. Though dead, they may yet speak to many thousands of their fellow men. And even if no monuments preserve the record of their existence upon the earth, they may live for ages in the silence of useful influences. Still it is a humiliating fact, that their “good”

is often carefully "interred with their bones," while their real or alleged "evil lives after them," in the hearts and upon the tongues of slanderers and liars.

7. We may wish to die the death of the righteous, *not because he has confessed Christ before men.*

A profession of religion hardly affords a presumption in favor of piety. Who, alas! may not contrive to obtain access to the holy ordinance of the Lord's supper?—A Judas as well as "a beloved disciple," may have a name in the churches. I proceed to say that

8. We may wish to die the death of the righteous, *not because he anticipates a future retribution.*

Many have died in great agonies of remorse, who would have died like the brutes that perish, if they had not had an anticipation of the realities of eternity. There was within them *a fearful looking for of judgment.* They could not die like Hume, whose last hours are reported by his companions to have been full of gayety; or like Mirabeau, the leading demon of the French Revolution,—who exclaimed: "I am going to die. When we come to this, we must bind the head with fillets, perfume ourselves, crown ourselves with flowers, and sleep tranquilly the last sleep!" He expired, it is said, "with a convulsive laugh!" Fellow-traveller to eternity, may I ask you,—whether Hume died as a philosopher, or as a fool? Died Mirabeau as a sage, or, as a savage?

Far different, in any circumstances whatever, is the anticipation of a future retribution by the righteous man. Yet this anticipation is often distressing to his soul, from his consciousness of guilt and unworthiness. Hence he fears death: and "through fear of death," he may be "all his life-time subject to bondage."

9. Neither may we wish to die the death of the righteous, *because he may be willing to die.*

Men who have no love of God, and no good hope of heaven, may be *willing to die.* Bereavement, or the failure of ambitious schemes, or the loss of property, or the shame of disgrace, or pain of body, or hope of posthumous renown, or moral stupefaction, or unauthorized expectations of felicity, may make men *willing to die.* How strange, then, that any should be satisfied with a mere *willingness to die*, as if such a state of mind in a dying friend were an evidence of favor with God! Surely it is not this, which should inspire a wish to die the death of the righteous.

10 Nor should we wish to have our last end like his, *because he may have a confident expectation of happiness in heaven.*

The unrighteous, as well as the righteous, may "have hope in his death." There can be no doubt, that many, in their last hours, are deluded by phantoms of the imagination, which they call visions of glory. Often have individuals, when supposed to be past recovering, sung in raptures of the heaven which they saw in prospect. They longed for a release from the body. Yet some of these have unexpectedly regained their health.—What became of their piety? of their willingness to die? of their transporting assurances "of an eternal weight of glory?"—their subsequent years were years of sin, and they died without hope and without God. But if they had departed at a previous period, their death would have been proclaimed as a triumph of faith!

In relation to this point, there are words of Christ, which ought to be SPIRIT AND LIFE to each one of us. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I NEVER KNEW YOU: *depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*" Must not these have died in a confident expectation of "awaking to everlasting life?" And how tremendous their "shame and everlasting contempt!"

The true Christian may have an assurance of faith. Thousands of believers have found the Savior "precious" to their departing spirits. As the shadows of the grave were deepening around them, their eyes have beamed the full glories of the city, which hath the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb for the LIGHT thereof. Such may be the last end of the righteous: or it may be, that from a constitutional infirmity of body or of mind; or from the operation of disease; or from a deep and constant persuasion of personal sinfulness; or from want of confidence in the "exceeding great and precious promises;"—"an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ," may have no other hope than that which fears and trembles.—The good man's sun may go down in clouds, or it may set in glory.

Why, then, may we wish to die the death of the righteous? Having specified and illustrated some of those considerations, which do not afford a sufficient reason for such a wish, I shall now answer the question directly and explicitly. And

1. *He is prepared to die.*

He has complied with the terms of salvation. He has had godly

sorrow for his sins, and has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He has been born again. Thus,

2. *He has a title to an inheritance with them that are sanctified.*

"He that believeth hath everlasting life." "In heaven" he has "a better, an enduring substance." There he will "rest from his labors." There he will sin no more. There he shall have no more "sorrow," for "God shall wipe all tears from his eyes." Yes, Christian friends, faithful is he that promises. You shall "be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Though your pilgrimage may be long and dreary, you shall safely "pass over Jordan." You shall go up to "Mount Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon your heads." You shall be companions of those "who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." You shall sing anthems of redemption, with the "spirits of just men made perfect;" and your adoring voices shall unite with "the innumerable company of angels," in shouting, ALLELUIA, FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH.

3. *Consider, that if you do not die the death of the righteous, you are lost forever.*

"Except ye repent, ye shall all perish.—He that believeth not, shall be damned.—Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.—We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.—The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment. They that have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation. These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." What language can be plainer or more awful? And yet how are these scriptures "wrested!" With what indifference or contempt do multitudes treat "the wrath to come!" Surely "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead!"

How infatuated are those who claim a part in the felicities of heaven, in consideration of natural gifts or qualities, or earthly attainments and distinctions! What can be more irrational than an anticipation of joys at God's right hand, while the heart is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law or the gospel? Men may gather in crowds around the biers of the favorites of wealth, beauty, genius, learning, power; they may chant peace to the departed, in their dirges and requiems; they may celebrate talents, qualities, or achievements, in the lofty notes of funeral eulogium; they may pour out their hearts like water, in their wailing lamentations; but all this incense

of panegyric will not give to God a ransom for him who died a despiser of the cross, and an enemy of all righteousness. He must "*perish*, and that *without remedy*." "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" O with what emotions will many whom the world has honored, behold the righteous, the humble follower of Jesus, in the kingdom of heaven, *and themselves thrust out!*

I cannot close, without distinctly reminding you, my hearers, that a *wish* to die the death of the righteous—however sincere and ardent it may be,—*is no evidence of fitness to die such a death.*

I cannot doubt, that thousands who hear the gospel, wish to secure the heaven of the gospel. They continue in a course of impenitence, waiting a more "convenient season" to prepare to meet their God. They have more flowers of sin to gather and enjoy, before they can find time to go to the garden of God, and obtain the fruit of the tree of life. Thus they live and thus they die. O how many have been constrained to say—"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!"

How was it with Balaam? Were not his wishes expressed in the beautiful language of the text? Yet does not an apostle tell us, that he loved the wages of unrighteousness, and was rebuked for his iniquity? And was not the church of Pergamos obnoxious to severe censure, because there were those among its members, who held "the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication?" Such was the man who *wished* to die the death of the righteous and to have his last end like his! And have not many, in every age of the church, cherished the same wish; and notwithstanding all their intentions and hopes to the contrary, died at last the death of the impenitent, unbelieving, and unregenerate?

My friends, you must *live the life*, if you would die the death, of the Christian. Whatever may be your present hope, be assured, that unless "Christ is in you the hope of glory"—your hope will perish, when God taketh away the soul. If you bring not forth fruit unto repentance, you plainly evince that you are trusting to a refuge, which the hail will sweep away, when God shall lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet.

When the good man can look back upon years spent, in some humble measure, according to the principles of the "faith once delivered to the saints," he may approach his grave with an *unfaltering* trust. When the prevailing purpose of his soul has been to glorify

God, he may feel "ready to be offered," and with humble confidence may anticipate a "crown of life" in the day of the Lord Jesus. O, has he been valiant for the truth and gloried only in the cross?—Then may he hope to see, in his last moments, as did the dying Payson, "the celestial city full in his view;" to have "its glories beam upon him, its breezes fan him, its odors wafted to him, its sounds strike upon his ears, and its spirit breathed into his heart."

"Sweet is the scene when virtue dies,
 When sinks a righteous soul to rest ;
 How mildly beam the closing eyes,
 How gently heaves the expiring breast.

So fades the summer cloud away,
 So sinks the gale when storms are o'er,
 So gently shuts the eye of day,
 So dies a wave along the shore.

Triumphant smiles the victor brow,
 Fann'd by some angel's purple wing ;
 O grave where is thy victory now ?
 Invidious death where is thy sting ?

A holy quiet reigns around,
 A calm which nothing can destroy ;
 Naught can disturb that peace profound,
 Which their unfettered souls enjoy.

Farewell, conflicting joys and fears,
 Where light and shade alternate dwell ;
 How bright th' unchanging morn appears !
 Farewell, inconstant world, farewell !

Its duty done, as sinks the clay,
 Light from its load the spirit flies,
 While heaven and earth combine to say,
 ' Sweet is the scene when virtue dies.' "

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SERMON CLXXXVII.

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THE SINNER HIS OWN DESTROYER.

LUKE XIX. 41, 42.—*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

THE character of Him who wept, and the combination of circumstances that caused his weeping, throw around this scene an affecting tenderness which language is inadequate to describe. Christ had said to his disciples, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man, shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge him and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again. The Saviour had now come near the place of his sorrows and his death; yet he seems to have forgotten the bitter cup he was so soon to drink; and apparently insensible to the hosannas of the multitude, unhappy Jerusalem engrossed his attention, and awakened his feelings of tenderest compassion. He beheld the city, and wept over it. City once above all cities of the earth beloved of God—city of David—the royal city—city consecrated to God by sacrifices—which hast killed so many prophets, and hast rejected, persecuted, and art about to crucify the Son of God—O that thou, even thou, at least in this thy day, hadst known the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side; and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. The historians of that age, and the present condition of Jerusalem, inform us how awfully these predictions were fulfill-

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ed. The traveller who now visits what was once the glory of the world, discovers little more than a pile of ruins. The marble towers that met the eye of the distant spectator, like mountains of snow reflecting the sunbeams—the massive gates overlaid with pure gold—the hosannas of the multitude, crying, peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces—the smoke of the incense and burnt offering ascending to heaven—all is gone, and the barbarian pitches his tent in the city of God. How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the princes, how is she become tributary. She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies! And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer.

He beheld the city, and wept over it. The stubborn ingratitude of the people—the long suffering and goodness of God towards them and their fathers—their blindness in rejecting the things which belonged to their peace—the cup of their iniquity about to be filled by the crucifixion of their Lord—their certain and terrible destruction on the earth—their holy city burned with fire—their hopeless condition in the future state—reflections like these rushing together melted into tears the compassionate Saviour. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto desolation: and verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

We proceed now to the practical application of the truths contained in this affecting passage.

He beheld the city and wept over it.

It is not among the least degrading effects of sin, that it produces self-justification, even against the decisions of the understanding and the convictions of conscience. The transgressor finds *misery* indissolubly connected with *sin*: but not daring to charge directly on God unrighteousness in inflicting punishment, he creates a kind of inferior, but uncontrollable deity, termed *Fate*, or *Necessity*; and this imaginary being is made the author of what he calls his hopeless sufferings. This may seem a plausible method of relieving the character of God from unjust imputations, but in reality it is most dishonorable to his character. The doctrine that we are *bound* to our sins and the sorrows necessarily resulting from them, either charges God with a want of compassion, or implies that he is not an absolute Sovereign. But what is this fatality, or necessity, which many plead as the ground of disobedience? Does not God rule supreme in wisdom and goodness over all his works? Doeth he not his pleasure in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth? When he stretcheth out his hand, can any turn it back? Admit the fact that the present is a state of suffering and trial, it is nevertheless true that all things work together for good to them that love God. And it is also true that there is, for the vilest sinner, a way of escape from this vale of tears to a better country, even an heavenly. God

sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He has sent forth his word, arrayed in the majesty of his own attributes, bearing its appeals to every want and wo, every hope and desire, every emotion of which the heart is susceptible, He has sent forth his Spirit to accompany the word—to apply its healing power, and through its instrumentality to renew, and sanctify, and save. Can it be that, notwithstanding this exhibition of loving-kindness and tender mercy, the sinner cannot submit to God, believe, and live? Can it be that God hath pleasure in the death of him that dieth?—and can it be that the sinner can do nothing to inherit eternal life? Many there are who live and die in the neglect of duty, pleading the necessity of transgression, and implicitly charging the merciful God with their ruin. The Jews did this, and they are not alone in the guilt. Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; thus shall ye speak, saying, if our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but, that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?—Behold ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other Gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, we are *delivered* to do all these abominations?—(Jer. vii. 10.) In the face of such language, no sinner can pretend that there is any necessity for his future condemnation, except what he creates by his own voluntary rejection of the Gospel. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and *ye would not*. These sinners, Christ himself being judge, if they *would*, might have been saved. Though they had long enjoyed and abused the tender mercies of God—had put to violent death those whom he had sent on errands of love—had rejected the Lord of glory, and planned a conspiracy against his innocent life; yet, had they returned before the cup of iniquity was filled to overflowing, Christ would have embraced them, as the father fell on the neck of the prodigal son. So it is with the perishing sinner now. Christ has been wounded for his transgressions, and bruised for his iniquities. He waits long for the stubborn child to relent and return, and weeps when the days of hope are ended. Jesus wept, is a touching and repeated expression in the Scriptures; and these tears of the Son of God blot out the aspersion that he desires the ruin of any. Spiritual and eternal death can be imputed only to impenitence and unbelief. The lost sinner will feel at last that he has destroyed himself. He will remember that there *was* a time, when his Lord reasoned with him, and made him the offer of pardon, though his sins were red like crimson. Oh, that thou hadst known, even *thou*, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!

In this thy day. The space for repentance allotted, through grace, to sinning man, makes a distinction between our condition and that of sinning angels, which demands the most devout expressions of thankfulness. We are prisoners of *hope*—they prisoners of *despair*. Upon our

ears have fallen glad tidings of great joy. Through their dreary abodes has echoed no voice of mercy. *We* are permitted to lay hold on eternal life. *They* are reserved in chains, under darkness, for the judgment. This distinction of condition and future prospects between us and the fallen angels constitutes the chief value of life. The brief portion of our being passed in a world significantly termed the valley of tears, would be unimportant, if during this hand-breadth of time the character were not formed, and the destiny fixed, for the eternity which lies beyond. But our everlasting welfare is suspended on the conditions of repentance and faith to be performed in the present life. This solemn fact is confirmed by the general and explicit declarations of the Bible. And now because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not: therefore will I do unto this house which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee. Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people:—cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.—(Jer. vii. 16, ch. xv.—Ezek. xiv. 14.) It is evident also from the lamentation of Christ, that the hopes of impenitent men terminate at death, and even before in respect to some transgressors. What propriety was there in his weeping over Jerusalem, and expressing the earnest desire that the guilty people had known in *their day* the things that belonged to their peace, if they were so soon to go to heaven; or if they were ever to be saved? What mean those tears of the Son of God, and that exclamation of sorrow?—Oh, that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

The things that belong to thy peace. Hadst thou known, after thy many years of unbelief and sin, the character of Him thou hast rejected, he would have protected thee from danger as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings. Peace which the world can neither give nor take away should have been thine. He whom thou hast despised, and art about to nail to the cross as a malefactor, should have been to thee as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. (Isa. xxxiii. 2.)

He from whose lips fell these words of pity and of terror knew their full import. He knew, for he gave it existence, what the soul would suffer, shut out for ever from the light of God. He knew what bliss it might enjoy in the eternal kingdom of his Father. He knew what will be the consternation at the last day, when they that pierced him shall mourn, and call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne. He knew what agony must rend the sinner's heart, when his refuges of lies should be swept away, and he should remember that salvation was once urged on his acceptance with all the tenderness and patience of intreaty, and his Redeemer stood weeping and knocking at the door, but *he would not*

give him entrance. Enough there was in the character and in the present and future condition of Jerusalem to melt the Savior to tears—enough to excite the compassion of all holy beings. The God of their pious fathers had been wearied by their long ingratitude. Prophets had wept, and hung their harps on the willows. Angels had looked down with deep anxiety on the city of God. The long expected Messiah had entered their temple, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom; but they received him not. They refused to hearken. They stopped their ears, lest they should hear the law, and the words of the former prophets. Nothing could subdue them to repentance, for they made their hearts, saith the Scripture, like an adamant stone. And now the things that belonged to their peace were hid from their eyes. He who held the keys of life and death had come to weep over them for the last time, and to declare that they should see him no more till he should descend in the robes of judgment.

We have been meditating, my friends, on the overthrow of an ancient city, beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth. I trust we have not surveyed the mighty ruins with the mere feelings of a traveler. We have, or should have, applied to *ourselves* the monitory instruction. We have received, as a nation, richer blessings than were ever bestowed on the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Is not our responsibility therefore greater? Have not *we* too a day in which we may know the things that belong to our peace? And is not this day silently and swiftly drawing to a close? Are not *our* everlasting interests suspended on the conditions of obedience, to be complied with while we are standing on the threshold of eternity? Oh, to lose the things that belong to our peace!—to awake when the harvest is past, the summer ended, and we are not saved! And then to endure the thought for ever—that God took no pleasure in our death—that eternal life was brought within our reach; and the Saviour came to our dwelling-place, and wept over our unbelief, and intreated us to live, and *we would not!* And now the days of hope are ended! No more the Sabbath morn ushers in its golden beams, inviting us to the house of God and the gate of heaven. No longer the voice of prayer can reach the mercy-seat. The day of probation is for ever closed—the good things have been received—the door is shut—let him that is filthy be filthy still, and him that is holy be holy still!

Am I describing the condition merely of those who perished in the deluge—of those who fell on the plains of Admah and Zeboim—of those who entered not the land of promise—of those who moved to tears the holy Savior? Is it not true that the men of *this* generation, also, may fall short of the rest which remains for the people of God? Have we then estimated the value of the soul, and attentively considered what is necessary to salvation? Have we realized the deceitfulness of the heart, the allurements of temptation, and the uncertainty of life? Do we remember that each revolving day bears us onward one day nearer the anthems of heaven, or the wailings of hell—blots out one day from the pilgrimage of sorrow, or strikes one from the period which must for ever close the avenues of mercy? Why should this vain world gain the ascendancy over us, when we must so soon sleep beneath its surface?

Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? A few moments more, and where are *we*? Gone to that eternity on the borders of which we already stand. Who then has obtained the Christian hope? Be ye steadfast, for the crown of life is at hand. Who is still living without hope, and without God in the world? Lay hold on eternal life while it is called to-day, for the night cometh wherein no man can work. Waste no time in objecting that it is a difficult thing to be saved. When will the path of life be easier of access? Is it not also a difficult thing to be lost? God has hedged up the entrance into the broadway by promises and intreaties; by prohibitions and penalties; by the prayers and efforts of Christians; by the strivings of his Spirit, the checks of conscience, and the love of Christ. If you perish, you must force your way through all these barriers. Desist, then, from the unnatural work of self-destruction, and enter immediately on the work of salvation—for to-morrow may be too late. "He who delays repentance a single day, has one day more to repent of, and one day less to repent in." When the sinner is not far from the kingdom of God, a few moments of indecision may cost him death eternal.

Lay hold, then, on eternal life while it is called to-day, lest the hour of mercy glide away, and your eternal doom be written beneath that of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Jerusalem; and the compassionate Savior looking down shall say: "Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

"Unhappy city! hadst thou known—

"Then were thy peace secure;

"But now the day of grace is gone,

"And thy destruction sure.

"And can mine eyes, without a tear,

"A weeping Saviour see?

"Shall I not weep his groans to hear,

"Who groan'd and died for me?

"Blest Jesus, let those tears of thine

"Subdue each stubborn foe;

"Come, fill my heart with love divine,

"And bid my sorrows flow."

SERMON CLXXXIX.

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RESISTING THE HOLY GHOST.

ACTS, vii. 51. Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

The metaphors employed in this passage are too obvious in their import to justify much comment. The phrase, "stiff-necked," is suggested by the obstinacy of the bullock, when first subjected to the yoke: unaccustomed to obedience, and impatient of restraint, he heeds neither the caresses nor the goadings of his master. In the text, the phrase is employed to indicate the natural frowardness and contumacy of sinners under divine dispensations. God employs various methods to bring men to obedience. He instructs, he commands, he intreats, he threatens: the agency of nature and providence, of the word and Spirit, is enlisted, *to turn them from their idols to God*; but sinners disregard all, and walk, each one, after the promptings of *his own hard and impenitent heart*.

Again, this same class of persons are styled "*uncircumcised in heart and ears*." Circumcision was the ancient symbol of a holy heart—of a *conscience purified from dead works*. In this solemn rite, the saints of the former dispensation recognised not only the seal that confirmed their title to the promises of the covenant, but also the evidence of their reconciliation, *through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*. A circumcised heart, then, is a heart sanctified from sin—a heart once wayward and perverse, but now restored, with its affections and powers, to the Great Spirit above, from whom is our life. The *ears* are circumcised when the understanding and reason, and all the inlets of knowledge, are made subservient to the growth of that new life within, *which is after God in righteousness and holiness*. But those addressed by the apostle are, in both these senses, uncircumcised; their "*hearts are alienated from God by wicked works*;" "*sin reigns in their members*;" "*they know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*."

The description contained in the text demands of the preacher an extensive application. He is to carry it home to all men, and men of all times, who are favored with the overtures of mercy, but, like the unbe-

lieving Jews, reject these overtures, and strive to counteract the means employed for their salvation. In an eminent sense is he to urge it upon the consideration of those multitudes around him, who enjoy the stated ministrations of the Gospel, but pass on, from Sabbath to Sabbath, without hope and without God in the world. For a perpetual and solemn warning to all such, it is written—“*Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*” These words suggest several important inquiries, which merit the serious consideration of all the impenitent.

I. Who is the person mentioned in the text as slighted and dishonored?

Let it then be considered that it is not simply a *thing*, whether attribute or influence,—but an *Agent*—a living, conscious agent,—against whom the sinner is arrayed. It is a Being who has a source of influence in himself; and an influence suited to control and govern, not irrational, but intellectual and moral creatures: the name by which he is known, is the “Holy Ghost.” The office which he sustains in the moral economy of the world, is that of teacher, sanctifier, comforter. The honors which he claims are those that belong to the uncreated God. The enterprise in which he is engaged in this world, is that of “*destroying the works of the devil,*” (the crimes and the miseries with which he has desolated the earth,) by “*reconciling the world unto God by Jesus Christ,*” and elevating “*to the riches of the glory of the heavenly inheritance*” a multitude which no man can number. It is the same Holy Ghost, by whom holy men, under the former dispensation, uttered the law and the prophecies; the same Spirit of truth who taught the apostles “*all things whatsoever they should speak;*” the Holy One into whom the disciples were to be baptized, and from whom they received a witness, “*whereby they might know all things;*” the Being whom sinners in ancient times provoked and grieved, and thus exposed themselves to the wrath of God; that perfect Being, to avenge whose slighted honor all the attributes of the Eternal are awake. “*Whoso speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost hath no forgiveness, neither in this world nor in the world to come.*” This is the Being presented in the text, as meeting with the resistance of sinful men—and resistance while executing the gracious design of reconciling the world unto himself.

II. What is it to *resist* the Holy Ghost?

When our Saviour left the earth, to resume that glory which he had with the Father before the world was, he committed the destinies of his kingdom among men to the Spirit of Promise. On the day of Pentecost, the divine personage took the precious trust into his hands, and began to build the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. An alienated and lost world was to be reclaimed and saved; and all this effected by an influence that should proceed from him. The image of the earthly was to be destroyed, and the image of the heavenly impressed on the spirits of men; hence, a rigorous and protracted agency—an agency adequate to the wants, and compatible with the laws, of our moral being—was to be exerted, and exerted through all time. The nature of this influence, and the mode of applying it, may not be, in all respects, intelligible to us. “*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou*

hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But though we may not understand all that is done in "quickenings those who were dead in trespasses and sins," nor *how* it is done ; still, there is an influence exerted for this end, of which men are clearly conscious ; and this influence, the word of God teaches us, has its source in him. Mind and spirit, as all admit, are exempt from the action of brute force, being made subject only to the laws of intelligence and conscience. Whatever mediate and redeeming influence then the Spirit exerts upon man, must be through the truth. And it is noticeable that one of the appellations he bears is, the Spirit of Truth ; the Source of Truth ; the Revealer of Truth ; the Being who, working by and in the truth, carries forward the renewing process in the hearts of men. Here, now, is an influence that may be seen and felt ; an influence that always attends the truth of God as it circulates in the world, or is transmitted to rising generations ; an influence, without which no true faith is exercised ; and, finally, an influence incessantly operating for the salvation of the world. Resistance, then, is offered to the Holy Ghost, when an attempt is made to circumscribe or to defeat the influence of his word. By an attempt to stay its progress in the earth, or to counteract its tendencies on our own hearts, then, we are chargeable with the act for which the unbelieving Jews were condemned. And here let it be noticed, that the word resistance involves the idea of design, intention. We may *hinder* or *prevent* the execution of some design through ignorance, or from inability to do otherwise ; but in order to *resist*, in the proper sense of the word, there must be a consciousness of aim and intent, and a desire or at least willingness, to succeed in our aim. All this is involved in the term employed in the text. Sinners not only hinder the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, but they *resist* it: they are not only willing that his gracious designs should be defeated, but they choose it. This leads us to consider,

III. The fact, that the impenitent do, in various forms, resist the Holy Ghost.

We have seen that He who is styled "the Spirit of Truth," is engaged in the execution of a great and god-like design among men. He is abroad on an errand of mercy, seeking "to lead the blind by a way which they know not ; to gather up a dispersed flock, and restore them to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls." To effect this object, he labors with assiduity ; shedding forth, at all times and in all places, an influence on the minds of men,—an influence wisely adapted to the capabilities of men ; and which, if not counteracted by human perverseness, would make all men *wise unto salvation*. But this influence encounters an opposition in every impenitent heart ; and an opposition which, in a vast multitude of cases, never subsides, never relaxes. "*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*" My object now will be to point out some of the various forms in which this resistance is exhibited.

1. Men resist the Holy Ghost when they attempt to stifle the convictions of conscience.

Man is a moral being,—a being living under a moral law, and destined to a tribunal where every work shall be brought into judgment for

the conviction or acquittal of its author. Hence, in the constitution of such a being, conscience, an intuitive perception of the nature of actions, considered as right or wrong,—conscience, commanding us to pursue whatever is good, and sternly rebuking all conformity to evil,—must have a place. Deprive man of this distinctive attribute, and you incapacitate him for the great moral end for which he was created; you extinguish his relation to that spiritual world, of which he was designed to form a constituent part: yes, divest a man of conscience, and no other gifts or advantages he may possess can fill the chasm, and re-unite him to that elevated race who were made in the image of God. Conscience, then, is an elementary part of our being. As a teacher, its voice is heard in early childhood: its checks and monitions are felt through all the temptations and sins of life. As witness for God, it confronts us with the record of our crimes: as our judge, it brings the whole world in, guilty before God. This endowment of a rational soul can never be obliterated. It may for a time be obscured, but it can never be extinguished. It will adhere to the soul in its passage into the world of spirits; and, in that world of retribution, it will be to the righteous the voice of God, whispering thoughts of peace to their souls; but to the wicked, "*the worm that never dies.*"

The voice of conscience, then, is nothing less than the voice of the Holy Ghost speaking within us, and warning us to choose the good, and to refrain from the evil. When conscience says to the sinner, "*do not this abominable thing, for it is wrong, and God hates it,*" it is the voice of the Holy Ghost that he hears. When conscience says to him, "*break off thy sins by righteousness, and put away evil from thy heart,*" it is still the voice of the Holy Ghost reproving the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. When conscience spreads the record of his sins before him, and rolls the burden of guilt upon his soul; what is it but the voice of the Holy Ghost warning him to flee from the wrath to come? And now, does the sinner harden his heart against the monitory voice within? does he turn away his eye from this blazing record of his guilt? What is it all but resistance of the benevolent work of the Spirit? Is it his *daily* employment to administer some opiate to his troubled conscience; to obscure his vision with the mists of error; or to thrust business or pleasure between himself and the dread tribunal? What is it but an illustration of the fact, that the impenitent do *always resist the Holy Ghost?*

2. We resist the Holy Ghost when we disregard the dictates of prudence.

As conscience is the appointed guardian of our morals, so does prudence watch over our true interests. The first teaches us to regard what is right and just; and the second instructs us to pursue those things which make for our peace. They are both the endowments of the same holy and merciful God, who would have all men become holy and happy like himself. Now, the Scriptures teach us, that "*God will forsake those who forsake him;*" that "*there is no peace to the wicked;*" that "*they shall be driven away in their wickedness;*" that "*they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.*" And God has endowed our natures with

a conservative principle, to protect us from those intolerable evils to which the sinner is exposed. This endowment the word of God denominates prudence. "Wisdom dwelleth with prudence." "The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself." This forecast of the mind is one of the gifts of God; and, enlightened and instructed by the Holy Spirit, it becomes an important instrument of the salvation of men. Prudence draws her lessons from the recorded instructions of the Holy Ghost, and reads them in the ears of the sinner. Her language is—"Soul, thou hast destroyed thyself! Thou hast made the infinite and eternal God thy foe. Thou hast sacrificed thy peace for this world, and treasured up for thyself wrath against the day of wrath: but God, who is rich in mercy, hath sent his own Son into the world to save sinners, even the very chief. Now, therefore, why will you die? Turn, Oh! turn to the stronghold, thou prisoner of hope. *Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.*" Such is the voice of prudence, the guardian of man's interests for time and eternity. With such arguments does the Holy Spirit teach her to address the sinner, if, peradventure, he may turn unto God and live. But how are these lessons regarded by mankind? Do they gather around, and take their seats at the feet of this heavenly teacher, and receive the word of wisdom from his lips? No. They turn away from his instructions; they stop their ears and brace their hearts against his counsels and warnings, and rush forward to their destruction. Sinners listen to the teachings of prudence when she discourses on things of time; when she points out the way to wealth and long life, to riches and honors, she never fails of an audience. But when she opens the Book of God, and discourses on sin and holiness, and spreads before the eye hell and its miseries, and heaven with its glories, and would fain take the sinner by the hand and lead him to the cross, and thence on to heaven,—many, very many, are grieved, and go away sorrowful. Thus, again, is the Holy Spirit resisted, by the neglect or contempt with which sinners treat the counsels of prudence.

3. The Holy Spirit is resisted when the means of grace are neglected.

In the enterprise of reclaiming the world unto himself, God treats man as a free and rational being,—free, because unconstrained,—and rational, because subject to the government of motives addressed to reason. Hence, means adapted to set motives in an impressive light before the mind, are constantly employed to lead sinners to repentance. The word of God, supplied with its high and authoritative sanctions, is published and sent forth into the world; the Sabbath is consecrated for a day of rest to the body, and of holy employment for the mind; the Christian ministry is instituted; hours for prayer and religious instruction are interspersed through the toils and distractions of the week; and churches are planted, and made fountains of a holy influence to be sent forth for the regeneration of the world. Now, all these are so many agencies in the hands of the eternal Spirit, that are brought to bear on the conscience and the heart of the impenitent sinner: and these agencies are always operating. A man can hardly pass through a day of his life, or an hour of the day, without encountering the means of grace in some of their multiplied forms: and these means are all wisely adapt-

ed to secure the end sought—the restoration of the soul to God and to peace. Indeed, we can conceive of no means better adapted, or so well adapted, to make the sinner what he should be—the friend of God and a fit subject for heaven—as those which the Spirit employs. And, moreover, this result would always follow the application of these means, did they act on a pliant and yielding heart, and had they no opposition to encounter. But, by the impenitent the means are all resisted, as often as they are encountered, and resisted to the degree that is necessary to defeat their appropriate effect. The sinner counteracts the influence which the Holy Spirit would exert by such means—first, by withdrawing as much as possible from the sphere of their influence. Is the Sabbath designed as a means of grace?—the sinner defeats this design when he gives his soul no Sabbath, but dooms it to perpetual toil, or wastes the precious hours of the day in sloth, or profanes them with folly and sin. Is the preaching of the gospel, the prayer meeting, the counsel of the pious, among the appointed means of grace?—but this influence, too, is all defeated, if the sinner avoid a preached gospel, and shun the place of prayer, and interdict all intercourse between himself and the friends of his soul.

But again, the sinner may come within the sphere of this influence: he may sit before God as his people sit, and yet resist, even in a higher sense resist, the influence of appointed means. The Bible unfolds her inspired page before him; the Sabbath spreads her holy scenes around him, and invites to solemn reflection; the servant of God appears with his message fresh from the living fountains of truth, and discourses to him of sin and all our wo, or rehearses the story of redeeming love, and speaks of pardon and redemption through Christ; the warm entreaties of the pious fall upon his ear; and around him ascend the fervent aspirations to God in his behalf. In the midst of such scenes, and abreast of such influences, does many a sinner place himself; and yet his heart remains hard and impenitent; and his soul all the while is *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath!*

4. Sinners resist the Holy Ghost when they *make lies their refuge.*

The language of inspiration is, that the regenerate "*are begotten through the gospel;*"—"are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." It is "*the word engrafted, that is able to save our souls;*"—"the word of the Spirit is the word of God." All these declarations indicate the necessity of an agency in the matter of regeneration, that is connected with God's revealed truth. This truth must be honored in saving sinners. It must be believed, or the sinner be condemned. The truth, then, is the instrument by which the world is to be reconciled to God. This is the sword, by which the Spirit, as a mighty conqueror, assails the hearts of his enemies, and makes his way from conquest to conquest. Hence, if we would invite the influences of the Spirit, and co-operate with him in building up God's kingdom in our hearts, we must honor his truth, by receiving it. But what multitudes in gospel lands wilfully shut their eyes against the true light—reject and despise the truth that can alone make wise unto salvation—and make lies their refuge! And how do

"they grieve and vex the Holy One" by this abuse of light and privilege—how inevitably do they shut themselves out from his reclaiming influence, by annihilating the only medium through which this influence is ever exerted—and how assuredly will perseverance in this career of darkness and guilt precipitate the soul into eternal sorrow !

Did time permit, I would mention other modes of resisting the Holy Ghost. As illustrations of this resistance, I would point you to the giddy youth, who hopes, amid scenes of merriment and vice, to secure himself against the strivings of the Spirit ; to the enslaved worldling, who makes gold his idol, and drowns his soul in the cares of the world and the pursuit of riches ; to him who calumniates revivals of religion, and thereby dishonors the work of the Spirit ; to him who mocks when God visits the world with his plagues, and covers the nations with sack-cloth ; to the drunkard, the profane man, and the scoffer, who defy God's wrath as they condemn his mercy, and to whom is *reserved the blackness of darkness forever !*

But I proceed to inquire,

IV. At what *times* do sinners resist the Holy Ghost ?

Doubtless, they resist more at some times than at others. There are seasons, so to speak, of concentrated action of the Holy Ghost ; and at such times the resistance must be increased, or the heart would yield to the influence applied. But, waiving this for the present, we may say, that the resistance of the natural heart to the Spirit is protracted and habitual. "Ye do *always* resist the Holy Ghost." The impenitent sinner not only resists in all the variety of *forms* in which the Spirit assails,—suiting the defence to the nature of the attack,—but he resists with an unremitting effort. His thoughts are never "*thoughts of peace*" toward God. There is no period when he really and earnestly resolves to put an end to this strife, wicked and perilous on his part, and yield himself up to the new-creating influence of the Holy Spirit. In early childhood, even in the first dawn of reason and conscience in the soul, the work of the Spirit begins ; even then his voice is heard in the soft accents of persuasion, saying, "*Hearken now unto me, O ye children : yea, blessed are they that keep my ways.*" In the rough, the wild, and oftentimes guilty, career of youth, the same voice is heard, saying, "*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.*" As age advances, and the toils and sorrows of life multiply, the same friendly voice is still heard, crying from the "*high places, by the way,*" "*at the entry of the city,*" "*at the coming in of the doors,*" and saying, "*Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.*" But when the Spirit's work begins, then also begins the resistance of the sinner. As he draws "*with bands of love,*" sinners resist with a hard and impenitent heart. As he pursues his work of reclaiming, they pursue theirs of resisting. "Ye do *always* resist the Holy Ghost." Yes, the child resists ; the youth resists ; the middle aged sinner, at the head of his family, resists ; the aged sinner, stumbling on the dark mountains of death, even he resists that Spirit who would make the everlasting God his friend and his portion ! In health and in sickness, in prosperity and in affliction, through life,

and even in the final throes of dissolving nature, the sinner resists the Being that would raise his soul to a dwelling with God !

V. To what degree do sinners resist the Holy Ghost ?

The true answer is,—to a degree proportioned to the influence exerted upon them. This influence varies in its power at different periods :—at one time, it is comparatively feeble ; and at another, truth and providence are made to combine and concentrate their forces so as to act with great intensity on the heart ; but as the outward influence varies, so does the resisting force within. Survey the history of any sinner who was born and educated in a gospel land, and see how it confirms the fact we have stated. In his childhood, he was placed under the influence of parental instruction—of Sabbath schools—of divine ordinances—and of revivals : but they failed at the first to win his soul to God. He has grown up in the midst of these scenes, and every day encountered their influence ; and, alas ! resisted with complete success. At times, the encounter has been sharp and painful. Truth has stolen upon him unawares, and seized upon his mind ; the Almighty has met him in the judgments of his providence, pouring contempt upon his idols, and scattering his hopes to the winds ; conscience, too, an accusing spirit, has gone up to lay the record of his crimes before the judgment-seat ; and truly his soul is in great extremities,—*fear and anguish have taken hold upon him*. But that hour of darkness is gone : it has come and gone again, and the heart is still kept from God. The sinner still resists ; and, for any thing we can promise, he will continue to resist till these influences are forever withdrawn :—for, surely, if these blessed influences cannot overcome the yielding nature of childhood, if they cannot succeed with the generous sympathies of youth, what hope can be indulged of their success when encountered by the iron sternness of manhood or the morbid apathy of old age !

Thus it is, that impenitent sinners resist the Holy Ghost, and *always* resist—yea, resist to the degree that is necessary to repel the invading influences. With vast multitudes, this unnatural and perilous strife is prolonged through life ; and finally they win—win damnation to their souls !

From our subject, we learn

1. *The extent of human depravity.* The resistance which the Holy Spirit has to encounter, is man's nature—man's will excited into opposition to God. This resistance is a real and most earnest one ; it is habitual ; it listens not to truth or interest, to authority or to love ; it is armed with fearful strength ; it is prolonged for years ; and, in a vast multitude of cases, it will be sustained for ever. Look at this fact, sinner, and then decide on your own moral character. It surely is not necessary that *I* should apply to you the odious language—*totally depraved* ; but I do say, look at the fact which has been spread before you—a fact which belongs to human nature—to yourself, as well as to others—and then decide this matter as you can.

2. *The malignity of sin.* Be it total or limited in its sway over impenitent hearts, it surely wears a most fearful aspect. It is opposition to

the great and glorious God, whose presence fills heaven with love and praise, and whose loving-kindness is over all his works. It is the heart in arms against truth and duty—against personal interest and the general good. It is the soul “resisting the Spirit of all grace,” and resisting him in his very efforts to rescue that soul from endless ruin, and restore it to the family and the bosom of God. O sinner, what a dark and fearful spirit reigns in your heart! How surely the work of death is going on within you! How alarming the probability, that you will at last be brought down to hell, and there feel the gnawings of the *worm that never dies!*

3. Sinners, in a greater or less degree, *are always under the strivings of the Spirit.* It is a common excuse with sinners for remaining impenitent, that they have never been “moved upon by the Holy Ghost.” They are waiting for the Spirit to strive with them; and intend to avail themselves of such an occasion, and make their peace with God. But what does the text say, even of the class to which you belong? “*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*” And how can the Holy Ghost be resisted, and *always* resisted, if he is not attempting and *always* attempting to restore the soul to God? There is not then a sinner in this wide world, whom the Gospel has reached, but is now and at all times resisting the Holy Ghost. These strivings, then, fellow-sinners, are not to be waited for: you have always had them, you have them now: and the very excuse you have uttered is one of the modes in which you are resisting them. And we know not that the Holy Spirit will ever bring a higher influence to act upon you, than is acting at this moment. All the blaze of light and power of motive that can be drawn from that book which God has said “is able to make wise unto salvation,” is at this moment beaming upon your soul. And the spirit of prophecy has not said—no angel has whispered it—that you shall ever have more: “*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*”

4. *The Holy Ghost is a most gracious and condescending Spirit.* How like a tender father he pleads and labors with sinners to make them good and happy! How patient under neglects and abuses! He is resisted, but he still strives. Sinners labor to defeat his generous designs, but he does not abandon his work. The impenitent say unto him, “Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;” but his reply is, Oh that they were wise, that they would consider, that they would think of their latter end! Surely, if sinners perish, it will not be because there was none to *care for their souls.* Oh, if they die in their sins, how solemn will be their final meeting with that blessed Spirit, who has so long labored for their good, but whom they have so often resisted and grieved!

5. *Sinners while in a state of nature are growing no better.* We say this on the authority of our text, understanding the apostle here to assert a fact that belongs to *human nature* in its original state, and of course belongs to all men that are not “*born of the Spirit.*” Now concerning man in this state, his declaration is, that he resists, always resists, the Holy Ghost. And surely, there can be no moral good in this opposition

to the Spirit. The heart that cherishes it, or is the seat of it, can for the time being cherish nothing of which God approves. "*Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet waters and bitter?*" It is, indeed, most freely admitted, that sinners in a state of nature, may have a deep sense of their criminality before God, and be the subjects of great inward distress and alarm. This is in accordance with the apostle's experience, *When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*" But all this is compatible with the resistance to the Spirit which is described in the text. Nay more, this conviction of sin, and this distress and alarm, are the proper *fruits* of this resistance. They are an important evidence of the fact, that the heart is unreconciled to God. Of man in a state of nature it is written, "*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*" This is their chosen and their daily employment. This resistance rises in proportion to the force with which the Spirit acts upon their consciences. Hence, so far from abating, it is more active in the heart of the awakened than in those of stupid sinners. It is then delusion—philosophy without Scripture or fact—to imagine that unregenerate sinners are securing step by step an interest in the divine favor. Rather would we say to the awakened, but unrenowned soul, in the language of our text, "*Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*"

6. *We learn what is the first step to a reconciliation with God.* No approach, we have seen, is made to this state, while the sinner continues to resist. His resistance is his ruin—it is the barrier between God and his soul. It repels, and must for ever repel; it can never attract: your first duty then, fellow-sinner, is to cease your resistance. Your first step, and the only step required towards a reconciliation, is to put an end to that strife which has long separated you from God. It is a most unnatural, inglorious, and perilous strife. It is the opposition of a child to its parent—of the creature to his God—of the lost sinner to his gracious Deliverer. This controversy, sinner, is all your own: God has no part in it: the Holy Ghost approaches you only in love: it is you that resist. Stop then where you are, and for once honor yourself, while you honor your God, in surrendering to infinite love. It is right that you should do this. Peace and conscience require it of you. Angels and men who have witnessed this mortal and ungrateful opposition require it of you. The great God requires it of you. And, sinner, you *must* surrender to the Holy Ghost, or find no forgiveness, either in this world or in the world to come. "*As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*"



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SERMONS CXC—CXCV.

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THE NATURE, IMPORTANCE, AND MEANS OF EMINENT HOLINESS THROUGHOUT THE CHURCH.

Matt. xvi. 3. *Can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

Rom. xiv. 17. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

Luke xvii. 20, 21. *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or to there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*

Isaiah lii. 1, 2. *Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck; O captive daughter of Zion.*

In the progress of the cause of God on earth, there are certain great crises, or turning points of destiny, full of deep interest to him and to the intelligent universe. Such was the coming of Christ, an event around which were concentrated the interests of the whole human race, and of the moral government of God in all ages.

The advent of such eras is announced beforehand, and preceded by signs. The event stands predicted on the prophetic page, throwing its light into the dark regions of futurity; and God himself, as the long-expected day draws near, so orders his providence that signs of his advent may be seen on every side. He holds up a standard to his people, and calls on them to behold it from afar.

When he does this, it is their duty to notice such signs, to be fully aware of their import, and to act accordingly; and to do this is rightly to discern the signs of the times.

To none are these great truths more applicable than to Christians of every denomination of the present age. By the sure word of prophecy a great event has been announced as near at hand. It is the regeneration of a world. An event which, like a lofty mountain summit, rises to view on the chart of prophecy, as the great intervening event between the first coming of the Savior to redeem, and his final advent to judge the world.

The advent of this day is also preceded by its appropriate signs, which may be clearly seen by all of unblinded vision, but to mention which time will not now permit. And to a great extent these signs are seen and understood, and the people of God seem to be making preparation for correspondent action.

Beneath the inspiring influence of the Almighty, the universal church is aroused, excited, and agitated by the persuasion that a glorious advent of the kingdom of God is near at hand. The conversion of the world to God is no

longer regarded as merely the glorious but distant vision of inspired prophets. As a vivid reality, and near even at the door, it rises in all its majesty and soul-exciting power before the mind, awakening intense desire, and urging to incessant effort. Under this influence the church is daily approaching nearer to a full conception of all that is involved in a deliberate, all-absorbing effort to accomplish the mighty whole.

The field is the world, and the plans of the present age are as comprehensive as the field, and the church seems determined not to rest until the gospel shall be preached to every creature. Nor is this all. A result is to be expected, and should be aimed at, unlike any thing ever seen or conceived of on earth before. Not merely to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord, not merely to preach the gospel to every creature, but to reorganize human society in accordance with the law of God. To abolish all corruptions in religion, and all abuses in the social system, and, so far as it has been erected on false principles, to take it down and erect it anew. Hence incessant efforts are made to extend the influence of the Christian system into all departments of life; and all institutions, usages, and principles, civil or religious, are exposed to a rigid and fiery scrutiny. Abuses are assailed, and the whole community is in a state of constant agitation. Nor is this state of things destined to cease till the heavens and the earth have been shaken at the advent of God; till the last remnant of rebellion has passed away from the earth, and the human race shall repose in peace beneath the authority of Him whose right it is to reign.

How great the privilege, and how great the responsibility of living in an age like this; and to one who deeply feels this responsibility, and the shortness of life, how natural the inquiry—How can I do most to secure the end in view? My time is short, the work is great. I desire to enter into it with all my heart and soul, and to be supremely engaged in some department of action. Which shall I select?

The inquiry is appropriate. A man cannot be supremely devoted to all departments of action. He must lay out his main energies in some one. He needs and must have a ruling passion, an all-absorbing purpose of the soul, of power to draw all else into its current, and render all else subservient to itself. And the natural course is to select some one of the great enterprises of the present age, and throw into that all the energies of the soul. Nor is it difficult to find an enterprise large enough to absorb the whole soul. Any one is vast enough to give exercise to more than all the energies of the highest mind, and, to him who meditates much and deeply on it, to fill the whole horizon of his vision, and to seem more intimately connected than any other with the salvation of the world. Thus to one the cause of Sabbath-schools may easily become the most important of all; to another, foreign or domestic missions; to another, the discussion and defence of doctrinal truth, and the exposure of error; to another, the cause of temperance; and to another, the circulation of tracts, or of the word of God. These and similar enterprises are, without doubt, great and glorious beyond conception. But neither one of them is or can become the leading and most important enterprise of the present age. Neither one of them can deserve to become the all-absorbing object of the soul, nor can safely so become.

This prominence belongs to one enterprise and only one. An enterprise at present not at all recognised as a great enterprise of the age, or as an enterprise at all; and on which public apathy is deep and general. Yet, on reflection, it must be seen to be the only one which deserves the first rank, and the only one to which it is safe to give supreme and all-absorbing power in the soul, so as to compel us to view all other subjects only in their relations to it. The enterprise to which I refer is this:—

THE IMMEDIATE PRODUCTION OF AN ELEVATED STANDARD OF PERSONAL HOLINESS THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH—SUCH A STANDARD OF HOLINESS AS GOD REQUIRES, AND THE PRESENT EXIGENCIES OF THE WORLD DEMAND.

That such a standard of holiness *ought* to exist cannot be denied; that it will exist *hereafter* is expected. But its indispensable necessity *now, this very day*, is not felt as it ought to be, nor the possibility of producing it; and adequate efforts to secure it are not made. These things ought not so to be. The attention of the whole church should be at once aroused to the subject and fixed intently on it, and the work of producing such a standard of holiness deliberately undertaken, as the first great enterprise of the present day. That it is such is the obvious import of our text. It teaches us that the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, that its advent depends on no secular power, and implies no worldly victories, no external splendor, no earthly dominions, but simply that reign of God over man which is the result of holiness in the soul. From this it is manifest that the kingdom of God can make no real progress except by an increase of holiness, and can never be fully established on earth till holiness prevails in its highest power. Of course, to secure such a prevalence of holiness ought to be the great business of the present day. Still further to illustrate this truth, I propose

I. To consider what is implied in a standard of holiness adapted to the exigencies of the present age.

II. Show that to produce such a standard of holiness should be regarded as the most important enterprise of the age.

III. Show how this enterprise should be undertaken and conducted.

In general, we remark that the standard of holiness required by the present age should be distinguished by two great peculiarities—that it should *include all parts of a holy character*, and that these should be *fully developed* so as to exert a *high degree of power*. In other words, the exigencies of the age require a COMPLETE, FULLY-DEVELOPED, AND WELL-BALANCED holy character. Let us now proceed to look in detail at the elementary parts of this.

1. Communion with God deserves a prominent place, as at the foundation of all high attainments in holiness.

By communion with God I understand an interchange or reciprocal exercise of views and feelings between God and the soul; when, according to his promise, he draws near, and manifests himself to those who love him.

This is both a reasonable and intelligible state of mind. Men are so made that they can exchange with each other both views and emotions, and this is essential to the highest degree of love and mutual confidence. And the same is no less true of the relations that exist between men and God. He is a holy being, and has infinite intellect and emotions, and if emotions exist in us of a corresponding kind, there is a rational basis laid for union with him, not only in views but in emotions. Hence it is said, “every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.” And all Christians familiarly speak of this state of mind as involving *a sense of the presence of God*. It was this state of mind which David desired! when he longed, and thirsted, and fainted after God, and which he actually enjoyed when he said, “thy loving kindness is better than life,” and spoke of his soul as “satisfied with marrow and fatness” while in a state of joyful communion with God, and when he exclaimed, “whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee.”

This is the very foundation of all high attainments in holiness. The great and fundamental principle of Christianity is, that the mind of unrenewed man is entirely corrupt and degraded. Even the mind of a renewed man has no self-restoring power. Left to itself, it would again subside into passions and purposes corrupt and only corrupt. Nor is there any way to restore it to perfect purity but to bring it under the renovating influence of the pure and holy mind of God. In him are found the only causes adequate to produce this result—infinite power of exhibiting the truth, and infinite holy emotion to destroy the deadness and apathy of the soul. Both of these influences are needed, and either without the other is ineffectual. And both reside in God alone. Hence the whole progress of the work of moral renovation de-

pends entirely on putting the mind wholly under the influence of the illuminating intellect and holy emotions of Jehovah. He is our life. In him holy emotions glow, pure, intense, unmixed. And when his glories beam upon the soul, and the elevating and invigorating power of his holiness is felt, then sinful emotions subside and die, and the soul is filled with all the fulness of God. But let him retire, and sin revives again, and we die. On this point I speak to those who have experienced in their own hearts the influence of holy communion with God. I may fail to describe the state of mind with metaphysical exactness. But do you not know, by your own experience, that the thing itself is a reality? The Bible also speaks on the subject with the utmost fulness. What else is meant by "dwelling in God, and God dwelling in us?" or by the promise, "ye shall know that ye are in me, and I in you?" or by the promise, "I will love him and manifest myself unto him?"

But if communion with God is a reality, to increase it throughout the church is the foundation of all efforts to elevate the standard of holiness. It is by the life of God alone that the church can be made fully alive. The first great object then should be to remove all that prevents communion with God, to elevate our views and enlarge our desires on this subject, and to bring the church of every denomination fully under the power of his own infinitely pure and almighty mind. Then, and then alone, may we hope that the church will truly begin to live. Then, and then only will she be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Intimately connected with this, and originating from it, is—

2. Faith. By this I mean such firm belief and clear and habitual views of divine and eternal things, as shall correct all false estimates of the worth of earthly joys, or the evils of earthly sufferings, and give to motives, derived from things unseen and eternal, their full power upon the mind, as vivid and present realities. Man is made to shrink from present suffering and pain, and to desire present enjoyment. But he is also made to regard the future; and to gain a greater future good, or to avoid a greater future evil, he can cheerfully, if satisfied that it is necessary, sacrifice present pleasure or encounter present pain. And as the magnitude of the motive, and the firmness of his persuasion increase, so does his readiness to make sacrifices or endure sufferings. Hence, if the motives are infinite and the persuasion complete, finite pleasure or pain loses all its power to affect the soul. And such are the motives presented by the word of God: they are great beyond expression, and beyond imagination. The joy set before us is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and the evil to be shunned is the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. When such considerations gain the ascendancy, the world loses its power. Its joys and its sorrows are estimated not in theory merely, but in practice, as less than nothing, and vanity. And under the influence of such a faith, the feeblest mortal can encounter and overcome all the terrors of earth and hell. And why should it not be so? It is a conflict between infinite and finite for mastery over the mind; and if they contend on equal grounds, must not the infinite of necessity prevail? And it is faith which puts the infinite on equal grounds with the finite. It clothes the motives of eternity with the vividness and reality of objects of sense, and thus exposes the mind to their full power. This has been in all ages the great source of Christian energy and self-denial. Under its influence missionaries and martyrs, prophets and apostles, have cheerfully passed their lives in toils and sufferings, and died in triumph, by the sword, or at the stake, in excruciating tortments. And should the primitive energy of this principle once more be restored to the church, no obstacles could resist her power.

Let it not, however, be supposed that such faith can originate from the independent and unaided reflection of the human mind. It is the gift of God, and is the result of intimate and habitual communion with him. To his mind, the realities of eternity have an absolute certainty, and he fully appreciates and feels their worth. Hence, as we have communion with him,

he transfers his own views, and his own certainty, and his own emotions, to our minds. Eternity rises before us in all its grandeur and glory. The joys of heaven and the woes of hell become real, and the mind surrenders itself to the full and overpowering impression of the scene.

Such are the habits of faith needed in the present age. Such as imply a power to enter into the emotions of God, and walk daily in the light of heaven, and to mould the character, views, and habits, in accordance with the feelings and public sentiment of that blessed world. The natural result of such a state of mind would be,

3. Supreme devotedness to God and to his cause. And in this respect also, the standard of holiness in the present age needs to be greatly raised. By the preceding states of mind, the great objects of choice are brought before us, presented in their true light, and contrasted with all else. In this, is implied the decision of the soul to employ all its energies for God, and in his cause. A decision first made when the sinner ceases to rebel, and submits to his Savior, but ever after destined to gain strength, till his whole soul is absorbed in the service of God. For such an increase there is an adequate foundation in the true value of things, and in the relations of a Christian to his Savior. The worth of his cause is infinite, and the obligations of a redeemed soul beyond all utterance or conception; and when, in the light of eternity, and under the full influence of divine love, these things are fully seen, what can longer divide the choice of the soul, or prevent a full consecration of all its powers and faculties to God? Such is the appropriate and natural result of a true view of things, and when it takes place, all our wishes and interests will be entirely identified with those of God, so that we shall have no plans, no purposes, no ends of our own. And such will be our love to him, that the promotion of his glory and the advancement of his cause will become *entirely essential to our happiness*. This is an important point—it is the great point to be urged in the present age. That Christians should no longer cherish a mere general determination to serve God on the whole, resulting in feebleness of heart, low degrees of liberality, and irregular and inefficient action, but give themselves and all they have away wholly to the Lord, and so identify all their interests with those of God, that *nothing can render them happy* but the progress of his cause. It is on this criterion that we ought strenuously and earnestly to insist, for it is a decisive test as it regards our degree of devotedness to God. Are you in such a state of mind that you can be happy while God is dishonored and his cause declining on earth? Can you sleep at ease and enjoy the pleasures of life, whilst your fellow-men are sinking to wo eternal? Does wealth increase, or honors multiply, or worldly prosperity attend you, and do such things fill you with joy and satisfy all the cravings of your soul? Is there in you no aching void which such things can never fill? Where then is your love of God, and entire devotedness to his cause? He is still dishonored, and his cause languishes on earth; but you can be happy! Where, I ask again, is your supreme love to God, and devotedness to his cause? No: we shall never love God as we ought, until his glory and the progress of his cause, are *entirely and absolutely essential to our happiness*, so that we can enjoy nothing on earth whilst these are neglected—so that ease and influence, and riches and honor, shall lose all their power to charm, so long as the main desire of the soul remains unsatisfied. This is a practical test; all can see its force: and all ought to be made to feel its power. It ought to be made the standard—and the only standard—of the degree of our devotedness to God. It ought to be held up before every eye, and urged on every heart. It ought to be made to blaze on every conscience with all the energy of the Spirit of God. It ought to meet every eye as if written in letters of fire on the heavens above, and resound in every ear as if spoken from on high by the voice of the Almighty. In short, the church must be constantly tried by this test till it feels its full power, and is in truth, entirely, supremely, and universally devoted to God.

4. Moral sensibility to the evils of sin, is another point in which the standard of holiness needs to be greatly elevated.

A high degree of moral repulsion from sin is always a striking characteristic of a holy mind. Among the holy in heaven, we shall find not only right purposes and holy emotions, but the highest loathing of sin. Indeed, this is an essential characteristic of a holy mind, and no mind that has it not, can be in a healthy moral state. Sin is truly odious, loathsome, and repulsive. No natural pollution can for a moment be compared to it in this respect. And if our minds were in a proper moral state, we should shrink from it in all its forms, with loathing and horror unutterable. It is in this respect that the evil consequences of the fall are peculiarly manifest. In this respect it is, that men are dead in trespasses and sins. They have not ceased to be free agents, but all holy sensibility to the evil of sin is gone. They see that they are guilty of sin, but do not feel its moral pollution, and they have no spiritual energy to loathe and to renounce it. This is produced by the Spirit of God. The energy of his holy mind removes the torpor and apathy of our own, and gives to us some of his own moral sensibility to the evil of sin, and energy to renounce it. And it is only as this state of mind increases, that we can make any progress in eradicating the corrupt passions and propensities of our nature. But of this work a vast amount must be done, before we can make any progress toward eminent holiness; for in the attainment of such holiness, is implied, not only the formation of right principles, feelings, and purposes, but also the extinction of wrong ones, previously existing. We are commanded not only to put on the new man, but to put off the old man: not only to walk after the Spirit, but to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof: and in the latter work lies no small part of the duty of a Christian. It is not enough that the main purpose of the soul be changed, and that a Christian be on the whole, for God and not against him, and that he organize his life on this general hypothesis. All this may be done, and yet unfathomable depths of wickedness remain unexplored, and unutterable energies of sin remain within, unsubdued. A change of heart is but the first blow which the old man receives, and though in its ultimate results it is a mortal wound, he is yet far from dead. The work of entirely crucifying and eradicating all remains of sin, is yet to be performed. And it is an arduous work. No one who has not fully and deeply engaged in it, can tell the efforts and conflicts it requires. All men are inclined with unutterable strength of feeling to the indulgence of self-complacency in some form. But to come to the point of utter self-renunciation, self-loathing, and self-abhorrence, is diametrically opposed to all the strongest feelings of the soul. To do it is to die a moral death; and the proud heart recoils with agony from the point. It desires leave, at least, to glory in its humility; but to renounce all merit, to be fully sensible of one's utter vileness, guilt, and degradation, to believe, to own, acknowledge, and deeply feel it, and to be habitually humble and broken hearted, is the most arduous and difficult attainment of a Christian. But arduous and difficult as it is, it may be carried to an extent far beyond our highest conceptions, if we constantly aim at the standard of entire perfection: and no one should aim at any thing lower. No one should aim at any thing less than an entire and radical crucifixion of the old man, in all his members and parts, and to put on entire and in full proportion the Lord Jesus Christ, and to make no provision for the flesh to serve the lusts thereof.

But how can this be done without an exquisite moral sensibility to the evil of all sin? To see our sins, and acknowledge that they are sins, is one thing, but to have moral energy to loathe, abhor, and renounce them, is quite another. But all victory over sin depends entirely on this. The whole process is one of self-loathing and abhorrence of sin, and determined, agonizing efforts to subdue it. And why should it not be? How can a soul so *polluted and degraded* as that of man, so full of apathy and moral death, be *restored to holiness and life*, in any other way?

It ought then to be a leading object of the present age, to produce a more exquisite moral sensibility to the evils of all sin. No sin should be deemed trivial or venial. All should be abhorred. There should be the feelings of heaven on this subject. The evils of moral pollution should be felt, and mourned over as they would be in heaven, before the throne of God, where every robe is pure and spotless. And if the church will commune with God as she ought, she can gain this also. His feelings are pure and unmixed, and can impart a healthy energy to our own. He can teach us to loathe all our sins, even as he does, to crucify them with unsparing severity, and to long after perfect purity with the intensity of his own desires.

SERMON CXCI.

THE points insisted on in the preceding remarks are fundamental, and would imply all other graces: but of the traits of Christian character which flow from them, some are so particularly important in the present age of the world, that they deserve a separate and prominent notice. Among these may be mentioned,

5. Deep and unaffected humility

No sin is in its nature more plausible and energetic than pride. It is peculiarly an intellect sin, and not gross and vulgar, and it often assumes the fairest and most specious forms. It is also, when indulged, attended by a peculiar kind of pleasurable sensation, which, though in its results most pernicious, is at the same time most exhilarating and seductive. It is, in fact, a peculiar species of mental intoxication, and gives rise to habits of sinful indulgence, which grow stronger by repetition, and when fully formed are next to unconquerable. And against no form of sin is there needed an energy of holy abhorrence more intense, than against this. It has ever been the ruling sin of the world, and to it as a nation, we are peculiarly exposed; and of all sins, its evils have been least realized. It has been indeed condemned in theory. But no public sentiment in any age or country has ever felt towards it, as it ought. The apathy of the human mind on this subject would be truly surprising, were it not for the fact that the sin is so universal, and so much a master sin, and so rarely subdued. There is not, and never has been on earth, humility enough to create a delicate and energetic public sentiment as to the evil of this sin. Yet of all forms of sin, God abhors none so entirely and so intensely. It is to him an object of perfect abomination, and utter abhorrence; and in his church he loathes nothing so much. Nor are these feelings of God ill-founded. Though not a gross and vulgar sin, yet viewed in its results, it is the most pernicious of all sins, it is the great centre of rebellion against God on earth, the primal source of errors, heresies, and contentions in the church, and the most impregnable stronghold of the devil in the heart of man. Hence is it that so often, in descriptions of the agency of God in subduing the world to himself, he is exhibited as pouring out the vials of his wrath in a peculiar manner on *the proud*, and as threatening that when the day comes that shall burn like an oven, *the proud* especially shall be consumed as stubble.

Hence, if we would sympathize with God, there must be a mighty revolution in the church on this subject, and all pride and ambition, and unholy love of power, must become an object of utter loathing and abhorrence. The least degree must neither be tolerated nor indulged. There must be an energy that shall break down, and consume, and utterly eradicate this sin, and make the church what she ought to be, poor in spirit, and meek and lowly in heart. The energy of feeling on this subject ought to be such as no prosperity, and no temptations to pride shall be able to overcome. It ought to produce in the church not an occasional period of self-abasement before God, easily forgotten and laid aside in the hour of trial, but a habit

of mind, deep, fixed, and permanent, a trait of character inwrought into the very texture of the soul, even as it will be in heaven. In this respect especially, should the old man be utterly slain, and his heart's-blood poured out on the altar of God. God requires nothing less; he will be satisfied with nothing less; for the least remnant of pride he abhors from his very soul. In some, this state of mind has already existed in an eminent degree. But never in enough to form a public sentiment on the subject. But it must: it ought to exist in all the church, and become her all-pervading character.

6. Those mild and gentle graces of the Christian character which are exhibited in enduring, kindly and benevolently, injurious and unjust treatment, either from professing Christians, or from the world. Of this kind are meekness, patience, long-suffering, forgiveness, and love of enemies.

Of these Christian virtues it need not be remarked that they are the peculiar results of Christianity. It is the glory of Christianity that it can produce them, and that it will, where it exerts its full power, and no system besides.

The reason is obvious. No other system brings the soul in immediate contact (so to speak) with the true God, so as to impress his most characteristic and peculiar traits upon the soul.

The most peculiar traits of God's character, and those in which his highest glory resides, he himself being judge, are his mercy, his grace, his patience, his forgiving love: and it is also his glory that these exist in no small or limited degree, but beyond all conception of the finite intellect of man. These traits are no part of a selfish or sinful mind. To them it makes no approaches. Their nature it does not comprehend. It is not until *born of God* that the human heart first learns truly to forgive. And as it communes with God, it drinks in more and more of this spirit.

But the work is a great one, to become *truly and thoroughly forgiving*. Not merely to abstain from overt expressions of ill will towards one who has injured us, but, at once, and as the natural dictate of the soul, to return good for evil, and to exercise towards him ardent and quenchless love.

Yet, God requires and expects in us nothing less than this. That on this point our whole nature shall be changed, and we shall become forgiving even as he is; so that it shall not daily cost us a painful effort to struggle against resentful feelings, but the affections of our soul shall flow easily, habitually, and strongly in the channel of love. So that it shall be impossible to provoke us, or take us by surprise; so strong shall be the habitual tendencies of our souls towards forgiveness and love.

That the gospel has power to produce this state of mind, there is no doubt; that it was designed to do it is plain; for to no other trait of character is more prominence given as the great peculiarity of a Christian spirit; and on the want of no other grace does God so decidedly frown. He makes a forgiving spirit an essential condition of our own forgiveness, and teaches us to pray that we may be forgiven only as we forgive.

But on this subject, at the present day, public sentiment is exceedingly feeble, compared with the emotions of God. The indulgence, to a certain extent, of an irritated and unforgiving temper, is not deemed a great sin, so that like drunkenness, it can not be endured and must be checked. It is expected, as a matter of course, that Christians will now and then get angry, especially in circumstances of peculiar trial, and it is regarded as a matter of surprise and peculiar gratitude to God, if they do not. And the amount of unchristian feeling exhibited in some of the great movements and discussions of the day, is alike humiliating and surprising.

On this whole subject there should be a great and radical change. Public sensibility, as it regards the guilt of unchristian feelings, should be raised. The views and feelings of God respecting it, should be more regarded, and his solemn prohibitions of it sink deep into the soul. The formation of such a character as has been described, should be regarded as a prominent fundamental duty of the age. So far from being deemed a hopeless attainment,

it should be regarded as *essential* to qualify any one to labor in the great work of converting the world. Christians should seek for such feelings in infinite strength. They should endeavor to form some conception of this great peculiarity of God's character, and make him their model, and long to be changed into his own image, in this respect, and put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, and all malice, and be kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them.

7. Add now to all this the power of brotherly love and of all those emotions which tend by a positive influence to draw the church together, and make all true Christians one in heart, and you will complete the great outline of that standard of holiness which the exigencies of the present age demand.

That union among his followers was deemed a matter of great importance by the Savior, and essential to the ultimate triumph of his cause, no one can for a moment doubt, who has ever read his last prayer and noticed the prominent place which it occupies in it, uttered, as it was, in full view of all the future wants and destinies of his church. What less is implied in the petition "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; *that the world may believe that thou hast sent me?*" Nor can any one forget how full his instructions on this point to his disciples just before his death—nor how prominent the place it occupies in all the writings of the apostles. Facts like these should at least lead us to suspect that there may be something radically wrong in the views and feelings of the church in the present day on the subject; for no such union as Christ desired among his followers is seen or even expected at the present day. How much our Savior implied in his views of Christian union, it is not perhaps expedient here to inquire; for as a practical question it involves some points by no means easy to be settled, at least in the present low state of moral feeling in the church.

On one point, however, there can be no doubt; he intended that his followers should *love a common Father and be supremely devoted to a common cause*, and that they should *love holiness as seen in each other*; and he intended at least that there should be such an union among them as would naturally and inevitably result from *giving to these causes of union their full and uncontrolled power in the mind*. But these are causes of prodigious power. For a moment, suppose Christians to love God and the common cause as they may, and as they ought, and to exhibit conspicuously to every eye the beauties of holiness, and who can imagine how wonderful the result?

It is a well-known law of the mind that, when devoted to a great cause, we of necessity find our affections strongly drawn out towards all who favor it. We love them because they love a cause so dear to us. Thus, in our revolutionary struggle, all who ardently loved the cause of liberty and their country, found themselves united by a mighty bond of union, under the influence of which, local jealousies and sectional prejudices lost their power; and in proportion as this devotedness to the common cause was strong, was their union indissoluble. But what are the interests of a finite earthly cause, compared with those involved in the cause of God? These interests are infinite, and if properly seen and loved, may have, nay, must have infinite power upon the soul. Before the energy of such a principle of union nothing can stand. It must and will sacrifice every selfish and local feeling on the altar of God. Even, then, though the present intellectual diversities should remain among Christians, yet vastly higher degrees of union may be produced simply by increasing their devotedness to the common cause. Make the experiment and see if it be not so. Give full power to the love of God. Let every Christian fully realize the intimate and endearing relations of every other to a common Father and Savior, and to a common cause: let them daily meditate on what is to be their future union in heaven, and exhibit the moral character of God here on earth, and then see the result.

We cannot indeed expect that this alone will produce all that union which is essential to the glory of God: yet it will produce a degree of union unknown on earth before, and at the same time prepare the way for other and similar causes to secure the final and glorious result.

It ought, then, to be a leading object of the age, to give these principles of union their full power, and to give up every thing which can in the least diminish their full efficacy and universal prevalence.

SERMON CXCII.

HAVING, in the preceding discourses, considered what is implied in a standard of holiness adapted to the age, I proceed,

II. To show, that to produce such a standard of holiness shou'd be the great enterprise of the present age.

That it is the leading duty of the age; to prepare itself for securing the conversion of the world, none can deny. I shall consider what things are needed to secure this result, and show that elevated holiness, such both in *kind* and *degree* as I have described, alone can produce them.

1. Nothing but such a degree of holiness can secure the *pecuniary resources* needed for the conversion of the world.

The great desideratum of the present age is not a plan of action. The time was, when the church slumbered over the great work of converting the world. When there was not only no action but no plan. And on awaking from the sleep of ages, the first great duty to be performed was to survey the mighty field of effort, and to lay out and mature plans of action. But this work no longer remains to be done. No doubt the plans of the present age are yet imperfect, and will be improved, but that they include all the elements of successful effort cannot be denied.

The great desideratum, then, of the present age, is executive energy to carry out existing plans to their full results. The vast machine is *idle*, and now we need a *strong mainspring*. We need *executive power* in the church. Letting our plans of action remain the same, by increasing *this*, we may increase their efficacy a thousand fold.

What then are the elements of executive power? They are *high degrees of moral courage, a self-sacrificing and self-denying spirit, and adequate pecuniary resources*.

But in all these respects, the church at the present day is greatly deficient, and nothing but a standard of holiness such as has been described, can make good the deficiencies. Let us then for a moment look at these points in detail.

In the first place there is most manifestly a *great want of resources* to execute fully the benevolent enterprises of the day.

Not that the church has not adequate resources, if she would employ them, nor that her contributions are not great in comparison with nothing. But they are small indeed, when we view the emergency of the case and the work to be done. Think of all that must be effected before the world is converted to God. Think of the millions of China, and of Burmah, and of the whole heathen world—of the Bibles, and tracts, and missionaries, and schools that are needed at the present hour. Think of the wants of even Christian lands: yea, of our own country; of the efforts needed to roll back the tide of error and vice—to sustain the great cause of universal education, to provide the means of grace for all the community, and secure their conversion to God. Look at these things, and see how little we have *really gained* in the progress of sin and moral death on the earth taken as a whole, in the last forty years; and is it not obvious at a glance, that *much more must be done than has yet been even thought of*, before the world is converted to God? Look now at the expenditures of earthly governments for temporal purposes; look at the energy, and enterprise, and expenditures of the commercial world for inter-

nal improvements, and commerce, and compare with these the efforts and expenditures made to establish and maintain the government of God on earth, and to convert the world to him, and *are they at all on the same scale?* Do the means bear *any proportion* to the end? Alas, they do not. And on the present scale of action *centuries on centuries must elapse* before the world is converted to God.

Turn, now, from this general view, to specific facts. And here again I ask what feeling more common or more painful to those engaged in laying out the benevolent operations of the day, than that they cannot act up to their sober convictions of what the glory of God now requires, for the want of funds? Nay, I might ask, what single benevolent enterprise of the present day is not limited, painfully limited in its operations, for want of funds? As vast fields of effort, and the wants of a dying world rise before the mind, *how easy to plan*, how easy to show what the *glory of God and the public good demand*; to show how knowledge may be diffused; society elevated and reformed; the cause of education put on a basis such as is demanded by the exigencies of our country, and the great work we are called to do in the world: how Bibles and other religious works may be multiplied, until they fill the land and world, and how the glad tidings of salvation may be proclaimed in every quarter of the globe. It is easy to show how all this can be done; and to any one who gazes on the work, and thinks of the worth of souls, how strong the impulse to rise and do it. But Oh, the keen conviction that, like a sword, cuts the soul—that funds to do the work on an elevated scale, a scale worthy of God, *cannot be had!* I do not overlook the truly liberal spirits of the day; I thank God that they exist. But how many worthy coadjutors have they in so great a cause? Alas, it is a painful, a mournful fact, that **THE CAUSE OF GOD DOES NOT, AND CANNOT COMMAND RESOURCES, AS DO THE GREAT WORLDLY ENTERPRISES OF THE AGE.** For a system of internal improvements in a single state,* twenty-two millions of dollars is freely given; but to redeem millions of immortal souls, to change this whole world to a garden of God, when was an item of expenditure so liberal ever thought of? And are not such expenditures deserved by the cause? Let eternity answer.

Ought not, then, the state of things to be such, that *any thing which is really demanded by the glory of God and a dying world, can be done?* Are the interests of human governments vast enough to command all of the resources which they need for any enterprise in peace or war, and ought not God to have actually all that he demands for his government, so that nothing shall be needed but to state what *his glory really demands*, and to call for the amount?

Who can for a moment deny that such a state of things in the church is right? that it is reasonable? that it *ought to be*? What does God think on the subject, when he looks down upon those whom he has redeemed by the blood of his own Son, and who are his by a covenant of everlasting love, and who have given all that they have and all that they are to him? When he reflects on eternity, and the greatness of his cause, and all its glorious results, does he not feel that it deserves all that man *can do?* and *are not his feelings the truth?* The church, then, *must be brought up to this standard*, or she can never see things as they are, or sympathize with God.

But how shall it be done? By urgent and incessant appeals for funds *to hearts, divided, lukewarm, worldly?* or by elevating first the moral state of the affections, and then relying on *spontaneous action*, as an inevitable result of the change? Plainly the latter.

There is a *state of mind, which if first produced will secure all else, and that not by importunate urgency, but by the spontaneous impulse of ardent and overflowing love.* It is that **SUPREME DEVOTIONEDNESS TO GOD, ALREADY DESCRIBED**; a state of mind which *changes the self-denial from the side of giving, to the side of not giving*, and makes it essential to our happiness to do

* Pennsylvania.

all that we can for God. Rare as this state of mind is, it is a reality, and when it exists, it has inconceivable power. For if the cause of God is actually dearer to the heart than all besides, if to promote it is actually a source of the highest and purest happiness, how can we help giving? If its prosperity is identified with all the warmest and fondest wishes of the soul, can any thing be enjoyed whilst this declines? Of what avail are wealth and ease to impart happiness to a man whose supreme end is the glory of God, and who longs for it as for his highest good? How can he enjoy them so long as his main purpose is not attained? He cannot. He will freely, joyfully, and delightfully give them up, and any thing else for the glory of God. If he loves him better than father, or mother, or brother, or sister, or wife, or child, yea, than his own life, what will he not do to promote his glory?

Let us illustrate the principle by a parallel case. Look at that father—His heart is bound up in a son, an only son. He loves him with an intensity of affection which words cannot express. He too repays his father's love, and approaches manhood with a fair promise of eminence and usefulness. In crossing the ocean he is shipwrecked on a barbarous shore, and becomes the slave of cruel men. A vast sum may redeem him. But perils untold await him who goes to seek his rescue, and all shrink back from the enterprise. Intelligence is brought to his father; and now mark the operations of parental love. Does he sit down coolly and calculate profit and loss, and grow pale at the thought of dangers, and hesitate as to leaving home and friends and ease. Nay, can you keep him at home? Of what avail to him are wealth, and home, and ease, as the thought of his son, his only son, his highest earthly joy, rises before his mind? Detain me not, he will say. I know that dangers await me, I know the enterprise is full of peril, and to redeem him may demand my all. But shall I balance mere wealth against my son, and such a son? No, let it go; and as to ease or the society of friends, how can I enjoy them without him? How can I enjoy ease, or friends, or the pleasures of civilized society, whilst he pines in cruel servitude, in a savage land, without a friend to console, or aid to endure his woes? Impede me not, I cannot, I will not be detained, I will go for my son, I will seek his rescue; even death is better than to live and mourn his loss. Such feelings and such conduct are no fiction. Mere natural affection has impelled many to do even more than this. And why? The object of which they were in pursuit, *was to them worth more than all else*, and therefore, *to give up all for it was no sacrifice*, it was essential to happiness, and not to give it up would have been *a real hardship*, as involving the loss of that which was worth more than all besides.

This state of mind is the great mainspring of all energetic undivided action. It is what is meant by the *ruling passion* of the soul. It leads the ambitious man to give up all for power, the miser all for gold, the voluptuous all for pleasure, and the patriot all for his country.

And will not a corresponding state of mind produce the same results as it regards the cause of God? Cannot a ruling passion stronger than death exist in relation to this also? Is it of less worth than human objects, for which men so easily make sacrifices and suffer and die? Cannot God be dearer to the soul than any human object? Ought he not to be? Does he not deserve a love in comparison with which all earthly love shall disappear? Can gratitude even for REDEMING LOVE gain no such mastery over the soul?

Oh no, the cause of God does not furnish the only solitary exception to this universal law. Nay, here, and here only it can exert its highest power. Here the whole soul may be poured out in tides of mighty love. A love stronger than death, that many waters cannot quench, or floods drown, and in comparison with which all the substance of one's house shall be utterly despised.

Not only may it exist—it has existed. It was the moving spring of Christ himself, when he offered up his own life for a guilty world. Prophets, apostles, and martyrs, have felt its power; it led Paul in triumph through losses, and reproaches, and suffering, and death, to a glorious crown of life, after

he had proclaimed through the earth the glories of his Redeemer and God. And LET THIS SPIRIT BUT ANIMATE THE CHURCH AGAIN, and there will be no need of *urgency* to induce them to give. You cannot prevent it. They will first offer themselves, and then pour out all that they have, into the treasury of the Lord; and do it fully, and joyfully, and with a perfect heart. Such are the offerings that God desires, and on such a spirit will he look down with fulness of joy; for *the Lord loveth a cheerful giver*.

The great truth then, on which the whole subject turns, is this, *Resources are not wanting in the church; nothing is wanting but a state of mind which will render it impossible to be happy, whatever else they may have, till the world is converted to God*. Produce this state of mind, and it will produce all else. It will settle all cases of conscience, and difficult questions as to personal expenditure and retrenchment. A holy heart longing intensely for the glory of God and the salvation of man is the best casuist in such cases.

No general rules for retrenchment, or as to the amount to be given, can be laid down to meet all cases. Nor would it avail if it were possible, so long as God and his cause are not loved with supreme and undivided ardor.

But if they are, the spontaneous impulse of a man's heart will lead him to give all he can. He will retrench spontaneously as far as he can, and give honestly, and almost of necessity, to the extent of his ability. Wisdom is indeed needed to do all things judiciously on the great scale. But it is easily sought of God, and if sought in such a state of mind, and in view of eternity, it will easily be found.

2. The same state of mind will also produce A SELF-SACRIFICING AND SELF-DENYING SPIRIT IN THE HIGHEST DEGREE. If our love to the cause of God is so ardent and absorbing, that to see it suffer is the greatest possible self-denial, and to labor for its promotion the highest possible joy, it will then cost no struggle to give up any thing for God. What are ease, and home, and friends, and the enjoyments of social life, to one whose highest joy is found in promoting the cause of God? With what readiness can he give them all up. Not because his love to friends and relatives is small.—*Never is it more pure and ardent, than when he surrenders them all freely for God*. But love to God is the all-absorbing passion of his soul. For him he can give up all without a struggle; for him encounter dangers, and for him endure death: yea, he is unspeakably happy so to do. In fact, the state of mind that enables a man to do this, *is the happiest that a mortal knows*; for it implies the highest possible exercise of love to God, a state of mind which in itself is perfect bliss. Viewed then in its true light, it is a glorious privilege to make sacrifices and to suffer for God. And when the church feels on the subject as she ought, no urgency will be needed to induce men to go anywhere, or suffer anything, for God. The love of Christ, with mighty energy will constrain and urge them on; and increasing multitudes of laborers will devote themselves to the sacred cause. Not merely will ministers or missionaries practice self-denial in going to heathen lands, but all will go who by so doing can aid the grand cause. Merchants, or lawyers, or farmers, or physicians, any or all will go, if plans can be devised by which they may aid in the conversion of the world to God. *The whole energies of the church will be brought out*. None will be idle, none supernumeraries. All will be minute men, ready to take any post, and engage in any labor, and waiting only the word of command from the providence of God.

3. From the same sacred source will COURAGE FLOW IN ITS HIGHEST FORMS. And before the world is converted to God, this will be tested to the uttermost. For we are not to expect such a result without a mighty struggle.

For let it be remembered, not only is *man* in rebellion against God, but his rebellion has been *skillfully organized* by the dark hosts of hell, and will be firmly maintained against all efforts to subdue it.

Let it be remembered that not only is man corrupt *as an individual*, but that the spirit of rebellion has diffused itself into all the social, civil, and po-

litical relations of man. Not that all parts of human society are wrong, but that evil is mingled with all departments, and that some are utterly corrupt, and that this has been done under the influence of malignant spirits, great and terrible in perverted intellectual power.

Hence the Bible represents Satan as the presiding spirit amidst all the hosts of the rebellious on earth, planning systems of vice, error, and immorality, corrupting and debasing the church, and infusing and maintaining false and pernicious maxims in all departments of human society. All the leading forms of error and rebellion on earth are ascribed to him; and he is said to blind, to deceive, and to lead astray, the whole world.

Viewing the scene in this light, and it cannot be truly seen in any other, how vast, how arduous the work to be done. To suspend his influence over the mind of man, and cast him and his dark hosts out of the world and into the bottomless pit. To dissipate all the darkness he has produced, to overthrow and destroy all his plans and systems of error, fully to enlighten the mind of man, and to induce him voluntarily and joyfully to reorganize human society on such principles as God requires and approves. Can a result like this take place without a great conflict? It is vain to hope for it.

As public sentiment begins to have energy fairly to bring up the final question, all the elements of depravity will be collected and concentrated to oppose the cause of God, and the hosts of hell will marshal all their power, malice, and wiles, to retard his triumph and avert their own final defeat. For it is no trivial point that is now to be gained or lost. It is not merely one great question that is to be decided. It is not merely a struggle for mental freedom and rights of conscience, against the ungodly claims and blasphemous pretensions of Antichrist; it is not merely a struggle for civil and religious liberty, against corrupt governments or oppressive despotisms; it is not any one of these causes, nor any one cause like them, however great, and deep, and soul-absorbing. It is a question that involves them all, and more; it is a question that unites, into one mighty focus, all the elements of warfare, malignity, and rebellion, that exist on earth or in hell. It is the question whether *all the power of Satan on earth, in all his plans, and in all his wiles, when concentrated to one burning point, and put forth in one desperate effort, shall be utterly broken, and he be thoroughly and absolutely defeated, bruised, crushed, trodden under foot, disgraced, cast out and destroyed.* It is a question that will yet arouse and concentrate and absorb the energies of a world in a mighty struggle, where apathy and neutrality will be unknown. For such a conflict must the church prepare, for it hastens on. The infidel may scoff, but he who reads and believes the word of God should awake to his real condition, arouse himself at once, gird on his armor, gird up the loins of his mind, and stand prepared at any hour: for who can tell how near the day may be, even the GREAT DAY OF THE BATTLE OF GOD ALMIGHTY?

Whether it will involve physical persecution and the sword, remains yet to be decided. But the church ought to be prepared for any emergency. The word of God plainly indicates that the conflict, either of physical force or of public sentiment, or perhaps of both, will be fierce and tremendous. Who then can be prepared for the emergencies of a day like this, who is not strong in the Lord and in the power of his might? For such scenes mere human energy and human courage can make no preparation. We need that courage and energy which come from God alone.

But habits of elevated communion with him, and of faith, such as have been described, can give us all that we need. His mind beholds the mighty conflict without fear; his mighty intellect grasps it all. He sees and knows its mighty results, and by his energy he wields and manages the whole.

Who then that holds communion with him, and sees and feels these things, can be afraid? If God is for him, who can be against him? This one thought is enough. It nerves his soul, and fills him with a courage which nothing can destroy. He knows that God can sustain him and give him the

victory; and if God be on his side, whilst the throne of the Eternal stands he cannot fall. This was the secret of Luther's energy, and it is the only source of that courage which will finally subdue the world to God.

4. In no other way can high excitement and great energy in the church be so balanced and regulated as to exclude a pernicious mixture of angry and unholy emotions. It will be seen that efforts adequate to the conversion of the world will bring into exercise all the emotions and energies of man.— But to depraved beings this is a new source of danger.

It is a law of the human mind, that when highly excited on any one great subject, the strength of all its passions and emotions receives a correspondent increase. The whole mind is warmed, and the scale of emotion raised. This holds true alike in all great enterprises, civil and religious. Hence, if whilst the mind is in such a state of excitement, unholy emotions exist, they too exist in peculiar vigor. At a low temperature; the mind has no energetic emotions, for good or for evil; raise its temperature, and as they prevail in either direction, they receive new power. How dangerous, then, how destructive, unholy emotions, when the mind is excited to the highest possible degree. They are like the blasting and withering influence of the Simoom of the desert. They scorch and destroy all in their way. Nor does it follow, that because a man is sustaining a good cause with highly excited energies, that he may not be the subject of such emotions. Nay, in such circumstances peculiar danger exists of falling into such a state of mind. And he is blind to all the records of experience, who does not see that it exists. Indeed, to advocate a holy cause with all the united energies of the soul, and yet not permit the mind to be debased or corrupted by unholy emotions, is one of the highest attainments of man; in importance it is second to none. For the goodness of a cause can make no atonement for unholy feelings in its advocates. It only renders them the more conspicuous and the more injurious. Great as was the cause of our Savior, the least exercise of unholy feelings in him would have ruined a world. And though we are by no means in circumstances like his, yet it is no less true of us than of him, that the least degree of unholy feeling cannot be displayed in the advocates of the cause of God, without most seriously dishonoring him, and impeding his cause. The extent of the evil is less, no doubt, than it would have been in the case of Christ; but still it is real and great. Indeed, no evil of the present age is greater, than the ease with which Christians are thrown into unholy emotions, whenever excited by any great cause, and the deep apathy with which they regard the criminality of such emotions.

But if the church is not prepared to endure the excitement of the present day, when the world is but half awake, what will she do in the midst of the conflicts of a coming age? If the first faint tremblings of the earth throw her prostrate, what will she do when mighty earthquakes shall convulse it to its centre?

Is it not evident, then, that the church must learn to endure excitement of the highest kind, and yet to keep herself pure from all sinful emotions, before she is prepared to convert the world to God? And how can she secure this, except by just such a cultivation of the mild and forgiving graces of the Christian character, as has been pointed out? These are designed by God to be the balance of the soul in the hour of excitement; nay, they are so in God himself. Much as he is moved, he never ceases to be patient and kind. These traits of character in him are as infinite as his energy is great in other respects. And the same balance ought to be preserved in the church. She ought to be just as patient, and long-suffering, and gentle, and tender, and kind, as she is energetic, and bold, and courageous. It is not, indeed, common to unite these apparently opposite traits in equal degrees, and to some they seem incompatible. But they are not. They are both essential parts of the highest degree of holiness. They are both united in God. Nor do they tend in the least to weaken each other. The highest degree of courage

and energy cannot exist except in a meek, patient, and lowly mind. In such a mind its energies are undivided. No anger, or suspicion, or envy, divides or distracts them. They are all kept pure, and expend their united power in promoting the cause of God.

Indeed, this is the great secret of the highest possible degree of moral power. Let a man be in this state of mind, and personal insults have lost their power to agitate or confuse. He looks calmly at the truth with unclouded vision; he sees what the public good requires, and that, sustained by the energy of omnipotence, he calmly but decidedly resolves to do. By attacks on his personal interests, he can neither be excited nor provoked. All such things he overlooks and forgets, intent only to promote the glory of God and the welfare of man. But let the cause of God be assailed, and all the energies of his soul awake, and, in perfect consistency with the utmost meekness and mildness, he exhibits a courage which nothing can daunt or subdue.

Such is the style of character demanded in all who would engage in the great work of converting the world. And how can it be attained but by elevating to the highest possible extent, the standard of holiness in the church, and by aiming at humility, meekness, patience, and long-suffering, in the highest degree? So that these traits of character shall exert a decisive and controlling power on the public mind, and thoroughly imbue all the maxims, plans, principles, and associations of the day, with their own all-pervading character. *Nothing short of this can do it, and nothing short of this should be done.* So that harmony and brotherly love shall be expected, in all assemblies of Christians, and especially of ministers, as a matter of course, and not be regarded as an astonishing event, and a cause of peculiar thanksgiving to God. Do we ever hear ministers thank God that they have been able to meet together and transact business with so much temperance, and so little blasphemy, or drunkenness? And why not? Is not exemption from such sins as these, a real cause of gratitude to God? Who can deny it? Why, then, not thank God for their absence? Because they are not expected. They are rebuked by a strong public sentiment, and it is expected that they will be absent, of course. And why is it not so with angry emotions, and unholy excitement? Because the moral sentiment of the church on this subject is so low. Because the feelings of God on this point are not realized, and the deep guilt of such things is not seen and felt as it ought to be. Let the presence of God be realized and felt, and the public sentiment of the church be pure, and such things would not be endured on earth any more than in heaven.—Does Gabriel ever praise God, because he and Raphael, and all the heavenly host can labor for him without contention? Nay, what would be thought of a single angry word in heaven? Would not every golden harp in a moment cease its notes, and all heaven stand in amaze at the hideous sound? Alas, alas, for this earth, but most of all for the church of God! Oh, upon what scenes has God looked down, from age to age, among his own dear people, whom he hath redeemed by his own blood, and adjured by his own infinite love, to love one another. Redeemed by the same Savior, laboring in the same great cause, heirs of the same glorious inheritance, preparing to spend an eternity together in the service of God, they yet expect, as a matter of course, that they must in all cases of peculiar temptation, and in some that are not, quarrel and contend in the service of God! For this sin the earth groans in agony, and is weary, waiting in vain for the hour of redemption, and the heavens are hung in mourning, and the angels of God weep. Oh, for the voice of God, to make the church feel as she ought on this point! If angry meteors were to shoot along the sounding sky, and the heavens above to glow with lurid flames, as in token of the fierce displeasure of God—if on a dark canopy of gathering clouds, the Son of Man, in all the glory of offended majesty, should now appear, uttering, whilst the earth trembled at his voice, his emotions of mingled grief and indignation at the unholy divisions and contentions of his church—then

indeed, might his people lay it to heart; and will they not as it is? Is it not enough, that God has spoken in his word, and fully declared his feelings there? and must he darken the heavens and shake the earth, before his people will believe that he is in earnest on this subject, and means all he says? Is it a hopeless case? is this sin unconquerable? cannot the church subdue it, and be formed anew in the image of God, and put on the garments of infinite meekness and unconquerable love? Oh, yes, it can be done. The glory of God demands it. The exigencies of the age demand it. Gratitude to God demands it. And let the church feel on this subject as she ought, and if can be done; nay, it will be done; and the public sentiment of the church and a deep sense of the presence of God, will rebuke all angry and unholy excitement on earth, even as it does in heaven. No Christian would deem it hard to abstain from such emotions in heaven, and immediately before the throne of God. The very thought of them would be horrible to his mind. And the same would be true on earth, if all men had such a sense of the presence and emotions of God, as they might have and ought to have. It is possible to deliberate and consult here on earth, as if we were deliberating and consulting before the throne of God, amid the unclouded splendors of the upper world. Nay, if all Christians had the proper spirit of faith, they would never deliberate in any other way. Oh, then, how easy to do all things in calmness, and meekness, and brotherly love. Oh, then, how altered the spirit of religious public bodies: how altered the spirit of public discussion: how altered the manner in which the church would sustain and advocate every good cause. And how soon would the balmy energy of love, diffused throughout her borders, heal the wounds which sin has made, and give to every work of her hands an energy unknown before.

SERMON CXCIII.

5. IN no other way than by greatly elevating the standard of holiness, can intellectual diversities of opinion be removed, to such a degree as to secure the final union of the church.

Of the importance of a final and visible union of the people of God, so striking and powerful in its influence, as utterly to eradicate the unbelief of the world concerning the Divine origin of the Gospel, we have already spoken. We have also adverted to the power of ardent devotedness to a common cause; and love of a common holy character, to unite even those who differ as much as Christians of the present day in various points of belief.

But, this degree of union is not all which we are to desire or expect. The present degree of intellectual difference among Christians is not founded in truth, nor in the nature of things; and must, to a great extent, be removed before the unity which God requires can be restored to the church, and the world be converted to God. And this can be effected only by eminent holiness.

The question, how can unity be preserved in the church, has ever been considered one of the greatest difficulty.

At one time, it was deemed lawful and expedient, to maintain it by physical power, and to compel all men to think alike by civil pains and penalties. But by all enlightened friends of civil and religious liberty, these views have been abandoned, and the right of free inquiry maintained. And now, the chief confidence of many seems to be reposed on discussion, as the most effectual means of discovering and defending truth, and promoting unity of opinion. And, it must be conceded, that this is not only an important, but an indispensable means of securing these results. God intends that men shall think, and think *deeply*. Without it they can understand and value neither him nor his government; nor can they efficiently and wisely do his will. And no doubt this world will become a thinking world, just in proportion as it surrenders its intellect to that of God, to be illuminated and taught of him.

But it cannot be pretended that mere discussion is adequate, either to secure a discovery of the truth, or unity of opinion; for want of information is not the chief source of error, nor is mere argument the most effectual mode of enlightening the mind. It is clear, beyond a doubt, that the greatest of all obstacles to the perception of truth are moral, and that these may exist to such a degree, as utterly to deprive argument of all its power. Indeed, men practically admit this principle in all the intercourse of life. They never expect to see a leading antagonist in a controversy convinced, or willing to confess it if he is. They never expect to see one leading denomination, or party, convinced by the arguments of another, of the incorrectness of any of their own views or practices. Solitary exceptions may exist in individual cases, but these are regarded as extraordinary facts, and only serve to show the extent and reality of the general rule. Indeed he must have been but a careless observer, who is not fully convinced that the power of the heart over the intellect altogether exceeds the power of the intellect over the heart.

If then the heart has such sway over the intellect, can the entire intellect be secured except through the medium of the heart? Most manifestly it cannot; and no mode of discovering the truth, or producing the unity of opinion, can be correct, which is not essentially based on this principle. The great truth then, on which this whole subject rests, is this:—

The only effectual mode of producing unity of opinion in the church, is to remove all moral obstacles to the perception of the truth; and this can be done only by elevating the standard of holiness, and thus producing a state of feeling, so calm, unbiassed, judicious, and kind, that such inquiry and discussion as is necessary to remove diversities, shall be unimpeded, efficient and safe.

Obvious as these principles may seem, they have not been regarded as they ought to be. Indeed, the great errors of the present age, on this subject, may be traced wholly to the neglect of them.

It is entirely owing to this cause, that those results which would easily, universally, and of necessity flow from high degrees of holiness in the church, are neither expected nor aimed at, as things probable and easy to be attained, and that some almost deny the possibility of enlarged and harmonious views among all Christians, on all great leading points of doctrine and practice, and of an elevated, energetic, holy, united public sentiment, as it regards the conversion of the world, and the organization of human society on benevolent principles. That these things are not expected is obvious from the fact that the great effort of the day is rather to modify and check the evils of the present distracted and divided state of the church, than to effect a radical cure. Some seem even to regard the existence of different denominations, as the essential means of doing the greatest good. It is essential, it is said, to the greatest degree of excitement, and to bring out all the energies of the church in the common cause. It will not, indeed, be denied, that some innocent diversity of opinion may exist, on unimportant points of doctrine or government, owing to the necessary limitations of the human mind, or diversities of acquired knowledge, and varieties in character and condition, or to the want of express revelation on particular points, or because some things are in the nature of the case indifferent and optional. And that some good as well as evil has resulted from the existence of different denominations, will not be denied.

But that any degree of diversity of opinion or practice in the church, which is the result of sin, is useful or desirable, or even harmless, is an absurdity in terms. It is to suppose a state of society formed by perfectly holy men, would be less perfect than one formed by sinners, less adapted to do good and glorify God, and develop the powers of the human mind. And what opinion can be more absurd, nay, more impious? But, no one, it is presumed will maintain it. It must be conceded that all diversities of opinion which sin has caused, ought to cease. Let us then inquire what would be the result if all sinful causes of error were removed?

First, there would come into operation that natural and powerful tendency

to union, of which I have already spoken ; for supreme devotedness to God, as we have shown, inevitably tends to draw men together, and to produce a sincere desire to remove causes of difference. To be united as one, and to have mutual confidence and affection, is so happy and heavenly a state of mind, that to remain disunited would be a great self-denial, and a longing after union would be ardent and intense.

All shame at confessing error would cease ; for this arises solely from pride and a fear of degrading one's self, or one's party. If men loved God and the public good, as they ought, they would feel no shame to confess sins and errors, but the reverse. They would rejoice to do it, for by so doing they would free themselves from the grievous bondage of false shame, and throw their whole influence on the side of truth and of God. They would see that to confess errors degraded neither themselves nor their party, but exalted both in the eyes of God, and of all candid men ; and God would give them grace to do it, and he is able to give grace to all his church to do the same.

Again, all fear of obloquy and human censure would be gone, and under the influence of supreme love to God, and to his cause, the soul would be filled with holy courage, to follow the truth to all its results.

So, also, avarice and worldliness would no more darken the mind by their blinding and distracting influence, as it regards questions involving pecuniary interests.

Again, the moral affinities of the mind for truth would be greatly increased ; it would be a constant source of exquisite pleasure to the soul, and be valued beyond all local or selfish interests.

And last, though not least, the Spirit of God would guide the mind into all truth. He is ever ready and desirous to do it, if men would but be guided, but the love of sin, in any form, renders them, so far as it prevails, unwilling. Remove the influence of all forms of sin, and the soul freely and joyfully follows its Divine guide into all the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of eternal wisdom and love.

Now let all these causes have their full operation, and what will be the result ? All Christians will see God as he is, and therefore see him alike. They will see the system of his government as it is, and therefore see it alike. Hence it is evident that there is a foundation for unity of views in the very nature of things, as much in the moral world as in the natural. There is but one God, and one system of government, and this is a glorious reality and may be seen as it is, and all who see it as it is, must see it alike ; not because they are making efforts to agree, but because they are looking at the same objects ; just as all men see the natural world, alike, not because they are trying to agree, but because they see the same objects, and see them as they are. Now, the leading difference between the two cases is this, that in the case of the natural world, men are under no bias to take false views of it, in the moral world they are ; in the natural, *the will* does not distort or pervert the perceptions of the *senses* ; in the moral world it does distort and blind the perceptions of the *mind*. Of course, the rational way to cause men to see the moral world alike, just as they do the natural, is to remove the cause of the difference between the two cases, namely, *moral bias* ; and to cultivate eminent holiness, is not only an effectual way, but it is the only way to do this ; moreover to deny that Christians in a holy and unbiassed state of mind may arrive at harmonious views, is to limit the power of God to guide his people alike.

To reason from the past then, and to infer that because all Christians have disagreed, they can never agree, is neither scriptural or philosophical. The most powerful means of producing union, has never been fully and faithfully tried, and to give it a full trial is the great duty of the present age. Not to stop discussion, nor to compromise fundamental truth for union. Indeed union in fundamental error, or indifference to truth are no less to be deprecated than division. But it is our duty to give EMINENT HOLINESS its full power, as an essential means of securing the appropriate results of discussion. And on this

subject far more can be done than is even supposed; for on all the points of experimental piety mentioned in these discourses, all true Christians agree. Here then is a broad common ground, on which all can stand and labor together. Let them do it, and let the church rise at once in holiness and communion with God, and form an all-pervading atmosphere of love, and let this exert its full influence on the mind, and all causes of disunion will disappear, as the mists of night before the rising sun.

Inquiry will be free, candid, and safe, and the progress of truth in the church will be rapid and unobstructed. Sectarian jealousies will cease, party spirit die, and bitter, angry controversies be heard no more. In the warm and genial atmosphere of holiness, kindness, and brotherly love, the human mind will expand with an energy hitherto unknown. The everlasting forms of glorious truth will rise before the minds of all, and all seeing alike that glorious God, who is over all, and in all, and through all, will be united to one Lord by the ties of a common faith, through the one inward baptism of the Holy Ghost.

In what particulars and to what extent the opinions and practices of existing denominations would be modified by the change, time only can show. One thing, however, is plain, that the church, in her best days, will recognize no right to make any doctrine, practice, or mode of government, on which diversity of opinion remains, if any such there should be, an essential term of communion and fraternal intercourse, since this would be inconsistent with the existence of that visible union among his followers, which was desired and enjoined by Christ. It is indeed true, in a civil sense, that any church may adopt such terms of communion as she pleases. But a civil right to make terms of union and communion is one thing, while a license to do it, from the great Head of the church, is quite another. Here none can deny that all Christians are under solemn obligations to do the known will of Christ, and it is his known will, that all his people shall be one, even as he and the Father are one, and *visibly too*, so that the world may believe that God has sent him. It follows, therefore, that no church has a right to fix on any terms of communion, or mode of government, inconsistent with the attainment of this great end. Hence, either all Christians will see alike, on all points of doctrine, practice, and government, or if they still differ, will regard all remaining points of difference, as so unessential that they may be allowed to exist in any body of Christians, without giving sufficient ground for division or disunion; so that the whole body of Christians, on earth, shall *actually enjoy Christian fellowship and communion*, and MAKE UPON THE WORLD THE IMPRESSION OF ONE UNITED WHOLE.

The great point regarded by Christ, is most manifestly the *moral impression* of the union of his people on the world; and to secure this there must be some mode of union, so obvious and visible, as really and powerfully to affect the world. In no other way can they meet his wishes, so fully expressed in his last prayer, and fulfil his solemn command.

It is of course a matter of fair inquiry to what changes these principles would lead; but that the principles are correct it would seem that no one could for a moment doubt. And an elevated degree of holiness alone is wanting to enable the church to apply them at once, and to render all denominations ready and willing fully to admit whatever changes they may demand. For surely the highest point to be gained is not the glory of any one denomination, but the glory of God. Not to have all the world acknowledge that any one man or any one sect is exactly right, but to have all men unite with one heart and voice in praising God; and this never can and never will take place until all the church is united in the same great work. For the present divisions of Christians are one of the prominent causes of infidelity. A moral energy, then, is needed to look this subject fully in the face, and to come up decidedly to the great work of *doing the known will of Christ* on this point. The glory of God demands it. The welfare of a dying world

demands it. A holy purpose to wipe off the foul disgrace of existing divisions and contentions from the church of Christ demands it. And the Savior will never smile upon his church with the fullness of divine love, until it is done.

I am aware that the desirableness of such a consummation is less deeply felt by some minds, from a persuasion that important benefits have resulted to the church from the existence of different denominations, and that they will be still useful even in the Millennium. Indeed, it cannot be denied that important incidental benefits have arisen from the existence of different denominations, *in a low state of piety* in the church, and great evils have arisen from union and consolidation among corrupt Christians. But this is no proof that in a state of elevated piety all such evils would not be entirely avoided, and all the benefits, which in a low state of piety might result from the existence of various denominations, be obtained in higher perfection in a state of perfect unity.

If it is said that different denominations are needed to excite one another to love and good works, I answer, this is needed only in a low state of piety. It is not needed in heaven, nor would it be on earth if men loved God as they do in heaven. If the original and great main-spring of love were sound, it would keep the system at work with all its power, and all such secondary influences might be laid aside.

If it is said that the union of all Christians in one body would make the church worldly and corrupt, I reply again, this is true only in a low state of piety. The church in heaven is one, and ever will be; and yet, is she in danger of corruption? Is it said she dwells in the presence of God, and beholds his glory, and is above all earthly motives? I reply, so may the church on earth. Nay, so she will; for the tabernacle of God is yet to be with men on earth, and he will dwell with them, and be their God, and they shall be his people.

The fact is, that the assumption of the necessity of a permanently low state of piety on earth is the only basis on which such arguments for the necessity of different denominations can have any power; and remove their basis, and they must fall with it.

Now, what right has any man to make such an assumption? Has the church a right for a moment to remain in her present low state of piety? Who dares affirm it? Does not God command her to be holy as he is? We know he does. Is he not grieved, wounded, dishonored, and offended, by the present low state of piety in the church? We know he is. Ought not the church to make efforts to remove it, decided, vigorous, all-absorbing? Who can deny it? And if she does, will not God bless them? And if he does, will she not gain the result? Will not Zion arise from the dust, and put on her beautiful garments, and shine forth fair as the moon, and clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners? After all, here is the great turning point of the whole subject. It all concentrates here. The views of the church on this subject are low, deplorably low. There is no faith at all as to what might be, and ought to be, and would be, if the church would deliberately and decidedly make the honest effort, with full purpose of soul to do her duty to God, and be holy as he is holy. And, till this is done, all else is vain; there is no power in argument to grapple with the giant energy of unholy passions, either in the church or out. The power of sin must be broken, or all else is vain; and this the Savior righteously demands; and from it would certainly result such an open, manifest, and decided union among all Christians, as would most powerfully tend to convert the whole world. It is clear from his last prayer, that he fully and decidedly contemplated this, as absolutely essential to his highest glory, and to the ultimate triumph of his cause on earth. And it is a remarkable fact, that we can gather nothing from the New Testament that seems to imply, even remotely, that the Savior or his apostles contemplated the existence of different denominations of Christians on earth, either as desirable or allowable. They have said much, that to a candid

mind, who should read it for the first time, and under no influence from the feelings of the present age, would seem to imply directly the reverse. They have exhorted all Christians to be *perfectly joined together, in one heart and in one mind, and to all speak the same thing, and to have no divisions among them, and to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of perfectness.* But no where have they adverted to, or pointed out the advantages resulting from having the church divided into different denominations, even supposing them not to contend—much less if they do. All such advantages, if any there are, are most manifestly the result of the discovery of later ages. They either escaped the notice of our Savior and his apostles, or they did not deem them of sufficient importance to be stated and insisted on at large.

But if I were to express an opinion on the subject, it would be this:—That the original idea of the New Testament was open and visible unity in the church, as the result of elevated holiness, and to be perpetuated by the same. But as primitive holiness declined, this great idea was taken up and abused as the basis on which to build a great union, on worldly maxims, and with an unholy spirit; and that hence originated all the corruptions of popery, especially that most abhorrent of all, the attempt to compel unity of opinion by fagot and the sword: that after the Reformation, however, the great principles of free inquiry and rights of conscience were thrown out, but that being unbalanced by the power of love, they have split up the church into contending sects; but that when their kindred principle of elevated holiness shall be restored, it will bring the church back to the primitive, simple, and glorious idea of visible union in holiness and truth: and that, meanwhile, the horror of the world resulting from a flagrant abuse of the idea of unity in a low state of piety, has produced an undue fear of unity in any form, and on any principles—forgetting that unity is safe in heaven, and essential to the glory of God and perfect bliss; and that it will be so on earth, just so far as the same principles prevail here, that render it safe, joyful, and glorious there. If these things are so, it should, manifestly, be the leading object of the age to give to holiness its full power, and to wait the glorious result.

SERMON CXCIV.

THE necessity of an elevated standard of holiness, such as has been described, will be still more apparent, if we consider,

6. That nothing else can prepare the church to enjoy permanent prosperity.

That to the depraved heart of man it has ever been peculiarly difficult to endure the temptations incident to uncommon prosperity, no reflecting person will deny; and so long as a state of mind continues to exist in the church by which these temptations are invested with power, so long will it be true that she cannot endure prosperity, and yet remain incorrupt.—Nor is this true alone of the church taken as a body. It is true of individuals in all stations, from the highest to the lowest. But on those who are called, in the providence of God, to occupy important stations in the church, these temptations operate with peculiar power. It was so even with Paul, and to prevent his fall and ruin, his heavenly Father deemed it indispensably necessary to send and to continue a thorn in the flesh, even after entreated by earnest and repeated prayer that it might be removed. And if such things were true even of the chief of the apostles, what shall be said of us, and of other men? Who will be confident that he can stand when even an apostle was in such danger of falling? And that the danger is real and great, any man's experience, who knows any thing of his heart, must oft have taught him. How often has it been necessary for God to chastise him, and to bring him low to save him from ruin? And now, after all that God has done, and still continues to do, how few are found who can endure prosperity unhurt. How dan-

gerous to young men is early prosperity, and to successful ministers or evangelists, that deference for them and their opinions, which is so natural, and the peculiar honor and influence enjoyed by them in the church; and how often in the midst of prosperous revivals is the Spirit of God grieved and quenched by the unholy elation, ingratitude, and spiritual pride, which so naturally result from peculiar measures of success. Indeed, a liability to elation and ingratitude, has been, in all ages, the great danger of the people of God. So that the children of Israel, when about to enjoy a season of great prosperity in Canaan, even after a long series of wanderings in the desert, expressly designed to try and humble them and prepare them for prosperity, were yet deemed in greater danger from this than from any other source. How often was the warning repeated and urged upon them, "Beware lest thy heart be lifted up and thou forget the Lord thy God;" and yet even those oft repeated warnings were all in vain, as their subsequent history showed, and as was often confessed in the lamentations of later prophets over the ruins of their people. So also has it been in the Christian church. When the fires of persecution have raged, and they have been driven from the honors and enjoyments of this world to God, the church has become humble. But so soon as this external pressure has been taken off, and the natural tendencies of the heart have had opportunity to operate unchecked, how soon has she forgotten God in the elation of pride, and through her wanderings from him become exceedingly corrupt. And even to this day the scourge of affliction has been found essential to make her humble and keep her from ruin.

Indeed, the greatness and extent of the dangers resulting from this source almost exceed belief, and cannot be too strongly stated. The sin of pride, is not in its nature open, and gross, and shocking to the common feelings of mankind, but is peculiarly plausible, deceptive, and fascinating. Nor are its evil effects at once manifest; like a species of mental intoxication, it steals over the soul, relaxes its moral energies, and plunges it into an ocean of unhalloved and debasing indulgences. And to be keenly alive to its approach, and to reject, with loathing and horror, the very first drop of its Circean cup, requires a moral energy which few possess. Yet such must be the spiritual vigor of the church, before she can endure the state of prosperity implied in the conversion of the world to God. For in this it is implied that the scourge of affliction is no longer to be employed, as a means of producing humility; but that her prosperity is to be like the waves of the sea. And if the church, with her present degree of holiness, is unable to endure even the small measure of prosperity which God sees fit to bestow, how could she endure the accumulated and unheard of prosperity of the day when the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High? This is, indeed, a subject demanding deep and serious thought; for the whole of the great question, Can the church be prepared to endure the conversion of the world to God? centres here. Can she have resources, and honor, and wealth, and influence, and yet remain heavenly minded and lowly in heart? If she cannot, this world can never be converted to God. Prosperity will but be the ruin of the church. She will rise but to fall again, and never can she enjoy constant prosperity and the smiles of Heaven. Of course, the church needs a special preparation on this subject, and one adapted to the age in which we live, and to the prospects before us. No common degree of humility will suffice. A character must be formed of humility, so pure, deep, and strong, as to endure even the trial of millennial prosperity. And it can be done. For if pride can be excluded from heaven, and if the church can be prepared to endure eternal prosperity there, and yet remain pure and lowly in heart, cannot the same results be produced by the presence of God, and by breathing the atmosphere of heaven, even on earth? It may be: it will be: for such is the promise of God.

It is a duty that God himself demands the church no longer to evade. And

if suitable efforts are made, and the presence and aid of God implored, the work can now be done; and the church can be redeemed from a sin so odious, so degrading, so destructive. Her public sentiment may be made energetic and pure. To seek the approbation of God only, and to adore God alone—to be pure, meek, and lowly in heart, may become the constant, habitual, and delightful state of mind throughout the church, and to loathe with horror infinite the least defilement of pride. Then will prosperity, however great, have no power to corrupt. So intimate will be the communion of the church with God—so clear her views of eternal things—so deep her sense of the utter vanity of worldly distinction and human praise, that temptations such as few can now resist, will be stripped of all their power—the baseness, the pollutions, and the ingratitude, the unnumbered evils of pride, will be so fully seen and deeply felt, that the whole soul of the church will be turned against it as with the energy of omnipotence.

7. Nothing but an elevated standard of holiness can secure those powerful revivals of religion, which are essential to convert the world to God.

That revivals must be more powerful than they ever have been, before this result can be secured, none can deny. But this can never be expected till more faith, and holiness, and union are seen on the part of the church. The radical obstacles to powerful revivals throughout whole communities, are deep apathy and settled unbelief. These originate from a heart alienated from God, and fully determined to resist or evade his claims, and are fostered by the divisions, errors, apathy, and unbelief of the Christian world. And after all the speculation which has taken place, on the reasons why revivals are not more extensive, permanent, and powerful in Christian communities, the low state of piety in ministers and churches, and the divisions of Christians, are the real cause. Were they fully united on all the great truths of the gospel, each increasing, and not paralyzing the influence of another; were they all full of faith and of the Holy Ghost; did they live habitually in communion with God, and in full view of eternal realities, and indicate their faith by their lives; how irresistible the power of such example and effort, attended as it would be by the sovereign influence of the Spirit of God. And, as we have already seen, the same elevated state of holiness would give to the church humility to endure success. But, alas! the energy of holy example and united effort is wanting, and the tone of piety is so low, that the church is not prepared to endure higher measures of success. But let Christian example and effort be such as they ought to be, and let believers be so holy and humble that they can endure the highest degree of success, and the whole face of the Christian and heathen world would be changed. The whole united energy of the church would be concentrated in the great work of saving souls; nor would the omnipotent influence of the Spirit of God be withheld. In Christian lands, revivals would be more pure, deep, powerful, permanent, and all-pervading, than ever before; and in heathen lands, a new and peculiar energy, like that exerted by the Holy Spirit in the days of the Apostles, would attend the preaching of the word; clothing all missionaries with new power, and crowning their labors with heart-cheering success. No longer would the slow progress of conversion in heathen lands indicate that the church did not even begin, in earnest believing prayer, to lift the mighty mass of error, deadness, and unbelief: but the speedy and powerful movements of the Spirit of God, in breaking the chains of heathenism and gathering the nations to himself, would abundantly indicate that she was so strong in spirit, as to affect the whole heathen world, by fervent and agonizing prayer. Then would nations be born in a day. Then would Zion burst forth on the right and on the left, and lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes. Then would it be said, 'Who are these that fly as clouds, and as the doves to their windows?' And then would the voice of God be heard, 'Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all nations gather themselves together, and come to thee; and I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to

the people, and kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.'

8. Nothing but an elevated standard of holiness can produce that pure and powerful public sentiment, which is essential to organize all departments of society, in accordance with the law of God.

'That such a result is finally to be expected, is the obvious import of the word of God. But it is perfectly plain, that such great and radical changes in society, as are needed to secure it, can be the result of nothing but an elevated, united, and holy public sentiment; and it is no less plain, that by means of the moulding influence of this, many changes can be effected in all departments of life, which it were vain, in the present state of the world, to look for or attempt. But when by powerful and all pervading revivals of religion, the numerical majority of all nations shall be on the side of God, then will be formed, in favor of his government, a public sentiment, of power to affect the whole structure of human society.

This is the last great step before the entire renovation of the world, and its union in the love of God. The work is to be done freely and intelligently, not by law or by governments, but by enlightened public sentiment. The human mind must discuss simultaneously, all over the globe, the great principles of the government of God, and their bearings on all the relations of human society; and, on all great points, decide and act as one. All men over all the earth, will choose God as king, and base all the institutions of all nations on the great principles of the law of love. Then God will reign. Not by compulsory power, but by the free, spontaneous, delightful, heart-felt choice of unnumbered millions. The glories of his character will be seen, and the excellence of his laws felt, and, as the holy and happy state of society existing under his reign is contrasted with the preceding history of the world, their joy and exultation will know no bounds. As with the voice of a great multitude, and of mighty thunderings, and of many waters, will the song of praise go up, 'Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.'

A mighty battle, will, no doubt, precede this result. The kings of the earth, the man of sin, the beast and the false prophet, will set themselves in array against the Son of man. But who can withstand the energy of God, manifested through a holy church? An omnipotent public sentiment who can resist? They shall be consumed by the breath of the Almighty, and by the brightness of his coming. Amid the alleluias of ten thousand thousand saints, he shall establish his throne on earth, and every system of error, and combination of sinful men, shall receive its doom. If such, then, are the results of elevating the standard of personal holiness throughout the church, is it not indeed the great enterprize of the age?

SERMON CXCIV.

HAVING endeavored to show, that to elevate the standard of personal holiness, is the most important enterprize of the age, I proceed, as proposed, to inquire,

III. How shall this enterprize be undertaken, and conducted? To this, I reply,

1. Let individuals begin the work with themselves. And this is to be done, not by withdrawing from active devotedness to the other great plans of the age. It is not the tendency of holiness to diminish, but to increase action; and it is the glory and privilege of the present day, that any Christian, who desires it, can, in some sphere, act for God—either in the family, or Sabbath-school, or in the distribution of tracts, attended with personal conversation, or in some other of the great enterprizes of the day. And mere retirement from the world, and meditation on divine things, without action, is vain. We gain strength in retirement, merely to act it out in the service of God. Let then every Christian

place more fully than ever before him, the great enterprizes of the day, as the field in which, and the means through which, he is to exercise that holiness which he gains by communion with God, and faith in eternal things; then let him aim to secure in his own heart, by communion with God, the spirit of holiness that has been described; and if he fully and faithfully devotes himself to the work of effecting the conversion of the world, every day will make him feel his need of still more elevated holiness. The unbelief of the world, the toil, and labor, and self-denial, and suffering, required to carry through the great plans of the day, will urge him continually to seek higher degrees of devotedness to God, a more habitual sense of his presence, and more powerful and affecting views of eternal things. Hence the great object of the age should be, not to render Christians less active, but to mix with their active piety more devotion, more faith, more communion with God, more habitual views of the realities of eternity. Like Baxter and Howe, and other Christian worthies, they should not act less, but meditate and pray, and commune with God more, and dwell more by faith, amid the glories of heaven. First of all, then, let each individual begin the work, by laboring to form his own character in accordance with the standard of the word of God. Among other means to be used, the following are peculiarly important: *daily and full confession of sin*, attended by *deep humiliation*, before God, and such habits of reading his word, as shall constantly expose the mind to the full power of divine truth.

2. The next thing, most obviously, is to enlighten the public mind and produce a deep interest in the subject. It is the characteristic of every great cause, that it rests on a few great and simple principles, and those easily illustrated and held up. And in conducting such a cause, the first work to be done, is to develop and arrange those principles. The next, is to hold them up prominently and constantly to view, until they excite attention, and secure action. For a mere theoretical belief and heartless admission of truth is of no avail. A vital energy is needed, to give it a quickening power on the minds of men. The evils of intemperance were long known, before a voice was raised to check them; and even the promulgation of the principles of total abstinence would have been vain, had the friends of the temperance cause merely contented themselves with proving their point, and leaving it to the judgment of the community to do the rest. But they did not. They knew that they had to deal with a community, in a state of apathy, deep and general—a community torpid, ensnared, and benumbed with sin, and that the first point was to reach the conscience, and to restore moral sensibility to the body politic, and that to do this, there was need of deep feeling, untiring firmness of purpose, and of an incessant and impassioned exhibition of the truth: that there was need of constant repetition, and reiteration of the same truths in all modes, and in every variety of manner; in scientific discussions; in labored treatises; in profound inquiries; by sermons, by tracts; by anecdotes and detail; line upon line, and precept upon precept; by the press and by the pulpit; by day and by night. The results all know. The torpor has ceased; the apathy is gone; and the community is aroused on the subject throughout the civilized world.

Now, that there is a similar torpor on the subject of personal holiness, none can deny. All admit that the church is in a low and languid state, and mourn over the evils that result from it. But it is a dejected and heartless lamentation, and nothing is done. All admit that the standard of holiness ought to be raised, and hope that in some future day it will be done; but have no faith as to an earnest united effort to do it now. And let this state of feeling continue, and it is absolutely certain that nothing will be done.

Here then, is the place to begin. First decide that *something can be done*. Then inquire what is needed, and what ought to be done. Hold up the subject deliberately before the mind. Look at the present standard of the church; look at the points in which it ought to be elevated; look at the results to be

expected; and form your standard, high, definite, and full in all its parts, and then feel on the subject, and attempt to arouse others.

Ask, is not God interested in this work? Is it not founded in the great, simple, and fundamental principles of his government? Is not its attainment essential to the conversion of the world? If I take hold of it, will not God help me? Is not such a work called for by the exigencies of the age? And as there has been an advance in all the great departments of society, as to plan and action, is it not reasonable to expect a corresponding advance in this? Is not such an elevation of holiness fully and often predicted? And if I begin now, shall I not find the whole train of the influences of the providence of God in my favor, and bearing me on?

Reflect thus in the presence of God, till you obtain holy faith to undertake the work. Seek daily communion with him; pray that you may be enabled to comprehend, and fully to enter into all of his views on the subject. Lay aside all pride, and ambition, and worldliness, and seek only to discover his wishes, and to know and to do his will. Implore of him to open your eyes, to enlarge your views, and to penetrate, enliven, and fill your heart with his own infinite love, and then, relying on his aid, devote yourself to the work and plead the cause with earnestness, and faith, and zeal, and full assurance of success.

The most important points, however, are, that all who engage in this cause, *enter deeply into its spirit*, and have not only clear views, but *vivid and powerful emotions*; for every great cause has its spirit, and is advanced as much by feeling, as by intellect. The same is true of this. To advocate it with energy, there is need of HOLY EMOTION, full and ardent to the highest degree. Let this be duly cultivated, and the whole power of the intellect be called in to aid, and the deep apathy of the church on this subject can be destroyed. It is the characteristic of this age, that it is moved by public sentiment. The amount of cultivated intellect is great, and is yearly increasing, in all denominations; and if once called into exercise, can be made to bear on any point with tremendous effect; and when employed in behalf of a cause based on truth, nothing can stand before it. Now if such an increase of holiness as has been described, is essential to the great work of converting the world; if it can be proved, that all our efforts are vain without it, then the attention of the church can be waked up. The subject can be brought up, and kept up, and reiterated in every variety of manner; line upon line, and precept upon precept. Facts can be exhibited, and arguments stated, and appeals made, till the truth shall burn and blaze before every mind. The subject admits of enlarged investigation. It is no common-place theme. It opens to the mind views the most expanded and ennobling, and gives a deep insight into the real spirit of the age, into the whole system of benevolent enterprise in all its relations, and into the whole structure of society. It has important bearings on every discussion and controversy of the age, on all the relations of Christians to each other, and on every vital interest of the church. And to do it full justice, is a work not unworthy of the highest intellect that ever investigated the plans of God, or the warmest heart that glows before his throne.

I am aware that such is not the common impression. It is looked on as a simple, easy, obvious, common-place topic, needing no deep investigation, and admitting no wide range of thought. Points of theory, or doctrines, abstract and metaphysical, these require deep thought, and enlarged views, but personal holiness, it seems to be conceived, is a subject so simple, that it hardly needs a moment's thought.

No impression can be more false. What subject can have more vast or important relations than this? Is it indeed a trivial matter, that with a work to do, enough to tax the energy of angels, the church is in a state of such languor and apathy, that the world as yet has hardly begun to feel her power? Is it a small matter, that in an age, when change is crowding on change, and discussion on discussion, the state of diseased action is such, that inflammation and convulsive spasms are produced, by any and every attempt to dis-

could the great principles of society and the government of God? And is it nothing, to arouse the church from such a condition? to restore to her the energies of life? to stop febrile action, and check inflammation, spasms, and convulsion, to remove the elements of disease, and to restore vigor to her whole frame? Nay, it is a work worthy of the intellect and the resources even of God: and that he can conduct it to auspicious results is his highest glory. And is it nothing, to be co-workers with him in a work like this? Is it a subject requiring no deep thought, and energy of feeling? Nay, it demands and deserves the best intellect of the age, and is vast enough to require, and ought to create a literature of its own. Every other great cause gives rise to a species of literature, deriving its character from the object aimed at; and if this cause had its just deserts, it would give rise to a literature, in which this or any other age might glory. There is room here for every power of the mind, and every emotion of the soul. Here is a subject vast enough to tax the whole range of language, nature and society, for facts, arguments, and illustrations.

3. Let Christians of every denomination, throughout the world, unite in the effort. That this should be done, is not only desirable, but essential, and to such a union there can be no possible objection. The thing to be done, is to arouse and excite the whole church. Not to promote the interests of any sect, but to increase the holiness of all. Now this is what all are equally interested to have done, and what all ought to desire, and seek to obtain. It is one of those rare causes, which can awake no jealousy, no distrust, no suspicion; its very spirit and aspect are good will to all.

Now do not Christians of the present age need some common ground, where they may unite hearts, and voices, and prayers? Some subject on which they can all speak the same thing, and be perfectly joined together in one heart and one mind? And have they not such a ground in experimental religion, and in the promotion of eminent holiness?

There are points in which all true Christians are alike, in all countries, and in all ages. They are alike, when repenting of their sins, or when relying on the atoning sacrifice of Christ, or holding communion with God, or meditating on the glories of eternity; when devoting themselves entirely to the service of God, or longing to save souls from death; when mourning over their remaining depravity, and longing after entire conformity to the image of God; when meek, lowly, humble, and forgiving, and when exercising the sweet emotions of brotherly love; in all these attitudes, all Christians are alike. And, Oh! how numerous, how interesting, how important, the points on which they agree: and were these points made more prominent; did all Christians know one another more as Christians, and unite more affectionately to promote mutual holiness and love, how glorious the result. In the present distracted and divided state of things, they speak, and write, and act most on points in which they differ; and their holy feelings are cramped, covered up, and concealed. Those who are within each denomination, indeed, see and love the piety that is there; but by walls of partition, it is hid from those that are without. Oh, that all Christians would know one another more, as holy men, and on all great points of Christian experience, come together, and mingle hearts, and prayers, and efforts. And what can so soon secure this result, as united efforts in this great enterprise?

4. Let those who deeply feel on this subject, speak, and write, and preach, and publish. Great changes do not begin on the surface of society, but in prepared hearts: in men who by communion with God, rise above the apathy of the age, and speak with living vital energy, and give life to the community, and tone to the public mind. And are there not such men now in all parts of the land, and in all denominations, in whose hearts there is, and has been, long and deep feeling, and burning fire on this subject? who mourn over the unchristian spirit displayed by the children of God, the alienations and divisions of the church, the general apathy on this subject, and the

miserable lack of energy in the great work of saving a ruined world? If such there are, and I cannot doubt there are many such, prepared for the work, by the all-pervading spirit of holiness and truth, I would adjure them by the love of God, to make their feelings known. To write, and speak, and preach on the subject, to enlist in this cause the papers and periodicals of the day, and, in every possible mode, to arouse the public mind. Men are excited on every other subject, and shall they slumber on this? Unholy feeling is abroad; shall it not be encountered and rebuked by holy emotion? The public mind is agitated, excited, feverish; and this subject alone can restore it to a healthy state. Will you not speak of it? An alternative influence is needed in the body politic. Will you not help to produce it? A few voices are not enough. We need the united voice of holy men in every land—a voice that shall thrill in every ear, and act with vital energy on every soul.

5. Let the principles of this subject regulate all the *discussions* of the age. This is pre-eminently an age of discussion, and all efforts to avert it are vain. The human mind has been aroused by the Spirit of God, and the great events of the age, and cannot be put to sleep again. Nor is it to be desired. The work of free inquiry has begun, and it ought to go on, till all errors are exposed, and the eternal principles of truth alone retained. But if discussion cannot be avoided, our only alternative is this: to discuss in a low state of piety, and in an unholy frame of mind, and rend the church, and agitate and divide the nation, or to produce a public sentiment, which shall require of every man to speak and write in a holy and heavenly frame of mind, and take no excuse for a failure. Men feel keenly now the exposure of unsound arguments. But a state of public sentiment ought to be produced, which would make it a mere trifle, to be proved deficient in logical skill, in comparison with the exhibition of a bitter, angry, or resentful spirit, or any form of unholy emotion.

Now this can be done. To stop discussion we cannot hope, and ought not to desire; but it is possible to require all men to discuss in a holy frame of mind. What an entire revolution would this make in all the leading discussions of the day! Men under the constant influence of such a public sentiment, and of a sense of the presence of God, would soon find that they *could control their language and their feelings*, just as easily as if they were writing or speaking amid the holy society of heaven. And ought any man to speak or to write so that he would be unwilling to exhibit what he has written or spoken, before the throne of God, and in the midst of angels and the spirits of the just? It must at last be seen in the light of that world. Why then not write and speak as if we were already there? If any say this is a strict and a severe standard, I reply, even if so, it would be a duty; for God demands it. But it is not so. It is the easiest and most delightful of all modes of writing, if we could but once learn it, and by the aid of God we can. Is it not then worth an earnest and deliberate effort to learn thus to speak and write? Thus wrote Paul. Thus have written other holy men; and to write thus we can learn. And when would the intellect be so clear, or the affections in a state so delightful—when all the powers of the mind in a frame so adapted to gain their end, as when writing as if in the society of heaven? Ought not then all discussion that indicates another frame of mind to be exiled for ever from the Christian world? Sarcasms, sneers, suspicions, inuendoes, and excited unholy controversy, have been tried long enough. It is high time to try the full power of kindness, candor, mutual confidence, and a fair and ingenuous comparison of views. Oh, if the church would but be holy, with what ease would she go through discussions which now agitate her to the very centre, exhaust her energies, shed her life's blood, and that almost with no auspicious results.

6. Such humble confession ought to be made by the people of God, as shall counteract the pernicious influence of their past sins on the world.

It cannot be denied, that the present low state of piety in the church, is a

sin deeply to be lamented before God: a sin too, in which the whole church is involved. And that by the sins, and divisions, and strifes of his people, God has been dishonored and his cause injured before the world. The moral feelings of the globe have been deeply depressed by them, and immeasurable calamities have followed in their train.

Now, the moral effect of the past example of the church can be done away only by *confession, humiliation, and repentance, as general and open as her guilt has been.* And no analogy of God's providence authorizes the hope of pardon and the full and free enjoyment of the smiles of God, till it has been done. Deep and heartfelt confessions were required of the church in her captivity in Babylon, before she could return to her own land; and they are left on record as examples to us. And did we know nothing of the future, yet the nature of the case would teach us, that before the church can fully enjoy the presence of God, she must deeply mourn over her past guilt. But the same truth is confirmed also by the voice of prophecy. By it we are clearly told, that the final day of prosperity to the church will be preceded by a general season of bitter mourning for past sins among all the people of God. Whether a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer could now be fixed upon by the voluntary agreement of all Christians on earth, and whether the state of feeling in the church is such, as to render it probable that it would answer a good purpose, I shall not attempt to decide. There can, however, be little doubt, that the church will at length keep such a day, or a succession of days, until there is a deep, general, and heartfelt humiliation of the people of God for past sins. And whenever such a season shall be properly observed, its influence in elevating the tone of holiness will be immense. The world will feel its power; and in the church the foundation will be laid for a full restoration to mutual fellowship and harmony with each other and with God. The true relations of Christians to each other, and to God, will be more clearly seen and deeply felt, and the prospect of a speedy restoration of the favor of God, and of union, and mutual love, and confidence among all Christians, will give rise to sentiments and emotions, peculiarly delightful, majestic, novel, and sublime.

7. In the next place I would add, that in order fully to carry out this enterprize to its great results every Christian should give it the first place in his heart, render all else subservient to it, and see all other subjects in its light.

By this I mean not that we should undervalue or neglect any other plan or object. Indeed supreme devotedness to this enterprize cannot produce such a result. Its inevitable result will be new energy in every other good cause. I mean only that we should ever remember that all other things are valuable only as they tend to promote the great cause of holiness; and that we are under solemn obligations to make all our plans subservient to it.

That this is demanded by God, is beyond all doubt. To multiply quotations from the scriptures, were an endless task. It is the standing testimony of his whole word. Its uniform representations are, that of all things he most hates sin, and loves holiness: and that it is his great end in all he does, to bring all his holy kingdom to feel on this subject as he does, and that he will never be satisfied until this end is secured. The high end of Christ and his glorious reward was to secure for himself a holy church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish. For this he gave himself to death, and never will he be satisfied till he has secured this end: for its absence nothing can make amends. In vain are the tongues of men and of angels, the knowledge of mysteries and prophecy, faith to remove mountains, the giving of all our goods to feed the poor, or of the body to be burned, if the all-controlling power of love is absent. On this point there is no doubt. Whatever else may be uncertain, all is certain here. The whole heart and soul of God are engaged in this work, and will be so till its glorious consummation; and he will please him most who enters most deeply into his feelings in this respect, and looks at all other subjects in the

light of this one. Indeed this is absolutely essential to the highest and most perfect degree of communion with God. He made, and upholds, and governs the universe, to promote this cause; and we can never enter into his feelings, until we give to this subject the same place in our hearts that it occupies in his, and labor to promote it with the united energy of all our powers.

8. Give great and decided prominence to the agency of God, as essential to secure the desired result.

By this I intend, not only that we rely entirely on God, as the great efficient Agent, by whom the work of renovating the church and the world is to be done; but also that we take more enlarged views of what he is able and willing to do, and what we have reason from his promises to expect that he will do.

This is essential to authorise a cheering and invigorating hope of success, without which no resolute and decided efforts will be made. For, indeed, when we look at the strength of human depravity, and the very imperfect sanctification of good men, and then mingle in the excitements of life, and see how soon and easily they are thrown off their guard, and reflect on the blinding influence of passion and prejudice, and the vast amount of self-flattery and self-deception, which is practiced by good men, and the thousand circumstances that lead them away from holiness and communion with God,—when we look at these things, and think of raising such Christians to such a standard of holiness, we might almost despair. And indeed, if it were the work of man to arrest the attention, and subdue the evil passions of such hearts, there would be ample and abundant reason for despair. And moreover, if there were to be no more sense of the presence of God in this world than there has been, as a general fact, in ages past, and no higher degrees of influence than he has hitherto exerted on the minds of men, still our hopes would be vain of securing the end at which we aim. Nothing but a full manifestation of the presence of God can accomplish the work in question. A manifestation, such as the world has never seen, and such too, that the church shall be unable to throw off or to resist its power. After all that has been said on this subject, the church, as a general fact, *has a very faint and feeble sense of the presence of God. Their levity, and worldliness, and sinful passions, and unholy and bitter controversies, show it. A holy awe and reverence of God is not the prevailing habit of their minds.* They think of him as distant, and are affected but very imperfectly by a mere theoretical belief that he is omnipresent. That he is near they do not feel. But God will come nearer to the world, and his people will feel his presence, and be filled with holy awe. So it is predicted in the word of God. His terrors shall fall upon the wicked. They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. And on his people he will arise and shine with the splendors of the noon-day sun, and their sense of his presence will be constant and habitual. For it is said of the church, even on earth, that her sun shall no more go down, neither shall her moon withdraw itself; but the Lord shall be her ever lasting light. And there is no doubt that a vivid manifestation of the presence of God will be the great means of reaching the heart of the church, and causing the conviction that she *must feel* on this subject; for God insists upon it, and she will encounter his holy and indignant rebuke if she refuses. The great thing then to be done in this work, is to give prominence to the idea of the presence of God, and to pray for a full, powerful, and irresistible manifestation of his feelings, wishes, plans, and purposes to his church; so that they shall come under the full influence of the almighty energies of his mind. He can make them feel and act, however sinful and dead they are; and for such a manifestation of God, by and through the Holy Spirit, should his people earnestly pray.

This is the hope, the only hope of the church and of a ruined world. Did we trust to human zeal, how dark our prospect! I know indeed, that, in comparison with none, there is much love of God on earth. But

Oh, in comparison with the exigencies of the age, and the mighty work to be done, there is none at all. Well may we say with Daniel, 'Oh Lord, the great and dreadful God, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us shame and confusion of face.' And with Isaiah, 'We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away. And there is none that calleth on thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee. For thou hast hid thy face from us, and consumed us because of our iniquities.' But there is hope in God, he can plead his own cause, and when the help of man fails, his own arm can bring salvation.

Let us then implore him to do it; to exert his own energy and put forth his almighty power. To rend the heavens and come down, and the mountains may flow down, and the nations tremble at his presence. To reveal himself in noon day splendors, rebuking his church, and thoroughly purging away her iniquities, restoring to her new life, and clothing her in the garments of salvation and robes of praise. Then shall Zion arise and shine, her light being come and the glory of the Lord risen upon her. Then shall kings behold her light, and gentiles the brightness of her rising. Then shall all the glorious things that are spoken concerning her be in all their extent fulfilled. Then shall the sun no more be her light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto her, but the Lord shall be unto her an everlasting light, and her God her glory. Her sun shall no more go down; neither shall her moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be her everlasting light, and the days of her mourning shall be ended.

In view then of results so glorious, is it not your duty and your privilege to devote yourself with all your powers to this great enterprise? Look at the signs of the times. Do not all things proclaim that the kingdom of God is at hand? Is he not reproving the apathy of his people, and holding up before them the wants of a dying world? Does he not demand new energy, new devotedness, new zeal, in the great work of saving a lost world? And will you not rise at once to the effort? The path of duty is plain. There is a mighty work to be done, and each can do his part. Those to whom God has given intellectual power over the public mind, can throw all their energies into this enterprise, and hold it up in every form. Others can circulate sermons, addresses, and tracts on the subject, and enlist the whole power of the press in the glorious cause. And the work can be done. God is for it; all Christians can unite in it; earnest united prayer can be poured forth; and the whole energy of the church be called into action. And shall it not be done? Yes, it will. Whoever may slumber, God will not. Whoever may refuse to come up to the work; it will go on. But if any do refuse, let them not hope to escape the rebuke of God. He is not, and will not be indifferent to apathy on this subject. He requires, nay, he demands the aid of his people; and all who refuse it, will incur his indignant rebuke. Soon will he reveal himself in awful majesty and power, to expose alike the crimes of his enemies and the sins of his friends; and judgment will begin at the house of God. Let then all beware lest he take them by surprise. His advent is near; let all ponder his warning words,—*Behold, I come as a thief: blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame!*

But would you escape the shame and terror of such an hour, and have part with God, and with rejoicing millions, both here and hereafter? Obey then, at once, his spirit-stirring call—*Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.*

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THE TRUTH, IN RELATION TO CHRIST AND HIS SALVATION, THE GREAT BOND OF HOLY FELLOWSHIP.

I. JOHN, i. 3.—*That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us : and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

FELLOWSHIP in the moral system depends on a congeniality of views, feelings, and pursuits. Were these alike throughout a universe of minds, it would effectually secure their harmony, and render discord impossible. But the fellowship of the moral system has been broken in upon, and very discordant views are now entertained, even concerning matters of such high consequence, as the Creator's right to rule over his intelligent creatures, and their obligation to obey his commands. Discordant views and feelings on these points, interrupted the fellowship of angels; for a part of their number became disaffected with the government of God, while the other part remained steadfast in their attachment to it. This made a wide breach between them, which never will be healed. The first parents of our race took the side of the disaffected angels, and withdrew their allegiance from the Most High; in consequence of which we all find our native character is that of rebels against the divine government.

This interruption to the harmony of the moral system, occasioned by the apostacy of angels and men, was a dark and gloomy event. But a wise and benevolent God will bring light out of this darkness, and order out of this confusion. Through the mediation of his Son, he is recovering from their apostacy a precious number of our fallen race; whom he receives back into favor in such a way, that the bonds of fellowship between Him and them, and also between themselves, will be more closely drawn than they could have been, had no separation ever taken place. Since the apostacy, in connection with redemption, has made way for a clearer exhibition of His perfections, and of the dependence and obligation of His creatures, it has given a more interesting character to those things which lay the best foundation for preserving a permanent and holy fellowship in the moral system. Though it has lessened the number in fellowship, the number of

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friendly minds, (since some of the apostates will remain alienated forever,) still it may augment the sum of holy friendship. For such an augmentation thanks are due, not to rebel angels nor to rebel men, but to God alone.

Fellowship between kindred minds, namely, between such as are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and between them and their Redeemer, is the subject which the beloved disciple presents in the passage before us. Having in the two preceding verses made a brief statement concerning the person and incarnation of the Redeemer, together with the great opportunity afforded the apostles of gaining the most intimate acquaintance with him while he tabernacled in the flesh, he proceeds in the text to say: "That which we have seen and heard," (seen of Christ, and heard from his own mouth,) "declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Christian fellowship is here supposed to be very desirable, and susceptible of improvement by clearer exhibitions of Jesus Christ, and him crucified; implying that the more entirely his followers harmonize in their views of him and his salvation, the more perfect will be their fellowship with each other. And is it not also implied, that their communion with God himself, is promoted by the same means, namely, the similar views which are entertained by him and them, concerning Christ and his salvation? For, the same kind of fellowship which they had among themselves, they are said to have with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. If I have not mistaken the import of the text, it furnishes this interesting instruction:

That the truths relating to Jesus Christ and his work in saving sinners, lay a foundation for the most perfect fellowship between those that are saved, and also between them and the God of their salvation.

I. Permit me to state some of the leading truths relating to Jesus Christ, and his work in saving sinners.

1. I will begin with the union of the divine and human natures in his person. This was the truth on which the apostle now had his eye directly fixed. He begins this epistle, as he does his gospel, by asserting both the divinity and humanity of his Savior. In his gospel, he calls him "the Word," and "the Life;" in the epistle he joins them together, and calls him "the Word of life." In the gospel he says, "the Word was with God," which is here explained by his being "with the Father." There he says, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory:" here he says, "the Life was manifested, and we have seen it—that eternal Life which was with the Father was manifested unto us." It is evident in both his gospel and epistle, that he describes the Savior as having two distinct natures, the one original and eternal, and the other assumed in time; the one divine, and the other human. And with this agree the words of scripture in general. The Savior is sometimes described by names exclusively divine, and then by those which are human; also by attributes and works of both classes, infinite and finite. At one time supreme homage is paid to him, while at another, he is found among the lowliest of worshippers, falling on his knees and on his face before God. In him these two natures, which are infinitely diverse, are so united as to constitute one person. Paul, in the ninth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans,

speaks of Christ, as being in one of his natures an Israelite, while in the other, he was the supreme and blessed God. Both natures unite to make the Lord's Christ, and the sinner's Savior. The union was such as to render it proper to call the blood which was shed by the man Christ Jesus, not blood that God had *provided* merely, but "his *own* blood."

2. Another leading truth concerning Jesus Christ, is *the perfect holiness of his character*. The divinity of which he is possessed, must undoubtedly have been free from moral impurity; and this was equally true of his human nature. The holiness of the manhood was not, like that of the Godhead, infinite, but it was entire. In this dependent nature he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." In infancy he was distinguished from others of that age, by being called "that *holy* thing." He was also "the *holy child* Jesus." This character he maintained through his whole life, from the manger to the cross. He challenged his eagle-eyed enemies to convict him of a single fault: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Even the enemy of all righteousness was constrained to bear witness to the purity of his character: "I know thee who thou art, the *Holy One* of God."

3. No truth concerning Christ is more important than that which relates to *the object of his advent*. This object was complex, and yet one, since all the purposes designed to be answered by it are of a common nature. All were holy, benevolent, and every way consistent.

Nothing can be more manifest than this; that Christ intended by coming into our world, to effect the salvation of sinners. And Christ himself tells us, that he came to seek and to save that which was lost: and that he came to give his life a ransom for many. But this statement, *that he came to save sinners*, does not reveal the whole object of his incarnation. It is important that we should be informed in what way their salvation is to be accomplished. Is it to be in a way which prostrates the law, or in a way which honors it? This is a material point; for a licentious mob in making an assault on a prison where some of their comrades are confined, are seeking to save transgressors from punishment, but they are seeking to do it in defiance of the laws of their country. A salvation of this character is a perfect contrast to that which is effected by the coming of Christ. It was manifestly one object of his coming to act the part of an umpire between the supreme government, and this revolted world. The revolt was of long standing, and had been obstinately adhered to by a great majority of the race. After examining the claims of God, and the complaints of men, he declared his full conviction, that God was good, and that men were wicked—that his claims were righteous, and their complaints groundless—that they hated him without a cause, while he had just cause for abhorring them, and even for casting them into hell.

It has always been controverted in our world, whether it was right and fit to have one general government over the whole moral system; and whether the Creator has an inherent right, without the suffrages of his creatures, to set up his dominion over them, and require their obedience to his laws. To decide this point, was one of the most important objects of Christ's mission. And how did he decide it? Manifestly in this way: That such a universal moral government was indispensable; that God had the most perfect right to establish and

maintain it; and that the laws he had promulgated, which were all comprised in supreme love to him, and perfect benevolence to our fellow-creatures, could neither be repealed nor abated. "Think not," said he, "that I am come to destroy the law—I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil; for verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

While Christ came to save sinners, nothing was more remote from his design, than to approbate, or in any way connive at sin. "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, *condemned sin in the flesh.*" He came to save sinners by making an atonement for their sin. And what is an atonement? Is it not essential to an atonement that it should do as much to make sin appear vile and ill-deserving as would be done by the infliction of the threatened punishment on sinners themselves?

If any suppose, that the only object Christ had in view in dying for us, was to free us from punishment, they greatly err. To free us from a spirit of disaffection to the government of God, was in his view a matter of no less importance. To redeem us from *iniquity*, is declared to be the end he had in view, in giving himself for us. Hence it was, that he made the most unfeigned repentance of sin a prerequisite to forgiveness in every case. "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish."

It was another important object of Christ's mission to this revolted world, to reflect light on the benevolent character of God, especially as it is displayed toward his enemies—his disaffected subjects. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This display of the mercy of God, gives a new lustre to his justice. It seems clearly to show that justice when it executes the threatened punishment, is not prompted by motives of cruelty. The religion of Christ represents all men as moral bankrupts, owing a debt to divine justice, of ten thousand talents, and having nothing to pay; and it represents God as standing ready to forgive them the whole debt when they shall desire it; yea, as soon as they consent to take the place of complete insolvents, and from the heart pray, "Forgive us our debts."

II. Having thus stated some of the leading truths relating to Jesus Christ and his mediatorial work, I am now to show how these lay a foundation for holy fellowship between the people of God, and also between them and God himself.

1. Agreement in these leading truths, lay a foundation for fellowship *between God's people*. Fellowship in the moral system, as before remarked, depends on a congeniality of views, feelings, and pursuits. We have fellowship in politics, by entertaining similar opinions concerning the affairs and interests of the nation, the men in office, the measures pursued, and the like. We have fellowship in matters of science, by adopting similar systems of philosophy; and in religion, by adopting the same sentiments, and manifesting the same feelings towards God and the interests of his kingdom. The greater the agreement in our belief, feelings, and practice, the more perfect will be our fellowship. If, however, the matters in which we are agreed, though numerous, should be of a circumstantial nature, leaving us in a state of disagreement concerning only a few things which are essential to the gospel scheme, a proper foundation for fellowship would

still be wanting. But as soon as we can discover an agreement in the most essential points of faith and practice, even before we have descended to minute particulars, we are naturally led to the conclusion, that if our agreement thus far be cordial, there cannot be difference enough remaining to prevent a brotherly union. And the text seems to make the assumption, that the things which relate to the person, character, and work of the Redeemer, comprise so many of the fundamentals of religion, that they whose sentiments harmonize on these subjects, will be sufficiently agreed to enjoy Christian fellowship. That the things now referred to, were viewed by Paul, as lying at the foundation of the Christian faith, is manifest from his saying to the Corinthians, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ:" and also from his saying, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

Under the first head it was shown, that the most material things concerning Christ, which are presented in the scriptures, relate either to his person, in which the divine and human natures are brought together; or to his character, which even in the human nature is perfectly holy; or to the object of his advent, namely, the bringing relief to a revolted world in such a way, as to frown on rebellion, and sustain the authority of God. Now is it not a fact, that those who harmonize on these points, must be substantially agreed in their whole scheme of doctrine? They who concur in the belief that Christ is possessed of a divine nature, in which he is in every respect equal with the Father, must view the atonement which he made, as having infinite value; and of consequence, they must view sin as an evil great enough to need such an atonement, and great enough to deserve an endless punishment. They must view the law in all the strictness of its requirements, as justly claiming from us that unremitting obedience which was yielded to it by our Substitute; and, in all the severity of its threatenings, as just, and deserving that honor which he gave to it by his ignominious sufferings.

Will not those who harmonize in their views concerning the infinite greatness of the Redeemer, the purity of his character, and the holy and benevolent object of his incarnation, necessarily entertain the same sentiments concerning every thing relating to the attributes and government of God? Will they not agree in the belief that he is most great and glorious? If we agree in entertaining just conceptions of the atonement made for sin by the sacrifice of Christ, we must have the same views of Jehovah's right to reign over us, and of our obligation to obey; the same views of the perfection of the law, and our entire inexcusableness in transgressing it. We cannot have just conceptions of the atonement, without understanding that it was no part of its design to make amends for, what might seem to us, an over rigidity of the law; but that it is wholly a scheme of *grace*, which among fallen creatures may be limited, either in its provision or application, according to the good pleasure of God, without giving any of them the least cause of complaint. They who come around the cross of Christ, and who are instructed alike and affected alike with the wonderful scene which is here presented, may be considered as having for substance, the same religious creed. If they lay the foundation alike, why may they not unite in completing the building? In other words, will not an enlightened and real agreement in this fundamental

doctrine, the atonement of Christ, furnish a bond of union between his followers and a security to their holy fellowship?

2. I shall now attempt to show that an agreement in the great truths relating to Jesus Christ and his salvation, is sufficient to give existence to a fellowship between the people of God and God himself. The atonement of Christ, it is well known, is the only foundation of intercourse between God and men; but the sentiment now inculcated is this: that when any of God's intelligent creatures, whether redeemed, or such as need no redemption, entertain the same views of the character and work of his beloved Son, which he does himself, and possesses the same feelings of approbation towards him,—between him and such creatures there must exist a holy fellowship. They can say, not only that they have fellowship one with another, but also that their fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.

To determine that we truly have fellowship with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we need only to ascertain these three things: First, the character exhibited by the Lord Jesus Christ, and the representations made by him concerning the claims of God, and the duty of man: Secondly, the Father's approbation of this character and these representations. Thirdly, our own approbation of them. Nothing is more evident than this; that if we unite with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, not only in loving his Son, but in loving him for the same reasons, we must be in a state of holy fellowship, both with the Father and the Son. It is not difficult to ascertain what were the feelings of the divine Father towards his Son. They were altogether feelings of approbation. More than once a voice came from heaven declaring, *this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*. He always said and did the things which pleased his Father. His Father was pleased with him, because he loved righteousness and hated wickedness; because all the words of his mouth were in righteousness, and there was nothing froward or perverse in them. We are here shown the heart of the Son of God—all his representations were in favor of righteousness, and in opposition to wickedness. We are also taught that it was this which rendered him dear to his Father. Now to make it certain that we have fellowship with the Father, there is one thing more which we need to know, namely, that it is the Savior's love of righteousness and hatred of wickedness which serves to endear him to us.

A striking proof of the Savior's love of righteousness was given by the high regard he manifested to that law, which, in our world, had been violated and despised. Without the least dissimulation he could say, "I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart." The law, in its most unabated form, he preached, obeyed, and confirmed by bearing its curse on the cross. This law with which he was so much delighted, and upon which he put such honor, both by his life and death, is based on the principle of universal good will, requiring every one to love his fellow as himself, and to love God supremely. It is certain that this regard which he manifested to the law, drew forth the complacency of his Father. Does it draw forth ours? If it does, there is communion between us and God. Hatred of wickedness is always implied in the love of righteousness. The Son of God gave the highest proof that he really hated wickedness. He never committed any, and always manifested grief when he saw it committed by others. He boldly reprov'd it, both in public and

private; and to fix an eternal stigma upon it, was one important design of his death on the cross. His utter abhorrence of evil, renders him dear to his Father; and the same thing makes him precious to them that believe on him. A harmony of views in this matter is one means of the fellowship which exists between God and his people.

Jesus, the name which God gave to his only begotten Son, imports that he was sent to save his people *from their sins*. The interest which he took in effecting their deliverance from sin, endeared him to his Father: "Therefore," said he, "doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again"—that is, my Father loves me because I have benevolence enough to induce me to lay down my life to redeem men from iniquity. Now if we love the Son on the same account the Father does, then have we fellowship not with the Son only, but also with the Father.

The salvation of Christ is not only a deliverance from sin, but it is in such a way as to abase the pride of man, and exclude all glorying, save in the Lord alone. In this salvation we are represented as being altogether too poor to redeem ourselves; the Son of God must give himself a ransom for us. He said he came to save the lost—not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance. He frowned on them who trusted in their own righteousness. He taught the children of men, that if they expected to receive any benefit from him, they must come before the mercy-seat wholly in the character of sinners, acknowledging their destitution of all worthiness, and their entire dependence on divine mercy. With these representations of a free and gratuitous salvation, which were made by the Son of God, the Father was well pleased. He was well pleased with his Son, because he never, on any occasion, proffered to his brethren of the race of Adam, conditions of salvation different from these. And just so many of our race as are pleased with the Redeemer, and that on the same account, are in a state of agreement with his Father and their Father, his God and their God. It is an axiom, (i. e. a self-evident truth,) that when two things agree with a third, they agree with each other. And this will apply to moral as well as natural subjects. Just so many intelligences, whether infinite or finite, whether celestial or terrestrial, as entertain the same view and the same approbation of the character and work of the Redeemer, are in such a state of agreement one with another, as to prepare them to be united in one holy and blessed society forever.

REMARKS.

1. This subject helps us see why Christ is represented as *the uniting bond*, that will hold together those parts of the intelligent universe which have either retained or recovered a holy character. The sinless angels did not need his blood to redeem them; but that development of the glory of God, which was made by the work of redemption, they did need. These are things which the angels desire to look into; and they serve as the most perfect bond of union between them and their supreme King, and also between them and their fellow-subjects. Christ is therefore spoken of by the apostle as collecting together and becoming the head of a family composed of *men* saved from their sins, and of *angels* who never sinned: "that in the dispensation of the ful-

ness of time, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him."

2. In the light of this subject we see, that Christian fellowship is something truly *great and holy*; very different from a union made by *party* interests, or an agreement in the mere modes of worship, and other circumstantials of religion. It is the union of minds sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and thus brought to harmonize in their views and feelings concerning the essential truths relating to God, his character, providence, moral government, and grace. "Whom I love," said the beloved disciple, "in the truth: and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever." Here we are taught that the *truth*, when it is so received into our hearts as to gain a permanent residence, now constitutes, and will forever constitute the great bond of fellowship.

3. In the subject before us, we discover a good reason for denominating the Lord's supper a *communion*. "The cup of blessing which we bless," said the apostle, "is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" By our eating of one bread and drinking of the same cup, we have an apparent fellowship; but to render it real and holy, we need to have similar feelings towards those infinitely important truths which are exhibited in the sacramental supper; such as the holiness of the law, the ill desert of sin, the justice of God in punishing, and his mercy in pardoning it. If the communicants do not discern the Lord's body, and, in a spiritual sense, feed upon it, they will have no life in them, nor communion among them.

4. Since gospel truth lays the foundation for Christian fellowship, the proper way to promote such fellowship, is to make a *clear exhibition* of that truth. When the mere *modes* and *forms* of religion divide our hearers, it may be consistent that we should bear lightly on them; or perhaps for a time pass them over in silence: but if our preaching *Jesus Christ and him crucified* will offend them, they must be offended. Could any thing be more absurd, than that the ministers of Christ, for the sake of promoting fellowship, should withhold those pillar doctrines that furnish the only basis on which Christian fellowship can be consistently built?

5. In view of the importance of a holy fellowship in the moral system, of what immense value is the gift of the *Holy Spirit*. His efficiency is the immediate cause of all such fellowship, wherever it is found, whether on earth or in heaven. Hence it is that it receives the name of "the fellowship of the Spirit," and "the communion of the Holy Ghost." As the *witness* and *intercession of the Spirit*, of which the apostle speaks in his Epistle to the Romans, intend those evidences of grace, and those breathings of devotion, which exist in our own hearts, by means of his sanctifying influence; so the fellowship of the Spirit, or the communion of the Holy Ghost, (which means the same thing,) describes that holy fellowship or communion among ourselves, and between us and our Maker, of which his agency is the cause. Without this agency, the truth itself forms no bond of union. Even devils agree with the angels of light in believing *the existence of one living and true God*. But their agreement with them in this belief, has no influence in uniting them to those blessed spirits: nor is it any bond of union among themselves. With the angels of light, things are very different. They not only believe in the existence of one living and

true God ; but their belief of it is *spiritual*, being the fruit of a complete indwelling of the Spirit of God in all their hearts. Nor is the belief of just men made perfect in glory, any less spiritual. And so far as the Spirit of God has prevailed, in expelling sin from the hearts of good men on earth, the way is prepared for them to receive the truth in the love of it ; so that they have a real and pure fellowship one with another, and also with the inhabitants of the upper world. All the holy fellowship in the universe, is effected by the Spirit of God. The infinite holiness of God himself, is certainly from his own Spirit : and the holiness of all his creatures, whether on earth or in heaven, is from the same source. Their holiness, it is true, exists in their own minds ; but his Spirit is the efficient cause of its existence. And since the holiness thus produced, prepares them to be united in their views, feelings, and pursuits, it is a *spiritual* union, and may well be denominated *the fellowship of the Spirit*.

6. This subject will assist us in determining the question of *our meetness for heaven* : if we have fellowship with God and his friends, then are we prepared to spend eternity in their society. By reading the word of God, we discover what are his sentiments and feelings, and also what are the sentiments and feelings of his friends, in relation to all those great subjects which lay a foundation for spiritual fellowship. If we are honest in our endeavors to become acquainted with their sentiments and feelings, and also with those of our own minds, we shall be able to determine whether we are in a state of agreement with them : and agreement, let us remember, is essential to fellowship ; for how can two walk together except they be agreed ?

Are we in a state of agreement with the God of the Bible ? Can we perceive this, when we pray ? Prayer is often called *communion* with God. Do we, when we pray, have real communion with Him ? Unless our prayers are an unmeaning form, they bring our minds to look directly at the most weighty truths of divine revelation, and this gives us a good opportunity to know whether our fellowship is with the God of the Bible. When we come before him in prayer, it concerns us to be able to decide, whether we entertain those views of divine subjects which he has declared to be his own. He views it as his right to reign over the universe ; and has declared that he will not give his glory to another. Do our feelings accord with this declaration : do we from the heart say, let him have the glory due to his name ? He has manifested an entire regard to his holy law, and a great abhorrence of our transgressions. Do we love the one, and abhor the other ? In God's account, a pharisaical self-righteous spirit is loathsome ; but those who come to him with a broken and contrite spirit, not relying on their own righteousness, but on that of his Son, he will not despise. Are these the very sentiments of our hearts ? Do we loathe the self-righteousness we discover in our own religious services ? Though God would have us justified freely through the redemption of his Son, yet he wills *our sanctification*. Do we, in accordance with this, hunger and thirst after righteousness ? Can we, in these solemn approaches to God, appeal to him as the searcher of hearts, that *his will*, as he has revealed it to us, concerning his prerogatives and our obligations, his infinite purity and our entire depravity, his free grace and our utter unworthiness, *meets our cordial approbation* ? Can we say, that as he thinks and feels on these interesting subjects, so we think and feel ? If we can, then may we say with the apostle, *truly our fellowship is with the*

Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And they who enjoy the blessedness of communion with God now, will enjoy it hereafter; for communion on earth is a foretaste and an earnest of communion in heaven.

But let us remember the caution which the apostle gives, in close connection with the text: "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness," (i. e. in moral darkness or sin,) "we lie, and do not the truth."

Lastly. This subject reflects light on the criminality of unbelief. To many it seems strange, that the gospel should denounce such severe threatenings against that, which to them appears no crime at all; or, if any, a very small one. How, say they, can we be considered so culpable for not believing what appears to us irrational and unworthy of our belief? But would such a glorious exhibition of divine truth appear unworthy of their belief, if they did not love darkness rather than light? The gospel, which proffers salvation to repenting rebels through the mediation of Christ, recognises the immutable difference between holiness and sin, and makes the most luminous display of the divine glory, and of all those truths, which form the only basis for a consistent fellowship in the moral system. They who cannot be attracted by such things as are presented in the gospel, are decided enemies to the interests of the universe. The man who rejects the offer of eternal life, on the condition of repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, practically declares that he wants no fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, nor with his Father, nor with his disciples, nor with angels of light; that he wants no divine government, no moral law, no mercy-seat, nor reconciliation with God. His unbelief plainly speaks it out: "If I cannot be received into the fellowship of God and his friends, without my feelings and pursuits being made to harmonize with theirs, let me remain without the camp of Israel." And what does the threatening of God do, but confirm his own choice? "He that believeth not, shall be damned." The threatening places him without the gates of the New Jerusalem, where he has chosen to remain. It excludes him from the fellowship of those within the walls of the holy city, and leaves him in the company of those who are characterized as "dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie!"

But let not the unbeliever think that his case excites no compassion. While the gates of the holy city are not shut, to be opened no more, we cannot forbear to cast a wishful look, and to address him, in the language of Moses to Hobab: *Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.* Let such of you as have not yet accepted the gospel invitation, know that the God of Zion, and all his friends in heaven and earth, wait to receive you into their fellowship. "The Spirit and the bride say, come." Oh, come then without delay, lest the privilege of being associated with such holy and blessed society be lost forever.

SERMON CXCVII.

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MOTIVES AND MEANS OF PEACE TO THE CHURCHES.

PSALM, CXII. 7.—*Peace be within thy walls.*

THE Psalmist, contemplating the beauty of Zion, and the delightful harmony and exquisite grandeur of the worship at Jerusalem, and feeling his bosom glow with love for his "brethren and companions," when they said, "let us go into the house of the Lord," breathes forth to Heaven the soft aspiration, "Peace be within thy walls." This prayer of the sweet singer of Israel, contains a sentiment which ought to be cherished in every Christian's heart, and often uttered in his petitions before the Throne. It is of the same spirit with the final blessing and legacy of the dear Redeemer: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you;" and will therefore be an appropriate theme for a few remarks on *the importance of peace in the kingdom of Jesus Christ.*

1. The triune Jehovah, the covenant God of the Church, is the *God of peace.* How frequently in the benedictions of the Apostle Paul, is he thus characterized: "The God of peace be with you," Rom. xv. 33.—"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly," 1. Thess. v. 23.—"The God of peace make you perfect in every good work," Heb. xiii. 20.—"God is not the author of confusion, but of peace," 1. Cor. xiv. 33.—Consequently, in entering into covenant with him, he will expect of us conformity with his own character, and esteem us as his people only so far as we imbibe his spirit. And we cannot consider the church as fulfilling her obligations to her Sovereign, unless she cultivate those dispositions which will fit her for communion with him, and continually "follow after the things which make for peace."

2. Jesus Christ, the head of the church, and king in Zion, is the *Prince of peace—the Lord of peace.* At his birth as the Son of Man, a choir of the heavenly hosts sang, "Peace on earth." To effect a reconciliation between an offended God and rebellious men, was the purpose for which he came into our world, and submitted to poverty, reproach, and death; and to secure this object, he now lives as Intercessor in heaven. He therefore anticipates, that peace will reign in his spiritual kingdom, that its members will all speak the same thing, being perfectly joined together in the same mind, that there may be no schism in the body, but the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. What! shall there be strife and divisions among the subjects of that kingdom, which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" Shall the soldiers of the Prince of peace, march forth under any other banner than that of love? Shall they not emulate the spirit and manner of their great leader? His paths on earth were paths of peace; his sermons, sermons of peace; his prayers, his benedictions, his commissions, all were peace. And now that "he reigns exalted high," peace is inscribed on the radiant bow of glory that encircles his head.

3. *The Spirit, who inhabits the church as his temple, is a spirit of peace, and refuses to dwell in the midst of noise, strife, and confusion.* "The fruit of the Spirit, is love, joy, *peace*, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance." These effects of the Spirit's operation are all connected with a subdued and softened heart; and every thing which is of an opposite nature and tendency, belongs to the flesh, grieves the Holy Spirit, and induces him to take his departure. "Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?" Wherever then we find envying, strife, and divisions, there is carnality, confusion, and every evil work; there the Spirit will not remain, and we may not look for his peaceful and purifying presence. But how shall the church ever arise and shine, fair as the moon, and clear as the sun—how shall she ever put forth her strength, and exert her power to bring the world to the love of God and holiness, if that Spirit desert her, whose it is to cherish her graces, give her might in prayer, and make her instrumental in the conversion of the world?

4. *The constitution of the kingdom of Christ, is one whose essential principles are peace.* "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight."—The principles on which I establish my government in the world, are not the ordinary principles of human government, but such as inspire my subjects with peaceful feelings, and induce them to sheath the sword, and make conquests only by the persuasive influences of truth and love. The gospel is the gospel of peace. "Have peace one with another." "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." "The kingdom of God is *peace*." Indeed we can scarcely read a section in this constitution, without perceiving clearly that it emanated from the God of peace, and was intended and adapted to bless the world with peace, and to lead men to love and pursue it.

Hence we read that "unto them that are *contentious*, and obey not the truth," God will render "indignation and wrath;" but "blessed are the *peace-makers*, for they shall be called the children of God." "Live in peace, and the God of peace shall be with you." When therefore the Christian church enters into sharp and virulent controversy, when her members indulge in debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, back-bitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults, they belie Christianity, contravene its laws, rebel against its righteous principles, and offend its author, their King. If then we would preserve inviolate the very charter under which we act, and which we acknowledge to be excellent by our voluntary adoption of it, we must avoid foolish and unlearned questions, which gender strife, and follow after peace with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

5. *The church can only then shew forth her beauty, and glorify her King, when her members are at peace with one another.* The beauty of the church consists not in any external habiliments, or any system of observances, but in a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God, is of great price; in the manifestation of kindness, tenderness, meekness, forbearance, peace. Only when clothed with humility, and crowned with love, and speaking in the mild accents of mercy, can she so let her light shine, that others, seeing her good works, shall glorify her Father who is in heaven; and only then can she go to the footstool of mercy, and implore the Spirit to lift up a standard against

the onsets of the enemy. In order to glorify her Jesus, she must walk in his steps, imitate his example, grow up into his likeness; and

“ Thus will she best proclaim abroad,
The honors of her Savior God.”

Thus will she convince the world of the purity of her motives, and the excellence of her religion, and lead multitudes to shout, “ Hosanna to the Son of David.”

But who can admire the church, when they see it the arena of strife and sedition? Who can believe it to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone? Who will imagine it to be the image of a pure and lovely religion? Or who will be won over to the love and belief of the truth? And how can Christianity ever hope to take hold of the world, and secure its favor, while her professed friends are not at peace among themselves, but displaying towards each other the rancor and malice of bitterest foes? How can we dream of making conquest of the whole earth, and recommending the religion of Jesus to Pagan nations, until we shake ourselves from the dust, and put on the beautiful garments of peace?—until, in one united host, accoutred in the armor of God, and wielding the spiritual weapons of the heavenly warfare, we go forth to conflict only with the powers of darkness, under the great Captain of salvation?

II. But if peace be so important, and so manifestly incumbent on the children of the Most High, it will be interesting to inquire, *what means should be used for its cultivation?*

1. *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.* The lusts of the flesh include, among others, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife; and are directly opposed to the exercises of the spiritual nature—love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness. If then we place ourselves under the guidance of the “Peaceful Dove,” and act in conformity with his suggestions, we shall be preserved from biting and devouring one another, and shall pursue the things which make for peace. And when a brother errs, we shall labor to restore such an one, in the spirit of meekness. Whenever the church is rent with unholy contentions, and her members indulge inimical and untender feelings, she is not walking after the Spirit, but after the flesh, and led captive by the devil, throwing herself off from the heavenly influences of that Spirit, who flies from the scenes of turmoil and divisions, to seek for some more peaceful and quiet resting place. Let the church only listen to the wooings of the Spirit, let her members cherish his movements on their souls, and often sit with docility under his teachings, and they will necessarily cultivate the Christian graces of love and peace.

2. In contending for THE FAITH, *avoid the usual concomitants of controversy.* There is no allusion now to the controversy often existing between different departments of Christ's kingdom, but to that contest which the whole church is expected to maintain with the enemies of truth. *The faith* of which Jude speaks, as the connection will shew, is manifestly that which is included in repentance unto life and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; for it is opposed to the doctrine of those who were “ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, even our Lord Jesus Christ; sensual, having not the Spirit, walking after their own lusts;” and is character-

ized as the "*common salvation.*" While therefore the church, as a body, is required earnestly to uphold the essential truth of the gospel, "*the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.*" The whole contest for the faith once delivered to the saints, must be conducted without strife or vain-glory, and with the meekness and gentleness of Christ; so that the sanctifying power of the gospel may be manifest even in controversy, and win opposers from the snare of the devil. The enemy will come in like a flood, the powers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places will attack the citadel of truth, and the church must maintain her ground, standing fast in the Lord: but she will always do it most successfully by keeping the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace, and putting on bowels of mercies, kindness, tenderness, humbleness of mind. "Union is strength." And a union on such principles would be mighty indeed to the pulling down of strong holds.

3. In reference to differences of opinion among those who name the name of Jesus, and acknowledge his reign in their hearts, *if they be of minor consequence, and not necessary to salvation, they must not dwell upon, as if of more importance than the vital and practical points of the Christian faith.* On this subject there is doubtless much error in the practice of the church; much that prevents the cultivation of peace, grieves the Spirit of all grace, and throws a cloud over the horizon of the Christian world. The Psalmist considered the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom to be dependent on its peaceful condition, and every righteous soul will doubtless respond to this call to "pray for the *peace of Jerusalem:*" "For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, *peace be within thee.*" But how shall we sincerely offer up petitions for her welfare, or her unity, while those points on which we disagree, are magnified into mountains that separate us from each other; and the infinitely more important matters of agreement, are almost buried in oblivion, and excluded from exercising their appropriate influence to bind together the members of the body in sweetest harmony of love? Oh! when shall the children of God leave off doting about strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, railings, evil surmisings, and perverse disputings, and desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby? When shall bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from the midst of them? When shall foolish and unlearned questions, which only tend to dissever, be dropped, and the *weightier* matters of the law be presented to the view of the church? Not until then will peace be extended unto her as a river, and her borders be enlarged.

We are too prone here to act on the principles of the world, too unwilling to compromise, and meet on the broad ground of *the common faith.* Why should not the precious, soul-reviving truths of the gospel on which we harmonize, have more influence in uniting us in love, and peace, and Christian communion, than the confessedly minor ones on which we differ, in driving us asunder? "Come," let us say, like Abraham to Lot, "let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me, for we be *brethren.*" Let us yield all that we can, and yet be on the platform of essential, saving truth: and thus, while we mutually overlook small mistakes and misapprehensions, we can unite in praying for the peace, and laboring for the prosperity of Zion.

4. Peace will be promoted by not *dwelling too exclusively on a*

single aspect of divine things, nor magnifying one particular doctrine above another of equal importance in the word of God.

From the various relations in which men are placed, and the different circumstances of their birth and education, they naturally adopt variant views, and cherish discordant sentiments. Some have always read the Bible with a certain system prominent in the mind, and others, with an opposing one. Hence their interpretations of many of the more obscure, and some even of the plainer instructions of God's word, will be dissimilar, and modified by preconceived opinions. And from the fact of never diverting their attention from this one view of the revelations of the gospel, in which they may have been built up by the only authors to whom they have had access, they are prepared to maintain it against every other system, and that, too, with warmth and zeal. Thus members of the church of Jesus Christ often engage in vain disputes of no avail, and oppose one another with all the unholy passions which nestle in the hearts of the unregenerate.

All minds will not apprehend the same system precisely alike, especially if it be extended over much ground; nor is it of high importance that they do, if there be mutual patience and forbearance, and no disposition each to exalt his own adopted creed to such a pitch of extravagant fondness, as to exclude all others as absolutely false and dangerous, and those who maintain them as unworthy of Christian courtesy and fellowship. We must be willing, for the sake of peace, to sacrifice a little selfish affection for our own philosophy, remembering that others entertain it as warmly for theirs.

5. *In controversy, verbal or written, impute nothing to opponents which they do not allow—neither pervert their meaning, nor attribute consequences to them which they disclaim.*

The peace of Christ's kingdom would be much increased if all controversialists would bear this remark in mind. How many seem intent on finding something erroneous in the writings of those who may not fully accord with them in sentiment. And for this purpose, when they cannot point out glaring error in the general propositions, either search for it in a perverted interpretation of the language, or conjure up horrific consequences which the candid reader can never allow. But how utterly unkind and unchristian, and how foreign from the Spirit of the Master is it, thus to refuse the hand of brotherly love to one who, while he agrees with us certainly in the main, would also rather retract his promulged opinion, than entertain the consequences attributed to it! Out of these imagined and falsely charged views, arise most of the heart-burnings and discords among brethren, and most of those clouds of dust which whirl about the paths of the church, impede her progress, and spoil her beauty.

6. *Abstain from censoriousness, and pride of intellect.* These faults are intimately connected, and where they exist have a direct tendency to stop the current of the river of peace, which makes glad the city of God. We must ever remember that the understandings of men are not all cast in the same mould, but almost as various as the individuals of human society, and that all have not the same appetencies. Some find one mode of worship adapted to their feelings, and in that experience most profit and pleasure; others choose a different form, and under it sit with most comfort and improvement. Now we may not presume to pique ourselves on our superior wisdom, and the propriety of our choice, and therefore censure those who depart from us

into another chamber of the house, which, however inferior in our estimation to that we have selected, is in accordance with their taste, and best adapted to their wants. We must not be wise in our own conceits, and say, "*we are the people, and wisdom will die with us,*" thus assuming to ourselves a singularly correct judgment, wrapping around us the robe of self-complacency, and walking forth in self-important majesty, expecting the world to follow in our wake. No! brethren, No! In those matters which are plain to the wayfaring man, and cherished by the whole Christian world, we must be steadfast, immovable: but while we cry with one voice for *peace, peace*, we must not imagine that all the light of Heaven has settled upon our minds, and that in order to the attainment of this blessed end, others must borrow of us, and extinguish their own. In things of "doubtful disputation," which from this very circumstance are less important, less necessary, and from which come the "wars and fightings" of the church, we must put away all censoriousness, distrust our own decisions, open our minds to further illumination, and continually wear the veil of modesty. Thus shall we enter into a covenant of peace, and dwell safely in quiet habitations, and the God of peace dwell with us.

In view of results so desirable, we cannot but reflect, how unholy the flame which burns in the Christian's heart, when he cherishes any dispositions opposed to the peace of Jerusalem. Oh! how should the church humble herself before God, and, weeping tears for past offences, pour forth the fervent prayer, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee." Truly, "they shall prosper, that love thee, O Jerusalem!"—When, Oh! when shall it be said of Zion spiritual, "She is beautiful, the joy of the whole earth, her walls salvation, her officers peace, her exactors righteousness!"

"How sweet, how heav'nly is the sight,
When those who love the Lord,
In one another's peace delight,
And so fulfil his word:—

When free from envy, scorn, and pride,
Our wishes all above,
Each can his brother's failings hide,
And show a brother's love!

Let love, in one delightful stream,
Thro' every bosom flow;
And union sweet, and dear esteem,
In every action glow.

Love is the golden chain that binds
The happy souls above;
And he's an heir of heav'n who finds
His bosom glow with love."

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SERMON CXCVIII.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF DOMESTIC HAPPINESS.

JOB v. 24—Thy tabernacle shall be in peace.

MAN was made for society; and the earliest form of society was that of the family. The all-wise Creator had scarcely made the first parent of our race, before he said—*It is not good for man to be alone; I will, therefore, make an help-meet for him.* And to show the importance and permanence, as well as the close and endearing character of this connection, he added—*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh.*

As domestic society was the first that was formed, so it lies at the foundation of all other, and enters more deeply into the order, the purity, and the happiness of our world than a volume could display. It does more to cement civil society, to create the tenderest relations, to soften the heart, to refine, polish, and harmonize the children of men, than all the laws which human wisdom ever formed.

The IMPORTANCE OF DOMESTIC HAPPINESS, then, is to be the subject of the present discourse. It is this blessing to which *Eliphaz* refers in the words of our text. *Thy tabernacle shall be in peace.* The word "tabernacle" signifies a *family tent*, or *moveable dwelling*. Such dwellings formerly were, and, indeed, still are, exceedingly common in *Arabia*, where *Job* is supposed to have resided, and in many other parts of the Eastern world. The term here may be considered as designating, by a very common figure, not only the tent itself, but also the family inhabiting it. This domestic circle, in the circumstances to which the speaker refers, shall be "in peace," that is, tranquil and happy; free from those sources of annoyance and suffering to which, in a different situation, it would not fail to be exposed:—at peace among its own members, and at peace with all around.

In showing the IMPORTANCE of domestic happiness, it is difficult to know where to begin, or where to end. Its points of contact with human enjoyment are so numerous, and its influence on the best interests of society, civil and religious, so deep and vital, that we can scarcely make an over-estimate of its value. A few of the more obvious and practical considerations which belong to the subject, will be presented with all plainness and brevity. May he who has the residue of the Spirit, direct our meditations, and grant that we may all know the happiness of which we speak, not by description only, but by the richest personal experience.

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I. The inestimable importance of domestic happiness appears FROM THE UNAVOIDABLE INTIMACY AND EXTENT OF ITS INFLUENCE ON HUMAN COMFORT. The degree of enjoyment which we find in scenes and with persons with whom we have no necessary connection, and with whom we may, if we please, avoid intercourse, is of comparatively small importance. He who finds little comfort in traveling may refrain from it : and he who has no taste for rural pleasures, may confine himself to his dwelling, or transfer his residence to a populous city. But who can measure the importance of our finding comfort in that place, and in that society, which we call our *home* ; with which God, in his providence, has been pleased to connect us by ties of the closest kind ; where we habitually reside ; where, of course, we pass the greatest part of our time ; and from which we cannot escape without both sin and greater suffering ? Other scenes we occasionally approach ; with this we are, so to speak, ever in contact. Here we, as it were, "live and move and have our being." To find one's ties to this place, and to this society an alliance with misery, is indeed deplorable ! To such an one, a state of suffering is not merely an occasional occurrence ; it is the character of his abode ; it is an inmate of his tabernacle ; it besets him day and night, in going out and coming in, in sitting down and rising up. He cannot escape from it without abandoning his family. In short, he who finds no happiness in the bosom of his household, must be a stranger to it the greater part of his time ; and if the consciousness of the want of it *there*, do not poison his enjoyment wherever he goes, and cause him to look with something allied to painful envy on scenes of eminent domestic comfort, when he witnesses them in other families, it must be because all the finer sensibilities of his nature have been blunted by the long continuance of discord and suffering.

On the other hand, whatever may be our sufferings abroad, if our own dwelling be the habitual abode of peace and love ; and if, whenever we return to it, we are welcomed with the smile of affection, and surrounded with the comforts of a well-ordered family, and the endearments of conjugal and filial regard ;—we have secured to us the very best elements of social happiness that this world can give. Here the laborer finds a constant and rich solace when he returns from his daily toils. Here the man of business, leaving the scenes of anxious care which distract and exhaust him, comes to his domestic circle to be soothed, refreshed and lifted up. The scholar here unbends, and seeks among those to whom he is bound by the most endearing of all earthly ties, relaxation, repose, and intellectual renovation. And even the politician, wearied with the strife and conflicts of political parties, retires to the bosom of his family to find that disinterested affection, and genuine enjoyment which among rivals or sycophants he seeks in vain.

Accordingly, one of the most eminent statesmen of *Great Britain*, not long since deceased,* bore a testimony on this subject which is worthy of being repeated and remembered. He declared, that whatever might be the clamor and violence of party zeal ; whatever the fatigue, the anxiety or the disgust which he suffered in the transaction of public business ;—he never entered his own dwelling, and sat down by his own fire-side, with his beloved family, without finding his wearied and agitated spirit immediately tranquilized, and filled with the most delightful serenity. There he found a refuge from all the heartless selfishness of political partizans, and was enabled to leave behind him every element of animosity or vindictiveness.

Surely, then, it is the wisdom of every one who wishes to establish his happiness on the firmest basis, to study to make his own dwelling, as far as possible, the abode of harmony and love. He who finds not comfort here, will probably find it no where. The absence of this blessing, will be like a worm constantly gnawing at the root of his enjoyment : while he whose domestic happiness is well established, will seldom fail to experience its benign influence in *all the walks of life*, and in the discharge of every public and private duty.

* Edmund Burke.

II. Again ; the importance of domestic happiness appears from the consideration, that IT IS A BLESSING EQUALLY ATTAINABLE BY ALL CLASSES OF PERSONS, AND WHICH MAY BE ENJOYED, NOT OCCASIONALLY ONLY, BUT EVERY DAY THAT WE LIVE. Some of those attainments which we most covet, and which enter in no small degree, into the elements of personal comfort, can be reached only by a select few of our race. The pleasures arising from the pursuit of literature and science : the gratification, such as it is, which flows from stations of honor and profit, among men ; and even those transient and turbid enjoyments which are gained by frequenting the circles of gaiety and fashion,—can be enjoyed only by a small portion of mankind, and not even by them without many interruptions. But the happiness arising from a well-ordered and affectionate domestic circle, may be enjoyed by all classes of the children of men ; in all situations of life ; at all seasons : nay, it may be said to be most rich, sweet, and productive, when separated from the false pleasures of an ensnaring world, and left to its own resources. Of many other enjoyments we may be deprived by the caprice or the malignity of those around us. But those which the bosom of a happy family furnishes, the world can “neither give nor take away.” In short, we may say of the pleasures flowing from domestic love and peace, as the inspired Apostle speaks on another subject—“Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven, to bring down this blessing from above ? or who shall descend into the deep, to bring it up from beneath ?” The blessing of heaven, indeed, creates it, and enables thee to enjoy it ; but when possessed, “it is nigh thee, even in thine heart,” and in thy dwelling, always, day and night, at hand, and ever ready to afford rich perennial refreshment.

It is an old remark, that human happiness is much less dependent on great but infrequent events, which produce a powerful impulse on the mind, than on the ordinary and perpetually recurring incidents which enter into our daily habits and enjoyments. The former have been compared to the periodical inundations of a mighty river, which once a year pours down fatness and plenty upon the country on its borders :—while the latter may be likened to the gentle showers, and the silent dew of heaven, which descend at all seasons, return after short intervals, and kindly nourish every herb of the field.

Surely, then, it is a dictate of true wisdom highly to prize that calm and unostentatious but rich enjoyment which domestic peace and love are adapted to secure, and to guard with the utmost care against its derangement or diminution. We may prepare artificial and highly sapid forms of diet, which will gratify in the occasional use ; but they are by no means fit to be made the habitual sustenance of life. The simple and solid aliment which nourishes, without undue stimulation, will be preferred by every wise man for his daily food. The exhilarating gas which the chemist manufactures, may excite without essential injury, if it be sparingly and seldom employed. But nothing is so pleasant or salubrious for daily respiration as the atmosphere which God has made, and on which our organs perpetually feast without derangement or weariness. So it is with domestic happiness. It is the daily food of life ; simple, solid, ever new, ever delightful, never cloying, but rather growing in hallowed relish from day to day. “What enjoyment is there in all the pageantry of state, in all the gratifications of sense, in all the delirious joys of giddy dissipation, once to be compared with this ? O pleasures, cheaply purchased, placidly enjoyed ; ever rising ; ever disclosing new riches ; never languid, never remorseful ; why are ye so seldom adequately prized, and by so few pursued with complete success ?”

III. The inestimable importance of domestic happiness may be further demonstrated BY THE MULTIPLIED AND WIDE SPREADING MISCHIEFS WHICH DAILY RESULT FROM ITS ABSENCE.

If the mere privation of present comfort were the only evil resulting from domestic discord and strife, the mischief, though serious indeed, to each individual, would not be so deep and vital as we often witness. But this, in a multitude of

cases, is but a small part of the evil. In how many melancholy instances have domestic feuds and alienation, driven husbands from their homes to the haunts of vice; tempted wives to violate their plighted allegiance; impelled children to take refuge among strangers from the miseries of their parental abode; and betrayed all into habits as degrading and destructive as they were criminal!

When home is attractive it will seldom be deserted:—but if it be uncomfortable, it is an instinct of nature to fly for relief to some other society. And if there be no reign of moral and religious principle, recourse will probably be had to society of a corrupt character. Many a husband and father once orderly and respectable, has been tempted, by the absence of comfort in his own dwelling, to resort for pleasure to the tipping club,—to the gambling table,—or to the haunts of licentiousness—until he has made total shipwreck of his reputation, and of all standing in society; and perhaps made beggars of his wife and children. Had he found at his own fire-side that smile of affection which wins and attaches the heart; that spirit of kindness and accommodation which delights in conferring happiness; that neatness, attention and order which are so essential to family comfort, he might have been regular and respectable still. But, finding little or nothing of all this, in that domestic circle to which he was bound in duty, he was gradually but fatally estranged from it; and tempted to seek in other society, and sometimes among the basest and vilest of his species, that enjoyment which he found not in company with the wife of his bosom, and their common offspring. Yes, if we could look into the dwelling of many a degraded and ruined husband, we should see “DOMESTIC INFELICITY” inscribed in large and legible characters upon every page of his history, and upon every broken door and pillar of his wretched habitation!

In like manner, who can tell how many of the instances of coldness—of alienated affection—of illicit attachment—of conjugal infidelity—and of final wandering from a once happy home,—on the part of wives—are to be traced to DOMESTIC MISERY as their baleful source? There was a time, perhaps, when they enjoyed, in a good degree, the comfort arising from the love and the kind attention of their husbands. But this comfort was gradually withdrawn. Habits of vice entered to pollute and destroy. The diminished affection; the stern looks; the harsh tones; and finally, it may be, the habitual tyranny and brutality of their companions, made the conjugal bond a burden; rendered their domestic interviews scenes of sullen dislike, if not of ferocious violence; until they were tempted to look to others for kindness and protection; and to abandon their children and their home in pursuit of unhallowed attachments. Many a wife, whose sin and shame have torn in pieces and scattered once happy families, might, humanly speaking, have been saved from this ruin, and all its concomitant and consequent mischiefs, if their home had been made to them, what it ought to have been, the abode of respect, kindness and love.

But this is not all. The effects of domestic infelicity on the spirit and course of *children* are often marked and melancholy. There are no human means so effectual in binding children to their parents, and to one another, in bonds of the tenderest affection, as MAKING THEIR HOME PLEASANT. When parents walk before their children, not only in purity and order, but with uniform kindness and love; when they instruct with affection, exhort with tenderness, reprove without asperity or harshness, and continually strive, while they are faithful to the best interests of their offspring, to employ all the means in their power to render the parental roof a precious refuge, a pleasant abode, a scene of comfort and endearment:—and when brothers and sisters of the same family, while they vie with each other in showing affectionate duty to their parents, are devoted to the comfort of one another: when a spirit of harmony, of mutual concession, and even of sacrifice, for the happiness of each, reigns among them all,—continually prompting every one to exhibit an amiable, accommodating deportment, to attend to the duties of their offices, and carefully to avoid

every thing adapted to wound or repel :—in such a family, children will find themselves happy in their parents, and happy in one another. They will prefer the domestic circle to any other. They will leave their father's house with reluctance ; will cast a wishful eye towards it, wherever they may sojourn or settle ; and eagerly return to it as to a delightful centre of hallowed affection, whenever they are favored with an opportunity.

But reverse the picture. Suppose a circle of children to be members of a family in which discord and strife habitually reign. Suppose the parents to be austere, harsh, tyrannical ; repelling each other with mutual reproaches, and manifesting to all under their roof the most revolting despotism. Will such a family be apt to conciliate and attract the youthful mind ? Will not *sons* be disposed to escape from it as speedily, and return to as seldom as possible ? Can they venerate—to say nothing of love—can they venerate parents whom they are compelled daily to associate with such scenes ? Can *home* present itself to their minds invested with any of those attractions which win and fix the heart ? Will not *daughters*, when their paternal home is uncomfortable, be ready to make almost any exchange which promises relief ; and sometimes, perhaps, in pursuit of this relief, take steps fatal to their peace, and perhaps even to their character, while they live ? Alas ! it cannot be doubted,—after making every reasonable allowance for the fact, that children, in family disagreements, are much more frequently culpable than parents ;—still it cannot be doubted, that the melancholy aberrations of multitudes of young people of both sexes ; once amiable and promising ; their early abandonment of the parental roof ; their false steps ; their criminal connections ; their blasted hopes ; and their final destruction for both worlds,—may be distinctly traced to that domestic unhappiness, which rendered home distressing, and tempted them to believe that almost any change would be for the better. These, yes, these, are the disastrous trophies of domestic discord and strife ! It is thus that the FAMILY, which ought to be a nursery for the Church and for heaven ; and which, when it bears any thing like the character which it ought to bear, affords a lively foretaste of the purity, the harmony, and the love of that blessed world ;—becomes a nursery of evil principles, and evil habits, and conspires with the great adversary of God and man, to degrade human honor, and to blast the brightest prospects of human felicity.

If there be the least truth in these statements, can we need further arguments to convince us of the inestimable importance of domestic happiness ?—Every head of a family has the deepest interest in this subject, for his own temporal comfort, and that of her with whom, by the tenderness of all earthly connections, he has become “one flesh ;” for his own spiritual peace and growth, which of course, can never prevail amidst discord and mutual alienation ; for his children, whose preparation for living, and whose destiny in life, depend more on the character of that domestic circle in which they receive their youthful impressions than tongue can tell ; in a word, for all those considerations which ought to affect the heart of a Christian and a man. He who does not see that upon the character of that domestic society over which he presides, are suspended temporal and eternal interests of incalculable extent ; and that its maintenance in a happy state is worthy of all the vigilance, all the self-denial, all the unceasing labor, and all the fervent prayers, which he can bring to its aid, must be indeed blind to scenes of daily occurrence around him ; scenes which must awaken the sympathies of every thinking man.

IV. Further, the great importance of domestic happiness appears from ITS ESSENTIAL AND UNAVOIDABLE INFLUENCE ON THE CHURCH OF GOD.

The family has been called “the nursery of the Church.” And, truly, in all the extent of what is implied in this figurative language, it is really the case. What the family is in itself, its members will generally be found to be in relation to the house of God. In fact, every Christian family is a little “Church” within itself. We have the authority of Holy Scripture for this

language. (*Colossians* iv, 15. *Philemon* 2.) And as the character of any aggregate body is necessarily formed by the character of its parts, so the visible Church of Christ will never fail to be such as are the families that compose it. If peace, order and love reign in every dwelling, or in a majority of them, peace, order and love will reign in the Church. But if domestic heart-burnings, and feuds, and strife, and alienation prevail, then just in proportion to the degree in which they prevail, will lukewarmness, indifference to the truth, heartless ordinances, "evil surmisings, and corrupt disputings," prevail in the house of God, marring, as a matter of course, all its spiritual beauty and undermining, or rather destroying every element of its edification.

We sometimes see professors of religion who, if we were to judge of them by the language of their social prayers, or by the character of their public services and efforts, we should judge to be eminently zealous and devoted Christians. But when we follow them to the bosom of their families, how sad the disappointment! "Of the carbuncle," says an eloquent writer, "it is remarked, that it looks on fire, but when touched, it is as cold as other stones. There are persons who soon rectify our mistakes concerning them, by our intercourse with them. They will not endure close inspection. Their piety is rather official than personal. It consists in certain exercises and appearances, which are resigned with the occasions that require them. In company, they are the merry companions, the temporising associates; in the house, the cruel husbands, the negligent fathers, the tyrannical masters."^{*}

We need not inquire what must be the unavoidable effects of such examples on the great interests of religion and the church of God. They are too obvious to be mistaken, and too injurious and melancholy to be easily measured. What will men of the world say, when they enter such families, and witness such examples? Will they not be naturally led to conclude, either that religion is a fable, or that most of its professors are hypocrites; and thus, on either supposition, draw most unfavorable conclusions concerning the church of God? What will be the influence of such families on the children who make a part of them? Will they think favorably of religion, when they find their parents, while professing to be under its governing influence, manifesting so unlovely a spirit? Who can doubt that one great reason why so many of the children of professing parents stand aloof from the church, and are finally found among its opposers and contemners, is that they saw so little in the domestic example which they daily witnessed, which was adapted to raise religion in their estimation?

Here is a consideration, then, which addresses itself to every principle of attachment to the Redeemer's kingdom. O ye who are called to preside over families! behold the top-stone of the fabric of your obligation! If your households are the abode of piety, order, harmony, and love, besides promoting your own personal and social comfort; besides promoting the temporal and eternal welfare of your children; you are recommending religion to those around you, and building up the church of God. You are letting a light shine before men which cannot fail of warming and animating the friends of Zion as far as its influence extends, and of frequently leading others to "glorify your Father in heaven."

V. Only one more consideration will here be urged, and that is, that THE MORE GENERAL AND PERFECT DOMESTIC HAPPINESS IS, THE MORE PURE, HARMONIOUS, AND HAPPY, WILL BE THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE.

Communities are made up of families. And as the whole is equal to all its parts, in the science of numbers and quantity; so it is equally plain that, in the department of morals, the whole body will ever be found to bear the character which is generally born by its component parts. Of course, irreligious and disorderly families; families in which discord, strife, and hatred reign, will generally be found nurseries for training up the ignorant, the profane, the

^{*} *JAN'S Life of Winter*, part II. chap. 3.

reckless, and the profligate. It is certain that all the disorders and crimes which disturb civil society, grow out of habits which are fatal to domestic happiness, and are the natural fruits of domestic infelicity. The intemperance, the profaneness, the fraud, the violence, and all the forms of profligacy, which are daily producing so much distress in the state, are precisely those habits which produce the great mass of domestic misery. Of course, when family government, order, and peace are generally maintained, there is just so much done toward the prevention of public crimes, and, consequently, just so much contributed to the promotion of happiness in the whole community. And, on the contrary, where they are neglected, the native fruit of the neglect is the raising up citizens, and the formation of habits, altogether unfriendly to the purity, order, and strength of civil society. Yes, from wretched, disorderly families, spring those youth, who ultimately afflict the land with violations of the laws, fill our penitentiaries with convicts, and consign to the gallows those who are unfit to live.

If any doubt this, let them turn their eyes, for a moment, to those parts of the world, in which the retirement, the union, and the affection of domestic life, are but little cultivated;—where parents and children generally find their enjoyment, not at home, but in public; not in the hallowed endearments of the domestic circle, but in the never-ending varieties of fashionable dissipation. What is the state of society in those countries? Is it moral? Is it happy? No, never. There, conjugal indifference, alienation, and unfaithfulness, reign with a fearful sway. There, the family in a great measure loses its proper character. There, the filial affection and duty of children are comparatively unknown, or little regarded. There, of course, the influence of domestic ties is swallowed up in the heartlessness of separate pleasures. And there, as a natural consequence, every species of disorderly and selfish gratification is proportionably prevalent. In a word, show me a country in which domestic society is little esteemed, and little sought after as a source of enjoyment; and I will show you a country in which all the bands of social order are deplorably lax; in which dissipation, profligacy, and crime, are pre-eminently prevalent; and in which those whose taste is formed on scriptural principles, can never be happy.

It is plain, then, that every PATRIOT, as well as every MORALIST, and every CHRISTIAN, ought to prize domestic happiness as a most important matter, in which the State, as well as the Church has a deep interest; as a matter which lies at the very foundation of all social order; as a precious attainment, on which are suspended the intellectual, moral, and spiritual welfare of our children, and the real comfort of every form of human society, to an extent which nothing but the most ample experience can fully appreciate.

From the view which has been taken of this subject, we may see,

1. In the first place, THE PERFECT INFATUATION OF THOSE WHO UNDERVALUE THE HAPPINESS OF THE DOMESTIC CIRCLE, AND ARE CONSTANTLY SEEKING ENJOYMENT ELSEWHERE. There are those to whom this character belongs. They have little conception of the comforts of retirement and home. Whenever they think of pleasure, it is always in connection with something *abroad*;—the gay company;—the circle of fashion and splendor;—the haunt of riot and dissipation;—the convivial table;—the midnight party and song;—these, if not some still more criminal in their character—are the scenes in which a large portion of mankind seek their happiness. In domestic pleasures, pure and rich, and solid as they are, they find no enjoyment. They consider these as fitted only for the weak, the demure, the spiritless. For themselves a higher walk,—as they would express it—of enjoyment is marked out than the tame and insipid pleasures of the nursery, and the domestic fireside. Never was there greater infatuation! Such persons are “seeking the living among the dead.” They will never find real enjoyment until their taste is rectified; until they can relish those calm and pure gratifications which a sanctified home fo

nishes, and which are never so delightful as when we are most devoted to them. O how much do those lose, who are destitute of this relish! Like the lost spirits, they loathe what is right; their meat and drink is mischief; and the result of all their toils is increasing disappointment and misery.

2. It is evident that this is a species of enjoyment for the securing of which it is WORTH WHILE, AS WELL AS NECESSARY, TO TAKE UNWEARIED AND CONSTANT PAINS. If domestic happiness be so rich in itself; so extensive in its influence; so vital to the best interests of our children; and so important in its consequences both to the Church and the State;—then, surely, that man is a wretched calculator who is not willing to take pains; to deny himself; to watch day and night; and to labor without ceasing for its attainment. Like most of those things in our world which are really precious, it cannot be reached or maintained without much attention, vigilance and effort. But it is richly worth them all. In all our well-directed labor in this field, there is “great reward.”

3. HOW MUCH REASON HAVE THOSE WHO ARE FAVORED WITH A GOOD DEGREE OF DOMESTIC HAPPINESS TO REJOICE AND BE THANKFUL!—Highly favored of God! You enjoy a treasure. Prize it highly; improve it carefully; guard with the utmost care against every thing that may mar or diminish it; and pray without ceasing that it may be maintained unimpaired. You may part with a large portion of your outward wealth, or with those honors among men which you esteem so highly—without suffering any important privation. But if you lose your domestic comfort, you will be poor indeed! This ought to be watched with the utmost vigilance, and scarcely any earthly sacrifice that can be made, is too great as the price of its maintenance.

4. Finally; important as domestic happiness is to ALL the children of men;—to the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the bond and the free—it is evident, from the foregoing statement, that THERE ARE SOME TO WHOM IT IS OF PECULIAR IMPORTANCE, AND WHO, OF COURSE, OUGHT TO LABOR AFTER THIS BLESSING WITH PECULIAR CARE. They are those whose station in society renders their conduct most conspicuous, and their example most influential;—such as ministers of the Gospel; public men of all classes; the wealthy; the learned; and, in short, all who occupy elevated places among men; and whose habits, whether they will or not, cannot fail of being noticed and spoken of by multitudes. Such is the language of Scripture; and such are the plain dictates of reason. O how peculiarly guilty, then, are those who, while they undertake to instruct and rule others, and to furnish models for those around them, are unskilful, unamiable, revolting, and perhaps reckless, in the management of their own families; and have so little government of their own spirits, and so little of the faculty of making their households orderly and happy, that they are constantly surrounded with ruffled tempers, and revolting disorders! Surely such ought to “consider their ways;” to form, in the strength of God, new resolutions; and to labor without ceasing, for rectifying their mistakes, and for the attainment of a blessing which we have seen to be invested with such inestimable value. Whatever toil or sacrifices others may undergo to reach and secure the blessing in question, *they* ought to be willing to make ten-fold greater sacrifices for this end. These, surely, ought to take PECULIAR PAINS so to *rule their own households*, as that *their tabernacles may be in peace*,—as ever they would wish to adorn the station in which God has placed them, and to be made instrumental in promoting extensively the Divine glory, and the benefit of their generation. God grant that they may be thus wise for His sake in whom all the families of the earth are blessed! Amen!

SERMON CXCIX.

THE MEANS OF DOMESTIC HAPPINESS.

JOB v, 24—*Thy tabernacle shall be in peace.*

AN attempt was made, in the preceding discourse, to unfold the IMPORTANCE of domestic happiness. We have seen that its relations and its value are incalculable; that its importance is deep and vital to ourselves, to our children, to the church of God, and to the community at large; that all have a deep interest in securing and maintaining it; and that those who undervalue and neglect it are among the most infatuated of mortals.

But another inquiry arises, no less interesting and practical—How SHALL WE ATTAIN THIS BLESSING? What are the most effectual means of securing domestic happiness? To the consideration and answer of this question let us now direct our serious attention.

And here, let none imagine that this blessing will come, as a matter of course, to all who desire it. Multitudes, in forming matrimonial connections, and in looking forward to the commencement of domestic life, dream of a happy family, as an object to be confidently expected. And provided they can begin their conjugal union with certain circumstances of outward comfort—such as a well-furnished dwelling, and a handsome equipage—they fondly believe that all will be well; that felicity in this new relation can scarcely fail of being secured. Alas! how often are expectations of this kind totally disappointed! How few families can with truth be called REALLY HAPPY! We see households, every day, in which wealth, rank, public honors, intellectual culture, and every external advantage that can well be imagined, are possessed; and yet no domestic happiness enjoyed. On the contrary, they evidently look for happiness *abroad*, and most of their intercourse at home seems to be marked by indifference, and weariness, if not by revolting discord and strife. The truth is, we are fallen, depraved creatures. We are compassed about with infirmities and passions which, unless some powerful corrective be applied, will, of course, make us proud, selfish, fretful, easily provoked, and, in short, generate all those evil tempers and habits which cannot fail of tarnishing the beauty, and diminishing, if not destroying, the comfort of domestic intercourse. This kind of happiness, then, is so far from being a blessing which, in given circumstances of external advantage, is secured as a matter of course, that we may rather say as experience teaches, that large possessions are unfriendly to it; the pursuit and the glare of public honors are hostile to its enjoyment; in a word, the more our feelings, plans, and interests, are absorbed in the great and the gay world, the less we shall be likely to enjoy of the blessing under consideration. Like every other valuable attainment in this world, it cannot be reached without close attention, assiduity, self-denial, self-government, and unwearied application to him who alone can make means and efforts effectual. But let us inquire, a little more in detail, what are the BEST MEANS of attaining this inestimable blessing. And,

I. *First*, if we desire to secure domestic happiness, WE MUST MAKE A HIGH ESTIMATE OF ITS VALUE, AND LABOR WITHOUT CEASING TO ATTAIN IT. The family, like the heart, is liable every day to go wrong, and will assuredly go wrong, unless it be guarded with the utmost vigilance. Such are the infirmities

and sinfulness of our nature, that the social machine will never work well when left to itself. We cannot safely intermit our watchful care of it for a single hour. And this watchfulness must extend to every *member* of the household, from the head to the youngest child and domestic; to every *interest* of the household, great and small, temporal and spiritual; to every minute *duty* and *comfort* of the household; obviating threatened evils before they come into existence, and securing important advantages which, without vigilance, would be lost. And, after all, this watchfulness must be conducted under the deep impression that it will be ineffectual without the Divine blessing. That blessing is indispensable to the accomplishment of any good, in this or any other field of duty. Unless the Lord keep the family, they labor in vain that watch over it. To unwearied watchfulness, therefore, unceasing prayer is to be added; and prayer prompted by that humble, weighty, solemn sense of the importance of the blessing sought, which gives earnestness and perseverance to importunity. It is evidently, then, no idle or easy matter to preside over a family, as it becomes a Christian man or woman to do. And none are so likely to succeed as those who address themselves to the work with a deep impression at once of its great importance, its unspeakable arduousness, and the absolute need of help from on high at every step. He who imagines that the blessing of which we speak is easily obtained, and that he can secure it by his own wisdom and strength, will assuredly be disappointed.

II. We cannot expect the reign of domestic happiness in any household, WITHOUT THE PREVALENCE OF SINCERE AND ARDENT DOMESTIC AFFECTION. And by domestic affection, I do not mean merely, or even chiefly, that transient feeling which is founded on personal beauty, or external graces; but that fixed, cordial, moral attachment, which is founded on the perception of moral excellence in its object, and which is made up of mutual respect, esteem, tender friendship, and endearing confidence. Without the prevalence of this unfeigned affection, there cannot be solid domestic happiness. It would almost require a constant course of miracles to maintain the one without the other. But where this attachment reigns among the various members of a family, it can scarcely fail to produce that habitual gentleness and kindness of deportment, and those numberless benevolent attentions, which always promote the personal comfort of those who practice them, as well as of those toward whom they are exercised; and bind together by ties of the strongest earthly kind. If it be desired, then, to attain and establish domestic happiness on a firm basis, "LET LOVE BE WITHOUT DISSIMULATION." Let the tenderest mutual affection be cultivated by all the members of the family. Let the utmost care be taken to guard against every thing adapted to impair its strength, or suspend its exercise. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things. Love covereth a multitude of sins." "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith."

III. THE HABITUAL GOVERNMENT OF THE TEMPER in the several members of the family, is essential to domestic happiness. In every family, occurrences will arise to try the temper. In this depraved world, where we all have our failings, we ought to expect this, and to make all our calculations, and set a guard over our spirits, accordingly. He who unites himself in marriage with a beloved object, ought to remember, that, as he is a sinful being himself, so she whom he takes to be the companion of his life, is also a sinful being; and if they have children, they will find, that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh;"—that the same corrupt nature of which they partake is transmitted to their offspring. Every household, then, is a little band of sinners,—and even if they all be pious, still they are but partially sanctified. The remains of indwelling sin still exist, and it will be well if they be not manifested every *hour*. In circumstances of this kind, "it is impossible but that offences will come." *That is, it is morally impossible but that something should occur,*

almost every day, adapted to jar the feelings, to wound, to incommode, in a word, to call for the exercise of forbearance and forgiveness. Now when any thing is said or done, either by mistake, by carelessness, or by sudden temptation, that tends to give offence, or to produce irritation,—unless it be met by a spirit of forbearance and self-government; unless there be such a curb placed on the temper as will guard against irritation, and prompt to that “soft answer which turneth away wrath,” there must ensue heart-burnings, hard thoughts, and a state of feeling wholly inconsistent with domestic harmony and love.

There is a class of evil qualities which piety *ought* to cure, but which it is not always found *in fact* to cure to the extent which is desirable. He whose natural temper is churlish, fretful or irritable, will be apt to betray more or less of this temper, even after the grace of God has “transformed him by the renewing of his mind.” But there are many, alas! of this unhappy temper, whom the grace of God has never transformed. What is to be done when such a temper is found either in the head, or in any of the members of a family? With such an one it will be impossible to dwell with comfort, without a very large measure of forbearance and meekness. Such a temper is in danger, every hour, of extinguishing affection, and of enkindling strife:—and where it is met and repelled by a similar temper, how is it possible that harmony and love should dwell under that roof? Such a family must be the abode of discord, of mutual reproaches, and of habitual misery.

On the other hand, a sweet and amiable natural temper has a tendency to cover a thousand failings, to impart a thousand comforts, and to spread delight wherever it appears. Enter the abode where such a temper reigns. How pleasant the intercourse! How gentle and cheerful the conversation! How mild and conciliatory every look, tone and gesture! No revolting vociferation, no discordant sounds, no harsh upbraidings, no unkind words grate upon your ears. All is soft, placid and harmonious. If there be occasion to correct error, it is done in the spirit of love. The questions and replies,—the requests and commands,—yea, the very reproofs are marked with gentleness and affection. Happy the family where such a spirit reigns among all its members! And just so far as it is wanting or interrupted, domestic happiness will suffer a corresponding suspension or destruction.

It is obvious that this regulation of the *temper* is peculiarly important in those who **PRESIDE OVER FAMILIES**. It cannot, indeed, be deemed a small matter in the youngest and most humble member. For any single member of a family, by the indulgence of a wayward temper, may destroy its peace. But when a turbulent, harsh, fretful temper is indulged by either parent, or by both, the evil lies deeper than if such a temper were manifested by younger members of the household. It must pervade the mansion, and mar all its comforts. Besides, what probability is there that children will learn to curb and regulate their tempers, when their parents set before them so miserable an example? Will not the source of mischief be likely to be propagated and extended? Whereas if parents carefully and conscientiously govern their own tempers, and faithfully repress every ebullition of an opposite character, in every member of their households, peace may be expected to reign in those “tabernacles.” One of the most fruitful sources of domestic misery is banished.

IV. If we desire to cherish and secure domestic happiness, it is important that all domestic intercourse be **MARKED BY HABITUAL AND MUTUAL RESPECTFULNESS**. Amidst the intimacy and familiarity in which members of the same household live with each other, they are extremely apt to lose sight of that constant manifestation of respect which can never be abandoned without harm. In the presence of strangers, indeed, the most rough, and even brutal, generally maintain some degree of respectfulness in their domestic intercourse. The harsh tone, the rude address, the reproachful epithet, are seldom indulged in *public*, but by the most vulgar. But thousands who are awed and restrained

by the presence of others, in public, when they come to the privacy of home, feel free to indulge in all the revolting tones, and even language, of insolence and contempt. Few things are more fatal to domestic peace than this. Those who have no sincere respect for each other cannot live together in comfort.— And those who cultivate this respect, will always discover it in their deportment.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that in making these remarks, there is no intention to recommend, between members of the same family, in private, that system of formal and studied politeness which is practiced in circles of ceremony and fashion. But it *is* intended to be said, that, amidst all the freedom of the most secluded fire-side, every thing, either in language or in manner, indicating the least want of respect, ought to be carefully avoided. All coarse forms of speech; all undignified epithets and modes of address; every thing approaching the rude, the uncivil, the satirical, the contemptuous; every thing, in short, in speech or behaviour adapted to wound feelings, or to sport with feelings, must be carefully avoided in the intercourse of those who wish to live under the same roof in comfort. On the contrary, there ought ever to be the most conscientious care to manifest the tenderest love, by the most delicate mutual regard to each other's wishes and feelings, and the most respectful mode of address and treatment in every thing. A palpable and especially a frequent failure here, will often do more to wound and to alienate, than the most open act of hostility. An unfriendly act may be forgiven; but who can be reconciled to undisguised sneer, and habitual contempt?

V. HABITUAL PRUDENCE is another important means of securing domestic happiness. Prudence is practical wisdom. Without this, no society, from a family to a nation, can continue a day in comfort. Even domestic affection, and amiable tempers, cannot prove effectual where childishness and indiscretion reign. It is the part of prudence, in domestic management, to lay wise plans for duty and comfort; to foresee threatened evils, and guard against them; to consider and adjust circumstances; to study peculiar tempers and talents, and to accommodate our treatment to them; to avoid all embarrassing movements and connections; to make all due allowance for each other's dispositions and infirmities; and, in a word, to look through the whole machinery of the household, from day to day, and to see that all its parts be kept in such repair and order as to secure their happy operation. To do this requires prudence; that is, much close attention, and practical discretion. Not great talents; which are not always found adapted to this result; but sobriety of mind, calm discernment, and sound wisdom. And, of course, where the presiding head of a family is strikingly destitute of this wisdom, domestic peace and comfort cannot be expected to prevail. It is as true of families as the prophet represents it to be of nations, that their situation is woful indeed when "babes rule over them."

VI. Another important means of attaining domestic happiness, is, A CLOSE ADHERENCE TO REGULARITY AND ORDER IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. "Let all things be done decently and in order," is the express command of the great Father and Founder of families. Without order there can be no permanent peace or comfort. Where "there is confusion," there is apt to be "every evil work." In all societies there are various duties to be performed. Every member has his department of service; and upon the proper attention of each to his own department, depends not only the prosperity of the whole, but also the comfort of each individual. So it is in families. There must be system and regularity in our tabernacles, if we would desire them to be at peace. Every member of the household must know his own station, and perform his own duty. When domestic affairs are thus conducted there will be tranquility and comfort. Order begets neatness, neatness comfort, and comfort love. Examine the interior of a family in which times, seasons and *appropriate departments* of duty are constantly regarded; in which the hours *for rising and retiring to rest, for meals, for domestic devotion, and other stated*

engagements, are fixed and systematically observed ; and where all the members are expected to yield a prompt and steady compliance with the prescribed order ;—in such a family, we seldom fail to find the reign of peace, quietness and comfort. This regularity itself is one of the essential elements of social enjoyment. But, on the contrary, a disorderly family ; a family without system ; a family of which every member is a law to himself ;—though it have all the external advantages that wealth and splendor can give, must be miserable in spite of them all.

VII. The last means of securing domestic happiness which I shall mention, and that which may be said to embrace all the rest, is, THE REIGN OF PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION. All the means which have been hitherto mentioned may be in a good degree possessed, and yet if Religion be absent, there is no security that the tabernacle will be in peace. A venerable divine of the last age was accustomed to say—“A family without Religion, is like a house without a roof, exposed to every storm.” Never was there a more correct and weighty maxim. Where the principles of genuine piety have no place, domestic affection, amiable tempers, prudence, mutual respect, and the strictest order may all be maintained, and yet all be in vain ; for they may all vanish in a day ; and even while they last, there are important sources of domestic enjoyment over which they can exercise no effectual control. There are exigencies in domestic history in which they are all utterly unavailing. In a word, the means before described are all highly important as *auxiliaries* ; but none of them, nor even all of them combined, furnish the essential element of the blessing which we seek. This is to be found only in the religion of the Gospel ;—that religion which does not merely cherish devout sentiments toward God as our Creator and Benefactor ; but also cordially rejoices in “redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace ;” which binds the disciples of Christ to one another as one body, and all to their God and Saviour, by the ties of redeeming love ; and which constrains all who feel its power to “live not unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.” This is that “godliness which is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

That real religion has a tendency to sweeten the tempers of those who embrace it ;—that its native spirit is a spirit of love, order, benevolence, patience, forbearance and charity ;—and, of consequence, that its native effect, wherever it really reigns, is to render husbands and wives more affectionate and harmonious ; children more dutiful to their parents, and more united among themselves ; and servants more faithful and diligent, is acknowledged by all who believe that religion is a reality. If this be so, it follows, that the more genuine religion there is in families, the more reason have we to hope that peace and happiness will be found in their dwellings.

Nothing has so powerful a tendency to refine and strengthen domestic attachments as real religion. The ties of grace are the purest and the strongest on this side of heaven. And where to the bonds of natural affection these are added, the union becomes endearing and precious in the highest degree. They do more than all other things put together to cement family attachments, to promote family enjoyments, to constrain its members to “put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor and evil speaking, and to be kindly affectioned one to another, in honor preferring one another.” Where grace dwells and reigns in the domestic circle, love is augmented ; trials are sanctified temporal enjoyments are doubled ; temporal sufferings are softened ; and the members of the household are led on with united hands and hearts toward the kingdom of heaven. Yes, there can be no doubt that the reign of grace under any roof, affords a more certain pledge of domestic comfort, than the most diligent study of all the rules, counsels and laws that human wisdom ever formed.

A religious family will, of course, be a family of PRAYER, both secret and social. Every occupied apartment may be expected to be a closet of devotion; and every morning and evening to witness the praises and supplications of the assembled household. How strong the tendency of such habits to cement affection; to inspire mutual confidence; to diffuse a hallowed conscientiousness over all domestic intercourse; to prevent heart-burnings and strife; and, in a word, to banish every thing adapted to mar the individual and social enjoyment of the family! Surely those who daily and sincerely bow together before their common Father, unitedly confessing their sins, and unitedly imploring all needed mercy, will be far more likely to dwell together in peace, than those who never recognize this most tender and most interesting of all relations.

Religion in itself, has a direct tendency to draw down the blessing of God upon a family. It constitutes an affectionate relation with Him. "The tabernacle of the righteous," says the wise man, "shall flourish." And again, "He blesseth the habitation of the just." And how happy is that family which is the object of Jehovah's blessing! Whether they have much or little, it is sanctified. Whether prosperity or adversity attends them, it is ordered in covenant love. The presence of their covenant God is with them. His protecting providence is over them. He causeth his angels to encamp round about their dwelling; their "walls are continually before him."

Let it also be remembered that there are various domestic trials under which nothing but religion can afford a sustaining power. When the loss of property reduces the affluent to poverty; when the loss of honors brings down the pride of a household once elevated among men; or when the "king of terrors" enters the domestic circle, and bears away one after another of its beloved members; what consolation can human wisdom bring? Let the history of its powerless wailings give the answer. But visit, in the hour of its calamity, a family in which "pure and undefiled religion" reigns. How calm, how peaceful, how resigned under the stroke! What meekness, what Christian dignity, what joyful confidence in God, amidst all the pressure of his dealings! "Here is the patience of the saints!" Here is the precious privilege of those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus!"

Such is the vital importance of religion to domestic happiness. There can be no adequate substitute for it. Accordingly, in what families are we most apt to see animosity, strife, disorder, and every evil work? In what families do we most frequently witness the authority of parents trampled under foot; and the disobedience and profligacy of children bringing grief and shame? In what families are we most frequently called to contemplate jealousies, hatred, jarrings, and wretchedness? Are they not met with, *for the most part* in those families in which religion does *not* reign; where the worship of God is not maintained; where his blessing is seldom, if ever, asked; and where, if there be "the form of godliness," its genuine "power" is unknown?

It is not asserted, indeed, that no families destitute of religion, are *comparatively* happy; or that none of those families over which *professors of religion* preside, can be called disorderly and miserable. There may, undoubtedly, be strong natural affection, and many amiable qualities, where there is no piety. But it is meant to be asserted, on the one hand, that where there is no religion in a family, that family is destitute of the surest and the richest means of domestic comfort; nay, that the most important ends for which domestic society was instituted, cannot be attained at all;—and, on the other hand, that where a family *reputed* pious, is a stranger to domestic happiness, we must suppose, either that the profession is a vain pretence, or that, though sincere, it is counterbalanced by defects adapted to nullify its best influence. To doubt this, would be to doubt whether the religion of Jesus Christ is a religion of love and purity. To doubt this, is to doubt whether the native fruits of the Holy Spirit of Christ are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and temperance;" and to doubt whether, where these reign, there will be found, of course, the most solid individual and social enjoyment.

The view which has been taken of this subject suggests a variety of reflections, which are worthy of our serious regard.

1. The first reflection is, that ALL THE MEANS WHICH ARE NECESSARY FOR SECURING AND EXTENDING DOMESTIC HAPPINESS, ARE EQUALLY CONDUCTIVE TO INDIVIDUAL ENJOYMENT. In many of our efforts to obtain worldly comfort, we are compelled to make *great sacrifices*; in other words, to endure much painful privation for a time, that we may ultimately secure advantages which more than counterbalance it. And to do this in a multitude of cases, is called, and justly called, real wisdom. But in the case before us, no such sacrifice is required. That is, all the principal means which we are called upon to use for the promotion of domestic comfort, are precisely those means which are most conducive to our own individual happiness. Reckon them up in order, as they have been enumerated and recommended;—The cultivation of DOMESTIC AFFECTION;—the government of the TEMPER;—UNIFORM RESPECTFULNESS;—habitual PRUDENCE;—REGULARITY and ORDER in conduct;—and pure and undefiled RELIGION:—Can any one doubt that the more we possess of all these, the more personally happy we shall be, irrespective of the comfort of our families? We may say, then, to every head, and to every member of a family—“Thou art inexcusable, O man!” O woman! for wherein thou failest of cultivating all these, it is not merely of domestic peace that thou art making a sacrifice; thou deprivest *thyself* of personal enjoyment; thou “wrongest thine own soul;” thou art an infatuated traitor to thine own present comfort!

2. It is an obvious reflection, from what has been said, that, if we desire to derive all those benefits from religion in our families which it is adapted to produce, IT MUST BE CONSTANTLY KEPT IN VIEW, AND MADE A PROMINENT OBJECT, IN ALL OUR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. One reason why religion is not more influential in securing family comfort, doubtless is, that it is too little, or too unhappily, brought into view; that it is not presented with either sufficient constancy, or sufficient attraction to the several members of our households. Some parents and heads of families, indeed, in attempting to reach this object, have sought it unskilfully. They have endeavored always to make Religion the most prominent thing in their intercourse with the members of their households; but they have presented it under an aspect of such rigor and severity, and in all their deportment, have indulged in so much of the austere and forbidding, that they have repelled rather than conciliated those around them who were not pious. This is unhappy. It is presenting rather a *caricature* of religion than its real character. Can we wonder that the children of such families often grow up with an aversion to religion; nay, that they are sometimes the most reckless and impious members of the community. But a much more common fault, even among heads of families who appear to be truly pious, is, that their religion is not kept sufficiently in view, either in their spirit, or in their treatment of their children and domestics. If children see that religion makes but a small figure in the daily example of their parents, and that while they recommend it in words, they manifest but little of its spirit in their temper and conduct; they will be apt to receive injury rather than profit by such an exhibition. Or, if their parents, however serious and exemplary in their outward deportment, seldom mention the subject of religion to them, and do not appear to feel that habitual and weighty sense of its importance in their plans and measures with regard to their children which it obviously requires—who can expect the influence, in this case, to be of a salutary kind? If we desire religion to exert its benign and *appropriate power* in our families, it must shine forth in something of its *appropriate character*. It must be seen, as mild, amiable and attractive. It must be seen, to be reasonable and lovely, as well as firm, steady and unyielding. It must show itself in the sweetness of reward, as well as in the solemnity of punishment. In short, let children and servants see that this is the grand principle which *governs* in private as well as in public; in refusing as well as in granting their requests; in selecting the places of their education; in choosing their associ-

ates; in every plan and measure without exception. *Then* will Religion occupy its proper place; for if it be ANY THING it is EVERY THING. *Then* will it appear "THE ONE THING NEEDFUL." Then will it be likely to make a daily and salutary impression. Then, and not till then, may it be said to REIGN in a family; and then may we hope that it will, in some good degree bind all the members together as "one body, and every one members one of another."

3. Another reflection suggested by what has been said, and of no small importance, is this—HOW EASY IS IT FOR A SINGLE UNHAPPY MEMBER OF A FAMILY TO DESTROY ITS PEACE! As the humblest individual who fears God, sent by his good providence into a family, even of heathenish impiety, may prove a rich blessing to it, so remarkably exemplified in the influence of the little Hebrew maid in the family of *Naaman* the Syrian; so a single corrupt member received even into a family in the main pious, may prove a source of mischief deep, lasting and deplorable. Often has the peace of a family been destroyed by one such member. Nor is it difficult to conceive how an unprincipled domestic of either sex, or a vicious inmate of a family in any station, may be secretly deceiving, ensnaring and leading to ruin other members or inmates, before the evil is even suspected. He who allows such an individual to remain under his roof for a single week or day after detecting his character, is infatuated, and unfaithful to the most precious interests of his family. It is evident, then, that heads of families, if they desire to secure domestic happiness, ought to exercise peculiar vigilance with regard to this point. Let them consent to incur serious temporary inconvenience rather than introduce such domestics or inmates into their households. If they cannot have *sincere piety* in all, let them at least require *pure morals*. Especially let them receive none under their respective roofs who refuse to conform to the religious order of their families. Such was the resolution of the inspired Psalmist. "He that worketh deceit," says he, "shall not dwell in my house. He that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight."

4. Finally; we are led to reflect, from all that has been said, HOW LITTLE REASON WE HAVE TO BE SURPRISED THAT MANY FAMILIES, RESPECTABLE, AFFLUENT, AND PLACED UNDER MANY OUTWARD ADVANTAGES, ENJOY SO LITTLE REAL HAPPINESS. The reasons are various; but any one of them is quite sufficient to account for the fact. In some, domestic *affection* is wanting; in others, domestic *order*; in a third class, the proper regulation of the *temper*, and the maintenance of mutual *respectfulness* are scarcely at all regarded; while a still larger portion have no RELIGION to guide, soften and cement them amidst the trials of life. Would it not be strange indeed, if happiness were found in such tabernacles? O ye who desire to invite and retain this blessing under your roofs, but have hitherto failed of realizing your desire,—try the means which have been suggested. Fairly and in good faith make the experiment. And, remembering the weakness and imperfection of all human efforts, "pray without ceasing" to the God of all grace that you may be inspired with wisdom and guided with strength in reference to this great interest; that your houses may be "temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in;" that the hearts of all the members of your households may be "knit together in love;" and that, after mingling in all the endearments of the domestic relation here below, you may not be mournfully separated through eternity; but that you may all be prepared by grace to be members of that blessed family above, into which no discord or strife, no sickness or death shall ever enter; but in which perfect harmony and perfect love shall reign without interruption and without end. Amen!

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SERMON CC.

By WILLIAM C. BROWNLEE, D. D.

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THE AUTHENTICITY AND GENUINENESS OF THE BIBLE,
AND MADNESS OF INFIDELITY.

HOSEA, viii. 12—*I have written to him the great things of my law ; but they were counted a strange thing.*

THE Holy Scriptures are transmitted to us, as containing a revelation from God. Our simple object, at present, will be to show that these Scriptures are *genuine*, and *authentic*. They are *genuine*:—that is, they have been written by the persons whose names they bear. They are *authentic*: that is,—they relate real matters of fact; and their doctrines and precepts are in exact accordance with the mind and will of God.

The proof of this is precisely of the same kind as that by which the authenticity and genuineness of any ancient books are established. Nay, it is the same form of argument, as that by which we establish the authenticity and genuineness of our Declaration of Independence, the statute laws of the land, and the history of our patriot fathers.

A political sceptic might say the same thing of these documents, which the religious sceptic utters relative to the Bible. I deny, he might say, *the authenticity and genuineness* of your laws, and your Declaration of Independence, which, you pretend, was drawn up in '76, and signed by the members of the old Congress. How should we meet this sceptic? Why, thus:—many witnesses were concerned in preparing this document; the people saw it when first published; they read it; took copies of it; and handed it down to us: and the national monuments, such as the 4th of July, commemorate the same; as also our courts, and existing magistrates, and the whole order of our national affairs. Manifestly, then, these documents *cannot be forgeries*. They could not have been fabricated in the days of the old Congress. The people of that day could not have been so imposed on as to believe them, if they had not seen with their eyes, and heard with their ears, all these revolutionary movements and documents.

Nor could these documents possibly have been fabricated since the death

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of those patriot fathers. How could any man, or any conspiracy of impostors, persuade the whole American nation, unanimously to receive, and credit the Declaration of our National Independence; and in memory thereof, to celebrate the 4th of July,—if no such national event had taken place?

Perhaps some sceptical royalist may say,—There was, indeed, an Act of Independence made and declared; a Constitution for the United States formed; and laws early enacted; but we have reason to suspect strongly, that the documents which we now have, referring to those times, are neither *genuine nor authentic*: they are corrupt forgeries!

But how absurd the suggestion!—They could not have been altered and corrupted in the days of the old Congress: for its members lived to detect, instantly, any such attempts at forgery. They could not have been altered, or corrupted since. For, before those primitive patriots died, millions of copies were promulgated in America, and Europe! So that instant detection would have followed any attempt to add a word, or to detract from them!

Now, apply this form of argument to the proof of the authenticity and genuineness of the Holy Bible. Take for instance the writings of Moses, on which was founded the national religion of the Hebrews. Moses wrote out the national law and code of religion, from God. To establish before the nation his divine mission, he wrought many miracles, in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the desert. These facts were such, that men's outward senses could judge of them. They were performed in the most public manner. His divine mission being thus established, he delivered to the officers of the nation the code of laws and the system of religious worship; a copy of this was put in the hands of the rulers; a copy was publicly deposited in the ark; and this was, by a national law, brought out every seventh year, and read aloud in the ears of the national assemblies. See *Deut.* xxxi. 9—11 and 24—26.

In this public document Moses declares to the nation, that God had brought wasting judgments on Egypt, and had slain the first-born in every family; that he had brought them out from that land with a mighty arm; and had made them walk through the Red Sea in a miraculous manner; that he had fed them in the desert by a succession of miracles; that they, and their fathers had celebrated the national festival of *the Passover*, to commemorate the escape of their first-born; that their daily sacrifices, and their weekly, monthly, and annual festivals were grand national monuments to perpetuate the memory of God's miracles. And he adds these solemn words:—"Know ye, this day; for I speak not to your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord, his greatness, his mighty hand, his miracles and acts,"—"But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which he did." *Deut.* xi. 2—7.

Now, Moses could not possibly have persuaded the whole Hebrew nation that these things had actually taken place BEFORE THEIR EYES, if they really had never so happened. He never could have persuaded a whole nation that they were circumcised to commemorate their covenant with God, if they had really not been circumcised. He could not have persuaded the nation to celebrate *The Passover* in memory of their grand national deliverance, if they never had been so miraculously delivered. Their national celebration of all these grand festivals, was an unanimous national declaration of their unshaken faith in all these miracles of Moses, and his laws, and doctrines from God. Hence, these laws and institutions could not possibly have been fabricated by Moses, nor by any in his day, or in the days of those who came out of Egypt.

It is equally impossible that they could have been forged in an after age. What man can gravely allege that a whole nation, such as the Hebrews, could have been persuaded by any combination of impostors whatever, to believe, and to receive, as a nation, a code of laws on whose pages it was

declared that they had, as a nation, been delivered by the most stupendous miracles, out of Egypt, if they had never heard of these miracles before.

How could any impostor persuade a whole nation to receive these as God's laws, delivered to their forefathers in the wilderness, if they had never heard of these laws before?

How could a whole nation, like the Hebrews, be persuaded that they were in a visible covenant relation to God, and bore the national marks thereof in their flesh, in circumcision, if that national rite had never been heard of by them?

What human power could induce a whole nation unanimously to celebrate, weekly, monthly, and annually, their grand national festivals, in commemoration of their escape from Egypt, their miraculous passage through the Red Sea, and their miraculous sustenance in the desert—if these events had never happened; and they, as a nation, had never heard of them?

Moreover, the law of Moses, and the code of religion, were to the Hebrew nation what our common law of the land and courts of equity and justice are to our American nation. The law of God given by Moses was *the common law of the land*.

Will any man say that *our laws and courts* are an imposition, a contrivance of imposture, strangely forced upon us? Can any combination of imposture ever so impose on a whole nation, as to induce it to receive a law and a code of religion, as established by their fathers, if they never had heard of that law and code before? It is impossible. And the same argument may be extended to every portion of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Hence it is manifest that the position which infidels assume here is infinitely more difficult to be believed than any position of the Christian. For infidels profess to believe, in the face of reason and common sense, an absurdity the most palpable and ludicrous!

Hence some of them that are more reasonable do admit that the law of Moses, and the Psalms, and the Prophets, existed in the Jewish nation in the days of Jesus Christ. But they alledge that we have no proof that they are the same *as originally given forth*; they have been altered, say they, and corrupted by forgeries.

This allegation is almost as *modest* and *credible* as would be the allegation of an Austrian despot, that our Declaration of Independence and first enacted laws are by no means the original and uncorrupted laws of the national legislators of '76.

The truth is—it was just as impossible to alter, or add to, or take from the law of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, as it *now* would be to alter, or add to our *public law*, by fraud or forgery, without instant detection. The law of Moses, and their religious code, were as public as are our common statute laws and our courts of justice. A copy thereof was placed in the hands of the sovereign and princes of the nation; another copy, as we have already stated, was deposited with the Levites, in the Ark, and, every seventh year, it was solemnly brought out and publicly read. This effectually prevented even the possibility of alterations or additions by forgery.

The same argument may be pursued in reference to the New Testament. Our Lord and his Apostles asked no man to believe without irresistible evidence. They demonstrated their divine mission from God by their *miracles*. These furnished overpowering evidence to the outward senses, and to reason and judgment. Their authority from God being thus settled, they delivered their divine doctrines, laws, and ordinances. The apostles delivered their writings of inspiration publicly to the church. These autographs were preserved with extraordinary care in the archives of the church, until copies of them were multiplied over the world. Besides, certain public monuments were instituted in the days of our Lord and his apostles, to commemorate his miracles, his death, his resurrection, and ascension. Hence the *change of the Sabbath* to the first day of the week; hence *Baptism*; hence the

Lord's Supper; hence the stated ministry, and hence the sanctuary of God, lifting its spires to heaven.

These doctrines, laws, and divine institutions could not possibly have been fabricated by impostors in the days of Jesus Christ or his apostles, and the Jews then living. No combination of the most successful impostors could have persuaded the multitudes of Jews converted to Christianity, at Jerusalem, to keep the Sabbath on the first day of the week; or to celebrate the Lord's Supper, in solemn commemoration of a crucified, risen, and ascended Saviour—if that Saviour had never been heard of by them, and had never been crucified, and had never risen from the dead, and had never ascended into heaven. Within a few days after our Lord's ascension there were many thousand Christians in Jerusalem. Each of these stood up as a bold and public witness of all the facts and events of our Lord's miracles, and death, and resurrection. Each of these was a living eye-witness of these things; and each of these handed down these things to their children, and these again to theirs.

Hence it is utterly inconceivable that the Gospel and its sacred institutions could have been invented, as a fiction, in the days of Christ and the apostles, and of Pilate and the Jews.

It is equally inconceivable that they could have been fabricated after the death of that generation. For if the following generation had not actually received the New Testament and its sacred institutions from the contemporaries of Christ and his apostles—then it would follow, that certain impostors had actually, though falsely, persuaded millions of the best and most enlightened men of all nations, that the New Testament, just now made known to them, for the *first time*, had been actually handed down to them from their forefathers! *For so is it stated on its first pages.*

The impostors, on this supposition of infidels, must have persuaded millions of the shrewdest and best men of all nations, that they, and their fathers, from time immemorial, were *baptized*, and that they, and their fathers, did continually celebrate the *Lord's Supper*, in commemoration of events which they had never heard of, and never had believed. A thing inconceivably absurd!

The truth is:—Just as certainly as our national history and our national commemoration of independence on the 4th of July does afford an expression of the nation's belief in the public fact of our national Independence: even so, the public institutions of BAPTISM, and the LORD'S SUPPER, and the CHRISTIAN SABBATH, and the perpetual MINISTRY of the Gospel, do stand forth as grand public monuments, kept up throughout the whole Christian world, to exhibit the unshaken faith of reasonable men in the doctrines and facts of the New Testament!

The *Historical Argument* for the authenticity and genuineness of the Holy Bible is irresistible. Here is a specimen of it:—From the present, back to the 4th century—with the exception of a few eccentric writers, who sought the immortality of doing mischief, like him who fired the temple of Ephesus—there has been an unbroken and continuous chain of testimony, and evidence of the most satisfactory nature.

In the 4th century, we have the testimony of the churches in Egypt, in Greece, in Rome, and over Europe; and of such illustrious writers as Athanasius, Augustine, Jerome, Eusebius, the Cyrils, and Gregory.

In the 3d century, the following writers, in union with all the church, testify to the authenticity and genuineness of the Holy Bible; viz. Arnobius, Lactantius, Origen, Cyprian, and the famous German Victorinus, who quotes nearly all the books of the New Testament.

In the 2d century, we have the testimony of Tertullian, of Clemens of Alexandria, Iræneus, who quotes every book of the New Testament; and gives his solemn testimony to "*the code of the New Testament, as well as*

the Old." "These codes," says he, "are the oracles of God, and are dictated by the Holy Ghost." We have also in this century, Justin Martyr; and the Epistle of the persecuted Christian Gauls to their dear brethren of Asia, in A. D. 170. And we have Tatian, who composed a harmony of the four gospels in A. D. 172.

In the 1st century we have the testimony of the *five apostolic* Fathers,—Barnabas, the fellow-laborer of Paul; Clemens, mentioned also by Paul; Hermas, who wrote "*The Pastor*;" Ignatius; and Polycarp, the disciple of St. John. Thus we have an *unbroken chain* of writers, and witnesses, from the apostles to our day.

But we have also the testimony of the *bitter enemies* of the Holy Scriptures. The Jews admit the facts, events, and miracles of Christ's life, but ascribe his miracles to magic. Cerinthus, and the Ebionites, and Marcion also, admit these facts and miracles.

The heathen philosophers who opposed christianity did all of them admit the authenticity and genuineness of the New Testament. I allude to Celsus, the antagonist of Origen; and to Porphyry, and Julian the Apostate; and Mohammed in the 6th century. (Horn. l. p. 95.) All these candidly admitted the scriptures to be genuine; and as containing real facts, and miracles of Christ.

But modern infidels have neither the candor, nor ingenuousness of the ancient antagonists of the Christian Fathers. To meet the taste of these reckless moderns, we lay down this position:—He who professes to say that the Holy Bible is a forgery, *does profess to believe that which is an absolute moral impossibility.*

If the Holy Bible be a forgery, then some impostors must have fabricated it: and these must have been Christians, or Jews, or Gentiles.

In reference to the Old Testament the *Christians* could not have fabricated it, as it existed before their time. The *Gentiles* could not have done it, for they were ignorant alike of the language, laws, and rites of the Jewish nation. No *Jew* could have done it: he would not have enjoined such strict laws, and exacted such stern morals; he would not have told their enormous national faults, and crime, had he forged it! Besides, as we have seen, no impostor could have thus imposed on a whole nation, so as to induce them unanimously to believe events which, on this supposition, never happened; and commemorate, as a nation, miracles and deliverance of which they had never heard.

Mohammed's imposture was totally different from a case of this kind: he made no pretence to miracles; he exacted no rigid morals; he enacted no severe laws; he reared no national monuments of national deliverances. He merely drew together a horde of profligates, and licentious epicures, and blood-thirsty men, under a system which gave loose reins to their most unbounded ambition, and lust, and blood!

In reference to the New Testament, and the most pure and sublime doctrines of the gospel, neither *Jew*, nor *Gentile*, could have ever conceived it: nor would they have been willing to form such a system of purity and self-denial, had they even been able! Their wisest men and greatest philosophers, even such men as *Antoninus Pius*, abhorred it, and persecuted its disciples even unto death!

No *Christian* could have forged it. There is a moral impossibility that a *genuine* Christian could do any thing of the kind. A saint of God could not do such an execrable deed.

If you say that a Christian, under a mask of *hypocrisy*, imposed it on the world, then I affirm that a hypocrite could no more achieve such a composition, than Satan could establish a paradise on earth, were he willing to do it! What! a hypocrite and impostor invent such a holy and pure system! A system that elevates man; that purifies human nature, and leads man to glory, honor, and immortality! No, no! when men of hypocrisy and

wickedness fabricate systems, you may expect such systems from their hands as the polluted Koran of Mohammed! When impostors invent systems, you may expect such works as the sparkling wit, vanity, and boundless pollutions of *Voltaire*; the gossamer absurdities and suicidal scepticism of *Hume*; the disgusting ribaldry of *Paine*; and the super-human blasphemies of *Houston*!

Such are the systems of impostors and hypocrites. But that impostors, or fanatics, or even talented knaves, could form such a divine system as THE HOLY BIBLE, is what no sane mind can really believe. Satan and his trodden-down servants are neither able, nor willing, in sober truth, to climb up to heaven! Far less can they preach gospel faith and repentance to each other!

In a word, we are led, irresistibly to this conclusion:—The laws, miracles, and doctrines of the Old Testament were received with implicit faith and obedience by the whole nation of the Hebrews, from Moses to this day; it follows that these laws, doctrines, and miracles, were in every iota true, or there must have been a universal deception of a whole nation's *senses* and *intellect*, from generation to generation! Again—the facts, miracles, and doctrines of the New Testament were received with implicit faith and obedience by millions of the most enlightened, the most sincere, and virtuous men of all Christian nations, and they gave evidence of their enlightened views, and unshaken faith in Christ. This they did by their resistance to every earthly temptation; by making the greatest sacrifices that human beings could make; and, many of them, by sealing the truth with their blood. Hence, either these doctrines, confirmed by miracles, were received by them on the ground of what they deemed infallibly true evidence; or there must have been a universal deception of the *senses*, and the *intellect* of millions of the most judicious, enlightened, and virtuous men that ever lived; and that, too, for these 1800 years! The man who is capable of believing this, is really an impostor upon himself!

And who are the men that oppose all such testimony as this, and reject the authenticity and genuineness of the Holy Bible? Are they sustained by reason? No: their doctrine and principles of evidence, if carried out, go to reject all history, ancient and modern. On their principles, no man can believe in any *past event*, whatever; they can believe in nothing, unless they have seen it, or heard it. And even then, says Hume, it is a doubtful case! "For," says he, "the perfection of knowledge is *to doubt*. We ought to doubt of every thing: yea, of our own doubts themselves. "Therefore," he adds, "the utmost that philosophy can do, is to give us a doubtful solution of a doubtful doubt!"

Who are they that reject the Bible? Are they willing, or able, to give us a better book, and a holier law than the blessed Bible? They *cannot*; they could as soon create a new heaven, and a new earth! Are they humble worshippers of Almighty God, their Maker? No: they have made such an approximation to what is brutal, that many of them **NO NOT EVEN BELIEVE IN HIS EXISTENCE!** Are they zealous for sound morals, and the reformation of mankind? No: they mock religion; and scoff at every thing like pure morals, as sheer bigotry and absolute fanaticism! Do they study the happiness and peace of mankind by trying thus to extinguish religion, and deprive us of our Bibles? Yes! they bring us such HAPPINESS, ay, and such PEACE, as Robespierre, and the French terrorists spread over wailing and bleeding France! Do they commend themselves by a rational and elevated philosophy? No: they outrage the first elements of science and philosophy. They, indeed, admit that a *globe*, and an *orrery*, must have had a maker, and an origin. But they gravely aver, that this globe, on which we live, and these heavens, *had no Maker!* A school-boy's globe must have been made—it really, after all, could not make itself! But, say our infidels, this, our great globe, made itself; and these heavens,

and these sparkling stars, and yon blazing comet, planned themselves, and made themselves! Ay! and by a voluntary start and impulse, they set out and continued in their mighty career! Oh! most accomplished natural philosophers! Do they aim at elevating, and polishing the human mind? Yes! by withholding all elevating, and all purifying power and means! Yes! they bring man, and the soul of man, to the summit of *perfectibility*, by teaching him to live as the beasts that perish; and by assuring him that he has the noble and glorious career before him, of *dying as a beast, without hope, without glory, without immortality!* For there is neither a hell, nor a heaven; no! nor a soul in man to be lost!

In conclusion, I submit the argument with these questions:—Is there one sober reflecting person here, who will hesitate between *Bible knowledge*, and *infidel ignorance of God's word*; between *Bible virtue*, and *infidel wickedness*; between *Bible glory*, and *infidel degradation*; between *Bible happiness*, and *infidel remorse and perdition*; in a word, between the *honorable service of the Lord Jesus Christ*, and the *slavery of the Evil one*, waxing worse and worse through all eternity? In view of the fearful tendency of the system of infidels contrasted with that of the Christian, who does not exclaim—“*O my soul! come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united! Rather let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*” And, finally, in view of the strong language with which this Revelation of Heaven closes, who that dares even to speak light of any portion of it, or to neglect its truths, will not tremble lest he be found among those who fall under its condemnations at the last day?—“*If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He who testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus!*”

SERMON CCI.

Preached Oct. 4, 1835, in commemoration of the first printing of an English Bible, A. D. 1535.

By REV. WILLIAM ADAMS,

NEW-YORK.

THE HISTORY, CHARACTER, AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RECEIVED ENGLISH VERSION OF THE BIBLE.

ROMANS, XV. 4.—*Whosoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

THE fourth of October, 1535—just three hundred years from this day—was signalized by the publication, for the first time, of the whole Bible in the English language. We call it a great event, because great results have followed. If it is natural for individuals to commemorate striking events in their history; if nations fail not to mark the return of the day which gave them the charter of their rights, and secured to them and their posterity the invaluable blessings of peace and liberty—with what propriety may a Christian pause, gratefully to celebrate the day which secured to him, and his children's children, the intelligible word of God—that charter of every earthly hope, the source of all true liberty, the title to a heavenly inheritance. Who has not noticed on the return of our national jubilee, a high-wrought patriotism, which seems to float in the air, causing multitudes to rejoice in view of all that day achieved for us and the world? Who that ever visited those memorable fields, where our ancestors fought in defence of their country, has not felt some deep emotion suffusing his eye, and agitating his frame, as he thought that he stood upon the very sod which was once wet with the blood of his fathers;—and that all which we now enjoy—the blessings of home and country, and religion—are to be traced back to the event which there occurred, and that their very existence was suspended upon that day's success? And what heart does not dilate with gratitude to God, on the morning of this Sabbath, which commemorates the bestowment of a gift to our parent country, from which Christian patriots have drawn all their inspiration—the unsealed fountain of light and truth, and intelligence, to which we trace back all our civil and religious privileges, our hopes for time and eternity, and without which we should now be sitting in darkness and primeval barbarism, the victims of a despotism whose "iron entereth into the soul."

Any information concerning the faithful transmission of the Holy Scriptures from other times; any testimony to the correctness of the version which we now possess, cannot be inappropriate or destitute of interest and profit.

The Scriptures were originally written upon rolls of parchment, similar, probably, to those which are to be seen in the holy place of Jewish synagogues, at the present day. These manuscripts were copied with the utmost care. Many versions of them were made from the original Hebrew and Greek, into other tongues. The various manuscripts which have come down to the present day, all agree essentially in their contents. This is admitted both by believers and unbelievers.

By whom, and at what time, Christianity was first introduced into the British Isles, cannot now be ascertained, with any degree of precision. It is certain, however, that many manuscript copies of the Scriptures, or parts of Scripture, in the Saxon tongue, existed at a very early date. One translation of the Psalms is ascribed to king Alfred. For several centuries after this, the general reading of the Bible was prohibited by the Papal See, whose supremacy was then felt and acknowledged.

The first translations of the Bible into English were previous to the invention of printing. They were the result of incalculable labor and expense of time. Transcripts were obtained with great difficulty, and being rare, were purchased at a price which seems to us incredible. The monks who employed their time, in lone seclusion, in executing these beautiful manuscript copies of the word of God, knew not for what vast and glorious results they were laboring:—like the electric chain, unconscious itself of the tremendous power it is transmitting to others.

The whole Bible was *translated* into English—but not printed—in the fourteenth century, by Wickliffe. Great efforts were made by the dignitaries of Church and State to suppress this translation. A decree was issued, prohibiting all from translating, or reading any English version of the Bible. Great persecutions arose. Many were punished severely, and some put to death for reading the Scriptures in English.

But the day had begun to dawn. It was not in the power of man to roll back the “living wheels” which the Prophet saw. A child may put in motion the nicely-poised rocking-stone; but the arm of a giant cannot stay it. The art of Printing was invented. The Reformation had commenced. Luther and his coadjutors had lifted up their voices, and Europe was beginning to shake with the volcanic fires which were rumbling beneath her.

William Tindal, was among the first in England to catch the spirit of the reformers; and to him are we indebted for the first *printed* translation of *any part* of the Bible in the English language. In order to accomplish his holy work, he left his order in the church, and retired from his native land. Nearly all the copies of this work which found their way to England were publicly burned, by authority; and all who were suspected of possessing and concealing any copies, were disgraced, fined, and punished. And let it be held in remembrance by us, enjoying without fear or molestation, as we do, the fruits of those labors, that the man who first printed any part of the word of God in our mother tongue, was himself strangled to death, and his body burned, for his temerity; praying, with his dying breath, in the true spirit of his Saviour, “Lord, open the king of England’s eyes.”

The first printed translation of the *whole Bible*, was by Coverdale, and was probably published at Zurich, in Switzerland, the last page bearing these words:

“Printed in the yeare of our Lorde, 1535, and fynished the fourth day of October.”

Versions of the Scriptures were now multiplied, copies circulated, and the power of God began to be felt. But as yet there was no common standard. To other times was reserved the emission of that version of the Sacred Text which we now possess; and which, we believe, is destined to stand to the end of time, as one of the most splendid monuments of scholarship and success the world has ever seen. This version of the Scriptures generally passes by the name of King James’ Bible; during whose reign, and at whose instance, the translation was undertaken, and to whom it is dedicated. It is an intensely interesting question to every Christian, How much evidence have we that this is a correct translation of the word of God? As this is the version universally received by Protestants, wherever

the English language is spoken, and there exists no probability that any other will ever supersede it, a few remarks, in passing, upon this point, may not be inappropriate.

1. It is worthy of remark, in the first place, that the word of God, in the original, is so remarkably distinct, intelligible, and obvious in its import, that no translator, possessing a tolerable knowledge of the original, and aiming to give a correct version of it, can possibly fail of finding there, *all the substantial doctrines of the gospel—all that is necessary to salvation.*

There are some human faces, and many scenes in nature, so peculiar and striking that the rudest attempt to sketch them cannot fail to convey some idea of the original. Let a thousand artists, of every variety of talent and skill, undertake to paint the face and form of our immortal Washington, and in all their productions, from the finished and almost breathing pictures of Stewart and Peale, down to the rudest effort of village skill, there will be a convergence of resemblance to one and the same original, that cannot fail to strike the most superficial observer. Or let them attempt to sketch the same bold and lofty mountain, peculiar in its form, striking in its outline;—one may present a picture with the last touchings and finishings of skill—but in all you will see a substantial resemblance to an object so prominent and peculiar. So let a thousand men, possessing the least claims to scholarship, of heterogeneous habits and prejudices, undertake to give a translation of the original Scriptures, and, *on all substantial points*, there will be such an obvious resemblance, that none can mistake, and he that runneth may read—just as the eye catches the outline of the vast and lofty mountain.

Men of every character and nation agree in finding the same obvious and fundamental truths in the Bible. Infidel scholars even, have been forced to acknowledge that they were there, while they have denied their divine origin. Errorists of every name have admitted that these same declarations were in the sacred text, and then have resorted to notes and comments to explain them away. The following sentence from the writings of Chrysostom, one of the early fathers of the Church, not only expresses the same sentiment, but confirms our preceding assertion, that the Scriptures existed in Britain at a very early period. "Though thou visitest the ocean and the *British Islands*, though thou sailest to the *Euxine Sea*, and travellest to the Southern regions, thou shalt hear *all men*, every where, reading out of the Scriptures; with another voice indeed, but not with another faith; in a different language, but with the same understanding." In a word, no man has ever been able to maintain any reputation as a classical scholar, who has departed far from that obvious meaning of the Scriptures which is to be found in every version. So bold, and obvious, and deep-chiseled are these truths, that they can, by no process, be sunk below the surface, and another, false, far-fetched and unnatural construction made to take their place. This is a feature in the original structure of that book which came forth from God. We should have been led to expect it from what we know of the character and intentions of its Author. Revelation is a gift of light; it cannot thicken and multiply our perplexities. The Teacher of infinite wisdom cannot expose those whom he would teach to infinite error. He will rather surpass all other instructors in bringing down truth to our apprehensions. In the language of Milton, "The very essence of truth is plainness and brightness; the darkness and crookedness are our own. The Scriptures protest their own plainness and perspicuity, calling to be instructed, not only the wise and learned, but the simple, the poor, babes and sucklings."

2. But the version we possess claims the *highest character for accuracy*, and that claim is founded on *the number and qualifications of those who made it; the manner in which they executed it; and the circumstances of the times in which they lived.*

The men appointed for this important labor were fifty-four in number, all of them pre-eminently distinguished for piety and profound learning in the original languages of the sacred text. Seven of them deceased, or declined the task, before the commencement of the work; and the remaining forty-seven were divided into six classes, from ten to seven in each. To each of these classes was assigned a certain portion of the Scriptures. Each and every individual in that department translated this portion by himself. These several translations were subsequently read by the whole division, who together agreed upon the final reading. The portion thus finished was sent to each of the other divisions again to be revised; by which arrangement every part of the Bible passed the scrutiny of all the forty-seven translators successively. Furthermore, these translators were empowered to call to their aid any learned men, whose studies enabled them to shed light on points of difficulty. The completion of this holy work occupied about three years. The lives of all the venerable men, who commenced it, were spared to witness its successful close.

One circumstance in *the aspect of the times* in which this version was made, deserves our special attention; affording, as it does, another most satisfactory testimony to its impartiality. Protestantism was then one and homogeneous; or if not absolutely so, more nearly than at any after period. It was not yet sundered and divided into sects and parties. The friends of truth were all occupied in opposition to one mighty error—to a common enemy—and had not yet found time or disposition to attack one another, and build up distinct and divided interests. Hence there existed no temptation on the part of the translators to impress upon their work a single sectarian feature. In this respect, certainly, it may be pronounced incapable of amendment. Any one can see that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to make a translation, in the day in which we live, when so many unhappy divisions and sectarian jealousies exist, which would conciliate the favor, and secure the confidence of all, and be cheerfully acknowledged as the common standard. But so it happened, in the kind providence of God, that the received version was made just in that auspicious moment of peace and union among Protestants, which has secured its adoption by all as the common standard. None have charged it with partiality—as favoring this or that sect—for the good reason that these sects and partialities did not then exist. Men may now differ in their *construction* of particular passages, but I know of no denomination, which has generally expressed a desire for a new and different version. Men may differ in the construction which they put upon the constitution of their country, but to give up the constitution itself, and undertake to form another out of present discordant and heterogeneous materials, is a point essentially different in its nature, and, perhaps, impracticable in its execution.

Nothing which diligence, circumspection, scholarship, love of truth, and prayer, could avail, was wanting to perfect this version of the word of God. It is what it professes to be, a translation, not a paraphrase; each word and expression corresponding to the original. What has, by some, been deemed a defect, is in fact a great excellence in our translation—it preserves, as far as possible, the very idiom of the original, the peculiarities of oriental diction; thus proving that the men who made it understood what was the best style of translation—that, which, like a transparent glass, is not seen itself, but shows every thing which is beyond it.

Our version of the Scriptures is pure English. Its words are of Saxon origin. Those venerable translators had not acquired the modern taste for languages of foreign extraction. They used the language which belonged to their own soil. They have demonstrated its wonderful resources and powers. They have contributed much to fix our language and save it from premature and universal corruption. It is an interesting fact that the men who have done the most to corrupt the English language, have been the least familiar with the English Bible.

It is sometimes said, that modern advances in knowledge of the original Scriptures have been so great, that many errors have been detected in the present version. And, so much has been said to this effect, studiously, habitually, and injudiciously, as we must think, by some of good intentions, that much has already been done towards shaking general confidence in its fidelity. Let it be understood, however, that such assertions do not refer to any thing important, or essential to salvation, but exclusively, to minuter points, and more delicate shades of criticism. With regard to this subject, we would remark, that it is not absolutely certain that the present so called "enlightened age," is so far in advance of other times, in profound learning of the original Scriptures, as the claims of some would lead us to believe. It is as true in reference to generations, as to individuals, that to be inordinately self-complacent, is nearly the same thing as being pitifully superficial. Reverence for the old is an original element of a good and great mind. To undervalue the wisdom of those who have gone before us, and to overrate our own, is one of the surest signs of ignorance. But, unhappily our ears are too familiar with language of such import. One would think, from all that is said about modern advances in knowledge, and "discoveries in religion," that our fathers were involved in melancholy ignorance and errors, and that the present age, like a certain divinity in Grecian mythology, "had been hatched from the egg of Night, and all of a sudden had spread its radiant wings on the primeval darkness." It is an interesting circumstance in connection with our subject, that during that long period of more than a thousand years of general darkness, there was in England in each century; excepting the fifth and sixth, some one or more scholars pre-eminent for knowledge of the Hebrew language. At the period when the first English translations were printed, such examples, instead of being few, like a star here and there in a cloudy sky, were so numerous as to form an illustrious constellation, whose light has reached our own age. Neither was this knowledge confined to one sex. A celebrated historian of that period remarks, in language somewhat quaint and antiquated, that "many of the daughters of nobility and quality, were not only as familiarly traded in the Latin and Greek tongues, as in their own, but also in the Holy Scriptures were so ripe, that they were able, aptly and with much grace, to translate them into the vulgar tongue for the public inspection, and edifying of the unlearned multitude." And he adds, "It is now no news in England for inmates of noble houses willingly to set all other vain pastimes at nought for learning's sake—to have continually in their hands either psalms, homilies, or Paul's epistles, and as familiarly to read or reason thereof, in Greek, Latin, or French, as in English." With all due gratitude for present facilities for *diffusing* knowledge, it would be well for us to bear in mind that many of our fathers were, from their youth up, familiar with the original Scriptures; and that in generations long since passed away, some of the venerable ministers of Christ were wont to read morning and evening, at the family altar, out of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures. That knowledge is more generally diffused among all classes, and less exclusively confined to the few, in our day, all will allow; but that other times were so far deficient in accurate and familiar knowledge of the original Scriptures, as to justify the belief that any essential improvements will ever be made in the present version, demands a serious doubt.

It is admitted on all hands that the received English version of the Bible far excels every other translation. It may be relied on as giving a full, clear and accurate exhibition of the mind of God. The illiterate man who reads it, with docility and faith, may obtain just as correct information of all that is requisite for salvation, as the most profound and critical scholar the world has ever seen. While we would most earnestly encourage every effort, on the part of all who have it in their power, to prosecute the study of the Scriptures, in their original tongues,—while we feel that the church has a

right to expect this of those who are set for the defence of the gospel, we are very sure, that the result of all such investigations will be to heighten confidence in the present version, and fill the heart with unfeigned gratitude to God, for that blessed book which we now enjoy, and which, for more than two centuries, has been pouring its light and consolation, wherever the English tongue is spoken. Let science toil, and diligence labor in original investigation—for the Hebrew Scriptures are a mine of solid and inexhaustible gold, where giants may dig for ages—let literature hold up her torch, and cast all possible light upon the sacred text, but we must and ever shall deprecate any wanton attacks upon our received version—any gratuitous attempts to supersede it by a new and different translation. It is the Bible which our godly fathers have read, and over which they have wept and prayed. It is the GOOD OLD ENGLISH BIBLE, with which are associated all our earliest recollections of religion. As such let it go down unchanged to the latest posterity. We give it in charge to coming generations, and bid them welcome to all the blessings it has conveyed to us. It is our fervent prayer, that the light of the resurrection morning may shine on the very book which we now read:—that we may then behold again the familiar face of our own Bible, the very same which we read in our childhood.

So many interesting reflections crowd on the mind, in connection with our subject, that we find it difficult to select the few only which we shall be able to present on this occasion.

1. *How great should be our gratitude that we possess the Bible in such an intelligible and accessible form.* It is not hidden from us in an obscure and foreign tongue; but in "our own tongue, in which we were born, we read the wonderful works of God." We receive not the interpretation of this blessed book from the lips of interested and ungodly men—from hirelings, whose own the sheep are not; but we may, each for himself, come to the living fountain, and partake of truth free from any earthly admixture. No more do we hear the cry, "Profanation!—an envelope of purple!—a casket and a lock for the word of life!" Whosoever will may come and take of the water of life freely. None are debarred from owning and reading the word of God by legal proscription. No flaming sword hangs over the garden of the Lord. We may possess, and read, and study, and bind the Bible to our hearts, and openly avow it our treasure and our guide. Neither are any debarred from the privilege of reading the Bible because of the scarcity of copies and the immense price which they command.—When the Scriptures were first introduced into our ancestral land, happy was the man, nay, happy was the religious community, that could say it possessed a small portion of the precious word. What wonders has the press achieved! What millions of copies has it sent forth! Our Bible Societies have issued them in numbers "like the dust of the summer threshing floor." Every one may obtain the Bible now in any form and at any price. And he that hath not, to him it is given. And it is worthy of remark, that, in this merchandise, the greater the supply the greater is the demand. When Bible Societies were first formed, it was urged by some, as an objection to them, that they would interfere with the honest industry of those who were printing and vending the Scriptures on their own responsibility. The reverse has proved wonderfully true. Give away one Bible and you may sell two. Dispose of a hundred, and you may sell a thousand. Give away a thousand, or tens of thousands, over all the land, imparting to as many immortal minds a taste of the pure river of life, and you create a demand which cannot be satisfied, short of "all the fulness of God."

2. *The remarkable preservation and transmission of the Bible furnishes us with delightful evidence of its inherent and indestructible power.* How ineffectual the efforts which have been made to bury it in oblivion! Secret treachery and open violence have conspired to destroy it. The time has

been when to read it was death. Infidelity has fought against it. But it has lived. It has triumphed. The identical press which was employed by Voltaire and the French Institute, to disseminate their attacks upon the Bible, has since been used in printing that very Bible they so vainly sought to destroy. Surely "the word of the Lord is tried." At first, like a little spark, it glimmered in the noon of night; many waters could not quench, nor floods drown it. It spread and brightened. The blast of violence but served to fan it to a larger flame, and the world is now illuminated by its celestial light. It shall never expire. It shall shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. All the facts in its history, leaving out of account the question of its divine origin, go to show that it possesses a principle of vitality—a victorious power of its own, by which it has overcome every opposition, and on which we ground the reasonable expectation of its final and universal triumph.

3. *What obligations rest upon us to multiply and circulate copies of this holy book.* Freely have we received, freely let us give. Regarding ourselves as almoners of the divine bounty, furnished with every facility and motive, how incessant should be our labor, to share with all our brethren of the human family the precious bread of life. Much has already been accomplished. It is a cheering fact, that the Bible is already translated into the languages of nearly three-fourths of all the inhabitants of the world.—Past success should stimulate us to still greater efforts. Truly it is the work of God, and let it prosper. Let us never cease from its prosecution so long as a single individual, in our own or other lands, is destitute of the Bible. Let no brazen gates, no iron walls deter us. The Bible was given by Almighty God to man, as man, wherever and whenever he exists. Robbery most woful is it to appropriate to a few what was meant for mankind; to debar any from its perusal; to keep a single soul in ignorance of those celestial truths which are our only solace and joy. The Bible!—let it go forth as on the wings of the wind. We welcome men of every land, and hue, and rank, to its glorious revelations, free as the air they breathe—the source and element of spiritual life.

4. *How surprising and cheering the results which have followed the English translation of the Bible.* If it never had been made, how changed would be the present aspect of the world, how different its probable destiny. Suppose, for a moment, that the world were rolled back to that point in its history when the Bible existed for us only in a foreign and hidden tongue. Let the millions of copies which are now read, and have been read wherever the English language is known, be recalled and consumed by the flames. Let the British and Foreign Bible Society and its sister association in our own land sink like lead in the mighty waters, and carry down in their curling vortex every Tract, and Sabbath School, and Missionary, and Education Society, that now exists on the face of the globe. Let us seek for the Bible and search in vain. Not only have you quenched the light, and liberty, and intelligence, which now exist in our prosperous and highly blessed land, but you strike out of the number of civilized nations the whole country which we inhabit. For we cannot forget the religious character of our origin. Our fathers were mostly brought hither by their high veneration and soul-felt love for the Bible. They journeyed by its light; they labored in its hope. Without its inspiration never would they have crossed the wintry seas to seek here an asylum for liberty. The Bible was their star. They sought to incorporate its principles with the elements of their society, and to diffuse its influence through all their institutions, civil, literary, and religious. But recall and annihilate the whole. Give back this smiling land to the wilderness from which it has been redeemed. Let loose again the untamed savage, and universal silence and gloom once more overspread this fair heritage of our fathers. We retrace our steps across the waters, but what a change! The spirit of liberty is gone! religion is gone! the

Newtons, and Scotts, and Baxters! the men of science and the men of prayer, the glory of the land are gone! No spires of churches pierce the skies to invoke the blessing of Heaven; here and there are to be seen the sheltered monastery and the cowed priest; the press is shackled; Papacy has resumed her power; not one dares to peep, or murmur, to move the wing or open the mouth; all are given over to uniform ignorance and oppression, enslaved by that most cruel and most contemptible of all tyrants, religious superstition—and that land which, for ages, has been radiating intelligence and liberty over the world, goes back to its primeval darkness, or becomes like Spain, in our day, unblessed with the Bible, stagnant as the Dead Sea, whose sullen waters send no tributary to the ocean; and as it is said by some, that no bird ever wings its way through the poisonous vapors which ascend from that accursed lake, so no faithful ministers of Christ are seen flying with the messages of salvation over that deserted land. The whole world lieth in wickedness again—"heaven mourns and hell keeps jubilee, because the day-light has passed and darkness returned." O! what has the Bible already wrought for the world through its English translation! and what mightier results are yet to follow! This may not be the time or the place to discuss the interesting question, but there are not wanting many probabilities that the English tongue is destined to become as nearly universal as it is practicable for any one language. Whether we take into account the vast numbers of those who already speak it, and who are now spreading themselves over the face of the whole earth, in pursuit of science or wealth—the advances which they have already made in improvement—the vast territories under their jurisdiction, and the mighty impulse which bears them on, we cannot but think that they possess incalculable advantages, not only for translating and distributing the Bible in other tongues, but for making their own tongue ultimately the medium of international intercourse, and our own version to be used by unborn and countless millions of the human family.

5. *Our subject teaches us how highly we should prize the word of God; with what prompt obedience and ready compliance we should practice all its precepts.* It is the precious gift of God. It has been transmitted to us at the price of toil, and tears and blood. It has been preserved for ages to be our guide and comfort. It is our only rule of living, reveals our only source of peace when dying. It sheds its light over all our dreary path in this world, and gathers its joyful hopes, like the setting sun, over the world to come. Millions have, in ages past, made trial of its precious truths. Many an eye has wept for joy over the very book which we now possess, and the cheek of sorrow here been lighted up with the smile of Christian hope. What shall we prize higher than the Bible?—without which this world were a wilderness, and the world to which we are hastening an awful mystery. Let every passing day bear witness to your gratitude for this blessed book of God. Let the FAMILY BIBLE be a conspicuous object in your dwellings. Let it be the object with which the earliest and fondest associations of your children shall be connected, and to which with hallowed pleasure they will revert in all the wanderings and dangers of subsequent life. The family Bible! How blessed the recollections which crowd into our minds at the mention of the name! It bore the record of our first existence. We remember now its very form and type—the shelf on which it lay—the morning and evening hour when it was read. It is associated with scenes of domestic peace, of parental affection. Forget it! as well might we forget the thousand expressions of a mother's love—the father's voice which daily commended us to God in prayer;—as well forget all which made our childhood's Christian home a blessing, and joy, and protection—and what is this but to say, that we might tear in sunder all the delicate threads, out of which that intricate web-work, the heart of man, is woven? For ever hallowed be the word of God. Let every fire-side witness its frequent perusal. Let

parental wisdom and youthful ardor together study its immortal truths. If you can bestow nothing else upon your children give them the Bible. Give it to them with a parent's blessing and a Christian's prayers. Tell them it is the word of God; beg them to read it when you are dead. Teach it to them now, in the house and by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up; so shall they call you blessed on earth and in heaven.

Finally, *How great will be the guilt of those who remain impenitent under the full light of the Scriptures!* To whom much is given, of the same much will be required. "To him who knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The poor heathen may stand up in the judgment and plead ignorance, for every man shall be judged according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not. To us light has come, and henceforth there can be no cloke for our sin. We know our Lord's will, and, if we do it not, we shall indeed be beaten with many stripes. Wo, wo unto those who repent not under the mighty works of God. Deep will be the ruin of those who, being exalted unto heaven, fall thence into hell. It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for such. We may not trample with impunity upon the pearl of great price. We may not receive or reject the Bible at our option. O no! Light neglected augments guilt; salvation despised will exasperate the accents of vengeance. Neglect your Bibles in this life, and they will hang like millstones about your neck in the life to come. Better to live in Pagan darkness, and grope, trembling and afraid, down to the grave, than, amid the effulgent light of the Bible, having eyes, to see not, and ears, to hear not, and an understanding that will not perceive. Better to die unenlightened, starting with instinctive horror from the mystery of the sepulchre, than, in the hour of death, to be stung with remorse for having despised reproof and rejected all the counsel of the Lord. Better perish any where else than in a land where Bibles meet the eye at every step, and are pouring upon the ear their accents of mercy. O go not from the sanctuary, from the light of truth—the weeping expostulations of love—the offers of forgiveness—the promises of heaven—the intercessions of Christ—the strivings of the Spirit—the full displays of God's everlasting love—go not to the judgment impenitent and unforgiven. A voice from these sacred pages cries, "Why, why will you die?" While you have an ear to hear it will not cease from its eloquent and divine appeals. Harken and your soul shall live. Blessed be God, with this book in our hands we may bid every despairing sinner come to his Redeemer. Come, poor, and blind, and naked, and weary, to this unfailing supply. The unchanging word is written on this changeless book, COME. As its glorious revelations were all about to close, its final, free, and unlimited invitation is, Come! "*The Spirit and the bride say, Come: and let him that heareth say, Come: and let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.*" And, enamored with the word, the ministers of Christ go forth to repeat it in the ears of every child of Adam; and, believing in its infinite fulness and freeness, we would run forward to meet all coming generations, ere yet they have arrived on the shores of being, and bid them welcome to the pure light of the Gospel—the hope of heaven—the splendors of everlasting truth.

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SERMONS CCII—IV.

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THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST.

ACTS 2: 33.—*Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.*

ON the memorable day when this text was uttered, the church experienced a revival of religion. The multitude had listened to him, who spake as never man spake; yet they were unmoved. An eventful stillness had succeeded the eventful scenes of the crucifixion. The disciples were first scattered and perplexed, then assembled with one accord in one place, and engaged in prayer,—“that prayer which opens heaven.” So it proved. Eminent displays of God’s power soon appeared among the disciples. This was noised abroad, and soon brought together a great multitude, to whom Peter preached the Gospel.

Then it was the Gospel was attended with “the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” The multitude, who just now mocked, were pricked in the heart, and called on Peter and the other apostles to guide them. That was a great day for the church, a day when sinners were made to feel, when the stupidity by which the heart is usually kept from the free and full access of the Gospel, had fled, and all was eye, all ear, all anxiety.

The Apostle, in his preaching, ascribes these wonderful displays of power in the physical, intellectual, and moral revolutions there effected, to Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Jews had crucified, but whom the apostles now declared to be the Son of God, the true Messiah, the Maker of worlds, the only hope and Saviour of men. These positions he proved to the Jews by the most unequivocal evidences, drawn from their own Scriptures, and finally from his resurrection, of which the apostles themselves, and a great many others, were witnesses.

“Therefore,” said he, “being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”

Much of the plan of redemption is distinctly comprised in this single sentence. We are led to consider in this text the HUMILIATION of Christ, his EXALTATION, and the TRINITY EMPLOYED in the work of man’s salvation.

THE HUMILIATION OF CHRIST distinctly set forth in the discourse of Peter, is more than implied in the text itself; for when it is said, he is exalted, we cannot comprehend the term except as we contrast it with humiliation, or a state inferior to that he now is declared to occupy.

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The humiliation of Christ, which we propose to consider in this discourse, may be embraced under three inquiries.

I. In what does it consist?

II. What was its object?

III. What is its influence?

I. What was the humiliation of Christ? Not the act of humility, which becomes a sinner; for he knew no sin, and therefore could never have that sense of guilt, which prompts to humility. But it was a descent from greatness, a stooping from dignity, which may consist with the greatest purity, as it is often the exhibition of the most disinterested benevolence.

From what, then, did the Savior stoop? Here we are brought directly to inquire what he is. Who and what is Christ? In answer to this question let the Scriptures speak; for the voice of inspiration alone is competent. Isaiah, in prophetic vision, calls him "the mighty God, the everlasting Father." The same prophet also said, "his name shall be called Immanuel," which is, being interpreted, God with us. John says, "the Word was God," and Christ was the Word. Paul says, "Christ is over all, God blessed for ever." And in another place, "he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Again, "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And again, "God was manifest in the flesh." "Adorn the doctrine of God our Savior." "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." In John's Gospel, it is said, "all things were made by Him." And in Hebrews, "he that made all things is God." In John's Epistle it is said, "hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us."

On this point it is not now my design to multiply all possible proof, but merely to assert the supreme claims of Christ to divine honors, in order to illustrate another point—the humiliation of Christ in executing his office of Mediator. It is this Being, thus exalted, and clothed with supreme majesty, "who was found in fashion as a man, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Yes, it is the same Being, who made the worlds; who said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" who fashioned man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; who created the human soul. It is the same who, eighteen hundred years ago, in our assumed nature, suffered under Pontius Pilate the ignominious death of the cross, who "gave his back to the smiter, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and hid not his face from shame and spitting."

Here is humiliation indeed, descent from dignity, and submission to unmerited pains. Oh, that we might estimate it more fully, and be more suitably affected by the truth as it is in Jesus. But it is impossible for us to see what Christ has done, until we have a correct view of his character. We can never perceive his true humiliation, until we measure the distance he has stooped—till we go up to heaven and down to hell. Yet standing where we do, with the inspired Scriptures to help our survey, we may see wonders, which philosophy never taught, which the light of nature never revealed, what no unassisted eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived. On the cross, where Jesus of Nazareth was nailed, and poured out his life-blood, we behold the Maker of worlds, the Sovereign of the universe, the Former of our bodies, the Author of our spirits. Do you know of any deeper humiliation than this? Can you conceive of any greater disparity of circumstances?

Here is a place, to which we should tread softly and frequently. Here we ought to linger and meditate, for the survey is full of instruction. Christian brethren, are you familiar with this ground? Have you been often here? Have you often, in your pious contemplations, trodden the heights of Calvary, and considered the wonderful display, which the scene of the crucifixion exhibited? God comes down to men, converses with them, does them good; and in return is despised, rejected, maltreated and crucified. Is this real? Then it is marvellous, and the mind is soon lost amid the varied scenes of wonder, love and praise displayed in it. It was done in a manner and recorded in a style peculiarly calculated to excite attention. Let the mind return from every other object to dwell upon it; for no beings are so deeply interested in the event as we are. This will appear more manifest in the consideration of the second question proposed.

II. What was the object of this humiliation? When God had made the world, and fitted it up for the accommodation of man, he created a holy race to inhabit it. They abused his mercies, lost their love for their Benefactor, and wandered away from him. So that, when the Lord looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand, it is testified—"they have all gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

It is after this rebel race that Christ is reaching. He came from heaven to seek and save the lost. For this, he took our nature, endured and suffered long, and when he found the immutable law standing in the way of our salvation, he fulfilled it, and answered its demands on us by the vicarious sacrifice of himself. He can be deterred from his benevolent purpose, neither by the rejection of sinners against himself, nor by the contumely they poured upon him, nor by the penalties of the holy and irreversible law. He meekly endured all, and returns in triumph from the grave, to effect and show forth a new and more glorious creation than that, which first produced the material and intelligent universe.

The object embraced in the mission of Christ is expressed in a single declaration of the Apostle—"He came into the world to save sinners." To save sinners! This was his object, his enterprise on earth. How great, in this view, appears the condescension of God, when he thus stoops from his throne to save his enemies! What are we that the Lord should thus regard us, even more than we regard ourselves? We are brands snatched from the burning, worms rescued from corruption, and clothed with dignity and glory—and this has been done in disinterested benevolence; for, "though man were not, heaven would not want spectators, nor God want praise." God does not need us. Had sentence been passed on us without mercy, we should never have been missed from our present places, nor any places we may hereafter occupy. Heaven would still have been happy; God would have been glorified. Poor are we as sinners, and worthless. We say to corruption, thou art our mother, and soon find our habitation with the worm. Yet to effect our salvation, it was necessary the penalty of the law should be met; and to remove this difficulty in the way of pardon, the Savior consented to receive the expression of divine wrath upon himself. His humiliation was necessary to the work he undertook, and the object was accomplished in his sufferings and death.

My brethren, are you familiar with the object, for which the Son of

God came into the world? It is an object, in which you are deeply interested. His eye was upon you. His benevolence reached after sinners that were lost. He surveyed the wide-spread desolation, the utter ruin which every where marked our world, and he came for its salvation. Objects of personal interest ordinarily secure attention. That which is here presented, transcendently surpasses every other; and what hold does it take on your affections? Are your feelings here alive? Are you sensible and sensitive to the fact, that in the humiliation of Christ, the purchase of these privileges, the services of this house, the revelations of this Book, were contemplated and provided?

III. The influence of this humiliation, therefore, or the effect of it, is,

1. The removal of all insuperable objections to the sinner's salvation. The remark is sometimes made, that God in the exercise of infinite power, could do as he pleases, and therefore could pardon sin without an atonement. But he cannot deny himself. He has made a law, and shall he not keep it? Where is his truth, his dignity, his immutability? He must execute that law. We can easily see that the maintenance of the divine government required that notice should be taken of sin. What shall be done? The sinner himself is unmoved. He is in rebellion. He cares not for the consequences. Shall he be left to those consequences? The benevolence of God forbids it. Shall he be saved? The justice of God forbids it. What remains then, but to devise a plan, in which both the benevolence and justice of God shall be exhibited and illustrated? This is done while the penalty is sustained by Christ, and the claims of the violated law are thereby averted from the guilty.

2. A second effect of this humiliation of Christ, is the exhibition of the divine attributes in a manner and to a degree they would never otherwise have been seen. Many of the attributes of God were indeed displayed in the work of creation, such as his wisdom in planning, power in executing, &c. But his truth and mercy and justice were but faintly seen. Those perfections, which most endear him to his creatures, have here an eminent illustration. Whatever contributes to display the divine perfections, serves one purpose of direct benevolence under the government of God. In the development of divine perfections consequent on the fall, the mind is furnished with additional sources of happiness, and new motives to love and obedience. This result could have no influence to make the fall of man in itself a desirable event, but may very justly be contemplated with interest, as an eminent effect of the humiliation of Christ. In the work of redemption is displayed a plan and exhibited attributes of character, which will be the subject of increasing admiration with men and angels through eternity; for as age accumulates upon age to heighten and enlarge the joys of the saints in glory, their love to God as the Author of these joys must also strengthen and increase.

3 The humiliation of Christ furnishes a subject peculiarly calculated to affect and soften the heart. Here is not only favor extended and grace dispensed, but personal suffering; individual, vicarious sacrifice comes between the guilty and his merited punishment. The mind is led to a scene of deep suffering, and compelled to dwell on what excites its sympathies and commiseration. I say then, the manner in which Christ has come down to us on the cross, is directly calculated to soften the heart, and to produce a lively and tender state of feeling and affection. All the severe features of a Sovereign are laid by, when God comes down to us in

the Mediator. He comes to plead, to ask us to accept a favor, to return to him. The justice of God is indeed rolling on its floods, and presenting its terrors to the guilty soul. But they are resisted and stayed at the cross of Christ, on whom they blacken and break with violence, while he still turns to the sinner, and with agonies, and tears, and smiles, calls on his heart to relent, on his penitence to flow, on his love to burn. The heart that is not past feeling, must here be tried. There is no alternative. Its attention must be diverted, or it yields to the force of a divine influence. It cannot dwell at Golgotha, and look steadily at the cross of Christ, without breaking and bursting.

4. In the humiliation of Christ, God's hatred of sin is eminently displayed. How absolute and unchangeable, that it could not even spare the only Son! If so, then think you that God will spare the sinner, who rolls sin as a sweet morsel under his tongue? Think you that he will justify it in those who remain relentless, while pardon is offered on the only possible conditions?

Where is the hateful nature of sin so eminently displayed as at the cross of Christ? Where can its dreadful effects be more clearly seen? It has gone, when forbid by infinite mercy to wreak its consequences on man, it has gone in pursuit of a victim even to heaven, and invaded the throne of God; and rather than it should destroy for ever this fair portion of the moral universe, it has been permitted to spend its force and display its power on the Son of God!

5. In this event, God has shown his exceeding great love to man. When the thunder was about to break on his guilty head, Christ interposed and received the stroke. He survived, and brought up mercy from that grave where he had paid the sinner's debt. Instead of the lightning's wrath, we now feel the Savior's love. Instead of the thunder's roar, it is the voice of mercy. How matchless, how unparalleled the mercy of God! "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend, but God hath commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

6. In the humiliation of Christ, we have an example for imitation. The greatest obstacle to the enjoyment of pardon and divine favor, is the pride of the sinner's heart. Little haughty ignorance in man is ever imperious in her demands, and unlimited in her claims. The pride of superiority is ever seeking in the heart of the aspiring sinner, a place which does not belong to him, and which he is ill calculated to fill. In the example of the Savior, this pride is rebuked. How great his condescension! How humble his walk! How far he came, and laid his glory by, to perform the work of man's redemption! As he humbled himself to exalt us, while we were yet sinners and enemies, may we learn to be humble in the enjoyment of those distinctions which were his purchase and gift. What a reproof to the pride of the human heart is the example of Christ! May we, by contemplating him, learn to practise that spirit of forbearance, condescension, and love, which shall exclude "envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, and perverse disputings," from the church, and to practise that self-denial and self-sacrifice which may make us efficient in every good work to do his will.

7. The effect of Christ's humiliation is to deepen our impression of the grace of God. Grace is the more dear to those who experience it, and rises in value in proportion to the expense at which it is extended, and

the evil from which it saves. In the humiliation of the Savior, embracing his sufferings and death, we see, the price at which this grace was purchased and extended. Nothing less than the blood of Christ could prepare the way for its dispensation. Victims might bleed on the altar of sacrifice till the earth should be desolated, and Lebanon might burn, in vain. If the mind is led to no more costly sacrifice, no more high and holy offering, sin must remain for ever unpardoned, and guilt unmitigated. It is the Lamb of God, that must be bound upon the wood; it is the sword of divine justice, that must slay the victim; it is the fire of God's wrath that must kindle on the substitute. Blessed be God, this has not been withheld. When there was no eye that could pity, and no arm that could save, then God interfered; and when Lebanon was not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt offering; when the earth was poor, and man was ruined, and angels were powerless; then the throne of God furnished both the priest and the sacrifice. And the penalty from which we are thus spared, and the glory to which we are raised, must require an eternity to experience, and an eternity to tell. Here, then, at the cross of Christ, we see how the grace of God is magnified, and his love to sinners illustrated.

Come, then, my soul, here take thy privileged and chosen seat; here employ all thy contemplations; here rest that weary anxiety, which seeks in vain for peace and hope in sin. Come, sinners, from the various pursuits and perplexities of life, sit together at the feet of Jesus, and learn of him. Contemplate Christ crucified, Christ the mighty God, the equal Son, and crucified to save us from wrath. Reflect, that in this event every insuperable obstacle to the sinner's salvation is removed, the glorious attributes of God are eminently displayed for your admiration, a plan is presented peculiarly calculated to affect and soften the heart, God's hatred of sin is conspicuously seen, his love for man is demonstrated, an example of benevolence and self-denial is afforded us, and the grace of God is pre-eminently exalted. Come, brethren, bring your minds to the deep and delightful contemplation of these topics. Stay here, till the multiplied and bright objects of the scene open on the view in their true splendor. Stay till you forget all other objects, till the world retires, heaven opens, till the soul is wrapt in that circle of thought and employment which angels enjoy, but from which a deceitful world is ever calling it away.

*“ Stay, till you feel your heart
 “ Ascending with your tongue;
 “ STAY, till the love of sin depart,
 “ And grace inspire your song.”*

SERMON CCIII.

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

ACTS 2: 33.—Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, &c.

THE exaltation of Jesus in his mediatorial character was the necessary result of his humiliation. He had assumed our nature, been tempted in all points like as we are, felt our infirmities, suffered an ignominious

death on the cross, and had risen from the tomb. After this, and while surrounded by a multitude of his disciples, he was parted from them, and received up into heaven.

To those who conversed with him after his resurrection, and who were now the eye-witnesses of his ascension, the evidence of his divinity was complete. But it is the design of the Savior that the testimony of competent witnesses to this fact shall be confirmed by standing evidences of his presence and power through every age of the church. In accordance with his promise, and in the execution of his purposes of grace, he sent the Spirit in the work of conversion soon after his ascension. And while the multitude were under the influence of this divine visitation, Peter boldly preaches Christ crucified, demonstrates to the Jews from their own scriptures that he was the Messiah, appeals for further confirmation to his miracles wrought in their presence, certifies to his resurrection and ascension, and adduces the obvious manifestations of divine influence at that time on the multitude as a standing testimony of his presence and power. "Therefore," he says, "being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

The divinity of Jesus, proved in his humiliation, is demonstrated also in his exaltation. For we may consider him exalted,

I. In the place he now occupies.

II. In his moral perfections, illustrated in the plan of redemption.

III. In the execution of his mediatorial office, and in the praises of the redeemed.

I. Christ is exalted in the place he now occupies. For we cannot with some, who rob him of other distinctions, be satisfied to leave him, we know not where, while we honor him as we know not whom. We worship him as God's equal Son, who created all things, who upholds all things, who is the only Savior of men, and the judge of all. We therefore receive the testimony of divine inspiration, that after he had accomplished our redemption in the days of his flesh, "he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us." He has gone to prepare a place for us, "whence also he will come again, and receive us unto himself, that where he is, there we may be also."

He was united in glory with the Father before the world was. This glory was beheld in him while on earth, full of grace and truth. He was received up into glory when he ascended, exalted above men, being appointed head of the church and heir of all things,—above angels, as it is written, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, made so much better than the angels as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

I am supplied then, in the Scriptures, with an answer to every important question that can be asked respecting my Savior. If asked *who* he is; I answer in the language of inspiration, he is "the mighty God." "Immanuel, God with us,"—"God over all blessed for ever,"—"the true God and eternal life." Considered in the work of redemption, he is "the Son of God with power" to atone for sin, and has "laid down his life for us." If asked where he was before the world; I answer, "glorified with the Father," as asserted by himself in John 17 : 5. If asked where

he now is, I answer, "exalted at the right hand of God," where he will continue to be, preparing for the reception of the saints, until he shall come again to judge the world; for all judgment is committed into his hands. When this is accomplished, and the mediatorial office ended, the saints shall inhabit "the kingdom of Christ and of God," of which the Father and the Son are indiscriminately called the Sovereign, as united in equal honor, power, and glory. In the Revelation, it is said, "the Lord Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of the city:" "the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." And in Colossians, 2 : 2, it is said, "the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ."

Thus is Christ exalted as the Sovereign of the Universe, the Creator, Preserver, and Judge of all; original, underived, omnipotent, independent; who supports the pillars of the Universe, and can safely keep whatever is committed to his hands. He is exalted as a Savior, having accomplished the redemption of sinners.

We mourn not therefore as Mary, when she said, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." He was seen of his disciples for forty days after his resurrection. They were the witnesses of his ascension to heaven. In the spirit of prayer, they returned to Jerusalem, and worshipped and held communion with him. At the expiration of ten days, he manifested his efficient presence in the fulfilment of glorious prophecy, in the divine work of regeneration, in the effectual instruction and comfort of his people; and by these operations and influences he has ever since continued to establish and confirm his people. We receive these testimonies, we worship the Savior at the right hand of God, we realize his promises of divine influence.

II. Christ as Mediator is exalted in his own moral perfections, illustrated in the plan of redemption. These perfections are inherent, and depend not for their existence and true excellence on any thing that has been, or can be done. But in the plan of redemption, circumstances were furnished for their public and eminent display. They shone through the man Christ Jesus, and illuminated his character in the days of his flesh. They furnished an example in practice, and inspired a code in morals, such as philosophy has exhausted its power in vain to create. Exalted to his seat in heaven, he sheds his glory through all the place, and enkindles in all his worshippers a flame of love, admiration, and joy. And having received gifts for men, he diffuses through this dark world the light and grace, which roll a flood of dazzling glory through heaven and eternity. We see it faintly here. It multiplies and brightens on the devout and heaven-directed eye of prayer. It is displayed in burning effulgence, as we are transformed by degrees into his image; and when we put off this flesh, it shall enkindle in the soul that fervid glow of pure devotion, which will prove to the glorified saints, what are those joys, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, but which God hath prepared for them that love him."

That, which gave offence on earth, will constitute the glory of the Savior in heaven. The purity of his character, and the strictness of his moral law, and the justice and spirituality of his kingdom will there be his glory. It is the holiness of God, which secures the love and homage of all holy beings. Their song is, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God

of hosts." This is the standard of pre-eminence with the inhabitants of heaven. The holiest being there will be the happiest, and accounted the most worthy. This it is, which will give peculiar energy and triumph to the devotions of heaven. The true purity of the divine character will be seen in the display of inherent attributes, and it will be appreciated and loved by all who are round about him. Therefore, the Savior will be exalted, in the glories of his own perfections, in a world where those perfections will be fully appreciated, by minds moulded and formed by his divine energy and benevolence to the same glorious and pure image.

III. We contemplate Christ as exalted in the execution of his mediatorial office, and in the praises of the redeemed. By virtue of his atonement he saves sinners; not by works of righteousness which they have done, but by his own grace. And sensible of their dependence on that grace, their song will always be—"not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."

The company of the saved will be a great company, and their habitual employment will be acts of praise and homage to Him, who has redeemed them out of every nation, and washed them in his own blood. The Scriptures say this company will be innumerable. Every one, who shall stand and bow there, will be a trophy of victorious grace, saved by Christ. Not one will take any merit to himself, or ascribe any part of the work of his redemption to any but to Jesus of Nazareth. They will constitute, therefore, a standing and shining monument of his benevolence and power. Each was an heir of hell, and all that makes him to differ from those, "the smoke of whose torment ascendeth up for ever and ever," he owes to the grace of Christ. Here is laid a foundation for that praise, which shall fill all heaven. O brethren, if we are borne by him across this gulf, which stretches its deep shadows between us and the heavenly world, will not he possess an eminence up to which we shall delight to extend our view; and will not he excite our praise above and beyond all else which can engage or interest the soul? While the songs of angels shall delight the soul, and all the resplendent glories of the place charm the eye, shall we not find that *all* is beneath the Lamb, who is the light of the temple, and by whose sacrifice we have obtained a name and an inheritance there?

Although we are informed that there are few comparatively saved under the circumstances in which sinners have lived and do still live, yet all the company of saints, "a multitude which no man can number," shall be truly assembled. It is true the Gospel has found, and does now find, but poor acceptance in the world. Most men have rejected it, and my witnesses are here, that it is with difficulty commended to the approbation and embrace of sinners. Some here, still in their sins, have heard thousands of sermons, and ten thousands of prayers. Truly there are comparatively few saved. Still, Christ shall be glorified in the praises of the redeemed. You may reject the Gospel, but heaven shall be peopled by willing subjects of the King of kings. Christ shall be exalted without you, in the exercise of his power, in the display of his moral perfections, and in the multitude of his saints. Yes, though not one of you should accept his offered grace, his praise shall be glorious, his name infinitely exalted. Not to recur to that glory he shall gain while he vindicates the law in your condemnation and punishment, he shall be celebrated in the joyful songs of myriads of the saved.

The covenant of grace, or of redemption, secured to the Son a nume-

rous seed to serve him, in whose conversion the Holy Spirit was to be the efficient, active agent. Under this covenant, a dispensation of grace commenced immediately after the fall, and many saints were gathered from earth before the public ministry and death of Christ. Under the new influence of Gospel light, and in connection with the ascent of Christ the Savior, and the descent of the Holy Ghost the Sanctifier, a season of religious revival was enjoyed on the day of pentecost, which will be ever memorable in the history of the church. Similar triumphs have been witnessed in succeeding ages, and they are destined to continue until the world shall be converted, and the church on earth shall embrace the world's population, and triumph over her enemies. Christ is on the throne. The agency is there. It is almighty. We have the promise recorded; and it has been for eighteen centuries in a constant course of execution.

Under this gracious administration, revivals of religion have been often enjoyed by the church. I allude now to facts, which are familiar to you. Here, Christ has been exalted and honored in the salvation of sinners. A divine work has been here repeatedly wrought, of which ye are witnesses, and which impresses the subject with peculiar and deep interest. Oh, from this spot, from the feeble services of this house, how many shall be permitted to rise, and join that multitude whose everlasting song shall be,—“Worthy the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God, by his blood!” And while the Gospel here continues to speak, how many more, we may hope, will, through the same divine influence, be prepared for the same employments, and admitted to the same company!

Glorious thought! that Christ is still exalted, and we are under discipline for heaven. Yes, he is still at the right hand of God, exalted to be a Prince and a Savior. Still it may be repeated, he has “received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Thanks be to God, we may still add, He has shed forth that which ye have seen and heard. God grant also, that we may be able soon to forget the *past*, in the happy, rapturous experience of the *present*, and say,—“Which ye *now* see and hear.”

From the wide field of instruction furnished by this subject, two or three reflections deserve particular consideration.

1. How humble ought Christians to be, under a sense of their dependence, and with the example of Christ, their great Master, before them! He was independent, yet he condescended, became poor for our sakes, and submitted to an ignominious death. We are entirely dependent; let us cherish a spirit of humility. This grace is eminently characteristic of the Christian. Without it, he can never find a place at the foot of the cross, can never realize the blessedness of communion with saints, can never enjoy the satisfactions of a soul at peace. The moment he rises in his feelings above his place, he loses that calm serenity which ever prevails in the vale of humility, and encounters storms, peril, and ruin. The Scriptures, therefore, often instruct us to “be clothed with humility.” A proper sense of guilt will ever keep us humble and safe. Whenever we become restive, and attempt to rise, we encounter dangers. An humble posture is always the safest, and the only proper one for a poor sinner. “A man's pride shall bring him low, but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit.” Let Christians, therefore, dwell much on

the example of Christ in his humiliation. Behold the loveliness of his character as here expressed, and transcribe it into your own.

2. We see the safety and dignity of those, who trust in Christ. He is exalted. "He is able to save to the uttermost *all* that come unto God through him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them." We then have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us in the Gospel." The exaltation of Christ ensures the safety of every believer. His disciples saw him after his resurrection, and they saw him ascend to heaven. They experienced the promise of the Father as he had told them, and witnessed the evidence of his exaltation in the conversion of sinners. These things are testified and recorded for our consolation.

Our happiness depends much on the stability of those objects, on which we rest. This is a principal reason why the things of time give so flattering and so false a hope. It is deeply impressed on the mind that they are fleeting. So, even while resting on them, the mind is unsettled and anxious. But the experienced Christian is persuaded that he can never be separated from the love of Christ. "Whether he lives, he lives to him, or whether he dies, he dies to him. Whether he lives, therefore, or dies, he is the Lord's." And he sometimes feels like Paul, that "it is far better to die, and be with Christ," than to live. To support them amid the inevitable trials of life, the experience of the same Apostle is often realized to Christians diligent in duty; and they become "persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"

And where can the soul find a more substantial, and happier source of consolation, than in the contemplation of a latter end of peace, and an eternal union with all that is good, and omnipotent, and pure? Amid the disappointments of life, here is rest. When friends fail us, here is one that "sticketh closer than a brother." When bereavements strike our earthly comforts dead, here are undying sources of consolation. Here is an adequate support in the desolation of wasting sickness, and a refuge in the leanness of death. Christian brethren, it is your privilege to appropriate this consolation. In prosperity, let it keep you humble; in the world, let it keep you thoughtful of coming changes; in bereavements you may feel its power to bless; in sickness, lean upon it; and in the darkness and poverty of death, let it be your refuge and very present help. Christ will be exalted in the redemption of his people, and he will proceed from conquering to conquer. Philosophy, and reason, and power have been united and employed against the advancement of this work on earth. Ridicule and mockery have lent their aid. Still it goes on. Revivals of religion are multiplied, the heathen are receiving the truth as it is in Jesus, the Jews are returning, and this growing kingdom is advancing under the guidance and protection of the great King; and let all the saints shout for joy.

3. There is one other consideration, which I would not fail to suggest. It is the manner in which all that has now been said must affect the finally impenitent. Christ indeed has submitted to death, even the death of the cross—but you have scornfully rejected that cross. He is risen again, and is exalted at the right hand of God, but you have not be-

lied. He is sustained and honored in the perfections of his moral character, and the praises of the redeemed, but you are insensible to them both.

From the position, impenitent men, which you occupy, it must follow, that all the power with which the Savior of sinners is clothed, all the perfections in which he is exalted, all the distinctions to which he is raised, will be employed against you. The very sources of blessing to the righteous will prove means of increasing the torment of those who despise them. The effect of this eminent display of divine love will be to increase the guilt and heighten the miseries of those, who shall turn away from it. Such proposals of pardon cannot be trifled with by the sinner without producing most fearful results, without greatly aggravating his guilt. Indeed we are taught that so great is the guilt of rejecting the Savior distinctly offered, that all other offences are involved in this one. When, as impenitent sinners, you stand in judgment, your condemnation will not proceed on the evidence that you have stolen, or lied, or profaned God's holy name, or holy day. These, if they exist, are minor offences. They are all merged in one great, damning sin—the rejection of an offered Savior. “*This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light.*”

It becomes my duty, then, again to offer for your acceptance this Savior from sin, once humbled, now exalted and glorified. To you are the words of this salvation sent. This Savior, now exalted; condescends to plead with you. Though in his humiliation, he was poor, in his exaltation he is rich—rich in priceless blessings secured for sinners by his poverty. In his humiliation he was despised, was put to grief, and was forsaken; in his exaltation he is honored in the praises of purchased souls, and in the possession of his original dignity; in his humiliation he suffered, and submitted himself; in his exaltation he is jealous of his honor, and will proceed to vindicate his authority: in his humiliation he condescended and pleaded with sinners, and still, in the execution of mediatorial office, he pleads with them by his word, and providence, and appointed ministry; but the time will soon come when he will plead no more—when judgment will proceed on the evidence of the past. This is a day of forbearance, of love, of life. “As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.” Our God is a God of mercy, but not of mercy only. Opening this everlasting Book, I read—“He whets his glittering sword, and his hand takes hold on vengeance.” I see—“dark clouds are his pavilion round about.” I hear—it is the voice of mercy still, but of mercy long abused; and the very next accent may be the thunder of that voice, which calls you to Judgment. Oh, “kiss the Son, lest he be angry with you, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little.”

SERMON CCIV.

THE TRINITY EMPLOYED IN MAN'S REDEMPTION.

ACTS 2: 33.—*Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, &c.*

Much of the plan of redemption, in its executive process, is set forth in this single text, leading us directly to consider,

- I. The salvation of the sinner as the work of the Trinity.
- II. The part which each person in the sacred Trinity performs in this work.
- III. The necessity of this Trinity to the work of man's redemption.
- IV. The beauty and harmony of the doctrine.

I. In our text the salvation of the sinner is set forth as the work of the Trinity. We plainly see that the doctrine of a Trinity in the Godhead is taught in the holy Scriptures; it is palpable. Here are the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; three persons employed in the work of man's salvation. The Father gives to the Son, and does not receive the gift. The Son receives the gift from the Father, and does not make the gift to the Father. The Son sends the Holy Ghost, and is not sent by him. The Holy Ghost is sent, or, as our Confession of Faith has it, "proceeds from the Father and the Son," and does not send the Father nor the Son. Can any distinction of persons be more plainly expressed?

Again—when the law was to be repeated to Israel, the Lord said, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is *one* Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." *One* Lord, essentially one, in substance, and in distinction from the gods of the heathen, which were many; *one*, as an object of simple and undivided worship; *one*, as the object of allegiance; *one*, as a unit necessary to be understood when the law was about to be solemnly announced, and repeated, and enforced on their observance. And so God is properly, essentially, and absolutely *one* only living and true God, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, having an existence in a Trinity of persons, mysterious, like all his attributes, co-equal, co-eternal, and essentially the same in all divine perfections.

When man was originally formed of the dust of the earth, it was the result of divine counsel in the Trinity—"And God said, Let Us make man." When man had violated the divine law, and was found wholly destitute of that *love to God* which that law required, his redemption was the result of divine counsel in the Trinity. The Father asserts the claims of the law, the Son accepts the penalty, and the Holy Ghost, by a divine efficiency exerted on the hearts of sinners, "prepares many sons unto glory." Here each performs a separate office. The law must be asserted—it cannot yield. The eternal Father asserts it. The Son takes the sinner's place under the law, and the substitution is accepted: he is "God our Savior." The Holy Ghost prepares the sinner's heart for the reception and love of the truth, and enlightens and sanctifies; he is God our Sanctifier. Thus we see, then, as set forth in the text, the sinner's salvation is the work of God in the Trinity. "Therefore," said the Apostle, "being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the *Father* the promise of the *Holy Ghost*, he (*Jesus*) hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

II. We are to consider more explicitly the part which each person in the sacred Trinity performs in the work of man's redemption. The law had been made and prescribed to man by the *one* only living and true God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This law having been wilfully and wickedly violated, God, as the maker and executor of the law, must exact the penalty of temporal and eternal death. If mercy is extended, justice must not be disparaged, nor truth violated, nor the depraved and rebellious heart remain in its enmity and pollution.

Here, then, is a three-fold service required. The law must be asserted in its claims and guarded from dishonor. The sinner needs a substitute and advocate. A work of regeneration must be performed to prepare the heart for a holy kingdom. The Father undertakes for the law, Christ the eternal Son undertakes for the sinner, and the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, executes the dispensation of grace. Here, then, the Father represents the law, preserving the faithful administration of justice. The Son represents the sinner, meeting in himself the penalty of the law, and thereby providing for the dispensation of mercy. The Spirit executes a divine work on the heart of the sinner, which illustrates to his experience the divine attributes of justice and mercy, and prepares him to receive pardon, under a full conviction of utter unworthiness and ruin.

Nor are here conflicting interests. The whole disposition of the Godhead is in favor of the administration of justice, of mercy, and of truth. The Father loves mercy as well as justice, and can never urge the latter to the prejudice of the former. Christ loves justice as well as mercy. The Holy Spirit aids the dispensation of neither at the expense or exclusive of the other. Yet the Father performs a work in this plan separate from the Son, and which the Son does not perform. The Son performs a work which the Father does not perform. The Holy Spirit performs a work separate and different from both. And yet whatever is performed by the Father, or the Son, or the Spirit, is properly and strictly the work of God, harmoniously approved and sanctioned in the divine mind. Is justice asserted? It is God. Is mercy dispensed? It is God. Is a sinner saved? It is God who does it. Do the Scriptures speak of justice, or the administration of law? It is God the Father, or God without distinction of person. Do they speak of mercy, or atonement for sin; by which, in the administration of the divine government, mercy may be dispensed to the guilty? It is Christ the Son of God, who has undertaken for the sinner, and become sin for him, and provided for him a justifying righteousness. Do they speak of regeneration, by which the enmity of the sinner's heart is removed, and love enkindled, and the law commended to his approbation and acceptance, as holy, and just, and good? It is God the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to reprove of sin; showing to the sinner the enmity of his own heart, illuminating his mind, and quickening all his powers to see the truth in its application to himself, illustrating the divine character, and bringing him into present judgment. Is the proud, rebellious heart subdued? Does the sinner repent, abhor himself, believe in Christ as a Savior? It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Does he strive against sin, gain the victory over the flesh, walk in newness of life? It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Is he comforted and edified in the truth? Does he grow in grace? Does he hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is he a new man in his desires and enjoyments, in his hopes and aspirations, in the circle of his duties and employments? It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Is he sustained under trials? Does the fire of devotion glow in his soul as the lamp of life expires? Is he strengthened in the inner man as the outward man decays? Does he triumph in death? It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Is the saint raised from the dead, incorruptible and pure, unsullied and immortal? It is the work of the same agency. For "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

III. We are now to consider the necessity of this Trinity to the work of man's redemption. We should speak with great caution and respect when we undertake to say what God cannot do, or what it is necessary for him to do. Yet this is a language that may with propriety be sometimes used, and expresses ideas which exist in truth. God cannot deny himself. He cannot do wrong. He can in no wise clear the guilty. He cannot look on sin with allowance. It is necessary that the law of God should be executed. If the sinner is saved, it is necessary that the law of God should be satisfied by vi-

carious suffering. In order to the enjoyment of God, and a state of happiness in heaven, it is necessary that a work of regeneration should be performed in the sinner's heart.

Here we see the necessity of the Trinity in the work of redemption. The only question now to be settled in the establishment of this position is—could not this work all be done without a Trinity in the Godhead? We reason from what we know, or are able to infer from premises possessed, and we answer, No. We do not see how this work could be performed without this divine Trinity. If the claims of the law are to be asserted, who will assert them but God? God must execute his own law. It can be safely intrusted to no other hands. Like its Author, the divine law is immutable. All else is liable to change, and therefore can furnish no parallel. If an atonement, or satisfaction to that law, is to be made, God only can make it. Who else can do it? Where is the power? Who can measure eternity in any one particular, so as to consent intelligently to assume an obligation or penalty involving eternity? Who but God? But suppose this difficulty were removed, and an angel or any other being were willing to offer himself a substitute for the sinner, to endure the literal penalty of the law, where would be the dispensation of mercy? The illustration of this divine attribute would still be a desideratum in the moral universe. The identical sinner would escape, but not through grace. Mercy could not enter into the scheme of such a substitution. As it is, this perfection of the divine character is eminently displayed. If, as a law-giver, I make a law, and prescribe that the first man who is guilty of the crime of forgery shall have his right hand cut off, and I should clear the guilty by the substitution of my own hand for his, whatever objection might be urged against the measure, it certainly would be an eminent dispensation of mercy. God, then, dispenses mercy to the sinner when he assumes himself the penalty, and makes a satisfaction to the law, which preserves its honor, establishes its truth, and saves the offender from merited punishment. None but God can do this.

Again—if the sinner is to be saved in heaven, it is necessary he should be holy. A work of regeneration must be performed in his heart, by which its enmity must be slain, its choice directed, its dispositions changed and rectified, and the whole current of its affections controlled. Who is able to look into the secret thoughts of the soul, to know its disposition, to understand its constitution and principle of action, so as even to anticipate its course of conduct, much more its emotions and necessary action under every possible circumstance, and every variety of motive? Who can do this but He, who made the soul, who intimately understands its nature, who can himself control it, and turn it as the rivers of water are turned? He only can enter into its secret chambers, analyze it, reveal its secret and hidden lineaments to its own view, control, new-create, and sanctify it. None but God can do this.

Here then, in the nature of the work to be performed in man's redemption, we see the necessity of a Trinity in the Godhead. Justice and mercy are to be united under the government of God in a consistent theory, and practically applied, in a harmony of the divine attributes, to the salvation of sinners. Surely to the accomplishment of this plan, the Trinity is necessary. All other theories are inadequate, imperfect, and unsafe. They take some part of the work from the hands of God, and commit it to a creature, subject to the direction of fatal imbecility, ignorance, or doubt.

IV. We have still to contemplate the beauty and harmony of the doctrine.

Its harmony is exhibited where "mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other." Here are clashing interests, but no discord. When mercy cannot proceed against justice, God the Son satisfies that justice, and bids mercy proceed. When mercy cannot proceed against the hardness and corruption of the heart, for which the dispensation is prepared, God the Holy Ghost enlightens, convicts, softens,

melts, and changes that heart, and brings it, by a voluntary action of its own powers, now enlightened, refined, and regulated, to embrace, and love, and serve God. When eternal ruin hung over the fate of man under the administration of the violated law, this plan of redemption was matured in the council of the divine Trinity. The Father consented to deliver up the only begotten Son to the operation of the law, a substitute for sinners; the Son consented to yield his life a ransom; and the Holy Spirit became the efficient agent in illustrating this plan to the minds of sinners, dark, ignorant, and lost; and in gaining the voluntary consent of these perverse minds to the truth. Here is harmony produced where every thing appeared discordant and hopeless. And this harmony is the result of the simple and natural action of God in the Trinity.

The beauty of the doctrine appears principally in its adaptation, and actual efficiency to produce its end, and that end one of the highest glory and benevolence. It saves sinners—saves them from the curse of the law—saves them under sentence of an immutable law, inflicting an eternal penalty—saves them in consistency with divine justice, in harmony with that law, and with the integrity of the divine character. Here is moral beauty which Almighty power alone could create, which uncreated, could have found an ideal archetype only in the conceptions of the infinite mind, and which could have found an application to the case of sinners only in the harmonious action of the divine Trinity.

And now, have we not here, in the harmony, beauty, and glory of this one doctrine, a sufficient subject for wonder, love, and praise, through all eternity? Who would mar the beauty, or interrupt the harmony of this doctrine? Let him first furnish, as a substitute, another doctrine, equally glorious, consistent, harmonious with itself and in all its relations, and withal equally supported by the unperverted, plain testimonies of the Bible. Before he proceeds to remove this corner-stone, on which I rest my eternal hope, let him show me one equally beautiful, more rational as a ground of trust, and better supported by the word of God. This he can never do. Oh, no; that scheme which removes the mystery of the Trinity from the plan of salvation, disrobes that plan of its principal moral beauty, mars the brightest attribute of God, conflicts the principles and destroys the harmony of the divine government, for one mystery substitutes greater mysteries, and utterly obscures the sun, which enlightens my path to the mercy-seat. The doctrine of the Trinity is the central sun of the Christian system, the source of light and heat, motion and life, to the worlds of mind within its sphere, which it holds in their orbits and controls. Blot it out, and you throw us back on the night of paganism, to the mere religion of nature, the dim twilight of heathen philosophy. We will say then, with the chief Apostle—"Without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Thus you see the divine Trinity employed in the work of man's redemption. You see the part, which each person in the sacred Trinity performs in this work. You see the necessity of this Trinity to the work of man's redemption, and the beauty and harmony of the doctrine. Instead then of a Being partial, bloody, or unjust on the one hand, or changeable, inbecile, or compromising on the other, you see all the glorious attributes of a Being infinitely perfect, meet, and harmonize, and unite in a work of infinite benevolence. You are called away from theory and speculation, from philosophy and human science, to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of him lessons of infinite wisdom. You are called to leave all masters on earth, and to pay your homage to that divine Master and Savior, whom "all the angels of God worship."

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THE EARTH FILLED WITH THE GLORY OF THE LORD.

NUMBERS xiv. 20, 21—*And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.*

THE practice of confirming a declaration with an oath, is of very early origin. And although the multiplication of oaths is a great evil, and the act of taking or administering them with lightness, an aggravated sin; yet they are, undoubtedly, in great error who maintain that all swearing, even on the most solemn occasions, and on the call of judicial officers, is unlawful. *An oath for confirmation*, says an inspired Apostle, *is an end of all strife*. Accordingly, in the sacred history, we find many examples of holy men, on various occasions, employing this form of asseveration. But, what is much more decisive still, we find the High and Holy One himself repeatedly adopting it to confirm both his promises and his threatenings. Thus we read, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that, *there being no greater, Jehovah swore by himself*; and again, in the same Epistle, it is said, that *God willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it with an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, they might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us*. And in the passage before us, the Lord said, *As I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord*.

These words were spoken on a very distressing, and, to the eye of man, a very discouraging occasion. When the twelve men who had been sent from the wilderness of *Paran* to spy out the land of promise, brought back their report, the mass of the people were almost overwhelmed with alarm and discouragement. Nay, overcome by apprehension, and infatuated with a spirit of

unbelief and rebellion, they proposed to make choice of another leader, and return back to *Egypt*. With this ungrateful and daring revolt the Lord was greatly displeased, and threatened to give them up to his destroying judgments, and to disinherit them for ever. *Moses*, however, interceded for the people in a most touching strain of importunate prayer: and he prevailed. The Lord said, *I have pardoned them according to thy word. But as truly as I live, the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.* As if he had said—"Unbelieving and rebellious as this people now appear, and utterly desperate as their prospects may seem;—neither my plans nor my promises, in regard to them or the world, shall be frustrated. My cause shall finally triumph over all the infatuation and rebellion of man. *The whole earth shall, in due time, be filled with my glory.*"

I shall not stop here to inquire, whether the original word here translated "the earth," is intended to designate the whole earth, in the largest sense of the expression; or only that land, viz. the whole land of Palestine, to which the people were going. However this may be decided, we know that examples occur in other parts of Scripture, in which the term "earth" is applied in the largest sense, and also connected with a promise that the whole inhabited globe shall one day be filled with the knowledge and glory of the Lord. In giving the most ample interpretation, then, to the language of our text, we are certain that we do not go beyond the spirit of Holy Scripture.

There are *three* things in the passage before us which demand our notice—THE IMPORT OF THE PROMISE WHICH IT CONTAINS;—THE REASONS WHICH WE HAVE FOR BELIEVING THAT THIS PROMISE WILL, IN DUE TIME, BE REALIZED;—AND THE DUTY DEVOLVING ON US IN RELATION TO THE PROMISE.

I. Let us attend to THE IMPORT OF THE PROMISE BEFORE US. This import, expressed with so much solemnity of asseveration, is large and precious. *As I live*, saith the Lord, *all the earth shall be filled with the glory* of the Lord.

Glory is the manifestation of excellence. The glory of God is that display of his most blessed character and will, which opens the way for his intelligent creatures to know, to love, and to obey him. This glory is exhibited in various ways. It shines in all the works of creation. All the works of God, we are told, praise him. *The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.* Again, the glory of God is manifested by the works of his providence. Here his wisdom, his power, and his benevolence, gloriously shine. *The Lord*, we are told, *is known*—that is, is made known,—*by the judgments which he executeth.* But, above all, is the glory of God displayed in the work of REDEMPTION; in that great plan of love and mercy by a Redeemer, which was first revealed to the parents of our race immediately after the fall; which was more and more unfolded in the ceremonial economy; and which reached its meridian brightness, when the Saviour, the blessed "Sun of Righteousness" rose upon a dark world. In this wonderful plan of salvation, the glory of God shines with

its brightest lustre. Here all his perfections unite and harmonize, and shine with transcendent glory. Now, when the Gospel, which proclaims this plan of mercy, shall be preached and received throughout the world; when every kindred, and people, and nation and tongue shall not only be instructed in its sublime doctrines, but also brought under its benign and sanctifying power; then, with emphatic propriety, may it be said that "the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord." As the highest glory, of which an individual creature is capable, is to bear the image of his Maker; so the highest glory of which our world at large is capable, is to be filled with the holy and benevolent Spirit of Him *who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person*;—is to have the knowledge and love of the Saviour reigning over all the population of our globe, *from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same.*

It is this universal prevalence of the true religion; that religion which alone can enlighten, sanctify and save; that religion which imparts the highest physical and moral glory, wherever it reigns, and in proportion as it reigns;—it is the universal prevalence of this glory which is promised in our text. When this holy and benevolent religion shall fill the world, then shall be brought to pass the promise which is here recorded. Yes, when the benign power of the Gospel, and all the graces and virtues which it inspires, shall reign over all the family of man; when the highest intellectual and moral culture shall be every where enjoyed; when the voice of prayer and praise shall be heard in every tabernacle; when the Sabbath shall be universally kept holy to God; when the Christian law of marriage, that noblest and most precious bond of social purity and happiness, shall be universally and sacredly obeyed; when the temperance reformation, without any unscriptural extremes, or fanatical perversions, shall pervade the world: when "wars shall cease to the ends of the earth;" when fraud and violence shall be banished from the abodes of men; when the voice of profaneness shall no more pollute the lips or the ears of creatures claiming to be rational; when tyranny and oppression, in every form, shall come to an end; when sectarian feuds and jealousies shall be unknown, save only in the pages of history; when all heresy and error shall give place to the power of truth, and all vice and profligacy to the reign of Christian purity; when the Mosque and the Pagoda shall be transformed into temples of the Christian's God: when the habitations of savage cruelty shall become the abodes of holiness and peace; when the activity of a greatly extended commerce shall be directed chiefly to the intellectual and moral culture of society; when justice, order, industry, brotherly kindness, and charity shall universally reign;—in a word, when the church of God, with all its choicest influences, shall fill the earth;—then shall the promise before us be gloriously realized. This will be emphatically, "the glory of the Lord;"—the glory of his power; the glory of his holiness; the glory of his love. It will be, in its measure, the same glory which forms the blessedness of the heavenly world; the same glory in which those *whose robes have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, walk in white raiment before the throne of God.* O how glorious shall this fallen world be,

when all the nations which compose it shall be "just, fearing God;" when those who are nominally "the people of God, shall be all righteous;" when every family shall be the abode of purity, order, and love; when every individual shall be a "temple of the Holy Ghost;" and when, from pole to pole, the song of jubilee shall be heard—*Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever! Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!*

Such appears to be the import of the promise before us.—Let us next inquire,

II. WHAT REASON HAVE WE FOR BELIEVING THAT THESE SCENES OF GLORY WILL ONE DAY BE REALIZED? This is, to the Christian's heart, a most interesting inquiry. Let us ponder it with a seriousness corresponding to its unspeakable importance.

And here it is obvious to remark, that there will be no need of *miracles* (in the ordinary sense of that word) to bring about the accomplishment of the promise before us. Only suppose the genuine power of the Gospel, which we see to reign in thousands of individuals and families now—actually to reign in all hearts, and to pervade the world,—and the work is done. But how can we hope for this? I answer—

1. First of all, and above all, our hope is founded on JEHOVAH'S FAITHFUL AND UNERRING PROMISE. This is, undoubtedly, the chief ground of confidence. For that a religion which has been preached for eighteen centuries, and which has been as yet received, even nominally, by less than a fourth part of mankind, will one day, and, at most, in a century or two from this hour, pervade and govern the world, we can expect with confidence only on the promise of Him who is Almighty, and who cannot lie. But this promise is surely enough for the most unwavering confidence. *Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Jehovah is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.* Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of all that has gone out of the mouth of Jehovah shall not pass away, until all be fulfilled.

Let us attend, then, to some of the promises on this subject with which the word of God abounds. Take the following as a small specimen of the "exceeding great and precious" catalogue found in the inspired volume. *The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ,* Rev. xi. 15. *Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession,* Ps. ii. 8. *All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him,* Ps. xxii. 27. *From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place shall incense be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts,* Mal. i. 11. *And I will gather all nations, and tongues, and cause them to come and see my glory,* Isa. lxvi. 18. *And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of*

the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it, Isa. ii. 2. His name shall be continued as long as the sun; men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed, Ps. lxxii. 17. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, and the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God, Isa. xxxv. 1, 2. And the kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; and all dominions shall serve and obey him, Dan. vii. 27. He shall say to the North, Give up; and to the South, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth, Isa. xliii. 6. His way shall be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations, Ps. lxxvii. 2. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, Isa. xl. 5. Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God, Ps. lxxviii. 31. The isles shall wait for his law, Isa. xlii. 4. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth, Zech. ix. 10. All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God, Isa. liii. 10. We see not yet all things put under Him, Heb. ii. 8. But he must reign, until all enemies shall be put under his feet, 1 Cor. xv. 25. At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Christ to the glory of God the Father, Phil. ii. 10, 11. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, Hab. ii. 14.

Such is a specimen of Jehovah's promises respecting the future prevalence and power of the gospel. Read them, Christians, with joy and confidence. Ponder them daily and well in your hearts, as a source of continual encouragement. And remember that they shall all, without failure, be gloriously accomplished. I cannot tell you precisely *when* this happy period shall arrive; but I can tell you, on authority not to be questioned, that, at the appointed time, this earth, so long the abode of sin and sorrow, shall be restored from its desolations, and made to bloom like "the garden of the Lord." I can tell you, that her Almighty King will yet, notwithstanding every unfavorable appearance, *make Zion beautiful through his own comeliness put upon her; that he will yet cause her righteousness to go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth, Isa. lxii. 1.* These promises may not, indeed, be all fully accomplished, until we, who now listen to their recital, shall be all sleeping in the dust; or, rather, if by the grace of God, we be made meet for it,—rejoicing before the throne, in possession of still brighter glory. But, "though we die, God shall surely visit his people" in mercy. Though neither we, nor even the next generation shall be permitted to witness on earth the complete development of "the latter day glory;" yet let us rejoice in the assurance that it will come in due time, and in all its promised blessedness. *The vision is yet for an appointed time; but in the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry, Hab. ii. 8.*

2. But further, our confidence that the religion of Christ will, one day, fill the whole earth with its glory, is confirmed by the consideration, that THIS RELIGION IS, IN ITS NATURE, ADAPTED ABOVE ALL OTHERS TO BE A UNIVERSAL RELIGION.

In all the forms of false religion with which our world is filled, there is something which renders them unfit or impracticable for universal adoption. Some are adapted to particular *climates* only; others to particular states of *society*; a third class to particular *orders* of men; so that, in their very nature, they cannot be universal. Indeed none of the Pagans seem ever to have thought of a universal religion, as either to be expected or desired. Nay, even the true religion, as it appeared in its infant and ceremonial form, under the old economy, was not, in its external method of dispensation, adapted to be universal. For, not to mention many other circumstances, it required all its professors to go up "three times a year" to the same temple to worship. And, accordingly, long before the Messiah came in the flesh, it was made perfectly apparent, from so many of the descendants of *Abraham* being scattered abroad in different and distant parts of the world, that it was becoming, to the Jewish people, as such, an impracticable system. Suppose all the four quarters of our globe to be filled with zealot, devoted Jews. Every one sees, that a rigid compliance with their ritual would be physically impossible. And, therefore, when the time for *Shiloh's* appearance drew near, it became, every year, more and more plain,—however slow some of that "peculiar people" were in learning the lesson,—that the ceremonial economy *must* come to an end;—*must*, of course, yield to a system less restrictive in its character, and more fitted for "every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue."

Accordingly, when we examine the religion of Jesus Christ, in its New Testament form, we find it divested of every feature and circumstance adapted to confine it to any particular territory or people. Its *doctrines*, its *worship*, and its system of *moral duty* are all equally adapted to universality. It teaches that *God has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the whole earth*, Acts xvii. 26.—*That he is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him*, Acts x. 34, 35.—*That he is alike related to all the children of men, as their Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor*; and that the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the monarch and the slave, all stand upon a level in his sight, and have all equal access, if penitent and believing, to the throne of his heavenly grace. It proclaims one method of justification for all classes of men; one kind of preparation for heaven; and that not ceremonial, but moral and spiritual; and one great code of moral duty, equally applicable to the learned and the ignorant, the polished and the rude, the civilized and the savage. And as all the great doctrines and principles of the religion of Christ are equally adapted to the whole human family: so the rational and benevolent laws, the unostentatious rites, the simple worship, and the whole spirit and requirements of this religion, are no less adapted to be universally received as the religion of the whole race of man. It has nothing local; nothing national; nothing exclusive, except its

uncompromising holiness ; no burdensome ritual ; no tedious or expensive pilgrimages ; no blazing altars ; no bloody sacrifices ; no intricate genealogies ; no special adaptedness to any particular form of civil government, or occupation in life. In short, every thing in this blessed religion ;—the simple costume which it wears ; the heavenly spirit which it breathes ; its law of marriage ; its holy sabbath ; its meekness, forgiveness, humility, and benevolence ; applying alike to all classes of men, and to all states of society ;—proclaim that it is suited to the condition of man, in all nations and ages ; to meet the exigencies of all ; to supply their wants ; to refine and invigorate their talents ; to elevate their character ; and to unite all who receive it, into one sanctified and happy brotherhood. Surely this character of our holy religion is adapted to confirm our confidence that it will, one day, as Jehovah has promised, gloriously fill the world ; and that, literally, in Christ “ all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

3. I have only to add, under this head, THAT THE PRESENT ASPECT OF THE WORLD FURNISHES MUCH REASON TO HOPE THAT THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THIS PROMISE IS DRAWING NIGH.

It cannot be denied, indeed, that, on the principles of worldly calculation, there is much in the present condition of mankind to distress and dishearten. More than *seven parts out of eight* of the whole population of our globe, are still sunk in deplorable darkness and corruption. Of the eight hundred millions of immortal souls, which the earth is supposed to contain, only about *sixty*, or, at most, *seventy millions* are nominally Protestants. The great mass of the remaining *seven hundred and forty millions*, are either Pagans or Mohammedans, or nearly as destitute as either, of saving, evangelical light. Of these sixty or seventy millions of nominal Protestants, only about a third part, or a little more than twenty millions can be said to have the real gospel of Christ, in any thing like its purity, so much as preached among them. Of those, which, in a large sense of the word, we may call *evangelical congregations*, probably not more than one half, or *twelve millions*, are so much as professors of religion, in any distinct or intelligent import of the terms. That is, of the *eight hundred millions* of the world's population, but little more than an **EIGHTIETH PART** are even **PROFESSORS OF RELIGION**, in any scriptural form, or claim to know any thing of its sanctifying power. How many of these professors of religion we may calculate upon as probably real Christians—ah!—that is a question on which the humble, enlightened believer, though he may hesitate and weep, will forbear to attempt an estimate !

Such is, confessedly, at present, the dark and distressing state of the great mass of our world's population. To what a lamentably small extent is that “glory” of which our text speaks, found to reign among our fellow men ! What a little remnant, among all the multiplied millions of mankind, have any adequate or saving knowledge of the religion of Christ ! O what a moral charnel-house does our world appear ! What a valley of “dry bones!—exceeding dry !” “Can these dry bones live ?” Yea, they shall live ! *The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.* And even now, amidst the darkness and

misery which brood over the greater part of the earth, there are appearances, every where, which promise the approach of better days. It is but a short time since a large part of the inhabited globe, was absolutely closed against the missionaries of the cross. Ten or fifteen years ago, *Egypt, Arabia, Persia, China, the Burman empire, and a large part of Africa and her islands*;—in short, by far the greater portion of the Pagan and Mohammedan world, were rigorously shut against the Gospel. Missionaries could not so much as enter those countries, without incurring either certain death, or the most immediate risk of it. But now it may be said, without exaggeration, that the whole world is opened wide to the bearers of the Gospel message. I know not that there is, at this hour, a single portion of the globe to which the enlightened and prudent missionary may not obtain some degree of access,—unless it be some portions which bear the Christian name, but are under the spiritual despotism of “the man of sin, the son of perdition, who exalteth himself against all that is called God.” He who “sits as Governor among the nations,” seems to be spreading a *natural preparation*, if I may so express it, around the world, for the preaching of the Gospel among all nations. He seems to be slowly and silently laying a train for mighty movements in time to come. He seems to be showing us how easy it is for him to incline the hearts even of his enemies—from worldly motives—not merely to permit the Gospel to enter their territories, but to *invite* its ministers to come in and proclaim their message. Never before was so large a portion of mankind accessible to the evangelical laborer. Never before was there so much evidence that the most massive fabrics of superstition are crumbling to the dust, and ready to give place to a more pure and rational system. Never before were there so many appearances which promise the fulfillment of that prediction that “nations shall be born in a day.” It is believed by some that there are at this moment, in the city of *Calcutta*, several thousands of young Hindoos, who are disposed seriously to inquire on the subject of salvation, and by no means indisposed to exchange their miserable superstition for a better form of religion. Only suppose such a body of young men prepared by the grace of God, and going forth in the Spirit and power of Christ into every part of *Hindoostan*, and how might that deplorable moral wilderness be transformed into a fertile and delightful garden of the Lord! How might a thousand Asiatic deserts be made speedily to “rejoice and blossom as the rose!” What say you, my Christian friends, to appearances and opportunities such as these? O ye who profess to know something of the sweetness of redeeming love, and the preciousness of Christian hopes, shall we be blind to these wonderful openings of Providence? Shall we be deaf to these importunate invitations to enlighten and save perishing men?

Contemplate, further, the singular progress of various forms of improvement throughout the civilized world; all of which may be considered as bearing on the great promise contained in our text. Behold the *intercourse* between distant portions of the globe increasing every day with a rapidity, and to an extent, beyond all former precedent! Think of the endless improvements in the means of *convoynce* from one part of the world to another; thereby investing mis-

sionary enterprises with facilities for carrying on their operations unknown to our fathers. Consider the wonderful improvements in the art of *printing*, and indeed in all the mechanic arts, rendering the multiplication of Bibles, and other pious writings, for the benefit of the world, practicable and easy to an extent formerly thought incredible. Contemplate the extension of *commercial enterprise*, which late years have produced, presenting the means of benefiting mankind to an amount altogether new and extraordinary. Think of the enlargement of our acquaintance with the different *languages* of the globe; it being probable that *ten* persons, if not *twenty*, now understand other living languages than their own, where *one* had this knowledge fifty years ago. Think of the *Bible* having been *translated* into more than *one hundred and fifty* languages at this hour spoken among men; and of the process of preparing the Scriptures for circulation in every part of the globe, still going on with increasing rapidity. And dwell, for a moment, on what is no less remarkable—the *progress of public sentiment* in regard to the conversion of the world to God. What, ten years ago, would have been thought the extravagance of visionary dreaming, in regard to this great enterprise, is now looked at, and talked about, with a grave familiarity and confidence which it is delightful to contemplate. It is less than ten years since a proposal from a warm-hearted Christian in the State of *New-York*, to supply the destitute of one populous *county* with Bibles, was regarded as a bold attempt, and received with thrilling interest. Not many months afterwards, the young men of the College at *Princeton*, resolved, with a moral daring which was then almost ridiculed as presumptuous, to attempt to supply the destitute of the whole State of *New-Jersey* with Bibles in two years. Yet bold, and almost hopeless as this pledge appeared at the time of its adoption, it was, substantially, and with wonderfully apparent ease, redeemed. Hardly was this accomplished, before a resolution was adopted to attempt the supply of the destitute in the *whole United States* with Bibles within a specified time. For this resolution, when adopted, many even of the warmest friends of the Bible cause, were not prepared; but feared it would prove a presumptuous and abortive undertaking. Yet, as far as any thing of the kind is practicable in such a country as this, it was faithfully and happily accomplished. But scarcely was this done, when the enlarged spirit of public benevolence—still augmenting in a geometrical ratio, called for a still wider and nobler field of pious effort. To supply *all the accessible portions of the whole world* with the Word of life, within a specified time, was the sublime enterprise proposed to the American Bible Society, and to other Bible Societies in our own and foreign lands. A like rapid increase has been observable in the means furnished by public liberality, for carrying on the great enterprises of Christian benevolence which distinguish and adorn our age. They are, in all, from thirty to fifty fold, and in some more than a hundred fold, beyond what they were a quarter of a century ago. Now, in regard to all these, and other striking analogous facts, I ask, my friends, how shall we account for this *astonishing progress of public sentiment* in regard to plans for the conversion of the world to God? Can we possibly consider it as merely accidental, and without meaning? Surely

such a conclusion would be as much opposed to reason as to piety. May we not rather consider it as a precious omen, that the great work which it contemplates is happily drawing near, and will, before long, be gloriously realized?

And to me, it appears worthy of special notice, that there are so many indications that the *English language*,—the language of those parts of the world which are most favored with Gospel light, will probably, ere long, become *the prevailing language of the whole world*. The extensive and rapid progress of this language on the *American continent*; in all the *British possessions* and dependencies in the Eastern world; in the continent of *New Holland*; in many of the Islands of the Sea; and, in short, in every part of the earth where American or British missionaries are permitted to lift up their voice for Christ, is truly, one of the most striking and interesting spectacles now passing before the contemplative mind. If the time should ever again recur, when the “whole earth shall be of one language and one speech,” the *English*, I am persuaded, is more likely to be that language than any other. And may we not consider its gradual and remarkable extension as one of the means by which the “earth is to be filled with the glory of the Lord?”

While we contemplate some of those prominent features in the aspect of the present day, which seem to portend an unexampled spread of the Gospel;—we ought not to overlook some shades in the picture which certainly wear a very different appearance. Infidelity and heresy were, probably, never more busy in circulating their virulent poison, than at the present hour. Principles at war with all social stability and order, were, perhaps, never more widely extended in civilized society: and in both the civil and religious community, the ebullitions of morbid excitement have never been more threatening in their appearance. That there is a *great battle* yet to be fought with these opposing powers, no reflecting mind can for a moment doubt. How violent or long-continued the conflict may be, I presume not to calculate. But let no man's heart fail him on account of these approaching struggles. A little before the advent of the Messiah, it was said, *I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill my house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts*. And, in like manner, may we not hope that all the corruption in principle, and all the morbid feverishness in practice, which exhibit so revolting an aspect at the present time, may result, like many a process in the natural world, in which the animal body is renovated and strengthened by the consequences of a subdued fever; and in which the gradual and complete subsidence of feculent matter is hastened even by the violent agitation of an impure fluid? It is no new thing either for infidelity or fanaticism to furnish an antidote to its own poison, by disclosing the malignity of its virus, in the deadliness of its effects; and thus creating an extensive and permanent loathing of those moral potions which allure but to destroy. Many are “running to and fro;” but my hope is, that “knowledge will be thereby increased;” and that the present febrile state of the *social body*, will soon terminate, under the control of Him who is able to bring

good out of evil,—in more firm and established moral health; and in more widely extended, and better directed efforts than ever, for promoting the universal reign of knowledge, religion, and happiness among men. It remains that we

III. Inquire, WHAT IS OUR PRESENT DUTY IN RELATION TO THE PROMISE BEFORE US? And here,

1. Undoubtedly, our *first* duty is to *believe the promise*. This is the very least that can be demanded. Unbelief “makes God a liar;” poisons the very fountain of Christian confidence; cuts the nerves of all spiritual exertion; and tends to discouragement and despondency. To what purpose has Jehovah promised, if even his own people will not hear and believe? We may say now, I fear, to the great majority of those who bear the Christian name, as the Master himself said to the desponding disciples on their way to *Emmaus*—*O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!* Ah, my friends, the lack of faith is the great, crying sin, not of an ungodly world only, but eminently of Christians. It is the littleness of our faith which makes us dwarfs in spiritual stature; cowards in conflict and in enterprise; narrow-minded in our views and plans of duty; and niggards in sacrifice and in contribution to the cause of Christ. Yes, it is the sin and the misery even of the sincere disciples of Christ, that the promises of God have so little daily influence on their practical habits. Christians! be afraid of unbelief; be ashamed of unbelief; only believe, and act as if you believed; and you shall see the salvation of God.

2. Another duty incumbent upon us in relation to this promise, is to *labor and pray without ceasing for its accomplishment*. They are undoubtedly guilty of an unwise and criminal perversion of God’s word, who infer, because he has promised a specific and rich blessing, and will certainly bring it to pass, that *therefore* they may repose in a state of entire inaction and unconcern respecting the event. There is no piety, my friends, in that confidence which neglects *prayer*, and which does not add to prayer *diligent effort* to attain that for which it prays. *Show me thy faith by thy works*, is a maxim equally of reason and revelation. God’s kingdom is a kingdom of means. He never did, and probably never will, convey the light of the Gospel to any people, by direct miracle; but by the agency of man. He “will be inquired of,” he declares, by us—to accomplish even that which he hath promised, and which he fully intends to bring about. And although he is able to effect all his purposes of mercy and salvation without the instrumentality of man’s labors, yet he condescends, in all cases to employ them. And is it not a mercy that he *does* require and employ them? Does not every reflecting man perceive that it is a wise and benign arrangement of Providence which renders constant activity of body and mind indispensable to the highest physical, intellectual, and moral enjoyment? And can any one doubt that it is an equally wise and merciful arrangement which makes it our duty to pray, and exert ourselves without ceasing to promote the reign of salvation throughout the world? Not only is it certain that the great King of Zion has commanded us to send the Gospel to every creature: not only is it manifest that we may properly estimate our Christian character by the degree in which we take an active interest in the

conversion of the world ; but it is equally plain, that every fervent prayer we offer, and every sincere effort we make for hastening this great consummation, has a tendency to benefit our own souls, as well as the souls of others ; to increase our faith ; to influence our love ; to enlarge our vision ; in a word, to make us more like Christ, and to impart a richer preparation for the holy joys of his presence. In short, we may say of him who is much employed in fervent prayer, and in diligent labor and sacrifice for the conversion of the world to God,—that he is *twice blessed* ; blessed as a benefactor of his fellow men, and as the receiver of a blessing, by the very act of conferring benefits on others.

3. A third duty, in relation to the promise in our text, is, that, in laboring for the spread of the Gospel, *no adverse occurrence, however painful, ought ever to discourage us, or at all to weaken either our confidence, or our efforts.* What could be more discouraging, than the state of the visible church, when the promise before us was given ? Yet the promise itself really prohibited all despondency. If indeed, we had any thing short of Jehovah's promise to rely upon, when difficulties or disappointments arose, we might despond. But *with* that promise, we may meet the most distressing difficulties without fear. What though some of our fondest hopes and plans are frustrated ? What though some of those instruments on which the highest confidence was placed, unexpectedly fail ? What though the lamented *Evarts*, and *Cornelius*, and *Wisner*, follow each other in quick succession to their eternal reward, and leave us to mourn over the sore bereavement of the missionary cause ? What though one beloved brother and sister after another falls, in the flower of life, and on the fields whitening to the harvest ? What though even the hand of savage violence be permitted to cut down young, zealous, and promising heralds of salvation, when just about to present the glorious Gospel to their merciless murderers ? Our tears may flow, over bereavements such as these. They ought to flow. But let no thought of discouragement arise. Frail instruments may die ; but the "Captain of salvation" lives. Is the military commander disheartened, when, in the shock of battle, some of his choicest subalterns fall around him ? Not if he has the heart of a soldier. And shall the "good soldier of Jesus Christ" have less courage ? In fact, every adverse occurrence ought only to constrain us to turn our confidence from the creature, and to place it more firmly and entirely on the Lord of all creatures. Tell us not, then, of the difficulties which beset our enterprise for the conversion of the world. Tell us not, that, going on as the Christian church has done for eighteen centuries, it will take thousands of ages completely to evangelize all nations ; or rather, that, at that rate of progress, there is little hope that the work can ever be accomplished. We know it all. And if our dependence were on the wisdom and power of man, we might abandon all hope. But in the name and strength of Jehovah, our covenant God, who can never fail or grow weary, we may go forward with confidence, in the face of every difficulty ; intimidated by no danger ; disheartened by no disappointment or adverse occurrence. Nay, how often has it happened that those events which we considered as deeply calamitous, and over which we mourned, as greatly hindering the Gospel,—have resulted

in its signal and extensive furtherance! When *Stephen*, the first martyr, was stoned to death by an infuriated mob, to whom he came with a message of love, "devout men," we are told, "*carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.*" But, mark the event! That persecution, though not so intended by the persecutors, became the means of sending many ministers of the Gospel away from *Jerusalem*, in various directions, and thus of extending and building up the church of God, instead of effecting its destruction, as the malignant adversary had confidently expected.

4. A further duty, in reference to the promise before us, is, that we *pray without ceasing for the power of the Holy Spirit*, to render all the means which are employed for its accomplishment, effectual. When we recollect the extent and difficulty of the work to be done: how many millions are yet in darkness and misery: how hard and full of enmity the human heart; and how obstinately the warnings and entreaties of mercy have been resisted;—we may well despair of human wisdom and strength; and look to Almighty power alone for success. *It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit*, saith *Jehovah*, that means are attended with a saving energy. Had we millions of the most learned, eloquent and holy preachers in Christendom to send forth, and all the funds that could be asked or desired for this enterprise;—all would be in vain, unless the power of the Almighty Spirit went along with the laborers. While, therefore, we labor with unwearied perseverance for the conversion of the world; while we raise funds with growing liberality; while we select, instruct and send forth the most able and devoted missionaries that we can find, and while we employ all the means in our power for imparting the Gospel to every creature; let us remember, that all will be unavailing, unless the Holy Spirit accompany and give efficacy to the means employed. Let every thing pertaining to the spread of the Gospel, be done under the deep impression, that, in our own strength we can effect nothing; that the promise is *Jehovah's* word; that the accomplishment of it is *Jehovah's* work; that to *Him*, of course, for bringing to pass what he has promised, every eye and every heart ought to be directed. And allow me, my beloved friends, to say, we are never likely to be either so happy, or so successful in any enterprise for extending the Redeemer's kingdom, as when we lie in the dust of abasement, sensible of our utter inability to command, by our own power, the least portion of the blessing which we seek; and placing all our dependence for success, at every step, on the Holy Spirit's life-giving energy. And I must also be allowed to say, that, in my own view, this doctrine, viz. *that success is all of God*, instead of being a legitimate source of discouragement, is, while it humbles, at the same time, one of the most comforting and animating of all doctrines. For though it be most true, that *he who planteth is nothing, and he who watereth is nothing—but God that giveth the increase*;—it is also equally true, that all hearts are in his hands, and that he is able to turn the most blind and hardened to himself, *as the rivers of water are turned*. O, it is sweet to the believing heart, to lean on God; to plead his promises; and to rejoice in the assurance, that though man cannot do it, by reason of weakness, He "with whom all things are possible," and who

"cannot lie," hath promised that the whole "earth shall be filled with his glory;" and that He is at once able and faithful to bring it to pass.

5. Finally; if so great a work as evangelizing the whole world, is promised, and is certainly to be accomplished, *then our plans and efforts for promoting this object ought to bear a corresponding character*: that is, they ought to be *large, liberal, and ever expanding*. We ought to consider it as our duty to devote to this object our utmost resources, and to engage the co-operation of all, over whom we can exert an influence.

The promise of God to his people is, *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it*. It is spoken of in various passages of Scripture as an excellence in Christian character, that the *heart be enlarged*;—that is, filled with large affections, large desires, large hopes, and large confidence. Never were Scriptures more applicable than these to the case before us. When we direct our attention to the spread of the Gospel, our views, our prayers, our efforts are all too stinted and narrow. We scarcely ever lift our eyes to the real grandeur and claims of the enterprise in which we profess to be engaged. We are too apt to be satisfied with small and occasional contributions of service to this greatest of all causes instead of devoting to it hearts truly enlarged; instead of desiring great things; expecting great things; praying for great things; and nurturing in our spirits that holy elevation of sentiment and affection, which embraces in its desires and prayers the entire kingdom of God; and which can be satisfied with nothing short of the "whole earth being filled with the glory of the Lord."

We, now and then, meet with a professing Christian who really does seem to regard the kingdom of Christ—its enlargement and glory—as the greatest interest in the universe; and who does seem to desire unfeignedly to consecrate all that he has and is to promote its progress. But, Oh, how small is the number of those who manifest this spirit! My dear friends, the number of such must greatly increase, before the church at large can be expected to *rise from the dust, and put on her beautiful garments*. The whole style of Christian character—if I may be allowed the expression—must become, generally, more decided; more active; more unreservedly devoted;—more abundant and fervent in prayer; more enlarged and liberal in the system of giving—*far more*, before the spread of the Gospel can correspond with the Divine promises; before it is possible that our raised expectations with respect to the conversion of the world can ever be realized. Yes, life and power must be greatly increased *within the church*, before her *power on the world* can be widely extended, and triumphantly glorious. Professing Christians must be seen to be really in earnest in their faith and hope, before they can be expected to make a deep impression on the impenitent around them. We often come to you, Christian brethren, soliciting your pecuniary aid, in bearing the Gospel and its heralds to the ends of the earth. And, truly, without this aid, we cannot carry on our benevolent operations for a single day. But, after all, we are much more anxious to see your souls swelling with holy love, and holy zeal, and holy activity; because we know that *this* indicates more deep and enlarged spiritual

advancement; and because it is a pledge, not of a mere fitful gush of liberality; but of a perennial stream of Christian bounty, flowing from love to the infinitely precious cause.

This character was once much more common, than it is at the present day. How ought we at once to be humbled and animated, when we read the history of the *primitive Christians*! Many of them, literally and cheerfully, gave up all for Christ. Contemplate, my beloved friends,—contemplate the affecting narrative! Ah! how they labored, and denied themselves, and made sacrifices, and gave their substance—sometimes to the last farthing—for the cause of Christ. See them “counting all things but loss,” and even cheerfully going to the stake, when the Saviour’s honor required it. Read this narrative, professing Christians, and then say, whether those who feel reluctant to give the price even of a few luxurious dinners for promoting the Redeemer’s kingdom, can seriously believe that they are animated by the same spirit with those devoted disciples?

But how ought we to be still more deeply humbled and animated, when we call to mind what our blessed Saviour has done for us! I have sometimes heard professing Christians talk of doing and giving as much toward the spread of the glorious Gospel, “as they *conveniently* could.” Surely this is wonderful language for the professed followers of a crucified Redeemer! Did our blessed Master do no more for us than he “*conveniently could*?” Did He not give *his life* for our redemption? Did He not, in offering up himself a sacrifice, that we might not die, yield himself to sufferings unparalleled and indescribable? Shall not every one, then, who calls himself by the name of Christ, make the language of *Paul*, in all its force and tenderness, his own!—*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 which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.*

Lift up your eyes, Christian brethren, on the unnumbered millions of our globe, sunk in ignorance, pollution and misery! Think of their condition: a condition in which *you* must have been at this hour, had it not been for the wonderful grace of God. Contrast with that condition your own mercies and privileges, and then ask, whether you ought not to feel for those who are thus miserable, and try to help them? Christians! can you enjoy your Bibles, your Sabbaths, your sanctuaries, your sacramental tables, and all your precious privileges and hopes *alone*? Can you enjoy these hallowed scenes, and heavenly gifts, and know their value, and yet slumber in ignoble indolence over the moral desolations of those who are perishing for lack of them? Can you calmly sit by, and see million after million of treasure cheerfully expended for amusement, luxury and sin; and only a few stinted thousands devoted to the greatest, best work of enlightening and saving the world? O whither has the spirit of the Bible fled? May He who gave the Bible, and the promise before us, restore it in his time!

Let us, then, with one accord, rouse ourselves, and endeavor to rouse others to new zeal, and larger enterprise in spreading the knowledge and glory of the

Lord. Every heart, every tongue, and every hand that can be stirred up to engage in this great work, from infancy to old age, is needed. And remember that the more thoroughly any of the children of men can be excited and consecrated to this work—the richer the benefit they gain for themselves. Christian brother! Christian sister! whoever you are, in this large assembly!—you have each, respectively, a duty to perform in reference to this mighty work. It is incumbent upon you to do all in your power for sending the light of life to the benighted and the perishing. Nay, upon every human being, whether in the church, or out of it, there lies an obligation to aid, as far as God gives the opportunity, in sending to “every creature” that gospel which is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” We invite you all, my hearers, not merely to the *duty*, but to the *precious privilege*, of co-operating in this holy and blessed enterprise. And we can venture to assure you, that, if the day should ever come, in which your hearts shall be thoroughly imbued with the *spirit of missions*, it will be the happiest period of your lives; as well as the pledge and the dawn of that wide-spread glory, which our text proclaims as certain and approaching. We can point you to no higher honor, no richer pleasure on this side of heaven, than that which is found in enlightened, zealous, active, absorbing zeal for spreading the holy, life-giving religion of Jesus Christ from the rising to the setting sun.

For the promotion of this work, my friends, the “American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions” has convened in this place. Our hope in coming together is, that we may be enabled, by the grace of God, to excite each other to more lively sensibility, and more ardent zeal, in the great Missionary cause which we have associated to carry on; and also that we may be instrumental in adding something to the missionary spirit which we hope already exists in the enlightened and favored population of this city. We are now celebrating the *twenty-sixth* anniversary of our Board: and, instead of being weary of our work, we can sincerely declare, that in looking back on our past course, our only regret is, that we have not labored with far more diligence and sanctified ardor in the cause of the world’s conversion; that our plans have not been more enlarged; and that we have not prayed more, and done more in this greatest of all causes in which Christians can engage. Yes, brethren, beloved of the Lord, we come to mingle our vows with yours; to proclaim with deeper conviction than ever, that we consider the cause of missions as the most precious cause in the world; and to bind ourselves by new resolutions, that we will, by the help of God, with greater zeal than heretofore, “spend and be spent” in this most blessed service. What more worthy object can we seek, than contributing to fill the earth with the glory of the Lord? Brethren, pray for us, that we may be faithful to our sacred trust. Pray for yourselves, that you may not be found wanting in the payment of that mighty debt, you owe to your Divine Master, and to a perishing world. And let us all, more and more, aspire to the honor of being “workers together with God” in hastening the triumphs of Immanuel’s universal reign. *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; and let the whole earth be filled with thy glory!* Amen! and Amen!

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SERMON CCVI.

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THE RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE OF MOTHERS.

2 KINGS 4 : 19. *Carry him to his mother.*

THE text is taken from a story of much tenderness and beauty. In the various journeys which Elisha made from Carmel to Samaria, he frequently passed through Shunam, where lived a woman well known for her piety and her rank, among the inhabitants of the place. Seeing how frequently the "holy man of God passed by," she proposed to her husband to have a chamber suitably furnished for his accommodation: "and it shall be," she added, "when he comes, he will turn in hither." The prophet was pleased with this exercise of piety and generosity on his behalf, and when "he came thither, he turned into the chamber and lay there." But if he was pleased, he wished also to manifest his gratitude; and he sent to her, saying, "Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?" Promotion at court, however, was not her ambition. She was loved and respected where she was; and she answered, "I dwell among mine own people."

There was one point, however, on which her feelings were deeply interested. She was childless; had no son or daughter on whom to exercise her affections, and to whom she might impart the influence of her good example, and her distinguished name. And in the way most welcome of all others, we find she had her recompense for the kindness shown to the man of God. Elisha predicts to her the birth of a son, and in due time she becomes the happy mother of a child, the more beloved, no doubt, for his having been given to her with such marks of Heaven's favor.

But how soon may the choicest comforts become sources of bitterest sorrows! "When the child was grown," grown, too, it would appear, to that age of childhood, most interesting to parents, "it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers." While in the field, he is suddenly taken ill, exclaiming to his father, "My head, my head!" who immediately directed one of the lads to "carry him to his mother."

It was the best plan for the child; and, if there was hope for him at all
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there he would find it. But, though carried to her without delay, and from the hour he was brought to her, not once removed from her eye, when "he had sat on her knees till noon, he then died." Overpowered as she must have been for the moment by this sudden calamity—her child of promise and of prayer, well in the morning, and a corpse on her lap at noon—yet not a murmur escaped from her; and she began at once to act like one whose mind was more fixed on the resuscitation of her child, than on its burial. "She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God," and then hastened away to Carmel, to lay her sorrow before the prophet, saying to her servant, "Drive, and go forward, slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee." She was seen by Elisha, while yet "afar off;" and his anxiety being awakened by her eager haste, he commands his servant to "run and meet her, and to say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?" Feeling, as she did, that whatever God does, is well done, she answered, "It is well;" and rushing past the servant, she threw herself in the bitterness of her soul at the feet of "the man of God." There she presented her case, and refused to leave him, till he would go with her to the chamber where the child "was laid upon his bed." He went, therefore, and having entered, and "shut the door upon them twain," he "prayed unto the Lord." In answer to his prayer, accompanied by action significant of his earnest engagedness, the "flesh of the child waxed warm," it "opened its eyes," and its heart again began to beat with the pulsation of life. The anxious mother was then called, and directed to "take up her son," now no longer a cold corpse, but animated with all the freshness of former days. Her joy, as she looked upon him thus restored to life and to her, did not lead her to forget her Maker and his; and, accordingly, first owning the Divine goodness and power to which she was indebted for her child, she "bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son and went out."

The narrative does not tell us how the child grew from this time forth, and what he became in after life. It leaves this to be inferred from the character of the mother, to whose hands his childhood was committed. The silence of the Scriptures is often as full of meaning as its express declarations; and if we are not expressly told in the story before us, yet we are led to believe, that, childhood being spent beneath such a mother's care, manhood must have ripened in piety and usefulness, perhaps in brilliant fame, and death have been met in peace. And here you have the object of our present discourse. It is to show,

How much the future happiness and welfare of children, both in this world and the world to come, must depend on the piety and faithfulness of mothers. Or, in allusion to the history from which our text is taken, it is to show,

That it depends, under God, on the mother's pious care over those in childhood, how far they are to pass unharmed at last, through the ills of life, and whether they shall be found, in the end, quickened from death in trespasses and sins, and heirs according to the hope of life everlasting. "As is the mother, so is the daughter," saith the proverb of the ancients; and

equally true is it, in the sense we have described, that "as is the mother, so is the son." Let us consider,

1. How facts bear on the illustration of the truth now advanced. We have read history to little purpose, if we have not observed, that there are periods when corruption seems to acquire a peculiar and fearful sway in our world; and these sad changes are generally attributed to the influence of some distinguished leader, or leaders in wickedness, who impress their own corrupt image on the generation in which they live. But if we trace the evils to their true source, we must go farther back than to the men who stand thus prominent in producing them. Had I time, I would here show, that all those great changes from bad to worse, which have rendered nations so corrupt as to consign them to ruin, have been effected through the corrupting influence of mothers, acting on those in childhood, who, in manhood, became the leading men of their day. Such, the Holy Scriptures inform us, was the real cause of that awful wickedness which brought the waters of the deluge on the earth. It was not till "the sons of God took to them wives of the daughters of men," (thus contracting unhallowed and forbidden alliances,) that "the wickedness of man became so great in the earth that it repented the Lord that he had made man, and he said, I will destroy man which I created, from the face of the earth." And what is so marked as the immediate cause of the wide spread depravity which called for the destruction of a world, is equally marked in other parts of the Scriptures, as the grand source of ruin to the nations whose history they record. Have you never observed how frequently they allude to the mothers of Israel, and of Judah's kings, when in the days of the nation's decline the throne passed in such rapid succession from one king to another, "who did evil in the sight of the Lord?" The career of guilt and declension was sometimes checked by the raising up of one good king, who walked in the way of the Lord. Such was Josiah, of whom we are told, "his mother's name was Jedediah;"—a name which at once announces her piety and worth. But see how the parentage of the wicked and idolatrous kings is noted. We are told of Abijah, the grandson of Solomon, and who was, perhaps, the first who filled the land with idolatry, that his mother's name was Maachah. Of Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, who did evil exceedingly in the sight of the Lord, we are told that his mother was Jezebel, who stirred up his father Ahab to sin. In like manner we are told of Jehoahaz, that his mother's name was Hamutal; of Jehoiakim, that his mother's name was Zebadiah; of Jehoiachin, that his mother's name was Nehushta:—names which, taken in connection with their history, sufficiently show the evil courses they pursued, and the consequent evil influence they would exert.

Now, why was this all so carefully noted? It was to show that the bane of the nation was found in the nurseries of her kings, where their infant minds were tainted and poisoned by their Jezebel mothers; and that being thus early led into sin, when in after life they gained the throne, their baleful influence was felt in spreading wickedness around them, till their nation was carried away into captivity, and their land left a desolation. It was the corrupt queen-mothers, corrupting the minds of their infant sons, who were to be, in future

kings, that primarily and mainly drew down the anger of God; nor was it till this insidious source of evil had been for generations at work, that hope finally perished.

But if maternal influence is thus powerful for evil, it is equally powerful for good, when rightly and wisely employed. Nor do I believe the assertion at all too strong, when I say, that the greatest and best of those whom we count among the great and good of our race, have always derived the elements of their characters from maternal care bestowed on them in childhood. If, in all the annals of the human race, there be an exception to our position, let it be named; let us be told where it is. It cannot be found in the pages of sacred history. The testimony here, respecting those whose names it has embalmed for immortality, is all one way. Such, it tells us, was the training under which the childhood of Moses was passed. The faith and piety of his mother were so strong, that "she did not fear the king's wrath;" thus showing herself a fit mother for a son who was to be the deliverer of Israel from Egyptian bondage, and the lawgiver to the redeemed nation. And who does not see the hand and design of God in that wonderful train of events which secured to the child of such high destiny, the care of a mother so peculiarly fitted for her task.

Under a like happy influence was the childhood of David passed; as he acknowledges in his subsequent days of power and fame. "Oh, Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the *son of thine handmaid*; thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and will call on the name of the Lord:"—thus in the days of his highest prosperity and greatest fame, recognising his pious mother's influence, not only as having mainly contributed to elevate him to Israel's throne, but as having been the bright star which kept alive his hope, in the darkest hour of his previous troubles.

To the same cause, as already observed in the case of Josiah, are we taught to attribute, in great measure, the wisdom and power which distinguished such of Judah's kings as "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord."

Again: John, the forerunner of our Saviour, is said to have had none greater than himself of all who had been born of women. But his mother was *Elizabeth*, a woman who "walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

Again: among the apostles of our Lord was one distinguished as "a son of thunder;" and another privileged to "lean on his Master's bosom," and to receive very special tokens of his love. But when we are told of the piety and holy ambition of *their mother*, we may account, at least in part, for their distinction among the twelve. (Matt. 20: 20, 21.) And not to mention others from the sacred Scriptures, as Timothy, whose "unfeigned faith dwelt first in his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice;" who, let me ask with reverence, was the mother of our Lord and Saviour himself? It was *Mary*, to whom the salutation from heaven was given—"Hail, highly favored; *the Lord is with thee.*" Thus showing, in the most illustrious of all examples, that

whatever is expected to ripen into true greatness, and perfection, must be first nurtured under a mother's piety, and wisdom, and faithfulness.

And on whom has the Saviour's mantle ever fallen, or in whom has his Spirit ever dwelt, with peculiar manifestation, who may not be added to the cloud of witnesses on this point? In far-gone times, look into the biographies of Polycarp, Augustine, Justin, Gregory, and others of the Fathers; and in later days, look to the childhood of our own Edwards, Dwight, Payson, Mills, and the whole army of those, at home and abroad, who are this day owned and hailed as the champions of truth, and you will find them all, without exception, to have been the sons of pious and faithful mothers. Nor is it only from the great and illustrious in the church, that we may collect such facts. Look around you and see; what are the families from which religion derives its most devoted and faithful friends? From what dwellings come the sacramental hosts, who fill the Lord's table when it is spread, and not only there confess his name before men, but are the foremost in efforts to spread his name through the world? Do they come from families where the mother, though she may rule as a queen of fashion, and is perhaps rich in every worldly endowment, yet loves not God, and finds no place for him in her heart and her labors? Far from it. They come, and come almost exclusively, from households where the mother is a Christian; where the nursery of the family is a nursery for the church; where the first lisplings of childhood, are accents of prayer; and the first thoughts of the heart, thoughts of God and of his Christ.

Nor need I stop here; had I time to go farther, I might add to the history of the church, the history of civil communities and nations. I might ask, who are your most valued merchants? who your wisest counsellors and legislators? You will find in most, if not in all instances, that the elements of their wisdom and greatness were formed under the hand of maternal care and wisdom. The father of our country, Washington, felt that he owed to his mother much of what placed him so high, both in the cabinet and the field. Napoleon, in the zenith of his glory, is said often to have owned how much of what was brilliant in his character, he derived from his mother. What else but a testimony to the same truth is given from the established law of certain tribes in our western wilds, ordaining that the sceptre shall descend through the mother, and not through the father? With such evidence, then, furnished from the records of all time, whether written "by saint, by savage, or by sage," I believe the world will never have a different testimony to give, as to the *fact* of the paramount influence of mothers.

Let us now consider, in the second place, that what facts show has been, reason shows must be, on this important subject.

"Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined."

But who bends the twig? Who has the mind or character in hand, while it is yet so flexible and ductile, that it can be turned in any direction, or formed into any shape? It is the mother. From her own nature, and the nature of her child, it results that its first impressions must be taken from her. And she has every advantage for discharging the duty. She is always with her child—if she is where mothers ought to be; sees continual

the workings of its faculties; where they most need to be restrained; and where led and attracted. Early as she may begin her task, let her be assured; that her labor will not be lost because undertaken too soon. Mind, from the first hour of its existence, is ever acting; and soon may a mother see, that, carefully as she may study her child, quite as carefully is her child studying her. Let her watch the varying expression of its speaking face, as its eyes follow her, and she will perceive its mind is imbibing impressions from every thing it sees her do; and thus showing, that, before the lips have begun to utter words, the mind has begun to act, and to form a character. Let her watch on; and when, under her care, the expanding faculties have begun to display themselves in the sportiveness of play, how often will she be surprised to find the elements of character already fixed, when she has least expected it. She has but to watch, and she will find the embryo tyrant or philanthropist, warrior or peace-maker, with her in her nursery: and then, if ever, her constant prayer should be, "How shall I order the child, and what shall I do unto him?" for, what he is to be, and what he is to do, in any of these characters, she must now decide. It is a law of our being that makes it so; a law that I could wish were written on every mother's heart, by the finger of God, and on the walls of her nursery, in letters of gold, that the mind of childhood is like wax to receive, but like marble to hold, every impression made upon it, be it for good or for evil. Let her then improve her power as she ought, "being steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work" which God requires at her hands; and let her know that her labor is not in vain in the Lord. For, even though her own eyes may not be privileged to witness in her child all that is noble, and great, and good, she may at least have lodged within him a charm against evil, that may save him, when her course on earth is finished. It is no picture of the imagination, that I hold out, when I ask you to come and see the son of a faithful mother, who has long pursued his course of crime, till he seems hardened against every thing good or true; yea, at times "sits in the seat of the scorner," and scoffs at every thing holy and good,—but yet, hardened and dead as his heart may seem, as to every thing else you may urge, there is one point on which, till his dying day, he can be made to feel. You touch it, when you remind him of what he saw and felt, when a child, under the care of a tender mother. His sensibilities there, he never utterly loses; and often, often, by that, as the last cord which holds him from utter perdition, is the prodigal drawn back and restored; so that, though "dead, he is alive again," though once "lost, he is found."

Such are some of the illustrations of a mother's power to do good to those most dear to her, and of the responsibility that springs from it. There is no influence so powerful as hers on the coming destinies of the church and the world. She acts a part in forming the ministers of religion, and the rulers of the land, without which all subsequent training is comparatively vain. And to her, also, it falls to train those who are to be mothers when she is gone, and to do for their generation, what she has done for hers.

In closing this important subject, then, we are led to reflect,

1. As to mothers themselves:—what a spirit of humility and dependence

on God should they cherish, in view of their station and duties in the world! Not more fitting to the minister at the altar, than to the mother in her family, is the exclamation, "Who is sufficient for these things? What earnestness in prayer, too, and what persevering watchfulness should accompany this sense of dependence on divine grace! When I see Hannah, the mother of Samuel, "pouring out her soul before the Lord," and not only "praying for her child," with all the earnestness she could feel, but "continuing in prayer," as one who will not be denied, I see what her son is likely to be. His future greatness and worth may be dated from that hour. Let Christian mothers remember that prayer is as powerful now, as it was then.

And, if they would not "hinder their own prayers," let them see to it that they walk circumspectly before their children, and their conduct be as becometh the Gospel of Christ. It was a maxim among the Romans, "Great deference and respect are due to the young." We all feel that this is due to the aged. But if parents show it uniformly to their children, they may be sure of having it well repaid to them. In the first morning of life, not only is precept nothing, without example, but example is every thing; it is the only source of knowledge from which the infant can learn.

2. I have a word to fathers who are blessed with such mothers to their children as I have described. There are fathers, I know, who, so far from prizing and seconding a mother's labors, as they ought, would rather thwart and defeat them; and through their unnatural and poisoning influence, has the seed, which was sown and watered by a mother's prayers and tears, been sometimes blasted, if not destroyed. Better for such a man that he had never been born. For if there be a cavern in hell, more dark and dreadful than any other, it must be the spot where such a father meets the son whom he has allured to perdition from the embrace of a pious mother. But let me hope there is no such monster of cruelty within these walls. I feel assured, that every father before me would rejoice to witness the mild dominion of piety and truth over his infant sons and daughters, as exerted by a mother's faithfulness. But while you would love and cherish her to whom you owe so much, be careful and prompt to sustain her in those labors of love, on which so much of your children's welfare depends. Her heart is sustained, and strengthened in the discharge of maternal duty, by even the smile of an approving husband. What animation and courage, then, must be given her, when she finds herself possessed of his sympathies, co-operation, and prayers, on her behalf!

Finally: I would remind all, whether young or old, of the honor and respect due to every mother who is doing her duty faithfully. The church and the world owe her a debt of gratitude, which they are too little inclined to appreciate fully. And here, perhaps, is a duty in which Christian communities may learn something from a heathen nation. In the days of Rome's greatest splendor, there stood on one of her seven hills, a temple dedicated to "Female Fortune;" and over its magnificent portal was written the name of Volumnia; for whose honor the temple had been built, to perpetuate her memory as a matron who had saved Rome by her influence over her son. Not far distant from it, arose a column, on which was inscribed "Cornelia, the

Mother of the Gracchi;" in acknowledgment of her worth, as the mother of two sons, whom she had trained up to be the ornaments and defenders of her nation. Such was the respect paid to mothers who "acted well their part" in pagan Rome. And will not Christian communities ever delight to "honor those whom God so greatly honors," by committing to their hands what is most precious in the happiness of all coming generations? They surely will. And let every mother bear in mind, that she may here obtain for herself a memorial far more enduring and precious, than the richest temple or column which Rome ever saw; and a still more enduring memorial in heaven, where, with her sons and daughters around her, her crown gathering brightness from theirs, she may bow before the throne of God and the Lamb, and proclaim to his praise—*Behold here am I, and the children thou hast given me!*

SERMON CCVII.

By JAMES M. MATHEWS, D. D.

THE ADORABLE SAVIOUR.

JOHN IX: 38—*And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

HEB. I: 6—*When he bringeth the First-begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him.*

THE sum of the gospel is the Saviour:—the Saviour in the fullness of his grace, and the perfection of his glories. The richest gems it contains were designed to adorn and beautify for ever the crown he wears. And if we love Him, we shall love, also, to gather them up again and again, and plant them anew on his brow, in order to gain fresh views of his divine beauty and excellence. That He is God, absolutely, essentially, and supremely God, we fully believe; and in this belief is our chief joy. Were it gone, our hope in his name would have no strength left as an "anchor of the soul;" and we could not sing the song in which so many have chanted their way to heaven: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for Jehovah, Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation."

Of course, in every fresh confirmation of his Divinity, which we gain, we add fresh strength to our joy and hope. Hence, the subject is ever welcome to the Christian; and you will, no doubt, my hearers, gladly accompany me, in surveying that strong and unanswerable argument for his Godhead, furnished in the text. I mean,

THE WORSHIP, which the Scriptures uniformly describe as his due, and uniformly describe as paid to Him by all ranks of intelligent creatures. While we glance at this subject, may He whose honor we would vindicate, enable us rightly to understand and improve it.

It is an axiom in theology, and needs no proof, that worship should be rendered to none but God; and that none can rightfully receive it, but He who knows himself to be God. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God; and Him *only* shalt thou serve," is a dictate of reason, as well as of revelation. If, then, we find the Scriptures constantly holding up the Saviour as a being who *is to be worshipped*, and who *always has been* worshipped by men and angels best acquainted with his character, what follows—what must follow, but that Christ is recognised in the Scriptures as Divine?

Now, what are the facts in the case? How was he regarded when on earth, by those who best knew his character, and best knew the will of Heaven concerning the measure of honor he should receive? "We have seen his star in the East, and have *come to worship Him*," said the wise men, who had been conducted by divine guidance from a far country, to render him their homage, while he was a babe in the manger:—and what they had come to do, they did. "When they saw the young child, they fell down, and *worshipped Him*; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts—gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

When he had finished his sermon on the mount, and was come down, "behold there came a leper and *worshipped him*, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And was he reproved by the Saviour, for thus paying him divine honors? So far from it, that immediately "Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, *I will; be thou clean*. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

On another occasion, he cured a man that was born blind; and when he afterwards found him, he asked, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And when he that was once blind, asked, "Who is he, Lord, that I *might* believe on him?" and was answered, "Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee," he said, "Lord, I believe; and he *worshipped Him*."

A woman of Canaan, whose daughter was grievously vexed with a devil, "came and *worshipped him*, saying, Lord, help me;" and he requited her faith and her worship, by granting her request.

When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were told he had risen from the dead, and were hasting away to tell his disciples, they were met by Jesus himself; "and they came and held him by the feet, and *worshipped Him*." And again, when the eleven disciples saw Him, "they *worshipped Him*."

Such was the service which his followers rendered him, while on earth. So universally did they *worship him*; believing that thus they but performed their duty; and as universally did he accept of their worship, as rightfully his due, and well-pleasing in his sight.

I might show you, also, that others besides his followers on earth, worship him. I might recur to the words of Paul, which he recites from the Psalmist: "When he bringeth his First-begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God *worship him*." And I might draw aside the curtain of heaven, and say with the beloved John, in the Apocalypse, "I beheld, and they fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints: and they sung a new song, saying,

Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Nor does the vision end here.—" And I beheld, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Where, I would ask, is that creature in all the universe of God, which is not described as speaking and acting here? And in what service is it, that all unite? What holy purpose, what sacred duty is it, that can thus engage every creature in all worlds, around, above, and below, in such a sympathy and concert as we here witness? It is the worship of Jesus. The Lamb that was slain is thus recognised as meriting and receiving divine homage and praise, from all creatures that are able to give it.

But while Christ thus freely and invariably accepts the expressions of homage from all creatures; and thus, as we say, avows himself to be " God over all, blessed for ever," our argument may be strengthened by showing,

2. How invariably angels and holy men have refused worship, when offered to them:—men refusing it, on the ground that they were men, and not God; thus showing that worship should be rendered to God alone, and that God alone could receive it; and angels also refusing it on the same principle.

When Cornelius, the centurion, had been directed by an angel of God to send for Peter, who should " tell him what he ought to do," " as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and *worshipped* him;" just as the apostle had seen men honor his Saviour, in the instances we have adduced. But what does Peter do and say? Does he receive the worship thus proffered to him? No! " Peter took him by the hand, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man."

When at Lystra, Paul healed a man impotent in his feet, a cripple from his birth; and when the people, seeing what he had done, " lifted up their voices, saying, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men;" and when " the priest brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people;" how did the apostles act? Did they suffer the proposed worship and homage to be rendered to them? Shocked at the very idea, " they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein."

Equally prompt and decided are *angels* in refusing worship, when it has *been tendered* to them. When John, in the view given him of the heavenly world, was so overpowered with its glories, as set before him by the angel—*“ he talked with him, that he “ fell at the angel’s feet to worship him,”—what*

was the reply from that bright and sinless messenger of heaven? High and exalted as he was, he would receive no homage, but at once admonished the bewildered and erring apostle, that God, and God alone, was to be worshipped by his creatures. And as the expression of homage was twice offered to him by John, twice does he promptly reply, "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: *worship God.*"

One instance, indeed, there is on the sacred page, in which a man, a presumptuous, proud, profane, profligate man, *did* receive worship, *did* allow himself to be approached and hailed as God, and seemed to have full complacency in the proffered honor. "On a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration to them of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to desire peace" at his hands. And as he there, in all the pride of authority and pomp, "made an oration to them, the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." And while he, vain man, uttered no rebuke against the guilty idolatry thus rendered to him, and seemed with a greedy satisfaction to swallow the flattery thus poured into his ears, honoring him with divine worship; the Most High, in his wrath, and in righteous jealousy for his own name, and for the worship due to himself alone, instantly took the case into his own Almighty hand; for "immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, *because he gave not God the glory*; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."—The corruption of the grave, and the grave-worm itself, as in a moment, fastening themselves upon him, before the eyes of the multitude, while yet he was robed in royal apparel, and while the acclamations of his gazing worshippers had scarce died upon his ear.

Such is the strong and thrilling testimony of the Bible, that worship can be rendered to none but God, without incurring the rebuke of Heaven. And yet, equally strong and undeniable is the testimony of the Bible, that Jesus Christ is worshipped by all the intelligent and holy in heaven and on earth. What then follows? Can the argument possibly be stronger to demonstrate that *Jesus Christ is God*? It is an argument confirmed by all who truly know him, in all worlds; and it is an argument, which will grow stronger and stronger, every day and every hour, through time and through an endless eternity; for it is corroborated by every act of worship, rendered to him on earth and in heaven.

In this sublime worship, we, my hearers, may have part, not only here, but before his throne in heaven. There, all who now honor the Son, even as they honor the Father, shall, with golden harps, unite in the song of Moses and the Lamb, for ever and ever. Let us, then, now ask ourselves, Are we here worshipping and serving the Saviour, so as to be justified in the hope that we shall see him, and glorify him, and enjoy him, in heaven? Here is the point, which it behooves us all to settle now. And I ask not, simply, whether you admit the reality of his claims to divine worship: but has this doctrine, in its power, reached your heart? Are you worshipping him in spirit and in truth? The time is coming, we know, when there shall be none to gainsay the truth of his Godhead; when it will be so written in the flame

of a burning world, that all shall see it; and when, before his august throne, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, either in the wailings of despair, or in anthems of joy. In which of these, my dear hearers, shall we have part? Take heed, and be not deceived. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." And "this is the work of God, *that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*"

SERMON CCVIII.

By JAMES M. MATHEWS, D. D.

CRITICAL PERIODS IN THE SINNER'S LIFE.

Luke xix. 42, 44—*This thy day—the time of thy visitation.*

WHEN Cesar stood on the banks of the Rubicon, a stream dividing Gaul from Italy, he paused for a time and deliberated. But at length he exclaimed, "The die is cast;" and throwing himself into the river, he passed it, followed by his army. He felt that in that deed he rendered the Roman senate open foes to him, and himself an open foe to them; and that he thenceforward, having cut off all retreat, had entered on a career which would issue in consigning him to the death of a traitor, or in raising him to be the first man in Rome, then the first city in the world. Such was the influence on his whole future life, which he saw would result from his crossing that river: and hence has the phrase, to "cross the Rubicon," become proverbial for those events in a man's life, which exercise a decisive influence on his future history and character.

A very brief survey of our own lives, and the lives of others, will lead us at once to see, that such events occur in every man's history—events which have a marked and decisive effect on subsequent character and condition. It is so in every man's history, as to his temporal interests. There is some event, or series of events, that determined the profession or occupation he pursues; some event, or series of events, that has decided his measure of success in the pursuit of it: and we do well, my hearers, often to look back and to survey these all-important seasons in our history; as they will often show how kindly and wisely an unseen, but Omnipotent hand, has led us on for good; led us, as he leads the blind, in ways they know not, and in paths they have not known.

But, my hearers, there are Rubicons to be passed in our religious and moral course, as well as in our temporal—occasions in the experience of our hearts, which extend their influence so far into the future, that it mainly depends on the decision we *then* make, and the purposes we *then* form, whether we shall at last be saved or lost for ever. If this be so, how important that

we should know it ; and, if such occasions there are, how important that we should be able to discern and appreciate them ! Let us then,

I. Show the fact that there *are* days, or occasions, in every man's life, on which his eternal interests are mainly suspended. And,

II. Point out what those seasons are, and how they are to be most surely known and distinguished.

Our proof of the first shall be drawn simply from the Scriptures. They tell us of such a day occurring in every man's history, just as plainly as they tell of a coming judgment. How, otherwise, are we to interpret the text ? It speaks of a day, as Jerusalem's day : and why *her day*, if not because on her improvement of it depended, as the Saviour adds, whatever belonged to her peace ? That day is called, "*the time of her visitation*," because of the special nearness and favor with which God then manifested himself, for the last time. Such special seasons of divine visitation are indicated in the following passages :—" I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin : for this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee *in a time when thou mayest be found*." " Seek ye the Lord, *while he may be found* ; call upon him, *while he is near*." " The *harvest* is past, the *summer* is ended, and we are not saved." In every year that passes, there is a season of harvest ; and if the work of harvest is not done, before the season is gone, the labor of the year is lost. So is it in the life of man. There is a harvest season in his days, as they move on ; and if it is not improved, he and all that is valuable to him, is *lost*.

" Yet a *little while* is the light with you ; walk *while* ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you :—*while* ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of the light. These things spake Jesus ; and departed, and did *hide himself* from them." And he hid himself from them as a comment on his words ; in which he had taught them that the period in every man's days, while he may be said to have the light, is comparatively "*a little while* ;" and that if it passes unimproved, thenceforward, Christ, as it were, hides himself from the man, though still living among those to whom the Saviour is revealed.

" Behold, these three years, I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none ; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground ? And the dresser of the vineyard answered—Lord, let it alone *this year* also, till I shall dig about it and dung it : and if it bear fruit, well : and if not, *then after that* thou shalt cut it down :"—showing us that when men have long resisted the Spirit, and remained unfruitful, " he limits a certain time," during which he will deal with them still farther ; and if, beyond that limited time, they continue unfruitful and impenitent, "*then, after that*," he abandons them to destruction. As he says in another place, " Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, to-day, after so long a time, as it is said, to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

Such are some of the proofs which the Scriptures afford that there *are* periods, occasions in the lives of all, on which the interests of eternity are suspended, and hang, as it were, poised and vibrating ; when the choice ther

made, and the step then taken, be it for good or evil, sends its spreading and controlling influence over the man through time and into eternity; when all of weal or of woe that awaits him, seems summed up in what he does, and decides on, at that one hour or one moment of his being; and when, though all his future life may contribute to the same result, yet then and there was the turning point of his everlasting destiny.

And now, my beloved hearers, who would not desire to be taught, how he can know and discern, in time, these periods of his moral history, which are so pregnant with good or evil to all his subsequent existence here and hereafter? There is no secrecy about them; no difficulty in knowing and ascertaining them. God desires to make them plain; so that he who runs may read, and reading may understand. Let us consider then, as we proposed,

II. How those seasons may be known; how we can discern their occurrence. They occur,

1. *In times of affliction; especially if it be affliction immediately from the hand of God.* There is something in the rod, especially if held in God's hand, that has a melting tendency on the heart. Whether it be disease inflicted on ourselves, or death bereaving us of those we love; it is designed by Him, who afflicts, as a "time of visitation," as "a day" on which much depends, as to the future condition of the heart. There may be those who harden themselves under the chastisement; and who, like Pharaoh, or like Israel of old, if smitten more, will but harden themselves, and will but sin more and more. And when this is the case with any man, we have reason to fear, his day of visitation is gone by; and that he is now given up, as one "past feeling." Alas for the man, who can feel himself carried near his own grave, or can look into the fresh grave of one dear to him, and yet not melt—and yet not feel that God is speaking to him loudly and earnestly. He may call it firmness; God and his angels call it "hardness and blindness." He may felicitate himself on what he can bear, while all this cherished insensibility is only ripening him for a heavier doom, when his heart will break beneath the curse of Him to whose rod he refused to yield.

But it was not always so with any man; I hope it is not yet so with any one before me. I would hope that if the rod of Heaven fall on any of you, the day of its coming may be the day of your peace with God. To secure this result, watch your own hearts, when suffering under sorrows; and watch them also when the sorrow is gone, lest like a deceitful bow they turn aside, and leave your last state worse than the first. Many, many thousands among the redeemed, are now looking back on days of grief, and saying, "It is good that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." It was in this way God reclaimed them from their wanderings. And in this way has he brought many to a stand, who, until the hour of their sorrow, were hastening in the downward path to perdition.

And here I would mention one class of transgressors, who are generally reached in this way, if ever the day of saving power overtakes them at all. I mean those sons and daughters of pious parents, who, though instructed in the

way of truth and duty, have yet despised it, and are living in prolonged impenitence and unbelief. Aggravated guilt rests on all such. In infancy, they were commended to God in faith and prayer. In childhood, they were trained for God by parental precept and example. And if, in mature years, they turn aside and walk in the ways of sin, he has but two ways of treating them. He either pronounces the sentence on them, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone;" and then perhaps pours his abundance around them—their hearts growing hard, as their prosperity is full; or in mercy, refusing to give them up, he sends his rod, his scourge, that by its strokes he may chastise their wanderings, and save them from utter ruin. Thus he reached Manasseh, the son of good Hezekiah; and reclaimed him from his idolatries; though to save his soul he lost his crown, and was sent in chains a prisoner to Babylon. (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11—13.) If any should then tremble to let the day of their affliction pass by unsanctified, it is such as I have now described. Their last hope is gone, if severe chastisement comes, and leaves them still unreclaimed to God.

2. I have time to allude only to one other critical period in the life of the sinner. It is, *when God's word is accompanied with unusual power, either upon those around him, or on his own heart.* God's calls in his gospel are always earnest, and always loud. But there are times when his voice waxes louder and louder, and when the power which accompanies it, rends the rocks asunder, and makes the mountains to tremble and quake. (Exodus xix. 16, 19.) Such a day did the Israelites see when they stood at the foot of Sinai, and listened to the voice of God, as he pronounced to them the words of his law. Such a day did Jerusalem see, when the Son of God was in the midst of her. He then "spake as never man spake." "The people were astonished at his doctrine," and "wondered at the words of truth and grace which proceeded from his lips." A day, too, of still greater power accompanying his word, was seen, when, "Pentecost having come, the apostles were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave utterance;"—"to speak the wonderful works of God," and to speak with such power, that "on the same day, thousands were added to the church of such as should be saved."

Nor are days of special power, accompanying God's word, unknown in later times. Who has not heard of those "seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," which have been granted of late years, and are granted still, to revive his heritage, when languishing? Yes, and in his infinite and sovereign mercy, we have seen them and felt them; seen and felt them in this sanctuary. We have seen the day when the very same truth, which now falls on the ear of many like water on the rock, melted those who heard it into contrition in a moment, and raised the anxious inquiry from old and young, "What must I do to be saved?" And all this was so, because God was then in a special manner here, and accompanied his word with special manifestations of his presence and power.

Whenever and wherever such seasons come, they constitute "*the day*" of those who see them; they are a "*time of visitation*" from God, when he comes in great mercy; when he calls loudly and powerfully upon all to return

to him; and when all that will come are welcomed and saved. And what we admonish all to remember, is, that if their unbelief outlives such seasons of mercy, there is reason to fear it will destroy them for ever. There is most solemn meaning on this point, in the words of the prophet, where he calls "*the acceptable year of the Lord, the day of vengeance of our God.*" For, strange as it may seem, the time of one, is always a time of the other—a day marked as a day of *acceptance with God*, by the freedom and power with which he makes his salvation known, is always marked as a day of *vengeance from God*, by the righteous indignation, wherewith he casts off and leaves to their own hardened unbelief those who still persist in rebellion, in defiance of the loud calls they then hear. How was it in the cases already recited? There were many in the congregation of Israel, who heard the voice of the Lord when he spake from Sinai, and who stood out against it all, and did not believe in him; and the consequence then was, that, because they believed not, God swore that they should not enter into his rest; and they went on grieving his Spirit, till "their carcasses fell in the wilderness." And, as we are taught by our Lord in the text to expect that it should be, equally marked and fatal was the issue to the great mass of those who heard his warning and powerful voice in the days of his flesh, and yet did not believe on him. There were some in the nation, whose eyes were opened, and who embraced him as the Saviour, even after they had aided to crucify him. But from the multitude, from Jerusalem as a city, "the day" was passed, "the time of visitation" was gone. They had refused to hear him, while "dwelling among them full of grace and truth," and "teaching the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." And now, when others saw and believed, "the things which belonged to *their* peace were hidden from their eyes."

Let us then, my hearers, "beware lest a promise being left us of entering into rest, we should fail, and come short of it, after the same example of unbelief." We have heard the terrors of the law and the grace of the gospel. We have seen, perhaps felt, the trembling and anxiety produced by the one, when revealed in its power; and we have seen, if we have not felt, the grace and sweetness of the other, when those around us have bowed beneath its influence, and believed to life everlasting. And if we have seen others thus taken, while we are still left, then how earnestly and instantly should we be up and doing! Up, up, and do; as if you felt the alternative of heaven or hell to depend on the decision of this hour. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth, say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Perhaps, long as you have delayed, the call may still be for *you*. "We, then, as workers together with God, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For he saith, I have heard thee, in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee. Behold, now *is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*" Amen.

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SERMON CCIX.

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THE IMPORTANCE AND MEANS OF AN ABLE MINISTRY.

2 TIM. ii. 15. *A workman that needeth not to be ashamed.*

THE public ministry of religion is of divine appointment. It has always been God's leading instrumentality in maintaining the cause of truth, piety, and salvation: and it is to endure "to the end of the world." In the arrangements of Christ for setting up his kingdom on earth, this institution is very prominent. He selected the men, trained them under his own eye, sent them forth to preach, and gave them instructions for perpetuating the holy order.

No one can doubt that the ministry is a *wise* appointment. Every great interest needs special supervision; and the greater the interest, the more systematic and thorough, obviously, should be the supervision. And the ministry, as a great guardian influence, is seen at once to be wisely adapted to its momentous objects. It was designed of God to exert great moral power over individuals and communities, for the advancement of the highest interests, both of time and eternity. Hence, good men have always looked, with wakeful concern, to the character and qualifications of the ministry. This solicitude has been natural and right; nor is it less important now than at any former period.

A characteristic, *first* in importance, beyond question, is *decided godliness*. For the absence of this, nothing can atone. Scripture demands it. The nature of the office demands it. The Christian teacher should have the fruits of the Spirit in strong, vivid, and prominent exercise. He must be "a man of God; full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost—rooted and grounded in love."

But while this is indispensable, other qualifications are also essential. The Head of the church would have an *energetic*, as well as honest and devoted ministry. And hence the necessity of looking to its intellectual as well as religious character. It is obvious there are many causes now tending strongly to lower the ministerial character, and thus to abridge its influence and usefulness. These I need not even name. They are, most of them, alas, too familiar. The danger will be obviated, if the church but duly respect herself and the honor of her King, and thus, with proper feeling, insist on the qualifications which God himself requires in her pastors. It cannot, then, be amiss, at such a time, and on such an occasion, to dwell on

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ABLE MINISTRY.

1. That such a ministry was designed of God for men, is clearly manifest from *Scripture precept*. "The priest's lips should keep *knowledge*, and they should seek the law at his mouth." "Till I come, give attendance to *reading*."

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee." "*Meditate upon these things.*" "*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.*"

In accordance with such positive precept, there are also indirect expressions of the divine will. "The same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach." "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." It is said of Apollos, in commendation, that he was "an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures;" that "he spake boldly in the synagogue, and mightily convinced the Jews." It is said of Paul, that "his letters were weighty and powerful." And of himself he testifies, "though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge." In view of such Scripture, who can doubt that it is the pleasure of God to have a ministry of vigorous and well-cultivated mind, as well as heart?—of high intellectual as well as religious character—able to teach—of sound speech, that cannot be condemned—well furnished with all the qualities for strong and resistless bearing upon the public mind.

2. The importance of an able ministry is evident from the express provision God has made for training and supporting it. In the Jewish nation, there were various regulations, designed to secure eminent qualifications in the sacred office. There were nearly fifty theological schools. None were allowed to enter the priesthood till thirty years of age. Large funds were set apart for sustaining men, both in their preparation and in actual service—funds so ample as to take away all temptation to deviate from appropriate study and labor. And none were expected to entangle themselves with the affairs of this life, either before or after entering the sacred office.

The spirit of these arrangements was retained in the Christian dispensation. The twelve had the very best of training and instruction, before they were authorized to preach. Nor were they much from under the supervision of their great Teacher, during his ministry of three years. He forbade their taking either bread or money, or even two coats apiece, on their mission; but instructed them to rely entirely on others for the means of support. He endued them also with the power of miracles. After his crucifixion he bestowed still higher gifts—larger measures of the Spirit, and the power of speaking in different tongues—gifts, all designed and adapted to make able ministers of the New Testament. And who questions, that, thus furnished, they were indeed men of great strength, as well as piety and zeal? With what energy and effect could they assail the powers of sin! How resistless the majesty of truth from their lips!

But the personal example and instructions of Christ are withdrawn. The power of miracles, the gift of tongues, and the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, are withdrawn. And what does this providence indicate, but that other preparatory means, of corresponding force, are to be substituted? It will not be pretended, that human nature is less perverse now than it was then. The minister of this day, therefore, needs as much power as did Peter and his associates.

3. Another consideration in point is, that *all the most important movements in the church have taken place under the instrumentality of able men.* Why were Moses and Aaron selected to rescue Israel from bondage—to instruct them on their journey to Canaan, and to arrange for them a splendid system of religious polity?—why, but for their peculiar qualifications?—the one being learned in all the wisdom of his age, and divinely inspired; and the other a man of ready and commanding address. Who have displayed nobler powers than David and many of the prophets? But why were not men of inferior capacity selected to be thus honored of God, if talents are of no account with him?

But not less illustrious have been the chief actors in every great movement of the Christian church. The twelve disciples, though taken from humble life, as we have seen, were not sent out till thoroughly trained, and endued with capacity for wise and powerful action. The apostle Paul was a master-spirit of his age. He had genius: he had the best mental discipline: he had stores

of varied and important learning. And, commissioned by the great Head of the church, how brilliant and triumphant his course from one city and province to another! And why did Divine wisdom enlist those gigantic powers in the work of the holy ministry?—why, but that the work called for a powerful instrumentality?

Another momentous achievement was the Reformation from papal corruptions; an event that gave immortality to the names of Luther, Calvin, and others. And who have exhibited greater learning or talent? Think that the church had slept—had been almost extinct, for centuries. Think of the ignorance and prejudices of the multitude. Think of a domination over reason and conscience, supported by the combined energies of church and state, throughout an entire continent. Think that every stir for freedom was watched with a jealous eye by prelates and emperors. What must have been the inflexibility of character, the courage, the intellectual strength, that could successfully engage in an onset against such an array of sin and despotism?

A somewhat similar emergency, at a later period, brought up such men as Wesley, Whitefield, and the immortal Edwards, to re-instamp the image of God on the world. The church was to be rescued from desperate worldliness, formality, and fatal errors; and Divine wisdom selected the instruments.

The modern enterprise of *missions*, also, is a magnificent movement. And who does not know, that the pioneers and chief actors in this cause, at home and abroad, have been men of vigorous intellect and accomplished scholarship, as well as inextinguishable benevolence.

It is thus that cultivated talent, and learning, as well as piety, have been associated with every important moral revolution. We deduce from the fact, an argument for a ministry of elevated character. There is as much scope for effort, as much demand for energy, for skill, for comprehensiveness of plan, and boldness of action, now, as there ever has been. And divine Sovereignty is not intending to lay aside the great principles on which it has always acted. If it has glorious objects to be achieved, and the gospel ministry be its chief instrumentality, it will still demand a ministry of intellectual strength and resources, as well as moral purity.

4. A ministry of vigorous character is to be expected *from the language of prophecy relative to the glory of the latter day*. The church, in all its departments, is yet to exhibit a more glorious aspect. She is to shake herself from the dust; to arise and shine, the glory of the Lord being risen upon her; appearing comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners. Her course is to be that of victory and *triumph*; till the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.

The church has her great Captain of salvation: and if destined to rise above her littleness and her distractions, and to hold dominion through the earth, it is reasonable to expect He will qualify and appoint for her, leaders worthy of himself, worthy of her true character, and worthy of the glory to be achieved. He will summon to her aid, men wise in counsel, prompt and energetic in action; such, that "one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight." Very possibly reference was had in part to the ministry of the coming day, in the cheering predictions, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make *princes* in all the earth." "He that is feeble among them at that day, shall be as David; and the house of David as God, as the angel of the Lord."

In such prophecy, the leading idea is obviously that of *power*. The church, in her day of glory, will have a ministry able to sway her counsels, and direct her grandest efforts, with a wisdom that all shall admire. They will be chosen of God, and prepared for the times. And do we now discern some signs of the approaching day? Do we witness the beginning of conflicts, that, under God, are to result in the submission and devotion of the world to Christ? How great the responsibility of the ministry at such a crisis; and the necessity for

men of uncommon wisdom and energy, as well as unshrinking faithfulness! Which leads me to observe,

5. The importance of an able ministry is manifest, *from the strength and number of the forces to be encountered and overcome.* The human heart in every age is desperately wicked, and of course inveterately opposed to the Gospel. It has its thousand errors and prejudices—its thick darkness and delusion. The onset upon this enemy of God, styled in Scripture “enmity” itself, demands all the skill and power of the best cultivated, as well as sanctified talent. There is also a systematic and wide-spread *infidelity*. It has in its service, genius, learning, wealth, and station. It never exhibited more stratagem, boldness, or energy and malignity of purpose, than now. To expose its *sophistry*, and silence its blasphemies, and rescue the millions it would ensnare and ruin for ever; there are clearly needed minds that can pour forth light like the sun in his strength. But we wrestle not merely against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, against the prince of the power of the air. Where is stronger intellect, greater knowledge, or a more wily adversary to be encountered? Where are movements more insidious, varied, complicated, rancorous, against God and human welfare? Who can count the armies, and estimate the resources, wielded by this Master spirit of sin and delusion? And can it be wise to send out men of feeble mind, to expose the devices, and thwart the schemes, and subvert the empire of such an adversary? It is not thus that Christianity is to make its way over the earth. While it trusts in the grace and power of Heaven, it demands for the conflict the ablest minds God has created and sanctified. And the better they are disciplined, furnished, and directed, the surer the hope of speedy and universal triumph.

6. A ministry of strength is manifestly called for, *by the grandeur and importance of the objects to be gained.* The field of action is a province of God’s empire in revolt and ruin. The ministry is an embassy of reconciliation from the Sovereign. Its aim is the recovery of this alienated world. Where is the enterprise, in its nature so grand, in its relations so momentous? Who can measure the interests staked upon its issue? Who can tell the importance of a successful result?—its importance to God, to the world, to the universe? And how obviously absurd to commit the keeping and direction of such a cause to the undisciplined, the rash, or the ignorant. When difficulties between a monarch and a portion of his empire, or between two independent states, are to be adjusted, who is commissioned for the emergency? When life, or character, or property of great amount is at issue, who is sought for a defence? When a high-minded people, roused by oppression, resolve on freedom, who are selected to guide her counsels and direct her armies? The wisest, surely, and the strongest. And strange indeed, if to men of inferior capacity can be intrusted the rights and interests of the eternal throne! Strange, if secondary powers can satisfy, when a world of intellect, an empire of mind in ruin, is to be brought back to God, and trained for his glory! What are liberty, property, character, life, or thrones that perish—compared with the honor of God, and the inheritance of the saints? In itself considered, the loss of a single soul is a greater calamity than the extinction of the sun, or the burning of a world. In itself considered, the conversion of one sinner is an event of higher moment, of deeper interest, than the creation of a million suns or systems. That soul, from the ever augmenting and enduring nature of its faculties, has, obviously, a value above that of the material universe. And the recovery of such souls has been deemed an object worthy of the solicitude of angels, and the sacrifice of the Son of God. Does not the object, then, demand the highest powers of the best cultivated minds? But, again,

7. *The all-absorbing and imposing character of worldly objects and improvements calls loudly for an efficient ministry:*—such a ministry, as, in the

name and power of God, may arrest attention, and turn off the eye from beholding vanity. We live at a period of great enterprise, and in a land affording scope for bold experiment in every direction. Genius is on the stretch for improvement, and continually throwing out its new discoveries. And, as regards secular prosperity, the nation is evidently putting on her strength and rapidly advancing. Canals, crossing large states, are no longer regarded with wonder. Our rail-road system is levelling or penetrating mountains, lifting up valleys, and arching wide rivers. Immigration, meanwhile, is pushing its onward march, clearing away forests, and building up cities. Whilst, in the older states, manufacturing establishments and large moneyed institutions are multiplying, and rising in pride and power. Nor is the *intellectual* world unaffected by the spirit of the age. Who is not amazed at the manner in which the press is pouring out its periodicals and volumes, and the rapidity with which literary institutions, of every character and grade, are springing into being? When was there ever more enthusiasm or success in pursuits of science? In what age has the bar of justice, or the hall of legislation, displayed severer conflict, or more electrifying eloquence? When has the human mind, in all departments of worldly enterprise and ambition, been excited to keener intensity? or brought out results more adapted to absorb public attention, and hide eternity from the view?

Now, we would not allay this spirit of enterprise; we would not arrest this imposing march of improvement: we would only have it all sanctified by the Gospel, and made subservient to Christ's kingdom. And, to that end, we do see, in these imposing movements, occasion for corresponding increase of energy in the church, and redoubled power in her ministers. For what but a strong Christian influence is to save the public mind from being so absorbed in matters of time, as utterly to forget God, and judgment, and eternity? And who, if not the angels of the church, can be expected to throw around a heavenly radiance, that shall present worldly men and worldly objects in their proper character? And what other influence, indeed, can be expected to save the church herself, from being led captive by "the god of this world?" Perhaps, in her whole history, the church has never been in circumstances of greater peril from this deceiver than now. Where is the scheme of avarice or ambition in which she is not eagerly participating? And how is her pride thus fostered, her spirit of prayer checked, and her mind diverted from the great business of her high calling? And who of her sons is not thus directly encouraged to make a covenant with death, if wealth is in prospect, rather than, like Moses and Paul, sacrifice all for Christ and his kingdom, and secure a treasure in the heavens? At such a crisis, what but new energy in Zion's watchmen is to save her and her children from being engulfed in that general tide of worldliness, which threatens to drown millions in perdition?

The ministry is also a *profession*: and needs for its success the respect and confidence of the community. But to secure these, it must have an elevated intellectual character. It must keep pace with the general progress of society. Is it stationary while every thing else is advancing? By losing its *relative* standing and power, it at once weakens its hold upon public esteem, and thus cripples, if not annihilates, its influence. True policy will give it such resources, such energy, that it can grapple with the stoutest minds, and become, by its well directed strength, the object of respect, of veneration, instead of scorn or pity. Yes; true wisdom would say, let it have the learning that can enlighten every circle; let it have a power of reasoning that can carry conviction through all ranks; let it have a divine eloquence that can thrill, and charm, and move, at pleasure. Yes; give it the ability and courage to hold up the cross of Christ, and to present Gospel truth and eternal realities in all their greatness; and it becomes "mighty through God." Let the cause of salvation be thus sustained, and all the bustle, and parade, and imposing grandeur of worldly enterprises cannot obscure its majesty, or impede its progress.

8. A ministry of great strength is called for, *by the prospect of unwonted excitements in the civil and religious world.* To scenes of conflict and revolution we are distinctly pointed by *prophecy.* Says Jehovah, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come, whose right it is; and I will give it him." And again, "The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: the Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake." To similar scenes allusion is also made in the Revelation of St. John, under a variety of imagery—"lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." From such striking illustrations, scattered throughout the Bible, we are led to anticipate fearful collision and devastation, such as the world has not yet seen. Nations will be shaken; kingdoms moved; thrones demolished; and new social organizations established—harmonizing with the spirit and genius of the Gospel. The church will be kindled to her primitive zeal, and unite her powers, and boldly claim for her Sovereign the spiritual empire of the world. And every such movement may be expected to rouse the jealousy, and wrath, and resistance of her great adversary and his legions.

We are instructed by past *history,* too, as well as *prophecy,* to anticipate great commotion and excitement. When have important changes ever been effected in public sentiment, or in the state of society, without a degree of violence? In science, in government, in religion, the conflict has always been sharp. And often have the hearts of the virtuous failed them, in looking for those things that were coming on the earth.

A moment's view of the world will, at once, reveal to the eye abundant occasions for excitement. They are seen in the organizations of civil society. They are seen in the conflicting systems of religion. They are seen in the spreading sway of infidelity, superstition, and lawless violence. Before men can universally be brought to concede to each other their rights, and to God his dominion, immense changes, of an exciting character, must obviously take place.

The storm then is certainly coming on. Already, indeed, are the elements in commotion. We hear the thunder. We perceive the agitation. We see, here and there, the uplifted hand of violence. And, should God permit, very little seems needed to plunge our nation, at once, in domestic or foreign war. And we see, that, without any miracle of providence, a very few years, nay, a few months, might involve states, nations, kingdoms, and the general church of Christ, in one scene of convulsion and dismay.

At such a crisis, we need, for Zion's sake, a ministry of unwonted wisdom, foresight, and power. We need, in the holy office, men who can stand amid high excitement, without being thrown off their balance—men who can look at the raging tempest with a calm and courageous heart. We need men enlightened into all truth and duty—men of enlarged and liberal views, as well as of inflexible integrity and firmness. We need a ministry, above all selfish considerations and party bickerings; that can keep its eye and hand steadily upon the "ark of God," come what may. Which suggests one other consideration, viz. :—

9. This elevation of character in the ministry will contribute to *union among all the truly faithful.* And who that looks over our Zion, with any thing like an angel's love, or an angel's pity, must not desire such a result?—"that they all may be one." This is indeed practicable. For the Savior has enjoined it, and fervently prayed for it. And such a ministry as we now contemplate, embracing in its comprehensive survey the great truths, and designs, and interests of the holy kingdom, and looking at things on the grand scale of immortality, and trusting in God, can easily keep in check its native pride, ambition, and other warring lusts;—it can easily merge all minor matters in the mighty enterprise of strengthening and extending the empire of Christ. And when the *watchmen* thus come to see eye to eye, and lift up the voice together, dissension in the *church* will cease, and all her energies be concentrated for preparing and sending forth the chariots of salvation. And thus very soon might it be said, in reference

to the number and character of her messengers, "the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place."

With these views of the *importance* of an able ministry, we are very naturally excited to inquire,

II. BY WHAT MEANS MAY SUCH A MINISTRY BE SECURED TO THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD?

1. *Candidates for the holy office must set for themselves a very high standard of ministerial character.* In this day of action, and call for labor, and of openings for usefulness, there is a natural tendency to rush into the field without preparation,—without maturity of judgment, without discipline of mind, without knowledge, without that balance of powers which is the result of well-proportioned cultivation—of systematic and prolonged training. This tendency must not be encouraged by the guardians of the church. It must be patiently and manfully resisted by candidates themselves. They must settle it as a first principle, that *qualifications* enter into every call to preach the Gospel—that "no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, *as was Aaron*"—a name signifying a *mountain of strength*.

Let ardent or indolent youth, then, not take counsel of their own feelings and prepossessions. Let them not ask for the most moderate acquisitions that will possibly answer. Let them not be satisfied with the low standard adopted by many others entering the sacred office. Let them rather look at the standard sanctioned by holy apostles and prophets, and still demanded by the word and providence of God. And let it be their solemn, unalterable purpose, to come up to it,—be the cost of time, and toil, and self-denial what it may. Let this purpose be sacredly adhered to, and, instead of here and there one magnifying his office, and pouring light on his generation, we should soon see numbers in every district, standing forth as pillars of fire, to illumine the whole moral heavens, and bless mankind.

To reach such eminence must indeed require time and effort. The requisite mental discipline and stores of knowledge are not the miraculous gift of Heaven. They are the result of close and long application. And let such as have not patience and conscience to abide this process, think again, what it is to be an ambassador from God! Numbers are desirable; but not without qualifications. The real influence and usefulness of the profession depend much more on its character than its numerical array. Why did not the Savior, at once, send out hundreds or thousands, instead of twelve well instructed, to sustain his cause and evangelize the world? O that all such as aspire to the same blessed work, would emulate the character of those holy men! Then might we again hope to witness apostolic triumphs in every church and every land.

2. Another means of securing an able ministry, dictated by common sense as well as Scripture example, is, to *select the most promising spirits*, even in childhood, and train them in faith and prayer, with the hope and trust that God will call them to the office. Our present system of charitable education for the ministry, so far as it extends, is well, if its principles be but faithfully adhered to. It considers native *talent* and *persevering study*, as well as piety, indispensable in its candidates; but it aids only such as are already pious. While this system is doing great things for Zion, it is very far from meeting the present exigencies of the church and a dying world. We seem to need that forethought, and that confidence in God's promises, which should lead us to regard as peculiarly his property, multitudes of bright young immortals now springing into being, and ready to take their places in the sabbath-school and the sanctuary, and to be consecrated wholly, as trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, for the glory of Zion and for the healing of the nations. Let, then, the hearts of pious fathers be turned anew to their children; and let the devout mother regard her most promising son as peculiarly God's property. And let those who have no such bright offspring, without grudging, or envy, or partiality, adopt the same

suitable objects of intellectual training for God. Let them go and select from the sabbath-school, or the obscurest hamlet. Let them place the child of genius and promise under a pious and able instructor, and follow him daily with their prayers, and with full faith that God will sanctify the offering for Christ and his church. Thousands might thus, every year, be rescued from meanness and moral death, to be pillars in the temple of science and in the temple of God. And why should a believer be deaf to this call of Providence, while genius is every where coming up, to expend its energy on mere worldly enterprise; or perhaps to act with giant power against the church? Why not take that talent, in its embryo state, and place it under a strong religious as well as intellectual influence; that, through grace, it may be fitted to bless millions yet unborn? Why be content just to work up the materials divine grace has already prepared? Where is our faith? Where our love? Why not be devising and executing plans commensurate with the loud calls for an able and efficient ministry, which now come from the four winds of heaven?

3. Another means of preparing such a ministry, is to select proper *locations* for theological study. On this point, reference must be had to facilities for exercising the heart, improving the manners, and acquiring habits of general intercourse and active benevolence, as well as training and furnishing the head. The minister is emphatically a man for *practical* life. His field of labor is a *community*, with all its endless variety of taste, character, and condition. No one needs a more intimate and extended acquaintance with mankind; none a more glowing benevolence; none a more easy and winning address, both in public and private. He must be able to interest, alike the abode of intelligence and refinement, and the dwelling of the rudest. And the qualities that fit for such varied intercourse, are not found in the researches of the cloister; nor acquired in a day. Like purely intellectual resources, they result from appropriate training. And, in suitable locations, they may be gained without interfering at all with the efforts of the study: nay, may afford, to some extent, the needful relaxation and solace of those efforts.

In this view, the vicinity of a city or large town, dangerous as it might, perhaps, be to unrenewed minds, is readily seen to possess decided advantages as a place for theological education. The city is a world in miniature, exhibiting human nature in all its aspects; affording opportunity for every species of intercourse, and giving scope for any amount of benevolent effort. While the student now and then spends an hour in searching out its ignorance, vice, and miseries, his sympathies are kindled, his philanthropy strengthened, and his heart enlarged. And all the enterprise and bustle around him, though of a worldly character, will operate only to quicken and expand his powers. If faithful to himself, he may go forth from such habits of study and active training, with a character well-proportioned, fair, elevated, acceptable—fitted for any situation. Divine Providence may assign him; prepared to act promptly, discreetly, energetically.

4. Another means of an able ministry, of express divine injunction, is *competent pecuniary support*. On this point revelation is plain. When Christ sent out his disciples, he bade them take nothing for their journey, saying that the laborer was worthy of his hire. The apostles, also, explicitly brought up his will on this point as a matter of solemn duty. "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel shall live of the gospel." The church, then, as she regards the authority of God, will make adequate provision for her ministers. This provision has in it nothing of the nature of *charity*; it is an act of the strictest *justice*—a discharge of one of the plainest Christian obligations. And it is a dark crime in the church, if she allow her ministers to be oppressed with anxiety about their circumstances, and oblige them to expend time and strength in direct efforts for subsistence. In such palpable disobedience she cannot expect the divine blessing—she cannot escape the marked disapprobation of her King. He may, in wrath, grant her desire, but send leanness into her soul. *The divine appointment*, in this matter, under both the Jewish and Christian

dispensations, is manifestly wise. It is adapted to prevent a secular spirit. It affords time for appropriate labor and study. It cuts off occasion for neglecting any of the momentous duties of an ambassador for Christ. And the ministry can never rise to its proper dignity, purity, and strength, in a disregard of these plain Gospel principles. Let the church, then, that would not be cursed of God with an ignorant, lean, or worldly ministry, obey promptly the Scripture requirement. Such a church, relying on God, may hope to be blessed with "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." And let the Gospel ministry be universally supported in this manner—"even so as the Lord hath ordained,"—and it would become more emphatically the *property* of the church, and its best powers be held sacred to her welfare; and the happy influence might soon be seen in her brightening graces and spreading triumphs.

Finally; For securing such a ministry as is demanded by the age, *let there be cherished a spirit of humble, fervent, believing prayer*. If the church has ministers of a proper character, she will receive them from God. His promise is, "I will give you pastors after mine own heart." "He gives some, evangelists; and some, prophets; and some, pastors and teachers." In all the efforts of the church, then, to increase the number and strength of the ministry, let her remember, that "promotion cometh not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south;"—that "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." And does the cry for laborers now come from every quarter?—from vacant churches, and dreary wastes in our own land?—and from waking millions whelmed in pagan darkness and hopelessness? Let the church carry the moving appeal at once to the throne of infinite mercy. Does the enemy seem to come in like a flood? Does the tide of worldliness appear overwhelming? Does infidelity send forth its blasphemies, and the Man of sin his emissaries? Does the church suffer shame, reproach, and trouble, from foes without and foes within? Let her be truly humble, but not desponding. Let her rise up in all the omnipotence of faith:—such faith as in other days "subdued kingdoms," and "obtained promises." And do the signs of the times, as well as prophecy, indicate the coming on of mighty convulsions and revolutions, in the civil and religious world,—demanding a ministry of wisdom, strength, and zeal kindled from heaven? Then let there be unwonted confidence in the power, and grace, and faithfulness of God. The cause to be sustained and carried forward is his. The crisis of the world, with all its interesting features, is open to his eye. And he only has the wisdom to select, and energy to inspire and summon forth the ministry that is needed. "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." Let the church thus keep near her King, obey all his commands, and trust for success only in the strength of the Lord God of hosts, and he will, by appropriate means, raise up for her deliverance and triumph, men of enlarged mind, "mighty in the Scriptures," and "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost."

With views like the foregoing, the friends of religion have established this Seminary of sacred learning. Its foundations are laid upon a liberal and comprehensive plan. Its object is to furnish an able and evangelical ministry—a ministry of sound and systematic theology; well grounded in a knowledge of the holy oracles; and aided by the counsels of past experience, and history, as well as the advantages of general intercourse with men; and thus prepared, through rich grace, for a clear, conciliating, strong, impressive exhibition of God's truth. The Institution has risen at an eventful period. Its location is peculiarly auspicious. As states, and churches without number, are starting into life and influence within its sphere of action, the character it may contribute to give them is matter of unspeakable interest, not only to this generation, but to coming millions. O may its impress be the image of the Holy One! Then may countless multitudes rise up in time and eternity, to bless the day of its birth. May the Institution, fixed in the confidence, and fostered by the offerings and prayers of the good, and enriched continually from the Fountain of all

knowledge and grace, stand forth for the honor of Christ, to the end of time. Be this its honor, its character and destiny; and when its goodly edifices have thus finished the work assigned them, and its career of usefulness shall come to be reviewed from the eternal hills of light, we will all say, "*Not unto us, not unto us; but unto thy name, give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake.*"

SERMON CCX.

BY REV. BAXTER DICKINSON.

Delivered on occasion of his resigning the charge of the Third Presbyterian Church in Newark, New Jersey, Nov. 23d, 1835.

SURE MEANS OF SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY.

ACTS XX. 32.—And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

THE apostle Paul, when he uttered this benediction, was at Miletus, a town on the western coast of Asia. He had planted many churches in different parts of Europe, and particularly in the Grecian states; and he was now on his way to Jerusalem, from which he had been absent a number of years. Arrived at Miletus, he sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus—a church not far distant, on which he had bestowed much labor and concern, and for which he still cherished a strong affection. The elders came at his invitation, and the interview was one of great interest. The apostle could stop but a short time; for he must, if possible, be at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost. He availed himself of the occasion, in reviewing his labors among them, glancing at his prospects, and giving suitable counsel and exhortation. In this connection he uttered the benediction before us, closed with prayer, and departed amid the cordial salutations and tears of the brethren, who all accompanied him to the ship.

Coming before you for the last time as your minister, I have been led by my feelings, to adopt this parting benediction as the theme of discourse.—“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” I can attempt little more, on this occasion, than to bring to a natural close, a ministry of six years among you, assuring you all of my kindest feelings at parting, and pledging my grateful and affectionate remembrance. I shall, in imitation of the apostle at Miletus, just advert to the character and results of my ministry here, and then make some suggestions with reference to your future welfare.

The apostle, in review of his labors, adopts language peculiarly strong. “Ye know,” says he, “from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you; but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house; testifying both to the Jews and to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ: wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” I cannot venture to apply this language, in its full import, to my own ministry. It has had its imperfections: and I can only say, it has been my honest endeavor to act upon the principles of ministerial duty here avowed by the apostle. It has been my aim to illustrate and enforce the great truths and duties of the Gospel, and to give to the several parts of the Christian system the attention which their comparative importance

demands. I have remembered that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." And I have considered also, that "wo is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." Under such impressions, I have tried to exhibit the amazing truths of God, whether joyous or painful, so plainly as to lodge them in the understanding, and so affectionately as to commend them to the conscience and heart. I have supposed it the great design of preaching, to bring men back to God; to render men holy. With this view, I have labored to alarm the careless with a sight of their guilt, to guide the inquiring to a Savior and Sanctifier, and to console and animate the humble; and I have freely testified to all, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

This ministry has been received with all the external attentions it has merited, and more. The congregations have been large and serious; and it is consoling to me, on leaving, that I see you in circumstances of rare prosperity, as respects union, strength, and readiness to every good work—circumstances rich in promise of future good.

But the connection, I would hope, has still higher claims to a grateful review. It was formed for purposes grand as immortality; and though there has been too much of coldness, and worldliness, and mere formality, we have not plodded on through the whole without evidence of God's special presence and power. There have been cases of hopeful conversion little noticed, because silent and solitary. There have been times of the marked displays of Divine grace. Two hundred and thirty-two have been added to the communion—about half the number by a public profession. Many, who had previously entered on a life of godliness, I would hope, have been quickened in the heavenly race. The cause of Christian charity, in its varied forms, has been honorably sustained. Through Sabbath school and Bible class instruction, there has been a very marked improvement in the religious knowledge and habits of the young. And, in common with the friends of God and man in other places, we are permitted to review with satisfaction our efforts in the great temperance cause.

For all that has been effected during our connection, we give honor to Him alone, without whose blessing Paul might plant and Apollos water in vain.

On the details of this ministry, it would be unsuitable here to dwell. God grant, that with all its imperfections, the great and final review of it, may be an occasion of our mutual and everlasting joy.

I proceed, as proposed, to some suggestions, with reference to your future prosperity.

1. You cannot too soon have a *stated, evangelical, and devoted ministry*.

I take it for granted, no one would wish the worship of the sanctuary suspended. All, however, may not feel alike, as to the expediency of a speedy settlement of a minister. I could wish that, on this point, there might be but one opinion. An occasional or temporary supply may go through with the duties of the Sabbath to acceptance; it may discharge some of the other general and necessary duties of a pastor; but it can never fully meet the wants of a people. There is something in the pastoral relation to create interest, and to inspire peculiar affection and confidence—circumstances indispensable to the highest degree of usefulness. And for this reason, with others, I have felt it my duty, except in peculiar cases, not to encourage the ordination of men merely as evangelists. A long interruption to the settled ministry almost necessarily leads to religious indifference, or fearful distraction. There are many interests to be attended to among every people, of which a pastor only can form a just conception, and on which a pastor only can be expected to bestow a suitable attention.

But another point of greater importance relates to the *character* of the ministry you select. I said, it should be *evangelical*—in other words, one that will faithfully exhibit the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. And it is a quality of such

fundamental importance, that, for the absence of it, no combination of other excellences can atone.

As to my views of Christian doctrine, I trust there is no misapprehension; and, consequently, as to my views of what constitutes an evangelical ministry. The scheme of Gospel truth, as I have endeavored to inculcate it, contemplates the existence of one only living and true God: it contemplates such a mysterious, though real distinction of persons in the Godhead, as renders proper the appellations, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—one God. It regards man by nature, and in consequence of his connection with the first apostate pair, as a sinner, utterly alienated from God, and in a state of ruin. It ascribes to the Lord Jesus Christ the prerogatives of supreme divinity; and regards his mediatorial work, his work of humiliation, as an adequate source of relief, and the only source of relief, for guilty and lost man. It holds to the obligation of man at once to repent of his sins, and by faith to embrace Christ as his Savior. It holds to his possessing all the faculties necessary to a free moral agency, and an immediate compliance with Gospel requisitions: while, at the same time, it acknowledges that such is his perverseness, that he is made willing only in the day of God's power, and becomes a child of spiritual life only by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. It recognises an eternal and unchangeable purpose of God, to justify and save some of our guilty race, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. It cherishes the idea, that the grace and power of God, manifested in active obedience, will carry his people forward through all the conflicts of life, to the glory and joy of the upper world. It anticipates a judgment to come, and a state of endless blessedness for the righteous, and of endless misery for the wicked.

Other truths are comprised in the Christian system, but these are fundamental. They are all truths which the minister of religion must constantly illustrate, defend, and urge—because there is attached to them immeasurable importance. Nor can a ministry be much valued as a means of eternal life, which does not make a full avowal of these truths, and a lucid illustration of them, in all their practical bearings.

To a ministry giving prominence to this system of truth, this field of Zion has been accustomed from the very childhood of you all. God has ever blessed it, here and elsewhere; and its mighty influence in preparing souls for heaven, will be told in the everlasting songs and glories of multitudes which no man can number.

In the selection of a pastor, caution on this point is, perhaps, more important at present, than at some preceding periods. We live in times of independent thought and conflicting views on every subject. There is pride of opinion, and too much angry controversy. In these heated collisions, I have supposed there was a middle ground, sanctioned by both the Bible and the standards of our church—ground on which the great body of our churches and ministers are disposed to plant themselves—cherishing confidence, and acting in concert, though still having slight shades of difference—difference principally of a philosophical cast. You want a ministry of truth—of the whole truth—without question; but not surely of mere speculation, and much less of wrangling controversy: not of bigoted attachment, on one hand, to all the precise phraseology of other ages, denouncing as heretical all that do not choose to adopt it; nor, on the other, one that rudely, recklessly, I had almost said profanely, sweeps aside all that is ancient in principle and practice, apparently for the very reason that it is old.

You will bear me witness, that I have never sought your edification and eternal life, by the intricacies of mere metaphysical speculation, nor the anger, wrath, malice, and evil speaking, of heated theological controversy; while the doctrines of our church and the truths of the Bible have been kept constantly before you. God grant that this pulpit may ever throw around the strong light

of heavenly truth, but never become the arena of profitless and unchristian conflict. May the doctrines of the cross here distil as the dew—doctrines full of consolation to the penitent, and alarm to the rebellious; but the wisdom and power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth.

But you need not only a stated and evangelical, but also a *devoted* ministry. And by a devoted ministry, I mean one which is uninterruptedly occupied with its appropriate business—one which engages the best powers of the man—one characterized by a manifest attachment to the kingdom of Christ, and a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of men.

There is enough in the appropriate work of a pastor, to occupy his entire time—to absorb all his powers of thought, feeling, and action. He should, therefore, be exempt very much from secular anxieties and business; and hence he should be liberally, promptly, and cheerfully supported. It will be ruin to his influence, and destruction to his charge, if, from any cause, he is led to cherish a worldly spirit and deportment. You may have an enlightened, eloquent, and strictly evangelical ministry; and it may accomplish little towards building up the church and saving souls, unless it be really interested in the holy and heavenly office;—unless it breathe the true spirit of piety, and exemplify the varied bright virtues of the Christian character, and evince that the man regards himself as engaged in a most sacred and momentous work.

On these topics, important as they are, I cannot dwell. May the Lord, all gracious, send you a pastor after his own heart.

2. Another thing important to your welfare, is a spirit of uniform and elevated piety in the church.

With the fraternity of professed believers there exists a mighty influence. They are a city set on a hill, that cannot be hid. They were designed to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth. They can give energy and effect to the ministry of reconciliation, or they can abridge its influence, so as to render it nearly powerless. Their godly walk and conversation give courage and animation to the pastor. They furnish a standing and palpable testimony to the truth and importance of the messages he brings. Their bright example sends alarm to the consciences of the worldly, the vicious, and the proud. The religious prospects of any community are cheering or alarming, very nearly in proportion to the degree in which the Gospel shines forth in the lives of its professed friends.

Be aware, then, of the responsibilities resting upon you. Can it be justly asked, What do ye, more than others?—Is your life characterized by backsliding, and devotion to objects of merely temporary interest? The cause of religion must feel the withering influence. Spiritual death, in all its horrors, will reign around you, and the multitude be seen eagerly pressing on to a miserable abyss. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate. Put on the armor of light. At all times, shed around you a pure and healthful influence; and thus give efficiency to the ministry of reconciliation, and secure the blessing of Heaven on your families, and on generations that may come after.

3. You will need, also, a temper of mutual concession and forbearance.

You cannot too deeply feel the importance of being at peace among yourselves. Discord and strife are not more destructive to social happiness, than to religious improvement. To whatever the contention may relate, it arrests the great work of preparing souls for heaven. And the strife is peculiarly unhappy, which arises from conflicting partialities so common in the settlement of a minister.

To expect a community to feel and think all alike, on any subject, is idle. It is not, therefore, probable, that all will think alike in reference to any preacher they may hear. It is consequently necessary to cherish a conciliating and yielding spirit. Every one should avoid claiming that his own wishes shall be

a criterion for all the rest. Such claims cannot be admitted; and from them can arise only jealousy and conflict.

To avoid circumstances so deplorable, let each restrain every feeling of envy, pride, and selfishness; and cherish only kindness, forbearance, and fraternal love. Put away, says the apostle, all anger, wrath, malice, and evil communications out of your mouth; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

In this forbearance and concession, it is not to be understood that conscience may be sacrificed—that truth, and the cause of piety and salvation, may be put in jeopardy. But while you strive together for the faith of the Gospel, and maintain an inflexible integrity, study the things that make for peace, and the things whereby one may edify another. Let nothing be done through strife, or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Thus, it is to be hoped, will the good providence of God concentrate your hearts on a spiritual shepherd worthy of your confidence; and thus may the light of this Zion break forth as the morning, and its salvation as the noonday. May you never feel, yourselves, nor entail upon those who come after you, the blasting influence of a spirit of party.

Cultivate the same temper towards all about you. It is a satisfaction to leave this interesting field of labor with ample proofs of a strengthening kindness, confidence, and friendship, between the members of the different churches. May this union in the truth and love of the Gospel be firmly cemented; and the immense moral power of these churches never be wasted in conflict, but all be directed in harmonious and vigorous action, for the honor of Christ, and the salvation of the world.

4. Let me urge a steady and zealous regard for the religious improvement of the young.

Instead of the fathers, will very quickly be the children, here, as well as elsewhere. And your destiny, as a people, is depending, under God, upon the character they assume in early life. Let their religious education be neglected, and it is easy to foresee, that this fair heritage may very soon be overrua with infidelity and vice. But let means of religious improvement be zealously pursued, and it is safe to calculate on successive generations characterized by reverence for the Gospel and devotion to the Most High.

Among the means of religious improvement to the young, the system of Bible class and Sabbath school instruction holds a prominent place. It is a means which, with us, has been attended with very important effects. There is no labor or sacrifice, in which I have stronger confidence of success, than in aiding these institutions. And it would be a most cheering fact, could I be assured this hour, that the Bible class and the Sabbath school, with their library, would at all times receive that countenance and support among you, which their great importance demands. Let the citizen sustain them as a means of producing an enlightened, sober, and elevated state of society. Let the father and the mother sustain them, as a source of temporal and immortal blessings to their offspring. Let the Christian zealously sustain them, as a nursery for the church, and for heaven. Sustain and encourage them by your counsels, your donations, your active services, and your prayers. Look to the character, and guard vigilantly the deportment of the young. Let them be trained to reverence and love all that is sacred, and to practise all that is pure, generous, and noble. Let the Gospel get its firm hold upon their hearts, and they are secure against vice and ruin; and you may then leave them and go down to the grave, with no anxiety about their welfare; for God is their defence.

5. Let me urge a generous support of the benevolent movements of the age.

I have felt it my duty to keep the great system of religious charity steadily before you; both with reference to your own good, as a people, and with reference to the wants and woes of the world. And it has been matter of joy,

to notice the cheerfulness, and increasing liberality, with which you have responded to the calls of Divine Providence. It is a period calling for action, self-denial, enlarged sympathy, and unflinching benevolence. And there is every indication that the demand on the enterprise and offerings of the church is to be still greatly augmented. Our country, exalted among the nations, is to be saved, and its glory advanced and perpetuated, only by the influences of the Gospel. And the world is to be rescued from the darkness of ages to the knowledge of Christ, and the love of God. To secure these great results, must be the aim of every generous heart. And the time for bold plan and action is evidently come. Be it your ambition, then, to bear an honorable part in the holy enterprise. Nothing will give me higher satisfaction, than to hear that you are abounding in these labors of love, more and more. God has prospered you, and is still abundantly prospering you. When counting up your gains, when looking on your wealth and splendor, when sitting in your beautiful temple, and rejoicing amid rich religious privileges, O think of the destitute, millions on millions! Remember, God is no respecter of persons: he loves them, as well as you: his sun shines as brightly on their fields: the Savior embraced them in his last message; and his Gospel can prepare them, as well as you, for his second coming and glory. Enter, then, fully into his great plan of mercy, and rest not till he has the whole earth for his possession.

6. Let me urge you to cultivate, habitually, the spirit of prayer.

For every species of prosperity, man is dependent on God. But in a peculiar sense is he dependent for spiritual blessings. In addition to the stated ordinances of the Gospel; in addition to a ministry which shall clearly exhibit the momentous truths of revelation; and in addition to those other means of religious improvement, which are ordinarily associated with Gospel ordinances, you need the quickening and transforming influence of the Holy Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but God giveth the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither is he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."

This dependence originates the duty of humble, importunate, and persevering prayer. "Yet for all this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Such prayer secures the approbation and blessing of God, in all circumstances of life; but peculiarly in connection with efforts that respect the great interests of the soul. Such prayer gives beauty and strength to the church. Such prayer gives power to the ministry. Such prayer opens the windows of heaven; it causes the skies to rain down righteousness, and the earth to bring forth salvation.

Think not then, brethren, to prosper, except in cultivating habitually a spirit of devotion. Let God be acknowledged at all times. Bring to his altar, daily, the sacrifice of an humble and contrite spirit. Let your interests, as a people, be brought before God in the sanctuary, in the domestic circle, in the social meeting, and in private personal communion with his Spirit. Pray habitually under the impulse of a vigorous faith; that faith which gives substance to the divine promises; which carries the immortal forward, and plants him down amid the scenes of judgment and a crumbling universe, and which opens new and eternal heavens to his enraptured vision.

If there be one thing on which your spiritual welfare, as a people, is peculiarly depending, that one thing is a spirit of united, fervent, and unceasing prayer to God. I see rich blessings treasured up for you in the stores of his infinite benevolence, if you cherish this spirit; but if you suffer it to languish and die, I see only blasting, and barrenness, and gathering woes, in reserve for you and your children.

I dwell on this point, because, while no duty is so intimately connected with your prosperity, there is, perhaps, none which you are so much in danger of neglecting, as the duty of prayer. The only sure pledge of success in any

important matter is the friendship of the Most High; and it is peculiarly so in matters of religion and salvation. You need continually the presence of the Holy Ghost. You need those signal manifestations of divine grace, that have, for successive generations, characterized this spot and this region. On their continuance are suspended all your rational hopes of religious prosperity. On them hang the destinies of your children, and coming generations, for eternity. Pray, then, and labor for, and expect revivals of religion. With all the imperfections, in some cases the extravagances, that have attended them a few years past, and at other periods, in one place and another, still they are from God; and they are the last hope of the church. And could I gather round me the thousands of this busy population, I would now say in the name of God—A pure revival is of more, infinitely more importance to you, as a people, than all your rising worldly prosperity, increased a million fold. For, what are silver, and gold, and parade, and costly dwellings for a day, compared with the image of God, with salvation, with an eternal heaven, with unfading crowns of glory? While, then, your ministers plant and water in this fair field of Zion, pray, pray unceasingly, for the descent of the Holy Ghost, that he may abide with you for ever.

With this brief review of our connection, and this notice of a few things deemed specially important to your spiritual welfare, I now leave you. At such an hour, a mingled tide of feeling, reflection, and anticipation, rushes upon the mind. It is matter of devout gratitude, that our connection has been one of peculiar harmony, and that we part, cherishing sentiments only of friendship. It is matter of humble praise, that at this moment my eye can light on those among you, who, I trust, are emphatically the seals of this ministry. Ye, brethren, are peculiarly our joy and our crown. Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Forgetting the things which are behind, reach forth to those which are before.

But it is matter of pain and grief, that, in closing this ministry, I see many still far from righteousness—without God, and without hope. As respects *your* salvation, my humble efforts seem to have been all in vain. Possibly they have proved only a savor of death unto death. Some of you have, at times, been alive to your guilt and ruin, and earnestly resolved to seek salvation. But your goodness was like the morning cloud and the early dew,—soon passing away. Others of you have, from month to month, and year to year, been but little, if any, affected by the Gospel. Ah! dying fellow-sinners! give heed for this once, I entreat you, to the parting voice of your friend. Begin *this day* the great work of salvation. Engage in it with whole heart and soul. It is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life. I tremble, I shudder, to think of the bearing this ministry may have had on your immortal destiny! Spare me—O, spare yourselves the anguish of an eternal separation!

With all of us the present is indeed a solemn crisis. We meet where we have often met and mingled our devotions at the mercy-seat; but the last page in the record of our intercourse is written, and the whole is in a moment to be sealed up. The commission I received to minister for your souls has been recalled and handed back; and its results are for disclosure at the bar of the enthroned Lamb. One and another of us will, in quick succession, be summoned to our account. My eye instinctively glances forward to that great day, when, with assembled worlds, we shall all meet again. Live, live, my immortal and beloved hearers, in steady prospect of that day. Live for God, for a dying world, for heaven, for eternity. FAREWELL!

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SERMON CXXI.

BY REV. DANIEL A. CLARK, NEW-YORK.

THE SINNER'S DESPERATE DEPRAVITY.

JEREMIAH iii. 5. *Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst.*

THIS passage evidently teaches the doctrine, that *men are as depraved as they can be in present circumstances.* The charge is made by the infinitely Holy One, and can be fully substantiated against every member of the unregenerate family. The justice of the charge may appear from a consideration of the following positions :

I. That God in his providence has surrounded the sinner with many circumstances operating powerfully to modify human character.

II. That by these circumstances every sinner is actually restrained in his wickedness, and held back in his downward career.

III. That every sinner does make the attempt, and succeeds as far as God will let him, to sunder these ligatures that would hold him fast to reason, hope, and heaven.

Among the circumstances which illustrate the first position, I mention,

1. Education. This makes christendom differ from the dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of cruelty. This makes the same land differ from what it was while a land of idolatry. This makes us to differ from our forefathers when under the superstition and tyranny of the Druids. This occasions the difference between us and the savage of the western wilds. Education, then, operates greatly in modifying character, and in preventing men from being as bad as they would be.

2. Human law has a similar effect. How near right, think you, would men be, if they were not controlled by human laws? Look at some country while in a state of anarchy. Look at some city or village where the influence of law is suspended. Look at France, while under the reign of terror, when law was abrogated, and see one company after another pass under the guillotine; and the executioners of to-day the victims of to-morrow; and, tell us, is not character greatly modified by municipal law?

3. By the law of God. If men have no other belief in it, but that which may be denominated the faith of history, it still greatly modifies human character. Men have been sorry a thousand times that God ever issued his law

They have hated to read, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." They have been sorry to read, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy;" "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" "Thou shalt not kill;" "Thou shalt not steal," &c. But men have been in a measure restrained by these laws, while they have hated the Lawgiver, and despised his statutes.

4. The troublesome supervision of conscience has greatly modified human character. This everlasting censorship, while it has held men back from sin, has been hated, and warred against, and scowled upon, by the whole human family.

5. The whole Gospel, the law drawn out into offensive interference with the sinful pleasures and follies of men, has modified human character beyond all calculation. It so commends itself to their reason, and applies such power to their consciences, that it becomes exceedingly difficult to withstand it. It is so tender, majestic, commanding, and reasonable, that it for a time melts and overawes many who ultimately reject all its provisions.

6. All the Gospel institutions—the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the church-going bell, the Lord's supper, the ordinance of baptism, every thing associated with Christian worship, operates in modifying human character, and rendering it, in appearance, better than it is.

7. The desire of heaven has the same effect. None, perhaps, are so abandoned as not to hope that they may, after all, live and be happy after death. The bare possibility that they shall reach heaven, and wish to unite in the song of redemption, prevents them from being as wicked as they would be. This operates as a powerful restraint, and helps greatly to modify character.

8. The fear of hell, also, holds back many from the commission of crime. Men are afraid that what they have heard respecting hell is true. Though the subject often excites their unhallowed mirth, it is a mirth which has its misgivings. Their very laughter betrays their fears. And though they trifle with the thought of everlasting burnings, it is with the manifest design of keeping their courage up. The fear of hell thus operates in modifying the character, perhaps even of the most worldly.

9. The expectation of a judgment has the same effect. They have some apprehension that they may be called to answer at the bar of God for their deeds on earth. They have "a fearful looking for" of this dread reality. They think it may be true that God will bring them into judgment, for every work, whether it be good or evil, and apportion his awards accordingly. And hence, this apprehension serves as a wonderful restraint upon their character.

10. Public sentiment is a great preventive of crime. Men are so constituted as to be obliged to respect public sentiment. They cannot endure the indignation of a whole community; and public sentiment in Christian lands favors virtue, and frowns on vice. The assassin is thus disarmed—the thief becomes honest—the swindler pays his debts—because public sentiment compels him. No one has daring enough to be utterly indifferent to the good opinion of all his acquaintance; and character is thus greatly modified.

11. The domestic affections produce the same result. The silken cords

which entwine around the family circle, prevent the commission of many a crime. The father, the husband, the mother, the wife, the son, the brother, the daughter, the sister—all the endeared relations which the members of a family sustain to each other, and which are strengthened every day, operate greatly in the formation of character. How many a son has been saved from ruin, through the affection which he bore to his mother! How often has a sister's entreaties tamed the ferocious spirit of a brother, and rendered it yielding and lovely.

Thus we see how curbed men often are, while in their native state. This world, then, is in disguise. God, who only knows the full influence of these modifying circumstances, knows what is in man. Therefore, when he looks down from heaven, he still pronounces "the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint," "every imagination of the thoughts evil," specious appearances to the contrary notwithstanding.

Thus we have recounted some of the circumstances which modify the human character. These are, indeed, of vast importance. They result in what we term *civility, good morals, &c.*—all bearing kindly upon the present condition of man. They all speak the wisdom and kindness of God—they are so many golden chains let down to earth, to modify its moral corruptions. God is good in every such ligature, by which he holds men within the reach of that blessed influence, which can sanctify and make them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. We ought, then, to thank God for these modifying circumstances, and pray that he would put these chains all on, and keep them on, till even the vilest and most obdurate shall yield to his infinite love. We ought to view men in more hopeful circumstances, in proportion as God shall hold them by these moral bonds. For, while a young man respects the Sabbath, and is obedient to his parents, there is more hope of him than afterwards.—While he is afraid to swear, we may hope that he will begin to pray. While he dare not avow open infidelity, we may hope, if we do our duty, that he will yet believe revealed truth, to the saving of his soul.

II. By these circumstances every sinner is actually restrained in his wickedness, and held back in his downward career. In proof of which we observe,

1. Men are *uneasy* under these circumstances; which shows them to be restraints. Let men be unrestrained, and they will be easy. It is only pain of some kind that renders them uneasy, and willing to change their position. Hence they will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd.

2. Men are constantly trying to alter their circumstances. But they are too indolent by nature to try to alter their circumstances, unless they are circumstances of restraint.

So when a raging fever burns,
They shift from side to side by turns;
And 'tis a poor relief they gain,
To change the place, but keep the pain.

3. When men at length alter their circumstances in any of these respects, they often show out a worse character; manifesting what they would ~~have been~~

before, if they might, if these restraints had been sundered, and they let loose upon the world.

4. When these restraints are all removed, men are uniformly far more wicked than if they had not been imposed. All will admit this. It is therefore manifest that these circumstances operate powerfully in restraining men from a career of sin and ruin. Even in the church itself there are vast multitudes who become apostates, because their apparent goodness was made up by such restraints: they had really no concern for the glory of God, and were not religious because they loved religion. Beware, then, lest you be left to fall away from your supposed faith, and hurry on to destruction. Not only should professors fear, but the impenitent also should fear and tremble; because God holds them as accountable beings, completely in his power, and in kindness, for a time, lets down ten thousand restraints upon them. God now controls the madness of his enemies. He puts his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their lips; binds them with his restraints; and holds them, perhaps, in apparent subjection. In this the character of hypocrites and unbelievers is distinguished from the truly religious. Their wickedness is merely suppressed, not subdued: their amiable appearances are produced by restraining providence, not by converting grace. The heart of the real Christian is not suppressed, but radically changed. The grace of God has transformed the tiger into a lamb, and the wolf into a kid. The Christian abandons sin because he hates it, and follows after holiness because he loves it. This constitutes the beauty of the Christian character, and this the distinguishing glory of heaven. *There* will be no restraint but love. The whole population will love to do right; and impelled by love alone, will employ, in doing right, their energies forever. On the other hand, as the character of the wicked is here varied and modified by restraints, God will only need to take off these moral ligatures, and substitute the everlasting chains of darkness, to surround them with the horrors of hell. The exceeding baseness of the wicked appears in this—that all these powerful restraints are required to hold them fast in mercy, and prevent them from doing worse; and the horror of hell in this—that all its population will love to do wrong, and in wrath be let loose to do it, so far as they can amidst fetters which will hold fast only to gall, and chains which will confine only to burn. How amazing, in view of all these considerations, is the operation of these providential circumstances in restraining the career of the wicked! We are thus prepared to consider the remaining position: viz.

III. That every sinner does make the attempt, and succeeds as far as God will let him, to sunder these ligatures that would hold him fast to reason, hope, and heaven.

One would think that a sinner would not wish to have these kindly ligatures sundered. Where may he wander, or rather where may he not wander, and against what rock may he not dash, and into what bottomless vortex may he not plunge with all his interests, and perish with his all, when he shall have thrown off the fastenings that hold him to the throne of *the Eternal*? While we go the ground over, and see how he raves, and rages,

and flounces like a bull in the net, and would break loose from God, if he might, whatever be the probable result upon himself, and his hopes, and his family, and his character, and whatever the relationship he must sunder, we are amazed at every step of the experiment, and we are amazed at the result, and at the blindness of the immortal being that is in a measure let loose to try his skill in the awful experiment, till God gives him up to hardness of heart and blindness of mind, and leaves him a prey to himself, and he is destroyed in his own waywardness. Let us, then, trace his steps, and see his ravings:

1. See how he breaks over and breaks through the restraints of *education*. He tries to throw off what he knew of God, and all he had learned of the Savior, and of the operations of the Holy Spirit; all he had learned of the operations of the Godhead, in the history of the church. And when he cannot forget, he raves at his own recollections, and madly reproaches the mind that cannot forget, and will not retrace and throw off what it is now to him a burden and a curse to recollect. But the Bible rushes upon his unholy mind with the vividness of a new, and fresh, and hated story. O that he had never read that book! he cries; that his mother had not furnished him a Bible when he left his home, or had not made him promise to read it every day! But if in his senses he may not forget, perhaps he may induce God to put out his mind, and destroy the powers of recollection. And this is now the only prayer he makes and the only thing he cares for. In the mean time he hates the very lessons that he learned in school, and would tread them all down as one does the worthless weeds that are overgrowing his path in a garden. But,

2. When he has tried for a time, but has tried in vain, to retrace the process of education, he finds himself reined in by *human laws*. If he cannot forget God, perhaps he can snap asunder the power of human control. Man cannot be omniscient. He can evade all human ties. He can rise above the law, and tread it down like the mire of the street. Or he can violate its precepts and despise its regulations, and hold on and hold out in despite of all its sanctions, presuming in his heart that God will not know, neither will the Almighty consider it. If the law does say, "Thou shalt not violate the rest of the Sabbath," he can drink and carouse, or lounge and loiter, and the world will only esteem him the better, especially if he add generosity and liberality to his infidelity and to his deeds of daring and outrage. He may violate any law that lays its restraints on this side of the judgment. Perhaps there may come no day of hated and holy retribution, and then he can have the infernal satisfaction of laughing at the Christians. If the failure of the divine promise of such a day should ruin the world, it will not, as he conceives, ruin him. He would be willing that no such appointment should be fulfilled, even though the failure should tarnish forever the character of Jehovah. If the law does say, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," if he can violate it, and the crime be hid, and no human tribunal take cognizance of the deed, he cares not for the law. He cares not

what misery his iniquities occasion, if his deeds do not break into open daylight. If it break the heart of a mother, and if a father writhe under the agony of a ruined son, he does not care for the tears of that mother, nor the agonies of that father. The deed he has done he does not intend shall come to light, in the present life, and he can easily bring himself to care for nothing beyond. Thus he throws off nearly all the restraints of human law, and contents himself with the purpose never to commit murder, or theft, or any crime that would draw him out to the light. Thus he blesses himself in his own delusion, and trusts for safety in his own righteousness. But he meets with more disturbance yet,

3. From the *law of God*. Impenitent and unbelieving, he has read in that law what if he cannot put down, he is a ruined man: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Thus is dashed, at the first stroke, the whole fabric of a dark and fatal idolatry. If man worships his money, or his merchandise, or his farm, or his friend, or any thing but God, or gives any thing else his supreme affection, even if he does not professedly worship it, he is condemned of God. And he adds, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." But how unfashionable it would be to care about this commandment, and let the apprehension that God "will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain," produce a serious moment, or a pang of distress! It is so noble not to care about God, or what God can say, or do, and it would be so cowardly, so ungentlemanly, to be afraid to sin, that the offender just breaks from this grand and controlling ligature easier than from many that would seem to have no such power to bind and to restrain. An effort not so mighty as that which sundered Samson's green withes, puts them all aside. But,

4. Not quite so easily does he dispose of the troublesome supervision of *conscience*. This vicegerent of Heaven stays often many a month after open war is declared. It sometimes will hold close conference with the heart, although the heart may wish to be alone. It is that power that will not die, nor see corruption. It will not go to sleep in the grave: it will watch, even while the wretch is dying, to secure the honor of God, and gather courage for a fresh attack just by the dying pillow. And the agony of its first onset in the unseen world, hard by the place of dying, devils cannot know. For they have never shunned a dying Savior, and they have never died.

But all the embrasures that can be opened upon the soul by this moral avenger must be closed, or its eternal thunders will be heard and felt. Yes, even here the heart sometimes says to conscience, as Satan to the Savior, "Art thou come to torment me before the time?" But it is the conflict of desperation, and like the murderer who came into close and terrible embrace with the man whose blood he would spill, and was heard to say, You must die, and with that saying put forth a thrust that forced the dagger to his heart; so in assailing conscience, to put down its spirit of admonition, it must be assailed *desperately*, and if the victory cannot be otherwise secured, it must be drawn to the crater, where the wretch stands to torment *himself*, and to be hardened by a view of its fires; and here may perhaps end

the conflict, till it is renewed again on the other side of time. Now there is but little left for the sinner to do. Conscience has ceased its admonitions. But still, he has a slight conflict,

5. With the *institutions of the Gospel*. We noticed in his conflict with the law, which spreads abroad its troublesome interference with his lusts and his pleasures, how readily he could contrive to evade its claims. But the Gospel, like some faithful party in the field of blood, still keeps up the chase, and deeply wounds at every shot. It proves not so easy as was apprehended to still this avenger of justice. It pursues the sinner close through all the narrow lane of life, and even down to the gate of hell, unless sovereign grace effectually interpose, or long-injured mercy say, "*Let him alone.*" But see the ungrateful struggle of the sinner to cast off this fastness of heaven—this Gospel of salvation. Every church-going bell fills his conscience with guilt, and each return of the day of rest reminds him of the quiet of his paternal roof, where a mother's prayers used to be joined with the Sabbath day in rendering the time of rest too holy to be endured. He must pervert its holy design, or writhe and bleed under the lashes of a guilty conscience. If he can get some scene of iniquity open, to prevent his soul from thinking; if the theatre may be opened, or any other house of death, or he may sport himself with the pleasures of the turf, and thus kill time, and throw off this one additional fastness of heaven, and put himself afloat upon the sea of life, then he can be comparatively happy, boasting like the school boy's kite,—

*See how yon crowd of gazing people
Admire my height above the steeple;
How would you wonder, did you know,
But what a kite like I can do?*

It tugged and pulled, while thus it spoke,
To break the string; at last it broke.
Deprived at once of all its stay,
In vain it tried to soar away.
Unable its own weight to bear,
It fluttered downward through the air;
Unable its own course to guide,
The wind soon plunged it in the tide.

Thus it will not fail to happen to the immortal being who shall try to do without the Gospel. He may go off from God, and despise the power that would pull him back, but he will go to wander amid the blackness of darkness forever!

Had I time, I would go on through the whole catalogue of restraints, and show how, one by one, the sinner wantonly throws them off. But I can notice only one or two more particulars.

6. The hardened sinner would dislodge himself from all thought of heaven or fear of hell. And yet these are very powerful ligatures, and often the last to be sundered. When men think of relinquishing heaven, they sometimes forget that awakening previous question, "If I abandon the thought of heaven, where shall I then be? What means that worm which never dies? What mean those chains of darkness—and that gnashing of teeth—and that quenchless fire?" Ah! when the sinner is arrested by such questions, and must answer them, and answer them, too, under the operations of

the Holy Spirit, he will find it hard work to answer them and sin on. The throes produced will be like those of the second death; and whoever has tried, will not need again to ask what is meant by the undying worm. That eternal separation from the society of the good, and that imprisonment with the devil and his angels, if it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder, when only anticipated,—what will the reality be? I am scared at my own question. It will be a death that never dies—a living death! But,

7. There is still another thought. The sinner must have broken through all the restraints of *public sentiment*, before we can know how bad he would be; and this ligature he tries to snap asunder. But he will find that public very populous, before he gets through. After he has gone his round with mortals, and has learned not to care what *men* think of his conduct, he must cease, too, to care what is thought of his deeds, in heaven. Those beings that have kept watch over his pillow by night, that have warded off fire and pestilence, or waked him in time to flee, that have loved his father and mother, and love them still in heaven,—what will they think of the puny worm who has brought himself to despise them, and sport with their opinion? But even this is not all; for devils, too, have their opinion. And he must cease to care what they think of him in hell. And their judgment, remember, is not depraved like their hearts. One might almost as well attempt to silence the opinion of heaven as of hell. The murmurs of that dark world against the man who casts its burning sentiments behind his back, will be like the distant roar of a thousand cataracts, or like the dashing of as many icebergs conflicting with each other in some boundless polar sea. And,

Finally: there yet remains to be noticed one of the most powerful motives of restraint, *the domestic affections*. It is impossible to guess what men would be, till they throw off the hold, for instance, that a mother has upon a profligate son. We must recollect how John Newton managed, and how miserable he was while a mother lived, to hold the cord entwined about his heart. When every other tie had been sundered, the mother kept hold of him by this,—when his character was gone, when he had descended to the meanness of serving a black mistress, and of eating his morsel from her leavings—when her favor was life to him, and her frown filled him with despair, and he had no other friend—then he remembered a mother's counsels and a mother's prayers; and then and there gave his heart to the Savior. There, from Africa's dark soil, and from a condition and character darker still, he first lifted his eyes to heaven, and began to breathe eternal life: and he lives now, and sings redeeming grace in heaven, and tells in every song how hard it is for a sinner to conflict with the restraints of infinite love.

But all these are a part only of the circumstances, the restraints, that go to modify human character; all of which the sinner deliberately strives to neutralize. And if in nothing else he has shown a character bad as language can describe, or actions prove, he has given a climax of the whole in his attempts to sunder all such ties, and cut himself loose from God, and from the whole family of kindly influences that would save his soul from death.

Such is the obstinacy, the rebelliousness, the ingratitude of the sinner. Must he not, then, be born again—have a new heart and a new spirit—or never enter into the kingdom of God ?

SERMON CCXII.

BY REV. DANIEL A. CLARK.

THE NATURE AND RESULTS OF SANCTIFICATION.

JOHN xvii. 17. *Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.*

OUR Lord Jesus Christ was a perfect man. This we must believe as confidently as we believe his divinity, else we shall have confused ideas of many portions of divine truth. And as he was a perfect man, and would be in all things a pattern of what his people should be, he must have a perfect religious character, and perform the Christian duties, as far as they would be applicable to his exalted nature. Hence, we often find him engaged in prayer.

Whatever difficulty there may be in the idea of a divine Redeemer's praying, the fact we are bound to believe. In his inferior character as Mediator, he acted by commission from the Father, and would take instructions from him, and put confidence in him. When the last scene was coming on, and he knew that soon he must hang upon the tree, he offered that memorable prayer, from which the text is selected. He prayed most tenderly for his people; and among the first blessings asked, he prayed for their sanctification, through the truth.

There cluster about this subject many interesting questions, to some of which I purpose to turn your attention.

1. What do the Scriptures mean by sanctification? Sometimes, it means being set apart to sacred use. Thus every seventh day is sanctified. "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." Thus the tabernacle and temple, the priests, and altars, and sacrifices, and all the sacred things of the Jewish dispensation, were sanctified.

God speaks of sanctifying his name, which he does when by his judgments he rebukes the gainsayers, and stills their blasphemies. He thus convinces men that he is holy.

I could name many other uses of the term sanctification; but its principal use, and that intended in the text, is, in application to the work of rendering an unholy creature holy. Men are by nature unholy. They exercise forbidden affections, and do not put forth the affections that God requires. The prayer of Christ in the text was, that his followers, through the instrumentality of truth, might be made what God requires them to be; having the affections of the heart, and, of course, the deeds of the life, conformable to the divine law.

2. Another question may here very properly be,—When does this holiness begin? And the answer is obvious: It begins at the moment of regeneration. Till then, all the exercises are unholy; for "the carnal mind is enmity against God." Nor is there any degree of alarm, or any amount of conviction, that can generate one holy affection in the heart, previously to this period. Of course all the prayers offered, and all the exertions made, prior to this change, are unregenerate prayers and exertions. Nor can it be believed, consistently

with correct scripture views, that, anterior to this moment, there is any approximation toward correct feeling. No alarm, nor the most distinct conviction, can bring an unregenerate man to feel any more correctly toward God, or any holy object, than he did in a state of carelessness and security. And although we would not pretend to say that the divine influence in the hour of awakening may not restrain the sinner, and hold him back from the blasphemous thoughts and affections which he might otherwise put forth, yet in all this there is no holiness.

And then it may be a question whether the sinner, under alarm, does not wax worse and worse, till the moment of passing from death unto life. If he has more light—if he sees more distinctly the objects of his implacable hatred, does he not obviously rise in his hatred, till it is changed into love? This point, however, it is not my object to press. We must concede that holiness begins when the heart is changed.

3. Is it always small in its beginning? Does that text in which the kingdom of God is compared to a grain of mustard seed, and that other where it is compared to leaven, teach us that grace in the heart is thus small at the first? Or do they illustrate the primitive smallness of the Christian church, and its ultimate growth and enlargement? They may be meant to apply in both cases; but aside from these texts, we are taught unequivocally in the Scriptures that the believer is, at the first, sanctified but in a small degree, and that he "grows in grace" till he arrives at the fulness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. He is, at the first, a "babe, and has need of milk, and not of strong meat." Afterwards, he "forgets the things that are behind, and reaches forth to those things that are before, and presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The light that has shined in upon him shines "brighter and brighter unto the perfect day." Hence, we gather, that though the work of regeneration is from its very nature instantaneous, the work of sanctification is progressive, and is, at the first, comparatively small.

4. But how will this comport with what believers have thought was their experience—that at the first they felt a glow of holy affection, which they termed their first love, which afterward they lost? And the Scriptures, they have supposed, favored the idea. "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." But was that love of espousals, thus accredited to Israel, all holy love? Or was it not, in great part at least, merely that natural joy which might arise from the comfort, and pride, and novelty of their emancipation? It surely soon vanished, and they murmured, and made them gods, under whose guidance they purposed to return to Egypt. And that whole congregation, you know, died in the wilderness. They were, evidently, as a body, destitute of holiness; hence their love of espousals must be explained as something else than delight in God.

But why may not the same be said often of that joy with which the heart of the new-born seems to overflow? Can we be allowed to believe it is all holy love to God? There can be, as yet, but little knowledge of God, or of truth. Hence that strong affection can hardly be allowed to flow wholly from objects so dimly seen. Is there not often far greater probability, that it is the mere effusion of animal affection? Or, at least, that it has far more of nature in it than of grace. There may not seem, afterward, the same hilarity; but is there not more knowledge of truth and duty, and more stability in the ways of God, more fixed principles of action, more humility, and more undeviating confidence in the Savior?

In which position would the believer most readily go to the stake, and lay down his life for his Master? when, during the first month of his regeneracy, he fills the air with his song? or, when a few years afterward, he has learned

the corruption of his heart, and at times, perhaps, hardly dare hope that he is born of God? May not the joy abate, and there be, at the same time, an increase of that principle of holiness that develops a heavenly mind? Surely it is the believer of continued experience, and not the man renewed but yesterday, that is rooted and grounded in the truth, and who cannot be driven about with every wind of doctrine. Whether this question is decided right, however, I wish each one to judge for himself.

5. Another question arising out of this subject is—does the good man at all times advance in holiness? and are we so to understand that text, "The righteous shall hold on his way?" Here, perhaps, again, it is not easy to come at what we are sure is truth. I have believed that it is otherwise, and that, while there are times when the good man progresses rapidly, there are other times when he makes no progress, and others, again, when the progress of holiness, if I may so speak, is backward. Thus Israel, sometimes, bent their track directly to the promised land at other times did not move for many days, and at other times marched retrograde. So we have seen the plant spring up and grow as if life was in it, and then perhaps for weeks seem stationary, and then again withering under drought, and seemingly about to perish. Whether these analogies may teach us truth, or mislead us, still I have believed it thus with the child of God. And the only position contested, I believe is, whether the Christian is ever in the way to do himself essential injury. That broad promise, "All things shall work together for good to them that love God," has been used as implying the negative. That the promise is true, and that the full import of it will be accomplished, there cannot be a doubt. But what is its import? Does God merely promise, in this precious text, that all *the events of his providence* shall conspire to bring his people to a higher seat in heaven? Or does he promise all this, and more too, that their very backsliding shall conspire to the same result? Would he promise, that if they forsake him, and sin by going after their idols, this very sin shall tend to purify them! Would it be safe to trust a wandering believer with such a promise in his hand? Is it reasonable to believe that it will tend to the health and growth of the heavenly mind, to have it wounded, and polluted, and ensnared by transgression? Have we any assurance that Peter and David might not have reached a nobler Christian stature, if they had stood firm in the hour of temptation? I confess, I think there is no such assurance.

Do not facts warrant us to believe that Christian minds, of the same powers and opportunities, have made different degrees of advance in the ways of God? The one is seen to climb the steeps of Zion, with brisk and steady step, and far outgo the other, while to us there appears no reason why the other might not have *led* in the enterprise. The professor who comes at length to the grave in old age, and, as we hope, a believer, but who can look back upon whole years of relapse and of wandering, has he those marks of maturity, and that animating hope, and that strong and conquering faith, seen in the man who moved steadily on in the ways of God, till his Master called him? You are thinking, perhaps, while you read, of two old men, contemporaries who died, it may be, in the same year, members of the same communion, the one having hardly deviated from the path of life an hour, while the other has seemed to be alternately a Christian or a worldling, as the times were. Now which of them seemed manifestly to fall asleep in Jesus, while the other was saved perhaps, though as by fire? You have all answered me. Pass through our churches, and tell me where is the venerated man of God, who is to the world around him a walking conscience, and carries heaven on his brow, in whose life there have not been some dark seasons of marked, and guilty, and hurtful relapse? Let me say, I do *not believe* that the Christian does make uniform progress in holiness, but does sometimes become stationary, and sometimes retrograde in the heavenly road.

6. Are we then to believe, that while every Christian in heaven will be perfect, there will still be a difference in their Christian stature, and their amount of enjoyment proportioned to their industry in acquiring holiness in the present life? On this point there can be very little doubt. There will be a difference in heaven among redeemed spirits, as one star differeth from another star in glory. Doubtless God will have employment for them all in his kingdom. As in a building there is a variety of materials, places to fill requiring more and less strength, but all necessary; so in that mystic temple whose top-stone is to be laid in heaven with shouting, Grace, grace, unto it, there may be required, to give it its greatest strength and beauty, souls of very different capacities.

7. It is then obvious that we are ourselves selecting the position we shall occupy in heaven, if any. On our industry will depend our growth; and on our growth our station in the kingdom of the Redeemer. And how can men be indifferent what is the position they shall hold among the redeemed in heaven! Increasing holiness bears its present fruits, gives its immediate as well as its future rewards. In what other enterprise, then, shall we be so ambitious to succeed as in this? If there is any one thing surprising above all others, it is that believers in Christ should be slow to put on his image. The Psalmist would never be satisfied till he awaked from death in the likeness of his Redeemer. There is surely no joy like that which is begotten by a holy temper: hence, how can one who has tasted this joy, find any other pleasures, which, for a single hour, can become its substitute? Let me close by presenting a few motives to engaging with ardor in this heavenly enterprise.

1. I have hinted that we shall be *happy* in proportion as we are *holy*. We are mistaken in supposing that any particular circumstances are requisite to render us happy. There is but one thing requisite, likeness to Jesus Christ. And this is a happiness within the reach of us all, in proportion as we are willing to exercise his temper, and copy his example, and put on his image. Hence that rich and precious intimation, "Christ in you the hope of glory."

2. We shall be *useful*, other things being equal, in proportion as we are *holy*. No good man can be satisfied who feels himself to be living to no purpose. Find me the Christian who is never happy, and, sure as life, he is never useful. He is a cumberer of the ground, and can never reflect on the day that has gone by with pleasure. The man who is not aiming to bless his generation may dig after comforts, but he can never find them. He may read all the promises over, day by day, but there will not be found a word of consolation for him. He might derive more from some act of real Christian benevolence, than he does from a whole Bible full of consolations: and to be *holy* is the way to be *useful*. To follow Christ has an eloquence in it that no exhortation, nor argument, can hold out. "Be ye followers of me, as dear children."

3. There is *dignity* and *character* in being *holy*, that nothing else can produce. What man is great, like him who walks in the consciousness of exercising the same affections that Christ does? In what matter should not men feel indifferent, rather than be willing to be losers in this mighty concern? How can it seem a small thing, whether we put on, or not, the character that glows in the view of heaven? the character that he wears who receives the homage of all the redeemed, and is adored by cherubim and seraphim? How comparatively trifling a matter is it, that we are honorable in the estimation of those who judge according to the outward appearance. The apostle could say to his enemies, It is a small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment. How noble his character, while he thus regarded supremely the inward adornings of holiness? Would we then aim at character,—character that will stand the test when worlds are burned up,—let us press on after **HOLINESS**.

SERMON CCXIII.

BY REV. DANIEL A. CLARK.

THE MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION.

JOHN xvii. 17 *Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.*

THE grand purpose for which God gave to men a revelation of his will, was, that the truth thus revealed might be the medium of their sanctification. It is hence spoken of as the sword of the Spirit, the Sanctifier. If it be asked, Why God does not make men holy, without the use of truth, we answer, that he would not thus treat them as moral agents. There must be in that case a mere act of his sovereignty, and man become virtuous without design. Indeed, it seems to me to be keeping within the record to say, that men cannot be saved without a knowledge of divine truth, in consistency with the nature God has given them, and the heaven he has provided for holy beings. The very nature of holiness implies that men have felt the force of truth, and yielded voluntarily to its influence. To repent implies, that we see the truths, that the law is good; and that we have broken it, while we were under the most sacred obligations to obey it. And faith implies, that we feel distinctly the truths, that we are lost, that Christ is able and willing to save, and has warranted us to make application to him. Hence men cannot be forcibly made to repent and believe, not acting themselves, voluntarily, in view of truth, without an infringement of their agency. Or, rather, such faith and repentance, if we could suppose its existence, would not be their own act, and could not, on the Gospel plan, avail them to salvation. *Let us then inquire, how and why divine truth is used in rendering men holy.*

1. It presents to view the objects of holy affection. To love God is a holy affection. But God cannot be loved, till men are acquainted with his character. In his word, his character is all presented. Had we no Bible, we might see his mighty power and Godhead in the works of creation; but only in the oracles of God do we see his whole character. There every attribute is written, and the full Deity made known. *Now*, if we have that temper to which goodness is lovely, we shall not fail to love him.

The complete character of the Lord Jesus Christ is, in the same book of God, revealed for our faith. We can see for ourselves, whether he has those attributes that we can love, and is such a Savior as we can trust in. There could be no faith in him, without this delineation of his character.

The Christian character, also, is presented in the Bible, as the object of our affectionate regard. We there learn the divine law, and have opportunity to approve: and the same may be said in reference to every holy object on which God requires us to place our esteem.

And we learn, too, in the same book, the objects we are required to hate; for holiness consists in feeling disgust toward the objects of unrighteousness, as well as complacency in righteousness. There we learn the temper of our hearts, and all the moral wrong in ourselves that we are to lothe and repent of. Thus a primary use of truth in our sanctification is to present us with the

character of the objects toward which we are to exercise holy affections, the objects we are required to love, and the objects we are required to hate.

2. Another use of truth is to present motives to the exercise of the right affections. The Bible amply assures us, that holiness is a lovely attribute of character. It is what renders God lovely, and angels, and the whole family of the redeemed. Hence holiness is indispensable to good character; and here is a motive to aim at a high standard of holiness.

The Bible assures us, that only where there is holiness there is happiness. This begets the peace and joy that reign in heaven; while its opposite has occasioned the ruin of this world, and the miseries of hell. These facts are so amply illustrated in the word of God, as to show the loveliness of virtue, and the hatefulness of vice, thus presenting us new motives to become holy. The Bible presents motives to holiness, by drawing out holiness and depravity to their final result in heaven and in hell. In the one world, holiness has produced its full effect in the everlasting peace and blessedness of its population; in the other, too, its full effect in the unspeakable misery of its hopeless inmates. Thus Bible truth presents men with motives to become holy, and being urged home by the Spirit of God upon the understanding and conscience, is the medium of sanctification.

3. As holiness must beget the love of holiness, it must also produce love to that truth which is the medium of its own production. The Christian, then, wishing to progress in that holiness which is begun in him, will be the friend of Bible truth, will aim to grow in the knowledge of it. As this is seen to be the medium of his cleansing, and as he now aspires to be clean, he must desire to know more of truth. All Bible truth will please him, for it all has one and the same effect, his cleansing. He will thus be a diligent student of the Bible, and will never feel that he knows enough of it while there remains in his heart or life one moral pollution to be cleansed away.

4. It will follow then, of course, that the Christian who is a child in Bible knowledge, will be a child in holiness. To the same extent that he remains ignorant of divine truth, he will remain unsanctified; and men will learn, without inquiring of him, how much attention he gives the sacred volume. Apparent exceptions to this position are easily explained. We have seen men of small intellect and small acquisitions in science, generally, who yet appeared to be rapidly growing in holiness. In such cases it will always be found, on a close acquaintance, that, though the man may have no general knowledge, he is daily conversant with the testimonies of the Lord. If one will learn *sanctifying* truth, he may become sanctified, though he may remain ignorant of other truth. We frequently meet with the contrast of this case; men possessing a large amount of general knowledge, but knowing little about their Bible: in which case there will not be seen much advancement in the stature of piety. If we are acquainted merely with men and money, though we may be acute worldlings, this knowledge will not tend to purify the heart. The knowledge that will render us holy is to be gathered from the word of the Lord. "Sanctify them through thy truth."

5. It would seem to be a truth unquestionable that the man who is under the process of sanctification, will have an increasing thirst for a knowledge of divine truth, till he dies. As the heart becomes purified, the love of truth, the means of its purifying, must increase. And let the thirst for truth increase, and it needs no argument to prove that men will grow in the knowledge of it. We shall find, then, no believer who thinks he knows enough of the Bible, no man, however old, or infirm, or poor, or occupied, or neglected, if he has begun to be sanctified who will not wish, by learning more truth, to nourish the spiritual life that is begun. More and more, as the cleansing operation goes on, and he feels the pleasure of being holy, will his mind be open to conviction,

and the truth become adapted to his taste as the honey and the honeycomb. The love of truth, in the aged believer, becomes his strongest appetite. Old men are not accustomed, you know, to abandon, in their latter years, the objects of their appetite. How often do they rather become the slaves of some strong governing principle, which is seen at last to be mightier in death than ever! And in the man of God, who is struggling with his corruptions, and desperately bent on the mastery, the appetite for truth must be the ruling passion while his eye can see, or his ear hear, or his mind perceive, or his heart and conscience be impressed. He will carry his Bible with him to his death-bed, and put it by his pillow, and glance his dying eye upon its pages, and ask the by-standers to teach him, and will be digesting some heavenly truth when life goes out; and the nourishment afforded his soul, by that last reflection, will add the finishing stroke to his sanctification. How can it be otherwise? Whomsoever it may condemn, though it tear from myself the last hope I have, still it must be true, that as grace advances in the heart, the love of truth will be enkindled. As there can be no natural health, and the body cannot be strong and vigorous, after the the appetite is gone; so is there no spiritual health, and the inner man is sickly and nerveless, where there is no relish for truth. The case cannot be, where there is growth in grace accompanied with a disrelish for the study of divine truth.

6. It would seem, then, that it cannot be a light thing to reject, or disrelish any doctrine of the Bible. Every doctrine must have its use in rendering men holy, else it had not been taught in that Bible sent to sanctify the world. God knew exactly what the case required, what system of truth the Spirit could use to the best advantage, in rendering the world holy, and this he has published. Hence, no part of it may be rejected as unwholesome, or innutritious. Suppose a table spread, day by day, by one who perfectly knew our constitutions, knew any disease that might be lurking about the body, or any danger of the season or the climate that needed to be guarded against, and we should presume to say, that one article upon the table was injurious to health, and never taste it; how exactly would the case resemble that of the man who imagines he has found, in the book of sanctifying truth, one doctrine of pernicious tendency. How arrogant, in the preacher of the Gospel, to lay his hand on any doctrine which he may not preach, or any duty he may not enforce, or promise or threatening which he may not deal out to the friends or the foes of God! And how mistaken his people, who would have him suppress any paragraph, or hold back any doctrine or maxim of the word of the Lord! Who can judge as well as he who gave the word? Who, among the army that publish it, or the multitude who hear it, can tell better than he, what kind of truth is suited to the exigency of a betrayed and ruined world?

7. It would seem, then, a matter of course, that sanctification will be going on among the various classes of Christians, more or less prosperously, in proportion to the amount of truth embraced in their system. We may even determine, by this criterion, what denomination is built the most substantially on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being their chief corner-stone. There may be in a human mind some truth, but not the whole truth. There may be so much error as shall greatly counteract the effect of truth. The system thus made out may be *somewhat* calculated to sanctify; and yet not the *best* calculated. It may nourish a sickly and palsied religion, while it can never produce the strong, and vigorous, and useful man of God. It may contain truth enough to bring men to heaven, and yet never produce, to shine in the firmament of God, many stars of the first magnitude. In choosing our religion this one question should be kept prominent in view: which is that that makes

the most enlightened, the most benevolent, the most holy and heavenly temper! for there we shall assuredly find the most truth and the least error.

8. Might not believers be sooner ripe for heaven? or, rather, might they not all be qualified in the time that God allows them, after their second birth, for a higher seat in heaven than they do ordinarily reach? Yes. They could learn more truth, could learn it faster, and digest it better, and grow more vigorously, and pass earlier the boundaries of Christian childhood, and thus arrive earlier at the fulness of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus.

REMARKS.

1. May not that truth which is learned *before* regeneration, operate afterward to the forwarding of the believer in holiness? Yes. It matters not how early truth is known. Give it then a free entrance at the first opening of mind, and pray that it may please the Spirit of God to use it for sanctification. The smallest lad in the school may be learning now what will be useful and precious truth to him, when he shall be shining a mighty orb in his profession, or afterwards in heaven.

2. Is there not more hope, then, that the children in our Sabbath schools will be converted, than those who are to-day lining the fields, and fishing along the banks of the brook? No doubt. They will have treasured up truth to exert a sanctifying and elevating influence when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

3. Will not revivals prevail in the next generation, among a younger class of sinners than in times past? Doubtless. As we approach the millennium, and the Sabbath schools shall have matured minds earlier for reading and reflecting, a younger and still younger generation will be sanctified, till our revivals will all be in the sabbath schools; and God will at length ordain praise, according to his promise, from the mouth of babes and sucklings.

4. And shall we not have then in our churches more active young men, and a race of fathers and mothers that shall shine brighter in the church of God? Yes, young men will be indeed "strong," and the patriarchal age will return, and every gray head will indicate the presence of wisdom and holiness; thus, there will be far more select and pure assemblages for the supper of the Lamb.

5. And will not this be then a holier and happier world? So the prophet sung: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fating together, and a little child shall lead them."

6. And will there not then ascend to God nobler recruits of the family of believers than in any of the ages that have gone by? Yes; new constellations will appear in heaven. And the various successions of the sanctified that shall then, at different times, come home to glory, will forever shine more, brilliantly in the kingdom of their Father.

7. And can we do nothing to hasten on that day, and swell the halleluiahs of heaven? Yes; let us seize the dear youth or child, who a year or two hence will feel himself too old to be a scholar, and press him into the Sabbath school and Bible class, and have his mind imbued with holy truth, before he gets that palying maxim, "*too old.*" Let us all gird ourselves anew; let us cheerfully discharge every obligation; and let it be our holy ambition to share largely in the coming glory. *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever.*

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SERMON CCXIV.

BY JAMES MILNOR, D.D. NEW-YORK.

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

EPHESIANS ii. 1. *You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*

WHEN we address dying men on the subject of that dissolution, which is the inevitable lot of all, they fully comprehend our meaning. The destruction of natural life is every day before their eyes; and however insensible they may be to their own constant liability to the stroke of the destroyer, and their consequent endless happiness or misery, yet arguments are needless to convince them that what has happened to the generations that have passed away, will happen in turn to them. Sooner or later, the inevitable doom involved in the sentence, "Dust thou art and unto dust thou must return," they know will be theirs. But the case is far different when we speak to them of that spiritual death which alienates the soul from God, precludes his favor, and if not risen from in the present state of existence, must assuredly banish them forever from his presence. Beings so bustling and active, so full of enterprise and energy, so alive to all that concerns their temporal interests, are very unwilling to believe that they may be dead while they live; and that if they be not quickened into spiritual life, their end will be what the Apostle terms, "Death unto death."

In our text he declares the Ephesians, to whom he wrote, to have experienced both these states. Once they "were dead in trespasses and sins." Now Christ had quickened them into spiritual life. Of two similar classes does this whole world consist. The larger number are dead in trespasses and sins. Like these Ephesians before their conversion, as described by St. Paul in the verses following the text, they are "walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, who worketh in the children of disobedience;" "having their conversation in the lusts of the flesh;" and "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." The Apostle guards against the supposition, that this was a character peculiar to the Ephesians merely because engulfed in the darkness of heathenism, by attributing the same properties to himself and his associates in their unconverted state. He confesses they "were, by nature, children of wrath, even

as others." But, with humble gratitude he avers, that their situation was now very different: "God, says he, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ."

The text may lead us to consider,

I. The state and character of the natural man as here described.

II. The agency by which he is rescued from spiritual death.

I. The state and character of the natural man. He is "dead in trespasses and sins." His condition has no fitter emblem than that of death. Similitudes, however, must never be strained so far as to lead into absurdities and contradictions. It would be carrying this allegation too far to make the natural death of the body, and the spiritual death of the soul identical. The body deprived of life is utterly incapable of action, just as if it had never been the tabernacle of that thinking principle we call the soul. But a soul dead in trespasses and sins is not exactly in that state. So far as regards the powers, sensations, and actions of our intellectual nature, it is perfectly alive. Its thoughts are exercised, and its sensibilities engaged, in earthly things with activity and energy. It can soar aloft into the regions of speculative knowledge. It can even avoid, in the exercise of its natural powers, much of moral evil, and practise much of seeming good. All that is exterior even in the offices and duties of religion, comes within its grasp. Nay, its faculties may be employed in the use of those means of grace which are designed to be the instruments of the soul's resurrection from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It would be a perversion of a Scripture doctrine, not to regard man, at every period of his existence, as a rational creature, or to question his free will. For so God unquestionably regards him. He is at all times under the obligation of the duties prescribed to him by his Maker. He is subject to the law of God, with all its sanctions; and to him are addressed the promises, exhortations, and invitations of the Gospel. These concessions are necessary to set aside those excuses which human reluctance and indolence are continually presenting for the neglect of the soul's salvation, and to maintain the universal accountability of all men for the talents committed to their trust. And yet, in perfect consistency with these admissions, it is, nevertheless, true, that all unregenerate men are considered in God's word, as "dead in trespasses and sins." "Sin hath entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death, (spiritual as well as natural,) hath passed upon all men in that all have sinned." Let a survey of the world be taken with that purified vision which the sacred Scriptures and the Holy Spirit supply, and its fallen inhabitants present the aspect of such a valley of dry bones as was spread before the eyes of the prophet of the Lord. The scene presented is one wide carnival of death, over every region of the habitable globe, in every place of man's dwelling, from the cheerless hovel of poverty to the splendid mansion of luxury and wealth, and over every intellectual variety of our species, from him who scarcely seems raised in mental endowments above the beasts that perish, to *him whose understanding has mastered all the heights of human science.* *spiritual condition is the heritage of our race.* "There is none that

doeth good, no not one." Every soul has been arraigned at the bar of divine justice; the charge of universal guilt has been established; and sentence of death passed upon every descendant of him who first violated the command of his Maker. By nature all are alienated from the love of God, and averse to holy principles of action; and, therefore, in the sense intended by our Apostle, they are spiritually dead. For the purposes of self-gratification; for the active pursuit of present enjoyment; for the inordinate love of the things of time and sense, man has principles and faculties of action abundantly sufficient. Ingenuity in the contrivance of his plans, activity in their pursuit, perseverance in their accomplishment, all who are observant of the course of human action will admit to belong naturally to man. It is this very devotion to earthly things, associated with dislike to spiritual, that the terms of our text were intended to designate. When we speak of a man's being "dead in trespasses and sins, and so incapable of doing what is spiritually good, it is not physical nor intellectual, but moral incompetency we intend. It is like our speaking of a miser being incapable of a generous action. The evil lies in the perverted state of the will, or heart, which is the seat of guilt. It does not imply that the man could not do what is right, if he really had a desire for it. But he has no inclination for spiritual things. On the contrary, he has a deliberate and allowed aversion to what is agreeable to the will of God. He is dead to holy duties—has no relish for them. This is sinful, and brings him in guilty before God. And, surely, it does not diminish, far less take away his guilt, that such is its extent, that nothing less than divine power will ever overcome it. Unrenewed men are utterly opposed to the holy requirements of God's law; and they willingly, and without constraint, reject the Gospel. The first is sufficient to seal their condemnation. The second raises their criminality into a still higher grade of atrocity. Having incurred an awful penalty, they ungratefully reject the declared and only means of its remission. They manifest no desire after an interest in the salvation which God has mercifully revealed. They have willingly brought upon themselves the guilt of transgression, and they are most criminally indifferent to the promises which divine mercy proposes for its removal. Is not this statement supported by Scripture authority and daily observation? Surely an unbiassed judgment must acknowledge its accordance with both. Men are called upon to love God with all their heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. They are conjured to abandon their pride, and self-indulgence, their love of the world, their reliance on their own righteousness, their opposition to the grace of the Gospel. There are set before them the love of God, as the legitimate and grand incentive to duty; his law as the supreme rule of conduct, his glory as its proper end, and his mercy in Christ Jesus as the only hope of escaping the consequences of transgression. But alas, how ineffectually are these things pressed upon their attention! All that promptitude and vigor of action, which are so readily called forth in the inferior concerns of life, are here wanting. Call we to such ever so loudly; they answer not. Proclaim we the terrors of the Lord; they still slumber and sleep amid the billows of divine wrath. Address we to them the affecting appeal

of God's mercy and compassion ; they have ears, but they hear not. Reiterate we the free forgiveness of the Gospel, and all the countless blessings God is ready, for Christ's sake, to bestow upon repentant sinners ; they refuse to stretch out the hand of faith to receive them. O how many have lived esteemed, and died lamented, and have had eulogies eloquent, perhaps just, pronounced upon their social virtues, whose minds have been strangers to the spirituality and holiness of God's law, whose conduct has not been subordinated to his commands, and whose hearts have never felt the quickenings of his grace, and so risen into that spiritual life which alone prepares for life eternal ! Never do they seem to realize the solemn truth, that the period of probation is wasted and the soul destroyed by any course that is pursued without reference to God and the salvation of his Son, and with no heart-felt reliance on that Almighty Spirit, who alone quickeneth the spiritually dead. And this appropriately introduces our

II. Second topic : namely, the agency by which alone, souls, dead in trespasses and sins, are rescued from that state. " You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

It is Christ, through the eternal Spirit, who is the agent in this great work. The converted Ephesians had heard the voice of the Son of God, and lived : and that same Son of God has still a voice upon earth. He addresses men in his Gospel, which, under the influences of the Spirit, that gracious Comforter, whom, agreeably to his promise, he hath sent from the Father, is made the power of God unto their salvation. This is the appointed agency for calling man from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from Satan to God, from spiritual death to spiritual life and peace. The doctrine of an incarnate Savior, honored not merely as a preacher of righteousness, but as an atoning sacrifice, applied by the Spirit in demonstration and power, is, indeed, to its believing recipient, as life from the dead. The sight, by faith, of Jesus Christ, consenting to die, as a vicarious offering for sin, in our flesh, and in our behalf, with the incalculable weight of all our offences on his guiltless head ; and then rising from the dead, still bearing our nature in triumph from the grave, and elevating it to the throne of God in glory, where he ever lives as our prevailing intercessor, imparts, as it were, a new existence to the soul. In the cordial persuasion and acceptance of these wondrous truths, it revives from its dreadful torpor, and is animated with principles of spiritual life before unknown. No otherwise can any experience a resurrection from the death of sin, and a new birth to righteousness, or look forward with well grounded hope for the salvation of God. That blessed Gospel which proclaims these saving truths also shows man his depravity and helplessness. It indicates with unclouded clearness that he needs salvation from the dominion, as well as the penalty of sin ; but that, in neither respect, can he be a Savior to himself ; that he must place his entire dependence upon " the Lamb of God," to whom has been committed the work of redemption, and " who alone taketh away the sin of the world : " and it sets forth this divinely constituted Redeemer in all the freeness, extent, and fulness of his great salvation. It exhibits him as declaring, in these unmeasured terms, the ample sufficiency

of the means of its attainment, and as pledging his sacred word for its bestowment on every believer;—"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." And, as an incitement, at once to embrace the proffered blessing, it sounds in the ear of each slumbering mortal the stirring call, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Nor is this all. But, aware of man's desperate insensibility, and that, if left to himself, he would remain unprofited by all the invitations of the Gospel, the same Jesus sends a heavenly influence to awaken and impress the heart. Without this, the privileges, duties, and delights of spiritual life would still be unheeded and unknown. But Christ fulfils his promise, made before his ascension to the Father, in sending the Holy Spirit to "convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." This sacred Agent accompanies the preaching of the word with his energetic inward operations. He removes the natural dulness of the ear, and softens the stony hardness of the heart. We remember the seer of old in the valley of vision. He saw at first only dry bones. But presently there was a noise and a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them from above. Yet there was no life in them. The spark of vitality remained to be enkindled. But, when the word was given, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live,—" immediately the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army." In like manner the Gospel is a dead letter, or it produces but a semblance of life, until the Holy Spirit visits, with his enlightening and animating beams, the souls to whom it is addressed. It is He who commends it to the awakened understanding and the anxious heart of the sinner in all its sufficiency for his salvation, and in all its fitness to his spiritual wants. After convincing him of sin, the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to him. He quickens the discernment, so as to enable the subject of his influences to see the beauty and excellence of the Gospel plan. He persuasively inclines, or more powerfully draws, his will into the choice of the better part. He renews the sinner's nature, and sanctifies his affections, so as to prepare him for an entire surrender to God of all his faculties and powers, and for a full engagement in all the duties of evangelical obedience. These things, in his natural state, he discerned not. They were, on the contrary, foolishness to him. Now he sees them in bright and undeceiving colors, and his heart is enraptured with the view. O who, in the pride of his soul, would trust the blindness of the natural understanding, or the feeble light of unassisted reason, when offered such an enlightener and such a guide! Who would rest in his own inefficient efforts, when he may rely on this all-powerful Agent! Who would delay one moment to accept that aid, without which the Bible presents in vain its glorious truths, and the soul remains utterly unprepared for the bliss of heaven, and momentarily exposed to perdition? Shall we be told that there is discouragement in this view of man's required reliance on divine assistance in the work of salvation? We answer, No. It is the only way

ground of consolation and hope. Without it there would be ground for neither. Though Christ, in the way now stated, is both "the author and finisher of our faith," he may be resorted to without hesitation or doubt as to his willingness to interpose the required agency in behalf of every sincere suppliant of his favor. His power is indicated in the declaration, "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, so the Son quickeneth whom he will:" and the willingness of the former to co-operate in the work, is found in the assurance, that He will give the Holy Spirit to all that ask. There is, therefore, nothing dispiriting, but every thing encouraging, in relinquishing self-dependence, and coming at once to Jesus, "the way, the truth, and the life." Because he liveth, his believing people shall live also. Yes, he who stood at the grave of Lazarus, and at whose bidding the dead came forth in all the vigor of restored life; he who took the ruler's daughter by the hand, and raised her as from the bed of death; he at whose call the young man of Nain arose from the bier, restored to all his functions; he, in fine, who manifested the energies of omnipotence in "loosing himself from the bands of death, it not being possible that he should be holden of them," he surely has power to bestow grace and salvation, and will confer them on all who come in humble penitence and faith to receive them at his hands. Millions of contrite sinners, bowing beneath his cross, have been invested with these blessings, from that hour in which he breathed upon his apostles, and said unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," down to the favored day in which we live. Nor must it be questioned, that he is as ready now as ever to quicken into spiritual life the millions of our race now lying dead in trespasses and sins, to make them partakers of his own nature and blessedness, and to form himself within them the hope of future glory. He is exalted at the right hand of the Father for these very purposes, and his mediatorial reign will not terminate until, to an illustrious extent, they have been achieved. However many slight his mercy, and become self-destroyers, myriads of the dead in sin shall be quickened to spiritual life, delivered from the power of Satan, absolved from the sentence of condemnation, and received into those heavenly mansions which the Savior has prepared.

Our subject addresses itself with interest both to those who are still dead in trespasses and sins, and to those who, under the quickening influence of the Spirit, have risen into spiritual life.

1. We are bound, in faithfulness, to say to the former, that, in their present state, the sacred Scriptures bear toward them a most threatening, nay, a condemning aspect. So they did towards the quickened individuals addressed in our text in their antecedent state of spiritual death. But, as the blessing of God accompanied the labors of his servants in *their* recovery to life, so we are encouraged to hope for like effects on our ministry, in reference to the dead in sin. The promise is unrevoked: "Lo, I am with you always, even into the end of the world." Yes, in reliance on Him, without whose blessing we know that our preaching and your hearing are alike vain, we will hope, that, in another sense than that which looks forward to the final judgment, *the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son*

of God, and live." O, make this hour your own, by listening to the Savior's call, breaking the chains of death in which you have been so long ingloriously holden, and coming forth from the grave of sin into the liberty of the sons of God. Let the time past suffice to have remained in degradation, darkness, inactivity, and death. The calls of mercy, so often unheard or disregarded, are still sounded in your ears; the gracious provisions still tendered to your acceptance. But while we repeat our solicitations to all who have hitherto turned a deaf ear to our message, we solemnly warn them of the danger of continued unbelief. We would inscribe, in characters that should be ever present to their view, that declaration of Christ himself: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." How awful the thought, that, when persevering obduracy shall have sealed you to the doom of the reprobate, that same benignant Savior who is now entreating you to turn and live, will cast upon you the everlasting reproach, "Ye would not come unto me that ye might have life." The voice of entreaty will then be changed to that of solemn adjudication; and the sentence of that dread tribunal annex to the spiritual death the consignment of body and soul to a second death, tremendous in wo, as eternal in duration. Do you vainly indulge a hope that the supplication, which the fearful prospect before you may extort, will, even at that late period, be favorably heard and answered? We do not hesitate to affirm, that no warrant for such a hope is to be found in the book of God. He who is now crying, "Turn ye at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you; I will make known my words unto you," will then fulfil the prediction of his prophet, in the stern reply, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me." How astonishing that folly, which is willing to encounter peril such as this! Be it not yours, my hearers. Dismiss a spirit of procrastination, and seek now that transition from spiritual death to a renewed life of faith and holiness, which is the only safe precursor, as it is the assured pledge, of immortal glory.

2. We have said our subject addresses itself with interest also to those who, under the influence of the Spirit, have emerged from the death of sin into spiritual life.

Take care that you have the undoubted witness within yourselves of this most interesting, blessed fact. If God has enabled you to realize this happy change, you know it by its benign effects upon your dispositions and feelings; and by those fruits of righteousness which, if ye were not living trees of the Lord's planting, you could not possibly produce. If you are under no self-deception as to what God has wrought *for* you and *within* you, "maintain the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end." Be humble and unostentatious, meek and lowly, as your adored Master. But it is no vio-

lation of modesty that you make manifest to the world that you have passed from death to life, and that you are the ever improving disciples of Him to whom alone you are ready to ascribe the glorious change. Put forth, for the promotion of his glory, exertions corresponding with your renovated powers. Let your life be spent in their holy self-denying dedication to his service, that you may become every day more matured for the never ending life which is to follow. "If ye be indeed risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Renewed and ransomed spirits! Break the fetters that bind you to earth. The tendency of the living principle within you is to heaven. Let your conversation be there. In affection and in privilege, in love and in duty, rise with your risen, glorified Redeemer. "Stretch your imaginations to the utmost. Raise your wishes higher and higher, while you live. Not a wish shall be disappointed. The gates of life are already unfolding to admit you." Anticipate, then, in holy hope, the joys that are to follow, "When Christ, who is your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory," and ye shall be like him; for ye shall see him as he is."

SERMON CCXV.

BY JAMES MILNOR, D.D.

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES.

MATTHEW xiii. 24—30. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying; The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the household came unto him and said; Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou, then, that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together, until the harvest; and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.

THERE is a rich variety of instruction in the parables delivered by our blessed Lord. That which we have now read affords a clear solution of a difficulty that has greatly perplexed the minds of many, and conveys a lesson calculated, if duly attended to, to avert much mischief from the church of God.

In order to derive the proper instruction from this interesting passage, I shall consider it first, generally, in reference to the world at large; se-

condly; *especially*, in reference to the *Church of Christ*. And thirdly; close the subject with a brief application of the truths thus elicited.

I. Let us deduce from the parable such instruction as it affords in reference to the existence and continuance of moral evil in the world.

Whence has moral evil its origin? If there be a superintending and Almighty Providence, why is its continuance permitted? How happens it, that the earth is covered with violence and oppression; that wicked men are exalted to riches and honor, and the virtuous made the subjects of degradation and misery; that triumphant villany so frequently exults in pride and power, while humble virtue is neither raised to prosperity, nor suffered to pursue her lowly path uninterrupted and in peace? Whence so strange an inequality in the states of men with respect to the comforts and enjoyments of life, and so manifest a pre-eminence of worldly prosperity, in many instances, granted to the unworthy and base?

These are difficulties urged by infidels against the providence of God, to confirm their own skepticism, and to unsettle the faith of others. They have also, at times, disquieted the minds of professors of religion; and much ineffectual labor has been expended for their solution. By both classes they have been exaggerated as to their nature and extent; by the former designedly, for the most malignant and mischievous purposes; by the latter unintentionally, from perverted or mistaken apprehensions; not unfrequently from a natural temperament of mind disposed to melancholy, or from an influence upon their judgments proceeding from their own particular allotment in the world.

That much evil, however, does exist, must be admitted; and although unbelieving philosophers may speculate about its origin, to the derogation of infinite wisdom and goodness, or perhaps to the utter denial of a supreme intelligence, still the humble Christian will resort, with satisfaction, to the only authentic source of information on the subject. His Bible unfolds the origin of all this evil. It proceeds from the sinful disobedience of man, and formed no part of the stupendous creation of God. All things were originally formed, by the great Creator, in a manner perfectly agreeing with his divine perfections.

Man, the noblest of his sublunary works, he endowed with an innocence and integrity of character, that, if retained, would have been a perpetual bar against those desolating miseries which have followed his transgression. The entire freedom of his will, and an uncorrupted and unclouded reason to assist his choice, were the original gift of his Creator. Under the influence of that enemy of his peace, the devil, mentioned by Christ in his explanation of this parable, he violated the commandment of God. The primary author of moral evil, therefore, is this great adversary of the human race. Yielding, voluntarily, to his machinations, our first parents introduced sin and all its ruinous consequences into the world, and from them a seed of evil-doers have, in all successive ages, "risen up in their fathers' stead." All the fanciful theories and vain systems, invented to account for the origin of the evil, can furnish no such satisfactory information on the point, as this sure word of God.

But still, admitting the truth of this account, it is not unusual to indulge a secret murmuring at the severity of God in connecting such terrible results with "the offence of one man." This is a subject of too great difficulty and extent to be entered into elaborately in this discourse. A few general reflections suggested by the parable may perhaps be useful.

Let me again repeat, that, great as is the acknowledged evil in the world, infidelity, misanthropy, and ignorance are prone to overestimate its comparative amount, and to overlook many alleviating circumstances, which more honest, unbiassed, and lucid views will readily discover. Unequal as the conditions of men may appear at a transient glance, a closer view would often detect the fallacy of first impressions. The enlightened Psalmist acknowledges that he was, for a time, under the delusion of such a partial and imperfect apprehension of the ways of divine Providence. A view of the temporal prosperity of the wicked made him exclaim, "I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." David, however, soon learned to estimate with more justice and reverence the dispensations of Heaven. Instead of looking only at the surface of things, or adverting merely to their present state, "he went into the sanctuary of God, and understood their end." He confesses his former ignorance and foolishness, and no longer distrusts the wisdom, or the goodness of God. He saw in the ultimate issue that there was no reason for arraigning any attribute of the divine nature, because of a *temporary* allowance of the predominance of vice. He no doubt also ascertained that no inconsiderable portion of the outward prosperity of the wicked was unaccompanied even by *present* felicity. Not unfrequently, when God gives men all the desires of their hearts, he sends leanness and wretchedness into their souls.

Wealth is often accompanied by the gnawings of conscience, at the unhallowed means that have procured it; by a restless anxiety and apprehension for its safety, and by an insatiable thirst for augmenting still the useless horde. Worldly honor hangs in trembling suspense upon the varying breath of the multitude, is haunted by a jealous fear of opposing rivals, and, even when most fully secured, soon palls with satiety, and often ends in utter dissatisfaction and disgust. Pleasure and gayety not unfrequently play their fantastic and deceptive arts before the world, when, could their votary be followed to the retirement of his closet, he would be found to be the victim of remorse, or of sullenness and gloom.

Thus, true happiness is less dependent than most imagine upon outward circumstances. Often are a tranquillity of soul, and complacency of feeling, enjoyed by the poor and despised Christian, to which the abandoned libertine, the ardent seeker of worldly honor, and the miserly accumulator of riches, are utter strangers. Neither does it always happen that virtue is not ostensibly seen to be its own reward, and vice its own punisher, in the external events of this life. The possessions of the unprincipled are frequently torn from them by the most surprising and unexpected reverses. The temporary idol of popular adulation is outrun in the race of *competition*, or having attained his desired eminence, grows giddy, totters,

and falls into degradation and ruin. The silly follower of licentious pleasures finds in the loss of property and health, and the tormenting stings of a guilty conscience, the certain results of his short-lived gratifications. And offenders of a still more aggravated grade, while deriving from occasional success the most encouraging hopes of continued impunity, are arrested in their course, and made awfully responsible to the demands of retributive justice.

The history of the world supplies abundant illustration of these truths, in relation both to individual and to national crimes. How soon did the appointed punishment follow the transgression of our first parents! What instantaneous evidence of the justice of God overtook the first shedder of human blood! How awful and speedy the termination of the rebellious attempts of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their wicked adherents! How sudden and dreadful the fate of Ananias and Sapphira! The extinction of nearly the whole human race in a mighty deluge of waters; the raining of fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah; the entombing in a watery grave of Pharaoh and his host; the extermination of the idolatrous Canaanites; the successive judgments upon the Israelites themselves for their rebellion and idolatry; and the present dispersed and degraded condition of that people; as well as numerous other events found in the annals of ancient and modern history, fully attest, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and will avenge with signal inflictions of his wrath the crimes both of individuals and of nations. Still, however, must we acknowledge, that, in numerous instances, the tares and the wheat are not only suffered to grow together, but the former are even permitted to choke and to destroy the latter. Why this is so, our finite faculties can never fully comprehend. Yet there are many considerations calculated to vindicate the ways of God to man. The text furnishes a very striking one, that of the danger likely to result from rooting up the tares;—the rooting up the wheat also. The fabric of human society is composed of many parts mutually dependent upon each other. Take away some of the materials which compose it, and you endanger its safety, solidity, and permanence. The world not only consists of the evil and the good, but, in the ramifications of the social state, they are often so connected, that the immediate punishment of the guilty would inevitably involve that of the innocent. This sometimes necessarily occurs in the adjudication of criminals to the punishments prescribed by the laws of human society. The innocent wife of a guilty husband, the helpless children of a wicked parent, share the punishment of crimes in which they have had no part. May not the goodness of God withhold in some cases the merited punishment from such a consideration as this? In others may not the long suffering of Almighty God be extended for the benefit of the offender himself; that time being afforded for repentance, he may "return unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon?" In others, again, may we not be mistaken as to the measure or degree of unpunished criminality? Outward conduct is, of necessity, the criterion of our decision. But we can lay no claim to infalli-

bility of judgment. Our decisions may be harsh or erroneous. We may be ignorant of many real palliations. We know not, even in instances of unquestionable error or crime, what Providence may have in store, either of mercy, or of judgment, for those who appear to us in the light of flagrant offenders against his laws. There are some particulars of daily observation, in which it is easy to discern how the providence of God produces good out of evil, and makes even the wrath of man to praise him, and benefit his creatures. If there were no victims of suffering, the requisite trials of human character could not be had. Where, in the absence of misfortune and of pain, would be the evidences of fidelity, of patience, and of fortitude? If the feelings of the heart were not excited by objects calling for the exercise of commiseration and relief, might not those virtues languish or become extinct in the breast? Activity in duty, humility of temper, submission to the divine will, and many other valuable properties of the mind, have been the product of vicissitudes of fortune, apparently the most discouraging and afflictive. Even the temporary triumphs of the wicked are often rods in the hands of an all-wise and affectionate Parent, whereby his children are aroused from sloth and inactivity. O how many can thankfully acknowledge, that their best instructions have been received in the school of adversity!

In short, while the existence of moral evil is a permanent and incontrovertible evidence of the wilful degeneracy of man, its direction to beneficial ends is equally decisive proof of the goodness of God. These, it is true, may at present be beyond the reach of our faculties; yet we may rest assured that "the Judge of the earth will do right." Without daring presumptuously to except against his moral government, let us look forward to that period to which our Savior has in this parable directed our attention, when "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil;" when, the wise purposes of his providence having been answered, all mystery and darkness will be removed, and the final destiny of mortals be determined by a sentence which shall receive the plaudits of an assembled universe.—"Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil; but glory, honor, and peace to every man that worketh good."

II. But although the instruction to be derived from a due consideration of this parable may have the latitude already assigned it, in reference to the world generally, it was probably designed to apply more especially to the Church of God.

Christ could not have intended, surely, that his Church should be defiled and discredited by retaining in her communion openly profligate and dissolute offenders. Such "children of the wicked one" as should presumptuously associate themselves with his people, and yet manifest themselves to be "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel" by profligacy and vice, it never could have been meant to tolerate within the bosom of his holy Church. The readiness with which such characters may be distinguished, would prevent all injurious mistakes, and their separation could be attended with no *danger to the general body*. On the contrary, the eradication of the most

noxious weeds from the neighborhood of useful plants cannot be more beneficial than the immediate excision from the communion of the Church of men of scandalous lives and conversation. But while the parable was not intended to prohibit such a salutary course of discipline as this, it is highly instructive in relation to the *extent* to which it may be carried. What intolerance and oppression have arisen from the abuse of ecclesiastical power! How many officious servants of the sanctuary, having fixed a standard of orthodoxy and practice according to their own peculiar views, have become the persecutors of others as sound as themselves in material points of doctrine, and as exemplary in the discharge of all the duties of life. Now the lesson taught by this parable is utterly hostile to such a course of conduct. It reminds us that in the Church of God on earth, "the evil are ever mingled with the good." Nominal Christians, hypocritical professors, specious pretenders to religion, are probably blended with the truly pious and sincere in every Christian society. This parable contains a manifest prophecy of the great Head of the Church, that such will continue to be the case to the end of time. The evil can never be entirely prevented. Wherever, therefore, fundamental error of doctrine is not propagated, or the cause of religion disgraced by a vicious course of life, any thing like severity of discipline is unbecoming and dangerous. A zeal well intended may produce the most mischievous effects.

Men may give but unsatisfactory evidences of piety, and exhibit but few of the graces of the Christian character, and on these points they may justly become the subjects of public or private admonition; and yet it may happen that in many instances of this sort, if we possessed a clearer insight into character, we should find much real goodness under an unpromising exterior. The same discernment might enable us to detect in others much secret vice, much unholy feeling, under apparently the most unblamable, nay the most attractive and admired course of external conduct. But it was never intended by Divine Providence to commit to fallible men a power which is from its very nature exclusively his own; and therefore their faculties, in the highest state of cultivation and improvement, are left incompetent to its safe and proper exercise. It is not permitted to root up the tares, lest, either through malice or mistake, the wheat be rooted up also.

A variety of causes may have restrained the Church from the exercise of severe discipline in cases where the interests of religion seemed to require it. In many of these cases, however, if the whole ground were surveyed, the complaint would vanish. But though it be just, imperfection in the administration of the system can be no objection to the system itself, which, even as established by the Savior, recognizes within the pale of the Christian communion the necessary toleration of some unworthy, nominal, hypocritical professors.

As this parable teaches a most instructive and imperative lesson of forbearance and moderation in the ministers of Christ, so it is calculated to correct a very improper course of sentiment in the private members of his Church. It is not unusual for Christians, actuated in some instances, it is hoped, by a holy zeal, but in others, it is feared, by a spirit of censoriousness, to sit

judgment upon their brethren, and pronounce very unauthorized denunciations upon their characters and conduct. Such a practice has the unqualified disapprobation of our Savior in many parts of his invaluable instructions, and is obviously opposed to the principle of this parable, which apprises us of the great danger of assuming a province that is not ours, but belongs to Him who "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart." To persons of the dispositions mentioned, we would address expostulations such as the Apostle did to some of a like character in his day. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

Equally opposed to the spirit of this parable, is that unhappy error of Christian professors, which leads them to separate from the communion of a religious society, because it tolerates, in their apprehension, some unworthy professors. Let such beware, lest the standard of duty which they have formed be not exactly that which the Holy Scriptures furnish. Let them reflect whether, in reference to the characters objected to, it be not at least possible that their judgment may be biassed or erroneous. And above all, let them be cautious, lest, by their unyielding and uncharitable conduct, they arraign the wisdom and goodness of God, who, no doubt for the wisest purposes, has apprised us, in the text, that the wheat and the tares, the righteous and the wicked, are to grow together, until, in the great harvest of the judgment day, *He* makes the awful separation.

Our Savior closed his explanation of this parable, by emphatically exclaiming, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." In the brief improvement with which we propose to conclude, let us also call on several descriptions of persons to hear the profitable instruction it affords.

1. Let vain speculators and philosophers hear. After all their attainments in human knowledge, how limited is their comprehension of the ways of God; how far beyond their reach the immense and complicated system by which his universe is governed. Let them not be hasty in condemning the arrangements of divine Providence, with the vast machinery and ultimate objects of which they are so little acquainted. Let them avoid presumptuous and rash speculations. Instead of daring to censure, let them silently acquiesce in events, which, though incomprehensible to them, they may be assured have originated in wisdom, are conducted in the most fit and proper manner, and will terminate in the happiest results.

In the final close of this terrestrial scene, and the full development of the ways of Providence, how mean and contemptible will all the vain objections of men appear! But until that period, "the Most High worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, and giveth not account of any of his matters."

2. Let self-deceivers hear. Let them not imagine that their being ranked in outward profession with "the children of the kingdom," constitutes them

of the happy number. Let them examine themselves as to the grounds of their religion. "Try your own selves, prove your own selves, whether ye be in the faith." They are perhaps trusting, as evidence of their religion, to transient feelings, or a punctilious attention to outward rites. Let them not build the superstructure of their hopes on such sandy foundations as these. Instead of fitful, inflamed affections, let them cultivate settled *habits* of piety. When availing themselves of the useful adjuncts of piety, religious rituals, let them recollect that there is "a form of godliness without the power," and that they may possess "a name to live, whilst they are dead." In that day when He "whose fan is in his hand shall thoroughly purge his floor, he will gather his wheat only into the garner, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." God "requires truth in the inward parts." Although hypocrites may *now* mingle in communion with the truly pious and sincere, "the Lord knoweth their hearts;" and what will be "their hope when God taketh away their souls?"

3. Let the righteous hear. Let them not be offended, nor fret themselves, at the unavoidable mixture of good and bad in the church of Christ. It is a departure from the character that ought to distinguish his disciples, to indulge repining murmurs at what he has predicted as an accompaniment of his church to the end of the world; and it is a violation of his precepts, invidiously to judge the character of their brethren. James and John were once so inconsiderately jealous as to ask permission to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, who refused to receive their Master. But "he rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Let us "judge nothing before the time." Without presumptuously deciding upon the claims of others, let us strive "to approve ourselves to God." And even where the flagrancy of vice compels us to censure, let us not transform the just condemnation of sin into a personal hatred of the sinner. Whilst God withholds his judgments, forbearance on our part is an obvious duty. The solemn day of separation is not far distant. Until it arrives, let admonition and kind persuasion supply the place of vengeance. In the natural world there can be no transmutation of tares into wheat; but in the kingdom of grace a change impossible in nature is readily effected. Many of those who are already gathered into the granary of heaven; many of those who are now ripening for that glorious harvest that awaits them, were once noxious, unproductive tares or pestilential weeds. Christian charity, which "hopeth all things," should encourage the belief, that many nominal professors, and profligate offenders, whose hypocrisy or wickedness we now lament, may, by that "God who is rich in mercy," yet be "quickened in Christ, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Finally;—let all who are now present, hear.

The great harvest announced in this parable involves the gathering in, or the eternal rejection, of the whole human race. The division will be but into two classes. Whether these be designated by the terms, wheat and chaff, wheat and tares, sheep and goats, wise and foolish virgins, persons clothed with, or destitute of, the wedding garment, there are but two classes. In

that awful "day which shall burn as an oven," his appointed ministers, the "holy angels," will discern with unerring sagacity between them. "The righteous will then shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father, whilst they that have done iniquity shall be cast into a furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." May God, of his infinite mercy, grant us a portion with the righteous in that day, for Christ's sake. AMEN.

MANNER OF READING.

"The author is impressed with the fact, that, in the manner of *reading*, and especially of reading Sermons, there is generally exhibited a most shameful and criminal deficiency. If he might be allowed a suggestion on this point, he would say with deference, let the parent, or some one selected by him, read *aloud* for the benefit of the family, after preparing himself to read with due *emphasis* and *feeling*. And as a general rule, read *aloud*, even when alone—remembering that impressions made at once on the ear and eye, reach the heart with double force. Let this course be prayerfully adopted, and well written sermons and essays, and the precious Bible itself, would not so often be regarded as dull compositions; but their perusal would be accompanied with power from on high."—*Preface to Clark's Works*.

THE FINAL SETTLEMENT.

"How soon, my brethren, will the amazing realities of Judgment and Eternity break upon our unearthly vision, and fill us either with ecstasy or despair! I cast my thoughts forward but a little, and behold, the dead are rising, the elements melting, saints rejoicing, devils trembling. The Judge appears upon his great white throne—In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we are before the judgment seat, with our respective flocks. The faithful and the unfaithful shepherds of every age are there. The trial proceeds, the books are closed, the final sentence is pronounced. The heavens are opened, and the pit yawns—the eternal song and the eternal wail are both begun. O may we then rise, with a great multitude saved through our unworthy instrumentality, to shine with them, as the brightness of the firmament—as the stars forever and ever."—*President Humphrey*.

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SERMON CCXVI.

BY REV. WILLIAM T. HAMILTON, MOBILE, ALABAMA.

PERDITION DREADFUL.

PSLAM XXVI. 9. *Gather not my soul with sinners.*

THE sacred Scriptures make known to us not only the certainty of a future state, not only that it will be a state of final retribution to the good and the evil respectively, but also, that *at death* we enter forthwith on these rewards. In the New Testament, this point is placed beyond the reach of doubt; for, to the dying thief our Lord declared, "*This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*;" and Paul says, "*I desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.*" And in another place, we read of those who now "*through faith and patience inherit the promises.*" Neither was this great truth kept hid from the Old Testament church, as is plain from the translation of Enoch and of Elijah, without seeing death; and from the phraseology sometimes employed by the sacred penmen of the Old Testament, when recording the death of good men. Thus it is said, "Abraham gave up the ghost and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people." This *gathering to his people* cannot refer to the interment of his body, for the account of his burial is given as a quite distinct thing, in the next verse. Besides, his body was not gathered to his people; for all his relatives were interred some hundreds of miles distant from the cave of Machpela, where Abraham's body was deposited; some of them in Chaldea, and some in Mesopotamia. In like manner, Aaron is said to have been *gathered to his people* at his death, although he was buried on Mount Hor, in the wilderness, far away from all his kindred. Moses, too, whose grave no man ever saw, is still said to have been *gathered to his people*. The idea seems, therefore, to be, that at death their souls joined the society of the redeemed in heaven, whither *all*, who like them, are of the people of God, are conveyed on their release from the body. The Old Testament phrase, *gathered to his people*, must, therefore, be regarded as equivalent to the New Testament expression, "carried by angels into Abraham's bosom;" or, "to join the general assembly and church of the first born;" or, "to depart and to be with Christ."

This interpretation appears the more probable, from the manner in which the Old Testament writers speak of the wicked at their death. Thus we read, Job 27: 19, "The rich man shall lie down, but he shall *not be gathered.*" And in view of the obduracy of the Jews, Isaiah writes, "*Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord.*" From all which it is apparent, that, to saints in the Jewish church it was made known, that at death, each one, approved of God, should join the society of the blessed; while from that privilege the wicked should be debarred.

The passage before us, moreover, intimates that at their death, the wicked will be associated together. "*Gather not my soul with sinners.*" This prayer expresses the utmost earnestness of desire for separation from the wicked, and for exemption from their portion after death. Why, then, is fellowship with the wicked after death, so greatly to be deprecated? It is so,

1. *Because they will constitute a community exclusively evil, in which not one holy, or virtuous, or good being will be found.* The designation applicable to them all, without exception, is *sinners.*

In one vast assemblage will be convened all the wicked, all the abominable, and the vile, that have ever lived upon the face of the earth.

To the truly pious mind, association, even for a short time, with the abandoned and the wicked, is productive of exquisite pain, in hearing their blasphemies, witnessing their violence, their clamor, and their excesses. Nay, to any person of common sensibility, it must be a very painful necessity that compels a temporary companionship with the grossly wicked, giving way to their vicious propensities, their boisterous passions, and their debasing appetites. What individual here, but would feel it to be one of the severest of punishments to be compelled to pass a month in no society, night or day, other than that of the inmates of a penitentiary;—to hear their blasphemies and their ribaldry, their filthy witticisms, malicious raillery, and empty and polluted conversation: to witness continually their low cunning, and to endure their loathsome familiarity! What, then, must it be to pass a life in society so degraded, so heart-sickening! But, in the worst community to be met with on earth, there is still some good. Even in the most vicious fraternity of villains, there will be some more generous, or less hardened than the rest; some still retaining a spark of original nobleness of nature, a latent energy of conscience, restraining them from the last steps in enormity, and operating as a check upon their more reckless associates. And, in *all ordinary* cases, we know that the good and the evil are commingled throughout society; in consequence of which, a silent, but powerful influence is every where operating to restrain the wicked from innumerable excesses into which they would otherwise rush. Who has not seen this illustrated in festive company? At first, every thing gives promise of decorum, propriety, and rational gratification. The conversation is animated, perhaps, but intelligent and chaste, and every pleasure moderate. But when they, in whose presence effrontery is modest, and vice wears the mask, are observed to retire, reserve is gradually *thrown aside*, and mirth, and clamor, and revelry, rise higher, and yet higher, *till, in one brief hour, all traces of decency and sobriety are buried in riot.* Now this is but a miniature picture of the world. Remove the good wholly

away from among the wicked, and the restraints now reluctantly submitted to, would be quickly spurned and forgotten; and bold and rapid would be the general advance in wickedness. If, with the multitude of the orderly and the pious every where scattered through the land, and restraining the wicked by the mild majesty of goodness, there is still so much drunkenness, and dissipation, and sabbath breaking, and profaneness, what would very soon be the state of public morals, were the pious all taken to heaven to-day? Were the devout and the godly all withdrawn, the sanctuary closed, and the voice of the preacher heard no more, vice would reign triumphant over the land; and our lovely villages, and flourishing towns, would speedily exhibit only a counterpart to the wretched cities long since merged in the depths of the Dead Sea. How appalling, then, must be the prospect of being entirely secluded from the good, associated with none but the wicked, and with all the wicked of every class and degree of turpitude, and with the father of lies, and with his fiendish hosts, in one horrid community! If such be their prospect, who will not exclaim with the Psalmist, *Gather not my soul with sinners*. But consider—

2. *Not only will the society be composed wholly of the wicked, but, their evil passions, uncontrolled, will be the source of constant wretchedness.*

All experience shows, that tastes long fostered, habits long indulged, become fixed, and exert a powerful influence over the whole man, even against his better judgment and his sober wishes. The covetous man, in proportion as he becomes sensible of the meanness of his governing passion, finds himself stripped of ability to control it. The drunkard, with the fixed conviction that he is such, finds himself borne irresistibly along by a current of his own forming; and then, even the moving tears of a ruined family, and the thrilling interests of an immortal soul, all affectingly calling on him to pause,—yea, even the tremendous gulf of perdition roaring and raging full in view before him, only rouse him madly to redouble his speed, as if anxious to drown reflection in the very horrors of destruction. So, also, the licentious, while, with each reiterated indulgence, the appetite is cloyed, and gratification diminished, yet find the chains of their own forging but the more firmly riveted upon them; and, as the galling weight of those chains is becoming more painfully felt, the power to burst them, and the inclination to attempt it, are the more sensibly diminishing. In like manner the ambitious, the envious, the malicious, the irascible, and the fraudulent, are every day increasing the power of their dominant passion, and rendering the prospect of their emancipation the more hopeless.

Now what is there to warrant the idea, that propensities cherished and obeyed through life, will be lost in death? What authorizes the expectation that the soul, merely by a separation from the organ of its communication with the material universe, will lose its peculiar and distinctive characteristics? The mechanic, or the artist, is a mechanic or an artist still, when he has laid aside his tools; he has the same knowledge of his art, the same love for its exercise. In like manner, the soul must be the same still; as ambitious, or irritable, or proud, or selfish, when it has laid aside the body, (which

is only the soul's instrument for acting on material objects,) as before. The wicked, therefore, will carry their evil passions still in their bosoms, to the world of spirits; and, if so, they bear with them eternal fires of wretchedness to consume them.

Even in circumstances the most favorable to happiness, one single evil passion will fill a man with misery. What will riches and honors avail him, who is burning with ambition, or pining with envy, or who is agitated by vindictive passions? What can the kindest attentions of the most affectionate friends contribute to the peace of that man whose bosom is the seat of discontent, or who, from a consciousness of secret, unsuspected crimes, despises and abhors himself! What an amount of misery is sometimes inflicted on a large and amiable family, by a single vice of one member! What would be the condition of that family, of which each member should be the slave of some one odious propensity, and all clashing, in their pursuits, one with another? It would be wretchedness intolerable! What mind, then, can conceive the depth of misery that must pervade a vast community, of which each member is vicious—a slave to vile, ungovernable passions: where generosity, kindness, forbearance, and moderation are wholly unknown; where selfishness reigns uncontrolled in every heart; where each one is stung with fierce passions, and intent on his own gratification, regardless of all around him; whom he hates and despises, and by whom, as he is well aware, he is himself as heartily despised and hated. Is this the fellowship of the lost? Then *gather not my soul with sinners.*

3. *They lie under the curse of Almighty God.*

God is the great fountain of light, and joy, and gladness, to the intelligent universe. 'Tis his smile that lights the sun, and gilds the landscape with beauty. 'Tis this that sends the sweet thrill of joy through the bosom of youth, alleviates the toils of manhood, kindles the fire of domestic comfort and domestic love, and soothes the cares and alleviates the sorrows of declining age. If God frown upon us, the heavens are hung with blackness, the earth sickens, vegetation languishes, business fails, labor is fruitless, commerce decays, and pestilence and death desolate the abodes of men. 'Tis God's smile that fills the heart of the contrite with peace, renders the sanctuary a banqueting hall to the soul, pours a flood of transporting radiance into the Christian's closet, nerves him to successful combat with spiritual foes, gives him strength to walk steadfast in the narrow way, dispels even the darkness of death's gloomy vale, and opens to the view of the dying saint the glories of the heavenly inheritance. Deprived of all created good, the favor of God were happiness enough. Without it, the possession of a world were but splendid misery.

But where sinners are gathered, the favor of God never beams. They are left to the wretchedness of their own vices, unmitigated by one smile from God, unsoftened by one token of his favor or of his pity. Not only so: they are not merely deprived of his favor, they are not merely left to the *uncontrolled dominion* of their cruel and tormenting passions,—but they are made *to feel the weight of his positive anger, the bitterness of his tremendous curse.*

It is, I admit, a distressing, an overwhelming reflection; but the Scriptures distinctly present it before us, and represent the doom of the wicked by the most appalling imagery. They are consigned to a fiery lake, prepared, originally, for the devil and his angels. They are cast into outer darkness, tormented in flames, without the possibility of obtaining the least mitigation of their sufferings; which extort from them incessant weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; while the worm that never dies ceases not its gnawings within! Now this is no fanatic vision, it is no superstitious raving. It is a sober delineation of awful truth, made by the God of truth and love,—if haply we may be roused by it to adequate effort for effecting a timely escape! Read, then, this fearful delineation; ponder it well, and flee—Oh, flee from the wrath to come, while yet you may! Wrath—how intolerable! To be cast where all that is loathsome and repulsive in character shall surround you; where fierce passions shall rage in a continual tempest within; where the hand of the Almighty shall kindle fiery torments within you; where your breath shall be blasphemy, your drink tears, your only music groans and lamentations! Shall any of us sink under this tremendous curse? God, in mercy, forbid it!—*Gather, Oh, gather not my soul with sinners!* be the earnest cry of each of us!

4. To aggravate the curse, *memory will still live, and conscience never fail to perform her dread office.* We are, indeed, *fearfully and wonderfully made*; and not more so in our corporeal frame, than in our intellectual and moral conformation. How important, for instance, is the single faculty of *memory*. Without it, accountability were out of the question, punishment and reward alike impossible. Let a man be entirely deprived of memory, and he becomes conscious only of the sensations of the present moment; the past and the future are to him equally a blank. Science would be to him inaccessible, and all knowledge unattainable; for *science* is but a systematic arrangement of facts ascertained, and of the conclusions deduced from them; and *knowledge* is but the result gathered by memory from the experience of past events. Skill, and foresight, and care, without memory, were equally impossible. For how should he, who retains no recollection of the past, either pleasant or painful, know what, to-day, may yield pleasure or inflict pain? How, then, shall he plan for the one, or guard against the other? He must, inevitably, remain a mere passive recipient of sensations occasioned by the objects which are present, ignorant alike of the source and the consequences of his sensations; profoundly ignorant whether those feelings be a part of himself, the result of the operation of his own powers, or occasioned by objects external to himself; ignorant whether he ever felt the same before, or shall ever feel the like again; ignorant, in short, of every thing but the sensation of the moment. What idea could such a person form of punishment or of reward? Place such a being in heaven, and after millions of ages spent there, he would be no happier than at the moment of his admission! Thrust him down to hell, and he at once tastes the sum of his misery in the first pang; with its endurance, it is forever buried in oblivion. The past is forgotten, and is no more; the future is unseen, unanticipated, and *is not*. In the passing instant his consciousness

and his very being are wholly concentrated. Take away memory, and, it is plain, conscience expires with it, and remorse becomes impossible.

But, memory we have, and memory we shall forever retain. The saints in bliss remember their former pollution—they remember the terrors of the law, and they remember the efficacy of atoning blood; and hence burst their ascriptions of praise to Him who redeemed them unto God. Memory will act, also, with never dying vigor, in each bosom throughout the vast multitude of sinners. This is plain from the nature of the case; memory is an original faculty, inherent in the mind, and indestructible as the mind itself. It is plain from the charge urged home by the Judge of all the earth, on the consciences of the wicked arraigned at his bar;—"I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." (See the close of Matt. chap. 25). It is plain from the conversation between the father of the faithful and the rich man tormented in hell: "Son, *remember* that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things." (See Luke, 16th chap.)

In this world, the mind is so occupied with business, and cares, and pleasures, that the greater part of our actions are speedily forgotten by us; but in the world of retribution all those objects will be removed, and those pursuits will be at an end. The mind, with all its powers restored to pristine, immortal vigor, with the memory of each event fresh as at the moment after its occurrence, will be ever active in the dread review; each action will be weighed and scrutinized, and conscience, with eagle eye to see the truth, and stern integrity to declare it, will fearlessly and loudly pass sentence on each action, as its bearings and influences on other persons besides the actor himself, rise up in view. Then will each cherished sin betray its native deformity, and discover its murderous work on the soul. Then, also, in the view of the impenitent, will the conduct of God be fully vindicated; his sincerity and earnestness in the gospel offer will be distinctly seen, and thoroughly believed; and the damning guilt of unbelief, will be doubted no more. Despairing groans and tears of blood will reveal the agonizing conviction.

Could the condemned outcast but believe himself blameless; could he only believe his punishments to be heavier than his desert, it would surround him as with a panoply, and shield him from the fierceness of divine wrath. But this it is that fans the fires of hell, and pierces with ten thousand barbs the sufferer's panting heart,—he knows he is reaping but the just reward of his doings. Heaven's glories beheld in distance, and the echo of celestial hosannahs heard in hell's dark caverns, shall only rouse conscience to proclaim,—“Atoning blood flowed for us too; a heavenly portion was offered to us too,—but we spurned it for the momentary pleasures of sin.” All hell quakes at the confession! its fiery billows rise, and roll, and rage, and break upon the ear, “*Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not.*”

“These are the words which glow'd upon the sword
Whose wrath burn'd fearfully behind the cursed,
As they were driven away to Tophet—
Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not—”

These are the words to which the harps of grief
 Are strung; and to the chorus of the damn'd
 The rocks of hell repeat them evermore,
 Loud echoed, through the caverns of despair,
 And pour'd in thunder on the ear of wo!"

And quivering lips and hollow groans reply, 'We know our duty, but we did it not.' *Our doom is just.* 'The terrors of a guilty conscience, who can bear! Merciful God, *gather not my soul with sinners!*

5. *They know their doom is unalterably fixed; escape, relief, and change, and death, are alike hopeless.*

On this subject reason utterly fails, analogy can furnish no clue to guide; the collected wisdom of all created beings were incompetent to decide what should be the duration of punishment inflicted on incorrigible rebels against heavenly majesty,—on the daring despisers of God's offered mercy. But this impenetrable mystery the Infinite Mind has vouchsafed to clear up. The compassionate Saviour himself has said, "*the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment; into hell, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*"

Appalling though the prospect be, inscrutable though the reasons be that render such a decision necessary,—to doubt it were folly, and to deny it, worse than madness, since the Son of God asserts it. This it is that forms the crowning point in the wretchedness of the damned,—their woes shall never end! Those fires will never die out; that worm will never cease its gnawings; that frame, lacerated in every fibre—quivering in every muscle, and bleeding with anguish at every pore, will never sink exhausted. Respite there is none, relief none, change is hopeless, escape impossible, and death—oh! 'tis a living death; the soul grappling in one eternal struggle with the monster death,—bleeding in intensity of agony from his envenomed darts,—is *ever-fainting, ever-dying*—but never, never, *never dead!* Were annihilation possible after countless ages had rolled away, the gloomy anticipation might yield some relief—lend some support to the soul against its tide of sorrows; but annihilation is hopeless—it is impossible: for God has pronounced the curse eternal. His breath fans the fire—his almighty arm sustains the sufferer to endure it. Eternity!—an eternity of wretchedness!—how unspeakably awful! Such an eternity, so filled up with suffering, awaits the impenitent. *What,—oh, what then shall it profit me, if I gain the whole world,—its highest honors, its finest treasures, its richest enjoyments, and then lose my soul? God of mercy! gather not my soul with sinners!*

From the pit, whose horrors we have been contemplating, there comes up the voice of admonition. Ten thousand groans commingle in the sound; ten thousand sighs wait it to our ears—*he who is living in sin, impenitent, unsanctified, is fitting for a place in this horrid society.* Are you a lover of wine, and a friend to strong drink? are you covetous? are you wrathful and unforgiving? are you a votary of pleasure, a lover of vain company, idle talk, unseasonable humor, and polluting joys? Then are you in the broad way, hurrying on with rail-road speed to join the thousands in the pit, who, when here, *wad*

in your steps; if here now would be kindred spirits with you, and for association with whom, nothing more is needed to fit you, than a dismissal from the body! Are you externally blameless, but inwardly corrupt and secretly vicious? Satan already marks you as his own,—and even now hell moves to meet you! Or are you living in no glaring sin, but in unbelief only? Remember, he who has said drunkards, and liars, and the unclean, shall not inherit the kingdom of God, has testified also—*he that believeth not shall be damned!* Let the refined, the highly cultivated, and the polished, ponder deeply this consideration—rejection of the gospel will consign you to perpetual companionship, hopeless of relief, with those very wretches from whose coarse wickedness and brutal vices you now shrink away in unutterable disgust! How will you bear to be their companions—their sport and their scorn for ever!

Of the doom that awaits them sinners are forewarned. If, then, in defiance of such motives, in contempt of such tenderness as the gospel reveals, men will press onward to ruin, mercy herself will suspend her entreaties, and use the high vantage ground to which she had brought them, only to occasion a more fatal plunge to the lowest depths of hell!

Dying sinner! “behold the Lamb of God”—the bleeding Saviour! Forsake the paths of folly—break off your sins by repentance, and surrender your whole heart to Jesus Christ, who is mighty to save. Believe on Him. That faith will purify your heart: and the entire change it effects in your character, and your emotions, will give assurance of acceptance, while you pray, *Gather not my soul with sinners!* Amen!

SERMON CCXVII.

BY REV. IRA TRACY,

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THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST IN SELF-DENIAL.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 5.—*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*

In the example of Christ we have a perfect pattern for our imitation. A pattern which we are bound to imitate in all cases where our situation is like his. Let us, then, look for a few moments at *what he did for the benefit of sinners*; and then consider in *what respects our situation, in relation to others, is like that of Christ*. For the benefit of sinners,

I. *He left the honors and enjoyments of heaven.*

He was King of kings and Lord of lords. But he saw in this far distant province of his empire the entrance of sin. He witnessed the sorrow, and wo, that followed in its train; and, urged by love, he hastened to save the ruined world.

II. *He endured the company of the degraded and wicked.*

The vicious and the vile seek the company of those like themselves; but can one who has been accustomed to virtuous and refined society, be happy *among the degraded and profane*? And when Christ became the friend of

publicans and sinners, was it because their company was agreeable to him? No, it was compassion for the miserable—it was pity for sinners, that made him their companion.

III. *His labors were incessant and painful.*

“*He went about doing good,*” is the short, but exact description of his manner of life. This was his employment—his meat and his drink; and for this he refused no effort, however painful.

IV. *He came among those by whom he knew he should be despised and rejected.*

Take the history of his life on earth, and observe the treatment he received, and received, let us remember, for the good of others. See the Saviour of the world cradled in a manger, because the inn was occupied by those considered more honorable! Hear the proud Pharisee saying, “Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber—a friend of publicans and sinners.” See him before the Jewish Sanhedrim. “They all condemn him to be guilty of death.” They then begin to “spit in his face, and to buffet him.” Others cover his face and smite him with the palms of their hands, and contemptuously ask, “Who is he that smote thee?” See him next, led away to stand, like a felon, before the Pagan governor. Here again listen to the slanderous accusations against him; and hear the infuriated cry, “Away with him, away with him! Crucify him, crucify him! And by whom was he thus despised and rejected? It was by those whom he most tenderly loved. He saw his enemies—the enemies of God—degraded, and perishing in sin, and his pity was moved. For our sake he could bear to be crowned with thorns, and spit upon, and called a vile impostor.

V. *He bore our sins in the garden and upon the cross.*

The self-denial, the condescension, the insults of which I have spoken, are as nothing, when compared with the sufferings of Gethsemane and Golgotha. It was in the garden that he began to drink of the bitter cup—the wrath of God against sin. See him retiring with the three disciples, and beginning “to be sore amazed and to be very heavy.” “His soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.” He lifts up his voice in prayer, “Father, *if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me;” but the burden is not removed. Again and again, he pleads, and no relief is granted; nor can there be, without the loss of a world. But the salvation of the world is an object so dear to the Sufferer, that he will not relinquish it. The rage of hell and the frowns of heaven can be borne, rather than we should be left to perish!

All this, however, is but the beginning of his sorrows. An ignominious death and the entire desertion of his Father’s countenance are yet to be endured. “They took Jesus and led him away. And he bearing his cross, went forth. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, *there they crucified him*. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ And he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”

Such are some of the self-denials and sufferings to which Christ submitted for the good of others. Keeping this example in view, and remembering that, if the same mind be in us which was also in him, we shall do as he did, so far as our condition permits, let us

SECONDLY, consider, *in what respects our situation, in relation to a world of sinners, is like that of Christ.*

1. As Christ saw mankind perishing and without a Saviour, so we see six hundred millions of our fellow-men in the same condition—perishing, and without a Saviour.

Their souls, as precious as our own, are in danger of being lost for ever; for they are, almost without exception, such as inspiration has described, [Rom. i. 17—32, and 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, &c.] of whom it is declared, *that such cannot inherit the kingdom of God.* That this is their condition is admitted

by all who believe the Bible and have any considerable acquaintance with the character and conduct of the heathen. In this respect, then, our situation is like that of Christ—we see countless multitudes of our race hastening to eternal ruin.

2. As Christ knew that the salvation of the world depended upon himself, so we know that the salvation of the heathen depends, under God, upon us *who have the Gospel*.

“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.” This evidently implies, that whosoever shall not thus call, will not be saved. “But how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?” The heathen have never heard of Christ, nor will they, till we who have the Gospel, convey it to them. Their salvation, therefore, depends as really, though in a different way, upon us, as ours did upon Christ. If he had not come and suffered for us, we could not have been saved; and if we do not give the Gospel to the heathen, they will not be saved.

3. As Christ could not effect the salvation of the world without self-denial, so we cannot save the heathen without it.

It was impossible for him to become our Saviour without leaving his home and country, exchanging the society of heaven, for that of vile men, exposing himself to the scorn of the wicked, and consenting even to die, in the cause: and it is equally impossible for us to save the heathen, unless many of us leave our home and country, exchange the society we love for that of pagans, expose ourselves to the contempt and hatred of the wicked—to dangers and to death, it may be, in the prosecution of the work; and unless others who do not go, imitate the self-denial of the Redeemer in efforts to give them the Gospel. The extent to which we are bound to carry our self-denial, is left for each one to decide, in view of the worth of souls, and the example of him, who though he was rich, for our sakes became poor.

4. As Christ knew that his labors and sufferings would not be in vain; so we know, that if we, with the same spirit of obedience to God, and benevolence to men, deny ourselves, and give the Gospel to the heathen, it will be the means of their salvation.

We are assured of this by the effects which have attended the publication of the Gospel in every age and country. Our own ancestors were pagans—the blood of human victims flowed upon the altars of their idol gods—they were degraded and wretched, as pagans now are. But the Gospel was preached among them, and that by Christian missionaries; and it produced its appropriate effects:—such effects as we see around us, and are experiencing ourselves, continually: for we owe to the Gospel all our elevation above the heathen, in knowledge, virtue, and happiness. Similar effects have attended the Gospel wherever it has been preached in its purity; effects which it is naturally calculated to produce—it being the means appointed of God for the moral renovation of the world.

Finally—As Christ saw a sufficient reward in the joy set before him, so we shall be abundantly rewarded for all our efforts in this cause when we come to see the fruit of our labors in heaven.

It was for the salvation of men, and the glory of God, exhibited to the universe in the accomplishment of that salvation, that he condescended to assume our nature, and suffer in our stead. Our inducements to give the Gospel to the heathen are essentially the same. We shall be the means of saving men, and of glorifying God in the view of the universe. While we labor in this cause, we are eminently “a spectacle to God, to angels, and to men;” and when our work is done, and we are called home to our heavenly rest, then, as *he sees* the travail of his soul and is satisfied, so we shall welcome there one *and another, who, but for us, must have gone to dwell in everlasting burnings,*

but who, by our instrumentality, are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

It appears, then, that west and in the same relation to the heathen in respect to the certainty of their salvation, in which Christ did to us. Their salvation depends as truly upon us as ours did upon him; it will not cost us more; and every motive which urged him to effort in our behalf, urges us with equal power to effort in their behalf. If, then, "the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus," we shall make the greatest possible efforts for the salvation of the world.

To what other conclusion can we come? The situation of millions, for whom we are called to labor, is as deplorable as was that of those for whom Christ labored and suffered; the necessity of our making exertion for their rescue is as imperious; success as certain; and the reward as sure. He did what he could. He refused no labor, avoided no indignity, shrunk from no suffering, that was requisite for our salvation. If we, then, have the same mind, shall the love of ease—or wealth—or pleasure—or honor—or friends—or country—of any, or all of these, prevent or diminish our efforts in behalf of those now perishing for lack of knowledge? O, no; if we have his spirit in view of this great object, all earthly good will dwindle to insignificance. This will be the theme of our most anxious study, and the object of our most vigorous exertion—the great end of our life.

And, Christian brethren, have we not promised before God, angels, and men, that we would renounce the world and follow Christ? If our profession was not a mere form, have we not given ourselves to God, and solemnly consecrated our time, property, influence—our every talent to his service? What mean our covenant vows, if not the entire consecration of all we are and have? What mean our solemn promises, if not that we will take the word of God and the example of Christ as our rule of life? Those vows we have often renewed, over the emblems of Christ's broken body and shed blood. And shall we now make it the object of our lives to seek the riches, honors, or pleasures, of this world? Shall we serve ourselves, instead of him who has loved us, and bought us with his own blood? His last command is, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And I hear him saying, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." And shall we disgrace the Christian name by refusing to obey? Millions on millions have perished already, because professing Christians have loved the things of this world more than the souls of men. Stay, I beseech you, stay, (for it is in your power,) this flood of ruin. The salvation of six hundred millions now depends, under God, upon Christians of this generation. The heathen now alive, must receive the Gospel, or perish in ignorance of it. We, then, who have that Gospel, which is the means appointed of God for their salvation—we hold their eternal destiny in our hands; and if we will, with the promised help of God, we can secure them from everlasting ruin.

If all who bear the name of Christ, possessed his spirit, they would give the Gospel to every heathen in less than *thirty years*; I say this after careful examination. If all the churches commonly regarded as evangelical, in the United States alone, should engage in this enterprise, it would not require four dollars a year from each member to defray the expense of giving a Bible to every heathen family, and supplying the whole unevangelized world with missionaries. Less than four dollars a year! or eight cents a week! And where is the individual who, if he should make it a prominent object, could not obtain that sum for this purpose? Less than four dollars a year! or less than two-thirds as much as the average annual expense for the use of ardent spirits to the inhabitants of the United States, before the temperance reformation commenced. And is it doubtful whether the members of our churches are able to give two-thirds as much for this object, as the people of the United States did then actually give for ardent spirits? Or shall we, Christian brethren

ren, tell the world that we care less for the Redeemer's honor, and the salvation of souls, than people then generally did for ardent spirits? It might require some self-denial to accomplish the work within the time above mentioned; but would it require more than Christ submitted to for the same object? And must he deny himself, and come down from heaven, and labor, and suffer, and die, and we deny ourselves of nothing? But could *men* be furnished in sufficient numbers to carry the Gospel to the heathen? It would require only one, on an average, from each church of two hundred members; and where is the church, which, if all its members possessed the spirit of Christ, could not furnish, at least, one missionary?

This great work, then, can be done. Christians have it in their power to give "the Gospel to every creature," before another generation shall perish. The salvation of these millions depends, therefore, upon the willingness of Christians to imitate the example of their Master. And what are the real prospects of these dying millions? Will Christians give them the Gospel? Or will they, while they have it in their power to save, let another generation perish? Ah! I fear the latter. But, Oh! how long, how long, shall this murderous apathy continue? Is there no "redeeming spirit" that can rouse the church to action? Yes, the spirit of Christ can do it; that spirit which brought him from heaven for the good of others, and which is enkindled in our bosoms only by looking at his cross. We have looked at those around us, and taken our standard of effort for the heathen from the example of selfish men; and those heathen, meanwhile, have been sinking to everlasting death; and this course will continue till we lift our eyes to the Saviour, and take his example as our rule of self-denial and effort.

Deeply impressed with this idea, I would say, then, in conclusion, "look unto Jesus"—see him, though Lord of all worlds, willing to bear the cross, and to die even, for the good of others! O contemplate the bright example, till you be changed into the same image—till "this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;" and till the purpose is unalterably fixed in your heart, that, whatever others may do, you will do all in your power to give the Gospel to the heathen, before another generation shall go down to the grave;—that so, at last, when you meet them at the bar of the Judge enthroned, their blood may not be required at your hands. Amen!



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